

Isaiah Chapter 11, Hebrew Text with Translation and Footnotes
Prophetic Vision Sees Beyond the Present Destruction with Double Vision--
The Coming Spirit-Filled King, and A World of Peace
With Wickedness Destroyed, Filled with Justice and Righteousness--
But Also, A World Dominated by A New Davidic Military Kingdom

11:1¹ וַיֵּצֵא חֹטֵר מִגֹּזַע יֵשׁוּעַ

¹See **Isaiah 9:1-7**, which describes **Isaiah's** vision of the coming Divine child / king who will bring light, joy, and peace to the earth.

There, we discussed the strange combination of a majority of past-tense verbs with a future verb in the last sentence, which shows that the entire matter is something in the future that YHWH's "zeal" will accomplish, but which has just been described as already having happened. We have held that **Isaiah** uses the past-tense verbs because this is what he has seen in the Divine counsel or vision, which enables the vision to be described as having already happened, or been decided upon, by YHWH—even though in actuality its fulfillment was still to come, in the distant future.

Here, in **Isaiah 11:1-10**, by contrast, the large majority of the verbs, are in the future tense: "a branch will go forth," "a stem will bear fruit," "YHWH's Spirit will rest on him," "he will not judge...," "he will not reprove...," "he will judge...," "he will reprove...," "he will strike the earth...," "he will put to death wickedness," "right-relationship will be wrapped...," "true faithfulness will be wrapped," "a wolf will live...," "a leopard will lie down," "a milk-cow and a bear will feed together," "a lion will eat straw," "a nursing infant will play...," "they will not do evil," "they will not destroy," "it will happen on that day," "nations will seek (him)," and "his resting-place will be glorious radiance."

Over against this large majority of future-tense verbs, there are a few past-tense verbs: "over a poisonous serpent's lair a weaned-child stretched out his hand," and "the earth was filled (with) knowledge of YHWH." In addition there is one present participle, "a little boy is leading (wolf and sheep, leopard and kid-goat, calf, young lion, and fatted animal)."

All of this, of course, makes it very clear that **Isaiah's** vision has to do with the future, even though there are elements in it that can be described in the past-tense, since YHWH has given the vision, and its fulfillment is assured.

Just as is the case with **9:1-7**, **Isaiah's** vision in **11:1-10** has to do with the coming king, and the nature of his government, which will be filled with a concern for the rights of the poor and oppressed peoples of the earth, and which will be strong and inflexible when dealing with evil, bringing capital punishment upon wickedness. As a result of this coming king's rule, the entire earth will be completely transformed into the kind of world that God intended in creation.

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Isaiah's vision is an expression of the universal hope that comes to expression a number of times in the biblical message. YHWH, the Creator God of the entire universe, has a future for His people, and for this earth. It is going to return to its Divinely intended nature in creation, to a condition in which peace reigns universally, and all the former antagonisms and hatreds are done with, once and for all! People who accept this vision as having come from God, can always look forward to the future, no matter how dark the present, with hope and confidence.

Slotki, the Jewish commentator, entitles **chapter 11** "The Messianic Age."

Gray entitles **11:1-8** "The Righteous Ruler of the Stock of Jesse, and the Return of the Golden Age."

He comments that "The poem predicts the restoration of the Jewish monarchy to the person of a king sprung from the family of Jesse, the father of David, who will be equipped by Yahweh's spirit for all the duties of a righteous ruler, **verses 1-2**. Thus equipped, he will in virtue of his wisdom discern what is right, and in virtue of his might achieve it, securing for the weak what is due to them, and smiting down the powerful who do wrong. All that he does will be done in righteousness and faithfulness, **verses 3-5**. In his days the conditions of paradise will return; the beasts will no longer be at enmity with one another and with men, but all will live together in peace and friendship, **verses 6-8**.

"The thought of the poet is concentrated on the future of the Jews, though he sees it in the light of conditions (**verses 6-8**) which will presumably be universal and not limited to Palestine....

"Of the conditions which immediately precede the reign of this king he says nothing directly, nor gives any indication how soon the future which he predicts may be expected...

"The editor, whether Isaiah himself...or another...who is responsible for the present arrangement of **Isaiah 10:5-chapter 12**, may indeed have intended that this reign was to begin when the world-power has been destroyed and the destruction of everything opposed to God within Israel and without (**10:22-23**) has been accomplished. But [it seems clear to Gray and others] that **11:1ff.** is not the immediate continuation of **10:5-34**...

"The elaborate metaphors of **10:33-34** contrast with the general literalness of **11:1-8**. The figure in **11:1** is simple, and **11:6-8** is, of course [?], intended literally, not metaphorically. Finally, the antithesis sought between **10:33-34** and **11:1**—the Assyrian cedar forest is smitten down, the tree of Jesse is rejuvenated—is anything but inevitable.

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“...It follows that **11:1-8** must be judged by itself and not in connection with **10:5-34**...

“If the most obvious is the correct interpretation of **verse 1**, the poem was written after 587 B.C.E...Like **9:1-6** the poem might well have been written towards the end of the exile when men’s minds were turning towards restoration, and when some may have been setting high hopes on Zerubbabel, of the stock of Jesse, who immediately after the return certainly focused such hopes upon himself (**Haggai, Zechariah**).” (Pp. 213-14)

Watts entitles **11:1-10** “A Shoot from the Stump of Jesse.”

He comments that “While David’s scion [a young shoot or twig of a plant, especially one cut for grafting or rooting; a descendant of a notable family] appears in **verses 1** and **10**, the emphasis is on Yahweh’s spirit (**verse 2**), the fear of Yahweh (**verse 3**), and the knowledge of Yahweh (**verses 6-9**). **Verses 4** and **5** are not clearly directed and may be understood to apply to Yahweh or to the king. The ambiguity is deliberate. Davidic ideology was structured to think in terms of God’s work through the king. This passage deftly keeps attention on God’s work...

“In addition, the surrounding sections shift the emphasis from the king to Yahweh’s endowments which are necessary for peace, prosperity, and success: His Spirit (**verse 2**), His ‘fear’ (**verse 3b**), His righteousness and justice (**verse 5**), and His ‘knowledge’ (**verse 9**). The king does have a role, but as in **Isaiah 9:6^{Heb} / 7^{Eng}** the composition carefully subordinates it to the wider view of God’s work and makes it contingent on the Spirit, fear, righteousness, and knowledge of Yahweh which are the essential elements for the fulfillment of God’s purpose for His people and the world...

“The genre of description of ‘the peaceable kingdom’ is virtually unique to Isaiah (compare **chapter 35** and **65:17-25**). It is used in contrast to the violent pictures of Yahweh’s warfare in the [**Book of Isaiah**] to convey the sense of Yahweh’s goals toward which His strategy with the nations and with Israel are moving.” (P. 170)

Motyer entitles **11:1-16** “The glorious hope,” and comments that “Here, for the second time, Isaiah extends to the remnant the hope of the royal Messiah. Again, it is specifically a word of assurance for the dark day of the Assyrian threat but contains in itself clear indications that its fulfilment is for time yet to come. Undated hope is a living, ever-present assurance for God’s people, and it is at this point that the passage speaks as much to the church today as in Isaiah’s time...

“The most obvious evidence of literary prehistory in **verses 1–16** is the insertion of the (probably) prose section, **verses 10-11**, bridging between two self-contained poems, **verses 1-9** and **verses 12-16**...These two poems complement each other: the first deals with the king, the nature of his rule and the paradisaical world where he reigns;

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the second deals with the world-wide people gathered to the Lord's banner. The bridge verses (**10-11**) are a very skillful piece of literature, in no way intrusive, a true uniting factor...The glorious hope...is of a reconstituted world and people under a perfect king." (Pp. 120-21)

Kaiser entitles **11:1-9** "The King of Peace."

He comments that "If **chapter 10** was dominated by the thought of judgment inflicted by Assyria on Jerusalem and at the same time by Yahweh on Assyria, **chapter 11** directs attention to the coming time of salvation." (P. 253)

Then, in his comments on this passage he insists (along with a number of other students of **Isaiah**) that it is a later addition to the **Book of Isaiah**, and not written by the prophet Isaiah, but rather by a later scribe, adding his thoughts to the original **Book**. (Pp. 253-54)

He states that "At all events, the expectation of the renewal of the kingdom from the roots of the dynasty points to a time at which the David dynasty had ceased to rule." (P. 254) Those who continue to maintain the traditional view that the passage comes from the historical Isaiah, hold that Isaiah, in vision, is speaking of a future time when the descendants of David will have ceased to rule.

Kaiser comments on **11:1-5**, which he entitles "The renewal of the kingship," that "If the annihilation of the Davidic monarchy had been brought about by Yahweh Himself in the catastrophe of 587 B.C.E., this was nevertheless not to be the last word on the matter. Rather, he would call a collateral line, stemming from the roots of the dynasty, to succeed to the throne and endow it with His spirit, so that it could fulfil all the claims made on a king. [But is there any real indication in the text of a 'collateral line'? Is it not only about one coming king, with nothing said of his descendants / dynasty?]..."

"While in **9:1^{Heb} / 2^{Eng} ff.** expectations are primarily directed towards liberation from the yoke of the enemy, here they are turned inwards. At the same time the passage develops as it were the theme of the righteousness of the rule of the one to come which was begun in **9:6^{Heb} / 7^{Eng}.**" (P. 254)

Oswalt states that "In **11:1-16** the messianic hope which began to be expressed in **7:14** and which was amplified in **8:23-9:5^{Heb} / 9:1-6^{Eng}** comes to full flower. The Messiah is not merely promised or announced but is depicted as ruling. In place of the craven and petty house of David, or the arrogant and oppressive empire of Assyria, here is a king in whose hands the concerns of the weakest will be safe. He will usher in a reign of safety and security to which the weary exiles may come streaming in return..."

"This segment **11:1-9** is specifically related to the messianic promise. It emphasizes three aspects of this figure:

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וְנֹצֵר מִשְׂרֵשֵׁי יִפְרָה:

And a branch² will arise³ out of Jesse's⁴ stump;⁵

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(1) his divine endowment for ruling (**verses 2 and 3a**);

(2) the absolute justice of his rule (**verses 3b-5**); and

(3) the quality of safety which will characterize his rule (**verses 6-9**)...

“The ruler will no longer see himself as privileged but rather as responsible, when he will become one for whom his people’s welfare is uppermost. In a word, the ruler will be the servant, not because he is too weak to dominate, but because he is strong enough not to need to crush. This picture cannot be applied to any merely human king. It is either an unattainable ideal or the figure envisioned is somehow superhuman.” (Pp. 277-78)

²The noun חֹטֶר, **choter**, means “branch,” or “twig,” or even “rod.” The Greek translation has ῥάβδος, **hrabdos**, which means a “rod,” or “stick,” or “switch,” or “staff,” or even “scepter.” The meaning in this context has to be a small “branch” that grows out of the stump. The noun occurs only here and at **Proverbs 14:3**, where it means a “rod” used to beat the back of fools. The Greek noun **hrabdos** occurs some 133 times in the **Greek Bible**.

Slotki’s translation has “a shoot,” and Slotki comments that “this contrasts with the last two verses of the previous chapter. The Assyrian forest will be cut down and end in everlasting desolation [does the text say Assyria will ‘end in everlasting destruction’?], but the stock of Judah [the text has ‘stock of Jesse’] will produce fresh shoots and new life.” (P. 56)

Watts observes that “The *shoot* (חֹטֶר) or the *branch* (נֹצֵר) does not spring from fresh new ground (a new dynasty) but from the old stump or roots. Jesse’s descendants will take on new life.” (P. 171)

³Watts states that the future verb “will go out” (our “will arise”) “does not set the time as future...but relates the passage to the controlling sentence (**10:33**) and the great mosaic of pictures that follow.” (P. 170)

⁴Slotki states that “Jesse, the father of David, symbolizes the Davidic dynasty.” (P. 56)

Watts states that “The prophecy reaches behind David to Jesse (as **Micah 5:1**^{Heb} / **2**^{Eng} reaches behind Jerusalem to Bethlehem).” (P. 171)

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Oswalt comments that “The prophet has just depicted Assyria’s swift and sudden destruction. The forest of her pride is nothing but a field of stumps. Although many interpreters see the fact of the stumps’ already being cut down as evidence of the post-exilic date of the passage, there is no reason to take such a position. The prophet merely sees what he is predicting as accomplished fact, much in the same way that the perfect tense is used to describe future events [i.e., the ‘prophetic perfect’]...”

“Both Jacob and Assyria have fallen under the judgment of God. But there is a difference. When Assyria was finally cut down in 609 B.C.E. by the combined forces of Babylon, Media, and Persia, nothing ever arose from those stumps again [really? The Assyrian people remained in their native land, becoming parts of the kingdoms that followed—and those kingdoms were sometimes given the name Assyria]. Not so with Israel. From one of her stumps, as we are told in the call narrative (**Isaiah 6:13c**), the smallest shoot would venture forth...

“Commentators (compare Calvin) are possibly correct when they suggest that the use of *Jesse* is an attempt to downplay the house of David (compare **7:1, 13**). Salvation would not come from the pomp and glory of the royal house. Rather, it would come from the promise of one who could create a royal house from a peasant family... Nevertheless, God’s promise to David stands. It is not merely through any of Jesse’s sons that deliverance will come, but specifically through a descendant of David.” (Pp. 278-79)

⁵The noun גִּזְעַ, **geza**(, means “stock” or “stem,” or perhaps “stump”; it is found only three times in the **Hebrew Bible**, here, **Isaiah 11:1; 40:24** and **Job 14:8**. This last passage is helpful for understanding what is meant (see **verses 7-12**),

For there is hope for a tree, if it is cut down,
that it will sprout again,
and that its shoots will not cease--
though its root [שֹׁרֶשׁוֹ] grows old in the earth,
and its stump [גִּזְעוֹ] dies in the dust.
Yet at the scent of water it will bud
and put forth branches like a young plant...

It is obvious that in **Job 14:8**, “root” and “stump” are synonyms, as they apparently are here in **Isaiah 11:1**; and that even though seemingly “dead,” can spring back to life, producing “branches” or “shoots,” that have the potential of becoming new trees.

Gray comments on “the stump of Jesse” that “This phrase well reflects the fact that the Jewish monarchy is no more, though the family, from which it sprang, survives.” (P. 215)

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and a sprout⁶ from his roots⁷ will bear fruit!⁸

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Motyer comments that “The imagery here is of a felled tree. All the former signs of vitality have gone but the vitality of the root [the text has both ‘stump’ and ‘roots’] remains. Isaiah is taking seriously his own prediction that ‘the holy seed is its stump’ (**Isaiah 6:13**).” (Pp. 121-22)

Watts states that “גִּזְעַה, ‘stump’ is descriptive of a broken, cut-off dynasty. It takes up the figure of the Master Forester from **Isaiah 10:33-34** with the trimming and thinning of the forest describing the troubled times of Ahaz’s reign. It realistically recognizes the severely reduced status of the throne, a reduction by the division of the kingdom (compare **7:17**) and more recently by the vassal status of Ahaz and the reduced area controlled by Judah. A ‘stump’ indeed!” (P. 171)

But is severe reduction the same as being “cut-off,” becoming a “stump”? We think not—and think that this depiction is descriptive of the end of the Davidic dynasty by the Babylonian exile, from which that dynasty did not recover in the return from exile. What do you think?

⁶The noun נֶצֶר, **netser**, means “sprout” or “shoot,” from a root word that means “grow green” or “be fresh” (see **Brown-Driver-Briggs**, p. 666). Motyer translates by “sapling.” (P. 122) Gray translates by “scion,” a young shoot or twig of a plant, especially one cut for grafting; a descendant of a notable family.

This noun occurs only four times in the **Hebrew Bible**: here, **Isaiah 11:1; 14:19** (Hebrew, “like a loathed branch”); **60:21** (“your people shall all be righteous; they shall possess the land forever. They are the sprout that I have planted”) and **Daniel 11:7** (used of an unknown descendant from the daughter of the king of the south).

Slotki’s suggests the translation “a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit.” (P. 56)

Motyer comments that “One of the most striking features of this remarkable passage is the dual title of the coming king as both the *shoot* (**verse 1**) and the *root* (**verse 10**) of *Jesse*. The reference to *Jesse* indicates that the *shoot* is not just another king in David’s line but rather another David (compare **Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 34:23-24; Hosea 3:5**)...

“Among the kings, David alone was the ‘son of Jesse’ (e.g. **1 Samuel 20:27-33; 1 Kings 12:16**), and the unexpected reference to Jesse here has tremendous force: when Jesse produces a shoot it must be David. But to call the expected king *the root of Jesse* is altogether another matter for this means that Jesse sprang from him...Here, the Messiah is the root cause of his own family tree pending the day when, within that

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family, he will shoot forth. In the **Old Testament** this is a dilemma awaiting resolution.” (P. 121)

We say, the phrase **שֵׁרֶשׁ יִשָּׂי**, “root of Jesse” found in **Isaiah 11:10** is a synonym of the phrase **גִּזְעַ יִשָּׂי**, “stump of Jesse” in **Isaiah 11:1**. Jesse did not come from the stump, but the stump depicts the family “tree” of Jesse as having been cut down, and now able only to put forth “shoots” or “branches” from the stump. In the same way, Jesse did not come from the root; rather, the root, like the stump, depicts what is left remaining when the tree has been cut down. Just as from the stump “shoots” or “branches” can emerge, so from the root remaining in the ground can a “shoot” or “branch” emerge. Jesse produced both the stump and the root, even though in this metaphorical language the tree has been cut down. Neither the stump nor the root produced Jesse! The stump of Jesse, and the root of Jesse, produced the “shoots” and the “branches,” not the other way around.

And so, when Jesus is called “the root of Jesse,” it does not mean that in some mystical / spiritual way, Jesse “sprang from David” as Motyer claims. It means that Jesus sprang from Jesse!

What do you think? Do you agree with Motyer? In all of this, we are reminded of Jewish rabbis in the **Talmud**, arguing over the exact meaning of biblical phrases, and oftentimes drawing unique meanings from them that the ordinary reader would never have found.

⁷We note that in this verse both the stump and the roots are depicted as being the source of new life, with the stump producing a **חֹטֶטֶר**, “branch,” “twig,” or “rod”; and the roots producing a fruitful **נִצָּר**, “sprout” or “shoot.”

The fallen tree has vanished; all that is left is its stump where the tree once stood, and its underground root-system, from which a sprout can arise when conditions are right. As Motyer states, “the hidden vitality of the root remains.” (P. 122)

It is clear that in the vision which Isaiah has been given, the powerful “House of David” (the monarchy that reigned in the time of Isaiah, with Kings Ahaz and his much greater son, Hezekiah), is depicted as having been cut down, as no longer existing as a powerful tree, but only as its remnant, a stump, with its roots.

When Jewish interpreters hold that Isaiah is speaking about the future of the Davidic house of Ahaz with King Hezekiah the promised child / king, this simply was not true of the House of David—even though greatly weakened, it was not “cut down.” Not until the Babylonian captivity of Judah, could the House of David be spoken of as having been “cut down,” and because of this, some interpreters of **Isaiah’s** vision apply

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it to the post-exilic ruler Zerubbabel as the “root of Jesse.” But the vision obviously is far too extravagant to be seriously applied to this post-exilic ruler—perhaps, as wishful thinking, but certainly not as reality.

It was probably true that whenever a future king was born, extravagant pictures of his reign would be drawn—such as we see in the “Royal Psalms” (see **Psalms 2** and **72**). But never in history did a Jewish national king arise who could even begin to fulfill this depiction.

Alexander (p. 249) joins with John Calvin and E. W. Hengstenberg (1802-1869) in holding that “because Jesse resided at Bethlehem where Christ was to be born, and because the family is here considered as reduced to the same obscure condition in which Jesse lived, as contrasted with that to which David was exalted,” it is easy to see how **Isaiah’s** description can be understood as fitting the time of Jesus in the first century, for in the first century there was no Davidic king on Israel’s throne—rather, the half-Jew, half-Edomite King Herod, who was in fact under the thumb of the Roman conquerors. (P. 249)

Kaiser comments on **verse 1** that “The Davidic dynasty is compared with a tree, all that is left of which is a stump. Just as this can again send forth shoots, so too the royal family will renew itself from a further group of descendants [where does the text say anything about ‘a further group of descendants’?] of Jesse, the father of King David (**1 Samuel 16:1ff.**). Just as David once suddenly emerged from obscurity, so now after the apparently final abdication of the house of David from its people, a second David will arise from the stock of their ancestor. In **Micah 5:1**, we hear mysteriously and yet ultimately in the same way that someone is to arise from Bethlehem to be ruler over Israel, ‘whose origin is to sought in the past, in distant times’...

“So it is quite understandable that here, as in **Jeremiah 23:5; Zechariah 3:8; 6:12**, the Messiah is understood as a shoot from his family tree.” (P. 255)

Yes, but Kaiser is reading the word “Messiah” into the text, as Christian interpreters so often do. We say, Isaiah is predicting a “coming king,” but does not identify the coming king as “the Messiah.” The only place in the **Book of Isaiah** where the noun “messiah” occurs is in **Isaiah 45**, where it is applied to the Persian emperor, Cyrus.

⁸The imagery involved here is that of a great tree (“the tree of David”—the line of Davidic kings that ruled Israel and Judah) that has fallen, that has been cut down to the earth, with nothing but a “stump” remaining. **Isaiah** tells how its author entered into the following dialogue with YHWH when he was called to proclaim a message of Divine judgment to Israel in the eighth century B.C.E.:

Then I said, How long, O YHWH? And he said:
Until cities lie waste without inhabitant,

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and houses without people,
and the land is utterly desolate;
until YHWH sends everyone far away,
and vast is the emptiness of the land.

Even if a tenth part remain in it,
it will be burned again,
like a terebinth of an oak
whose stump remains standing
when it is felled.

The set-apart seed is its stump. (**Isaiah 6:11-13**)

The set-apart seed (זֶרַע) is its stump (מִצְבֵּתָהּ), which oftentimes means “pillar,” but which is also a synonym of **geza** (גֵּזָא), “stock,” “stem.”

As Gray observes, “Not only will a new tree grow from the old root, but it will yield fruit; not only will the Davidic monarchy be restored, but the new king will prosper.” (P. 216)

Over against this, Kaiser holds that the Hebrew imperfect verb יִפְרֶה, “will bear fruit,” should be changed, with **Rahlfs**, the Latin Vulgate and the Aramaic Targum to יִפְרֵחַ, “will bud / spring forth.” With this change the meaning is hardly changed.

Isaiah has reference to the coming Assyrian invasion, that will “sweep up to the neck” of the northern Kingdom of Israel, destroying her as a people, bringing utter devastation upon the Jewish people. Israel will, in the wake of that Divinely sent punishment, be like a tree that has been cut down, with only its stump remaining. But that only applies to the Northern Kingdom and its rulers—not to Judah, where the House of David still reigned as kings. But still there is hope, even for the Northern Kingdom of Israel, for there is still life remaining in the stump! **Isaiah’s** vision of a future for the cut-down tree, from which only a stump remains, would certainly apply to the Northern Kingdom of Israel; but the vision depicts far more than just the fall of the Northern Kingdom—it is a matter of the entire Davidic line of kings having been cut down! That is why most interpreters insist that only after the destruction of Judah, and the Babylonian exile, is there the kind of condition envisaged here.

Yes, mighty Sennacherib and the Assyrian Empire will fall and disappear into practical oblivion. So also will the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and Isaiah’s own Nation, that of Judah, with Jerusalem as its capital. Within two centuries, all of Judah would be carried away into Babylonian captivity, and her proud capital City of Jerusalem, along with its magnificent temple built by Solomon, would lie in utter ruin. But that would not be the final end--quite to the contrary, Isaiah affirms, a wonderful future is coming, filled with hope. Even though the proud nation of the Jewish people is in the process of being cut down, even if the great “tree” of Jesse would be cut down, that would not be

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the end of the story. The “stump” of that cut-down tree would remain in the soil--and one day, from that stump, a “Branch” or a “Sprout” or a “Root” would shoot forth. From that cut-down tree, that stump, would come new growth, and ultimately the fallen tree would bear wondrous fruit!

For Isaiah, and for the other great writing prophets of the **Jewish Bible**, this is a basic theme, one that appears again and again in their writings. In fact, the names “Branch” and “Sprout” became for them synonyms for “the Messiah,” the coming of an “Anointed King.” Things may look hopeless today. Indeed they do! Within a few short years, the great tree of Israel may be nothing more than a barren stump in the ground. But that is not the final word in history. One day that barren stump will sprout, and a branch will grow up out of it that will become a mighty fruitful tree filling the world with its fruit—a world at peace! That’s Isaiah’s vision--and what a powerful vision it is!

Gray comments on **verse 1** that “The poem opens with a prediction of the restoration of the Davidic monarchy. This is expressed figuratively. Jesse, the father of David, is compared to a root from which there had grown a tree—the line of Jewish monarchs descended from David; this tree has been cut down; but the roots remain in the earth and a mere stump above ground, i.e. the throne of David has fallen, but the family of David survives; as from the stump of a tree that has been felled there may shoot forth new growth [see **Job 14:7-9, verse 8** in footnote 5; compare **Isaiah 6:13**], so while the family of David survives, hope remains that some member of it may reestablish the monarchy, and thus, in the terms of the figure, become the new shoot and green growth from the old roots. What the opening [two lines] of the poem asserts is that this hope will be actually realized...

“The fall of the tree belongs to the past; the stump is an existing fact familiar to the poet and his audience. Thus this verse presupposes a period when no Davidic king was reigning. The necessary inference is that the poem was written some time after 587 B.C.E.” (Pp. 214-15)

But we ask, Is that the “necessary inference”? Or can it not be that the prophet Isaiah has seen in his vision a future time when this will be true?

Motyer comments that “In **Isaiah 9:1ff.** the emphasis rested on the Messiah’s birth; here it rests on the fruit of his adult life and character.” (P. 122) Here again, we insist, Motyer is reading “Messiah” into the text, which makes no such mention, but only speaks of a coming king.

⁹Slotki states that **verse 2** depicts “the qualities which will distinguish the ideal ruler...under three headings, each of which consists of two terms relating to his intellectual, administrative and spiritual attributes.” (P. 56.

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רוּחַ חִכְמָה וּבִינָה
רוּחַ עֲצָה וּגְבוּרָה
רוּחַ דַּעַת וַיִּרְאֵת יְהוָה:

And YHWH's Spirit¹⁰ will rest upon him--¹¹

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Watts comments that “In contrast with the usual royal passages, the king is not named again, nor is he the subject of a verb, until **verse 10**. Instead, the passage turns to the gifts, attributes, and acts of God which make survival and revival possible.” (P. 171)

¹⁰Slotki comments on “wisdom and understanding” that “Similarly with Bezalel, *the spirit of God* manifested itself in *wisdom and understanding* (**Exodus 35:31**).” (P. 56)

Motyer likewise comments that “The main impression gained from the **Old Testament** is that the Spirit of the LORD endows chosen people for special tasks (e.g. **Exodus 31:2-3** [Bezalel, artistic designer of the Tabernacle] **Judges 6:34** [Gideon, the Judge]); but there are also individuals who enjoyed a permanent indwelling of the spirit: Moses (**Numbers 11:17** [YHWH endows 70 of Israel's leaders with the Spirit that He has given Moses]), Joshua (**Numbers 27:18**), David (**1 Samuel 16:13** [YHWH's Spirit came upon David mightily from that day on, following Samuel's anointing]) and possibly Elijah and Elisha (**2 Kings 2:15** [the school of spokespersons declare that the Spirit / spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha])...

“In **Isaiah**, the messiah is the Spirit-endowed one (**42:1** ‘Here is my servant...I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations’]; **59:21** [‘My Spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouths of your children, or out of the mouths of your children's children, says YHWH, from now on and forever’]; **61:1** [‘The Spirit of YHWH God is upon me, because YHWH has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed...’]).” (P. 122) This “Spirit” is not limited to the messiah, but is said to belong to Isaiah [**59:21**, or whoever it is that is being addressed] and to his children / disciples? as well, and their descendants throughout time!

But none of these passages mentions “the messiah.” This is Motyer's interpretation of YHWH's “servant” as “the messiah”—Jesus Christ. For the **Book of Isaiah**, the only “messiah” mentioned is Cyrus, the Persian (**Isaiah 45:1**), and YHWH's servant as having been “anointed,” (**Isaiah 61:1**), but not given the title “messiah.” Of course, Motyer (along with the great majority of Christian commentators) understands YHWH's “servant” as “the Messiah”—but the **Book of Isaiah** does not make this clear.

(continued...)

¹⁰(...continued)

Watts comments that the first of the Divine gifts to the coming king “is the spirit of Yahweh. This is a feature not found in the parallels from other books. It is a fact apparent throughout Isaiah’s vision (compare **4:4; 32:15-20; 34:16; 40:7, 13; 42:1; 44:3; 47:16; 48:16; 59:19, 21; 61:1, 3**)...Perhaps there is a return here to the charismatic nature of kingship (**1 Samuel 10:6, 10; 11:6; 16:13, 14; 19:9**) which had been replaced by the dynastic principle of Davidic promise (**2 Samuel 7:14**)...

“The spirit of Yahweh gives the king the skills needed to reign. They are listed in three pairs:

Wisdom and understanding are standard qualities required in the king...

Wisdom is the quality which enables the king to make good judgments.

Understanding is the deeper intellectual insight into events and persons that is required to establish policy...

Counsel and heroism are the second pair...

Counsel includes the formation of strategy, the planning of battle and policies for the kingdom...

Knowledge and fear of Yahweh [are the third pair]. They are basic terms for Yahwistic faith...

Knowledge refers to a true understanding and relation to God and His will...

Fear of Yahweh depicts the basic awe and submission of the king to the Holy God Who, in mystery beyond understanding, can only be worshiped.

The spirit of Yahweh makes these possible.” (Pp. 171-72)

Oswalt comments: “So Saul and David were endued with the Divine Spirit for their tasks (**1 Samuel 10:10; 16:13**). Thus, to say that God’s spirit was upon someone became almost a code phrase for saying that the person was acting out of a capacity which was more than merely human...Yet the Davidic kings had come to manifest a spirit which had little of God in it. Craven, cynical, pompous, they seemed to be spiritually bankrupt, so much so that Isaiah was led to testify that the palace was empty (**32:14**) and envisioned a day when the Spirit of God would be visited on the people as a whole (**32:15**) through their leaders.

“This verse fits the picture just drawn in a perfect manner. The promised shoot from the stump of Jesse will be characterized by the very breath of God about him... Unless the Messiah [we say, ‘coming king’] is truly endued with the Spirit of God, the results of his rule will be no different from those of an Ahaz.

“But Isaiah can look forward to such a Messiah [coming king] who will be able to perceive things correctly and who will be able to carry out correct decisions because of a correct motivation...

“Because the Messiah [coming king] will be characterized by this fear of the Lord, he can be depended upon to perceive correctly (**John 2:24-25; Mark 2:8**) and to

(continued...)

¹⁰(...continued)

act with integrity (**Luke 4:1-13**). The person who knows God in a full-orbed way and is supremely concerned to please Him can be depended upon not to allow self-serving to cloud the issue, to cause him to trample other people. If there should come One in whom God's Spirit could dwell completely and purely, that person could be the Savior of the world (**Isaiah 61:1**). The testimony of the **New Testament (Luke 4:14, 18; John 1:14)** and of the Christian Church is that Jesus of Nazareth is that person." (Pp. 279-80)

Kaiser states that "The thought and will of the king sent by God are connected with the spirit of God, so that his rule does not serve the purpose of self-glorification, but the will of God in implementing righteousness on this earth." (P. 256)

¹¹Notice how Isaiah's language quickly changes from the image of an impersonal "tree" or "stump" or "Branch" or "Sprout," to personal language--describing a person, a coming King. We quickly learn from this language that Isaiah is not talking about any literal branch that grows up from the stump of a cut-down tree--rather, he is talking about a person, whom God is going to raise up in Israel's future. Jesse was David's father; the "tree of Jesse" means the royal family of the Jews, the kings--including David, and his great son Solomon, and their descendants, who ruled over the Kingdom of Judah after the division of Israel into Northern and Southern Kingdoms.

Isaiah sees that "tree of Jesse" as having been cut down, with all its branches lopped off, with nothing remaining but a barren stump. But from that stump would come forth new life--a "Sprout," a "Branch"--a new King, who would fulfill all of the fondest dreams of God's people!

The two Hebrew words used by Isaiah are **חֹטֵר**, *choter* ("Branch," **Isaiah 11:1** and **Proverbs 14:3**) and **נֶצֶר**, *netzer* ("Sprout," **Isaiah 11:1; 14:19; 60:21**; and **Daniel 11:7**). In **Jeremiah** and **Zechariah** the noun used is **צֶמַח**, *tsemach* ("Sprout, Growth"). See:

Jeremiah 23:5,

The days are surely coming, says YHWH,
when I will raise up for David a rightly-related **צֶמַח**, Sprout,
and he shall reign as king and deal wisely...

Jeremiah 33:15,

In those days and at that time
I will cause a rightly related **צֶמַח**, Sprout to spring up for David;
and he shall execute justice and right relationship in the land...

(continued...)

¹¹(...continued)

Zechariah 3:8,

I am going to bring my servant, the **צֶמַח**, Sprout...

Zechariah 6:12, speaking concerning Joshua the High Priest,

Here is a man whose name is **צֶמַח**, Sprout:

for he shall branch out in his place,
and he shall build the temple of YHWH...

Psalms 132:17, in Zion YHWH “will cause a horn to sprout up for David...”

This is seemingly a very tiny thread of teaching; but the fact is, it is closely connected to the much larger motif in the **Hebrew Bible** of the “remnant” that is left following destructive judgments in history, from which YHWH’s new future is built. It is the firm conviction of the biblical writers that destruction is not the final word—YHWH God has a future for His people, and from the tiniest of remnants a glorious future will one day emerge!

That “Sprout,” that coming king of David’s line, would not act on his own—not at all! Rather, his entire being would be governed by the Spirit of YHWH God! Isaiah says,

And YHWH’s Spirit will rest upon him--

Spirit of wisdom, and understanding;

Spirit of counsel, and strength;

Spirit of knowledge, and trembling respect for YHWH!

He will be a king such as never known in historical Israel--with the fullness of wisdom and understanding, after the pattern of Solomon, only much greater. He will be a king who can give Israel sure guidance, and who can lead God’s people in their battles, to the overcoming of all enemies, much after the pattern of king David. He will be filled with knowledge and trembling respect for YHWH, much after the pattern of Israel’s greatest Aaronic priests. Indeed, this coming king will embody within himself all the greatest attributes so necessary for truly being YHWH’s agent!

That’s the hoped-for king of YHWH’s future kingdom. Not an egotistical maniac after the pattern of Saul, or many later Israelite kings such as Ahab or Ahaz or Manasseh--but rather, a king who is totally committed to YHWH, whose every thought and action is controlled by the will of God, not by his own will or purpose! Just as YHWH God created the universe by wisdom, so the Divine wisdom will be the motivating force behind this king’s thought and activity. Just as YHWH’s wisdom enabled Solomon to understand how to make decisions in terribly difficult situations, so

(continued...)

Spirit of wisdom, and understanding;
Spirit of counsel, and strength;
Spirit of knowledge,¹² and trembling respect for YHWH!¹³

¹¹(...continued)

this coming king will have the kind of understanding that only God can impart, in order to make the right decisions in those situations that are so hard to know what to do.

This great coming king will be able to counsel people--he will be able to give genuine guidance to the people of God, without leading them stray. And he will have the strength to carry out the Divine plans, protecting those who walk in his guidance. He will be no weakling or coward!

¹²Gray comments that “knowledge is here not knowledge of his craft, as in **Exodus 31:3**...but knowledge of God which shows itself in care for the poor and weak.” (P. 217) Compare **Jeremiah 22:16**, where it is said concerning Josiah,

He judged / defended (the) cause of (the) poor and needy--
then (it was) good.
Is not that the knowledge of Me?
A saying of YHWH.

¹³Gray comments that “As the spirit gives the exceptional craftsman (**Exodus 31:3; 35:31**), or the warrior (**Judges 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19**), or the prophet (**Numbers 11:25-26; Isaiah 61:1**), or the interpreter of dreams (**Genesis 41:38**), the power to do or be something beyond the ordinary (compare **2 Kings 2:15**), so it gives kingliness to the king (**1 Samuel 16:13-14**)...

“But the Messianic age will be distinguished by the outpouring of the spirit (**Isaiah 32:15; Joel 3:1-2 / 2:27-27**) on all men [people], and, in particular, the point with which alone the present passage is concerned, on the Messiah.” (P. 216)

Isaiah gives a six-fold description of YHWH’s Spirit that rests upon this “branch” or “stem” from Jesse’s stump or roots. It is made up of three pairs of attributes:

- (1) wisdom and understanding;
- (2) counsel and strength; and
- (3) knowledge of, and reverence for YHWH.

What do these attributes of the coming king indicate?

(1) The Spirit of wisdom and understanding indicates that the coming king is fully qualified to serve as both a judicial and as a military leader of the people. This coming king will be able to see through all the clouds of rumor and divided opinions, to get to the heart of the issues, making right and true judicial and military decisions. Contrast with this the proud boast of the Assyrian ruler in **Isaiah 10:13**, where he is

(continued...)

¹³(...continued)

depicted as claiming that his success is due to his own abilities. This great coming king, by contrast, depends wholly on YHWH's Spirit.

(2) The Spirit of counsel and strength. Alexander comments on this combination of counsel and strength as indicating "the ability to plan and the ability to execute, neither of which can avail without the other." (P. 250) Motyer similarly states that the coming king has "the ability to devise a right course of action, coupled with the personal prowess to see it through." (P. 122)

(3) The Spirit of knowledge of, and reverence for YHWH. Though a human king, this coming one will be totally related to YHWH, knowing YHWH personally, and in all he does, acting out of trembling awe for YHWH's will and direction. With this, compare the Davidic words in **2 Samuel 23:2-4a**, where David states:

The Spirit of YHWH speaks through me,
His word is upon my tongue.
The God of Israel has spoken,
the Rock of Israel has said to me:
One who rules over people justly,
ruling in the reverent awe of God,
is like the light of morning,
like the sun rising on a cloudless morning...

So it will be with this coming king, only in a much fuller, truer way than it was in the historical King David!

Gray states that His outpouring of the spirit on the Messiah involves "a capacity to discern what rightly belongs to the king's office and to the right discharge of it, and to detect the right in difficult circumstances...The king receives power not only to discern the right, but to execute it, to secure for the weak their due, and to punish and put to death the guilty, however powerful...The spirit makes him careful for the will of God and a true worshiper of Yahweh." (P. 216)

Alexander states that "The only person to whom the terms of this prediction have been verified is Jesus Christ, whose wisdom displayed itself in early life, and is expressly ascribed to a special Divine influence; who proved himself a 'discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart;' whose ministry was not only characterized by fortitude and boldness, but attested by miracles and mighty deeds; whose knowledge of Divine things far surpassed that of all other men; and who was himself a living model of all piety." (P. 250)

This Christian interpretation of the vision is certainly much more realistic than is its interpretation in terms of King Hezekiah, who was a relatively great king of Israel, but who fell far short of such an extravagant description, just as did the later Zerubbabel.

(continued...)

¹³(...continued)

We say, The description aptly fits the character of Jesus—but none other in the history of Israel.

Motyer comments on **verses 3-5** that “In this new section the thought turns from what the Lord bestows to how the royal *shoot* responds to the Lord, in his own person (**verses 3a, 5**) and in his royal office as judge (**verses 3b, 4**). Inwardly, he delights (verse 3a), outwardly, he commits himself to *righteousness, etc...*

“He is fully absorbed in exercising the Divine gifts...What the Lord does for the shoot is at once met by his subjective response; *wisdom, understanding, counsel, power, knowledge* are evident in **verses 3b-4**...

“In David’s line, king after king had failed, whether by character defect or administrative maladroitness [tactless and insensitive in behaviour or speech]. In this king character and rule are in total harmony. Whatever the Lord has given him is met by glad responsiveness.” (P. 123)

¹⁴Slotki comments on **verses 3-5** that the Messiah’s government “will be one of impartial justice, marked by righteousness and the fear of God.” (P. 57)

Gray entitles **verses 3-5** “The character of the king’ and his method of government...will spring from his spiritual endowments...Here there is certainly no hint that the king will be a warrior: he reigns after war has been abolished (compare **9:4-5**). The king will possess something of the wisdom of God; he will know all that goes on in his country (compare **2 Samuel 14:20**), and will be able like God (**1 Samuel 16:7**), or a prophet of God (**1 Samuel 9:19**), to probe things to the bottom (compare **Proverbs 25:2**), not being misled by deceitful appearances or lying words, but reading men’s hearts...The Messianic age is not to be an age free from sin (compare **Isaiah 65:20; 32:5**); the conception is thus entirely different from the later conception of heaven. But the wicked will not as now sin on with impunity: the king will make use of the Divine power given to him, to smite such sinners dead with a word.” (P. 217-18)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 3** that “The Messiah is now described as taking pleasure in true piety and recognizing its existence by an infallible sagacity or power of discerning good and evil, which would render him superior to the illusions of the senses and to every external influence. This faculty is figuratively described as an exquisite olfactory [relating to the sense of smell] perception, such as enables its possessor to distinguish between different odors. *And his sense of smelling* (i.e. his power of perception, with a seeming reference to the pleasure it affords him) *shall be exercised in* (or upon) *the fear of Jehovah* (as an attribute of others), *and* (being thus infallible) *not by the sight* (or according to the sight) *of his eyes shall he judge, and not by the hearing of his ears shall he decide...*

(continued...)

וְלֹא-לְמִרְאָה עֵינָיו יִשְׂפּוֹט

וְלֹא-לְמִשְׁמַע אָזְנוֹ יוֹכִיחַ:

And his delight¹⁵ will be in YHWH's trembling respect.¹⁶

¹⁴(...continued)

“He shall take delight in goodness, and be able to distinguish it without fail from its counterfeits...The meaning therefore must be that the fear of God or piety in others would itself be the object upon which this faculty was to exert itself...The sight of the eyes and the hearing of the ears, are put for the testimony of those senses by which men are chiefly governed in their judgments...

“It is no doubt true, that as a judge the Messiah [coming king] would be equally exempt from all disposition to favor the rich and the great at the expense of the poor, and from all liability to imposition; but it is also true, and here declared, that he should not judge of character at all by the senses, but by an infallible sagacity or power of discerning good and evil...This interpretation is connected with an old Jewish notion, that the Messiah may be known, when he appears, by his power to distinguish moral character through the sense of smell. In this way the famous false Messiah Bar Kokba (son of a star), is said to have been proved an imposter, and his name changed to Bar Kozba (son of a lie).” (P. 250)

Watts comments that “The fear of Yahweh...echoes **verse 2** and implies that the Spirit’s work in the king brings genuine devotion, a real delight, to his worship and service.”

He adds that the theme of **verses 3-4** “is unbiased justice and rule. They are characteristics that belong to Yahweh and should also belong to the king... Righteousness and justice are elementary requirements of Divine justice and of royal rule (**Psalms 72**)...Yahweh’s commitment to justice for the poor is paramount. No regime that fails on this point can claim to be the work of Yahweh.” (P. 172)

This is powerful teaching: no regime—no government, whether religious or secular—that fails to be committed to justice for the poor—can claim to be the work of God!

¹⁵This is the most difficult word or phrase to translate in the entire passage: וְהִרְיָחוֹ, literally “and his smelling (or ‘perceiving,’ ‘odor’),” is puzzling as to its meaning. See Alexander’s comment in the preceding footnote, and Oswalt’s comment in the next footnote.

Slotki translates by “his delight, literally ‘his smelling’ (of satisfaction).” He comments that “Not only will he himself be endowed with the highest spiritual qualities, but he will also be overjoyed when perceiving them in others.” (P. 57)

(continued...)

And he will not govern by his eyes' sight,¹⁷
nor will he decide by his ear's hearing.¹⁸

¹⁵(...continued)

The hiphil verb *hariych* is very closely related in Hebrew to the noun *ruach*, “spirit / Spirit,” and it appears that this is a sort of play on words (and sounds); the one filled with the Spirit is surrounded by a “smell” or “pervading odor” that is nothing less than trembling awe for YHWH. Anyone observing this coming king will quickly sense, smell this attribute of the all-important role of the Spirit in his life, and of his total devotion to YHWH’s will. The translation “he will delight in...” is simply guess-work, in our opinion, with no foundation.

The Greek translation (**Rahifs**) avoids the difficulty of the Hebrew, stating that “a spirit of reverence for God will fill him.”

We note that any appraisal of Jesus of Nazareth’s character and attributes has to center in how totally related his life was to YHWH God the Father. It is not simply a Johannine understanding of Jesus to say that to know him, and drink from his teaching, was to be instructed by God the Father, and drawn near to God—both in His infinite demand, and His infinite grace. What do you think?

¹⁶Oswalt states that “Considerable controversy surrounds the first phrase of **verse 3**. If the text is correct, the sense is that the Messiah [coming king] will ‘smell’ with delight the attitude of reverent concern for God’s ways just as God delights in the smell of incense [but **Isaiah 1:13** depicts YHWH as declaring incense to be an ‘abomination’!]. However, the passage is strange enough to merit considerable caution over its authenticity.” (P. 280)

¹⁷Oswalt comments that this line “appears again to be a reference to a more than merely human character possessed by the Messiah [coming king]. A human judge can do no more than to make the best use of his or her natural faculties in attempting to reach a fair ruling. Somehow this king will go deeper than that and will pierce beneath appearances to the underlying reality...The king for whom Isaiah looks [we say, sees in vision] is more than a new edition of the present monarchy. Rather, [Isaiah] looks for a radically different kind of kingship.” (Pp. 280-81)

Compare **John 18:36-38** (where Jesus is depicted as telling Pilate that his kingdom is “not of this world,” but is a kingdom of truth).

¹⁸Slotki comments that “He will not be guided by the superficial impressions of the senses.” (P. 57)

Motyer states that “He has the ability to distinguish between appearance and reality, a knowledge going beyond the evidence of *what he sees with his eyes or hears with his ears.*” (P. 123)

(continued...)

11:4 וְשָׁפֵט בְּצַדִּיק דְּלִים

וְהוֹכִיחַ בְּמִשְׁוֹר לְעַנְוֵי-אָרֶץ

וְהִכָּה-אָרֶץ בְּשֵׁבֶט פִּי

וּבְרוּחַ שְׁפָתָיו יִמִּית רָשָׁע:

But he will judge / govern poor people¹⁹ through righteousness;²⁰

¹⁸(...continued)

Kaiser: “**Verse 3** ascribes to him the capacity not to be deceived by what is submitted to him on whatever pretext...[The king is given] a share in God’s capacity to see through the disputes which are presented to him, and therefore to arrive at a just judgment.” (P. 257)

No, superficial appearances, rumors, and inept counsel will not influence this great king—in spite of all appearance, and diverging reports, he will “zero-in” on the actual realities, not allowing himself to be misguided by human prejudices and distorted conclusions. Compare **2 Samuel 14:20**, where a wise woman from Tekoa tells king David:

...My lord, the king, has wisdom like the angel / messenger of God,
to know all things that are upon the earth.

We think in terms of how Jesus constantly accepted people of all classes and conditions (and races and nationalities), refusing to stereotype and reject people on the basis of religious and nationalistic and class-conscious prejudices.

These last two lines (**3b, c**) are negative statements—they describe what the coming king will not do. The next two lines (**4a, b**) are the corresponding positive statement—they describe what the coming king will do.

¹⁹Slotki notes that rather than ‘the poor,’ “the lowly, helpless,’ those in distress because deprived of their rights.” (P. 57)

Oswalt comments that the phrase *he will judge the poor* “is an expression of a royal rule not only in Israel but across the ancient Near East. The king who did not accept this role, at least in principle, could not hope to survive (compare **Psalms 72:2; 2 Samuel 23:3-4; 1 Kings 10:9; Proverbs 29:4, 14; Isaiah 1:23**...) The poor, the helpless, and the outcast were to be accorded the special protection of the crown. However, there was a great gulf between the ideal and the actual. For then, as now, the poor lacked political power. Thus, if one’s kingship rested upon the favor and goodwill of the rich and the powerful, primary attention to the needs of the powerless would always remain an ideal. In order for that ideal to become a reality, the king’s

(continued...)

and he will decide for earth's humble people²¹ through what is right.²²

¹⁹(...continued)

authority would have to rest upon something other than political power. In that case, right decisions could be rendered without concern for political ramifications. These decisions could hardly be made unless the kingship was of a more than human sort. This seems to be exactly what Isaiah hoped for.” (P. 281)

²⁰Motyer comments that “Principles of righteousness are applied in just decisions ...The king does not favor the needy so as to sway decisions in their favor. Even in their case, what is right and fair must prevail, but, unlike the degenerate princes he will replace...he gives his full attention to their cause (**Psalm 72:2-4; 12-14**).” (P. 123)

72:2 יִדִּין עַמְּךָ בְצֶדֶק

וְעֲנִיִּיךָ בְּמִשְׁפָּט:

May he judge Your people with righteousness,
and your poor / humble people with justice!

72:3 יִשְׂאוּ הַרִים שְׁלוֹם לְעַם

וְגִבְעוֹת בְּצֶדֶק:

May mountains lift up peace / prosperity for the people,
and may hills (lift up) with righteousness!

72:4 יִשְׁפֹּט עֲנִיִּים

וְיִשִּׁיעַ לְבְנֵי אֲבִיוֹן

וְיִדְכָּא עוֹשֵׂק:

May he judge (the) poor / afflicted people;
may he save / deliver children of a poor / humble person;
and may he crush one oppressing!

72:12 כִּי־יִצִיל אֲבִיוֹן מִשׁוּעַ

וְעֲנִי וְאִין־עֹזֵר לוֹ:

Because he delivers a poor / humble person crying for help,
and a poor / afflicted person—and there is no one helping him.

72:13 יְחַס עַל־דָּל וְאֲבִיוֹן

וְנַפְשׁוֹת אֲבִיוֹנִים יוֹשִׁיעַ:

May he have pity upon a poor / weak person and a poor / humble person;
and may he save / deliver (the) lives of poor / humble people!

72:14 מִתּוֹךְ וּמִחַמַּס יִגְאֹל נַפְשָׁם

וְיִיקַר דָּמָם בְּעֵינָיו:

From oppression and from violence may he redeem their life!
And may their blood be precious in his eyes!

²¹Slotki suggests the translation “the oppressed.” (P. 57)

²²Alexander translates / comments that “The Messiah [coming king] as a righteous judge, is now exhibited in contrast with the unjust magistrates of Judah, as described in **1:23; 10:2, 23**. *And he shall judge in righteousness, the weak (or poor) and do justice with equity (or impartiality) to the meek of the earth; and shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall slay the wicked...*

“Paul, in **1 Thessalonians 2:8**, applies these words, with little change, to the destruction of anti-Christ at the coming of Christ.” (P. 252)

Kaiser comments that “In purely human legal proceedings, the reputation and influence of the person concerned all too easily play a decisive role. Therefore it is the declared duty of a ruler to help even the most insignificant to obtain justice in their struggle with the powerful...The fear of God comes into play in the recognition of the rights of the weaker members of society, because it makes people shrink back in awe from the Divine avenger and thus treat even their cases in an unpartisan way.” (P. 257)

Kaiser adds in a footnote that “I would add: any state shows itself to be a just state in so far as it respects the rights of its weakest member.” (*ibid.*) We agree!

This great coming King will walk in the personal knowledge of YHWH God, and his life will be marked by trembling awe before God and his will. No ignorant leader--but rather, the kind of leader whose very thought and action is determined out of genuine respect for God, and for the Divine authority! That’s the kind of king that God is going to cause to spring up from the stump of Jesse--his delight will be in knowing and doing the will of YHWH--not in simply judging on the basis of appearance, by sight or by sound. His judgment will be genuine, based on truth and reality!

And because his judgment is based on truth and reality, the mark of his kingdom will be that the weakest people on earth--the poor, and the humble, who have no political clout, who have no power to defend themselves, will be governed through righteousness, and nothing else. The question will not be “Who are you?”, but “What is righteous, what is the truth?” In that coming kingdom every person’s rights, including those of the very lowest and weakest of society, will be genuinely protected and respected. Talk about human rights!

This great coming king will center his administration on earth’s poor and oppressed people: **דַּלִּיּוֹת וְעֲנִי-אֲרָץ**. The *dalliyim* are those people who are characterized by being “low,” “weak,” “poor,” “thin,” and who, because of their lowly position in society, are “helpless,” unable to defend themselves in the courts that are controlled by the wealthy. The *anwey-arets* are the “poor,” “afflicted,” “humble,” common people of the land (Kaiser translates “the bowed down,” p. 252). This will be in sharp contrast to the prejudiced judges and rulers of Israel in Isaiah’s day--see **Isaiah 1:10-17, 21-23; 5:18-23** and **10:1-2**.

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In our study of Jesus' criticisms of the Jewish leaders of his day, we have seen how this same condition existed in first century Israel, and we have seen as well how Jesus constantly took the side of the poor and the oppressed over against those uncaring, self-serving leaders.

In **Jeremiah 22:16** it is stated that King Josiah "...judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know me? says YHWH." We agree with Gray in his comment that "...It is natural that the securing of the rights of these classes becomes a permanent feature of the ideal ruler, compare **Psalm 72.**" (P. 218)

Psalm 72:12-14 states that the Divinely chosen king "delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper. He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy. From oppression and violence he redeems their life; and precious is their blood in his sight." In line with this, we insist that at the very heart and center of the ministry of Jesus was just such a concern for the cause of the poor and the needy!

The coming king will insist on behalf of these people, the poor and the oppressed, that they receive "righteousness"—i.e., that they be treated as brothers and sisters with equal rights alongside the wealthy and the powerful. That the coming king will "judge poor people with righteousness" means that he will act on their behalf in such a way. This kind of "judging" is a saving, delivering act, not a condemning one. He will demand "uprightness"—**מיִשׁוֹר**, which implies that all people, both wealthy and poor, will be playing on a "level" playing field, one that is not "tilted" in favor of either side. It is not a matter of the king's demanding that wealthy people give up everything they have to help their poor neighbors, but it is a matter of their treating their neighbors fairly and evenly, not taking advantage over them.

Motyer comments that "The King does not favor 'the needy' so as to sway decisions in their favor. Even in their case, what is right and fair must prevail but, unlike the degenerate princes he will replace (**Isaiah 1:21ff.**), he gives his full attention to their cause..." (P. 123)

We say, So it was with Jesus, in his struggle with the Pharisees and High Priests of Israel in his day, as he reached out to the common people of his day, especially to those very people considered unworthy of entrance into the fellowship of Israel!

Motyer goes on to say that "Under this king ideal justice will be realized as enshrined in the *lex talionis*; the penalty is to match the crime (**Exodus 21:23ff.**)." (P. 123)

What Motyer fails to note is that this very passage calling for the *lex talionis*, the "law of retaliation," is quoted by Jesus according to **Matthew 5:38-42**, and strongly

(continued...)

And he will strike the earth²³ with the rod of his mouth;²⁴
and with his lips' breath he will put wickedness to death!²⁵

²²(...continued)

repudiated! Motyer wants to depict Jesus the Messiah as the upholder of the ancient law of retribution, but according to the **Gospel of Matthew**, Jesus was against that law.

And we wonder, how can Motyer, excellent biblical scholar that he is, oversee, or fail to mention this fact?

²³The two occurrences of the noun אֶרֶץ in **verse 4**, without the definite article, invite the translation “earth” rather than “land (of Israel).” Slotki’s translation has “the land,” but he notes that while this means “the guilty men in the land [of Israel],” “some render ‘the earth’...interpreting the sphere of the ideal ruler as universal.” (P. 57)

²⁴Oswalt states that this line “expresses the moral force possessed by a leader who owes allegiance to no earthly pressure groups. He can say what needs to be said in a given circumstance and the force of the truth is undeniable (**Mark 12:34**). The word itself becomes his weapon (**Hebrews 4:12; 2 Thessalonians 2:8b; Revelation 1:16b; 19:15**).” (P. 281)

²⁵Kaiser comments that “**Verse 4b** has a mysterious ring to it: this king ‘needs no scepter, no bodyguard, no headsman, to implement his verdict; one word from his mouth is enough to kill the evildoer immediately’ [Quoting H. Gressmann]. The king’s word is not just a report or an indication of his will; it participates in the power of the creative word of God and of the prophet (compare **Psalm 33:6; Hosea 6:5; Jeremiah 23:29; Isaiah 55:10-11**).” (Pp. 257-58)

Isaiah has pictured this coming King as having the strength to carry forward his plans. Now he further states that “He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; and with his lips’ breath he will put wickedness to death!” This coming King will be no pacifist, afraid to stand strongly and boldly for the truth, and against the workers of evil. No, he will be the embodiment of the Divine Warrior in history. He will have the power, and the courage to use that power to fight against, and overwhelm, all the forces of wickedness and evil!

And again we are reminded of Jesus, in his struggle with the combined religious and national establishment of his day, against which he pronounced its soon-coming destruction. See **Mark 13:1-37; Luke 21:5-36; Matthew 24:1-51**; also **2 Thessalonians 2:8** and **Revelation 19:11, 15, 21**.

What a king--the king that all the nations dream of and need! This great coming king is no coward or “pacifist” in the sense of being unwilling to confront and denounce, and even to pronounce the sentence of capital punishment upon wickedness (or the wicked person / state).

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Motyer comments on this that “The rod of his mouth’ and ‘the breath of his lips’ are shorthand for pronouncing sentence. The King needs no other display of power and no other weapon of enforcement than the bare word that he speaks (**Revelation 19:15, 21**).” (P. 123) Compare **Revelation 1:16**.

That word is effective in human history, leading the people of God in a Divine war against evil, as the picture in **Revelation 19** depicts, causing the death and destruction of the enemies of God. It is perfectly clear from the study of the **Synoptic Gospels** that Jesus pronounced the sentence of death (Divine destruction) upon the heartless leaders of first-century Israel.

The biblical hope for universal peace is based on the overcoming and destruction of wickedness! There can be no genuine peace while wickedness reigns!

Gray comments that “Here there is certainly no hint that the king will be a warrior: he reigns after war has been abolished (compare **9:4-5**).” (P. 217)

We disagree, and think it is very apparent in this text that the peace follows the coming of this future king to destroy wickedness—certainly, in our opinion, the role of a warrior. What do you think?

²⁶Alexander comments on **verse 5**: “*And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins* [which is derived from Latin ‘renes’ through Old French ‘reins,’ has given place in modern English to the word ‘kidneys’], i.e. he shall be clothed or invested with these attributes, and they shall adhere closely to him...

“The metaphor of putting on or clothing one’s self with moral attributes is not unfrequent in the Scriptures. The girdle is mentioned as an essential part of oriental dress, and that which keeps the others in their proper place, and qualifies the wearer for exertion.” (P. 252)

Motyer likewise states that “The motif of ‘clothing’ always has the same significance: the garments express the inherent realities and capacities of a person and the purposes to which he commits himself (**Isaiah 59:16-17; 61:10; Psalm 132:9, 16, 18**). The belt symbolizes readiness for action...[He is] one constantly purposing to act in the cause of righteousness and faithfulness.” (P. 123)

What do you think? Can you always tell the reality and capacity and purposes of a person by the clothing he or she wears? Has Motyer forgotten Jesus’ warning about “wolves in sheep’s clothing” (**Matthew 7:15**)?

Oswalt comments that “The general sense of the verse is clear. The Messiah [coming king] will bring justice and equity upon the earth because fundamental to his own character will be two essential qualities: uprightness and dependability born of

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וְהָאֱמוּנָה אֲזוּר חֲלָצִיו:

And righteousness will be his belt;

and true faithfulness to commitments will be the sash around his waist.²⁷

²⁶(...continued)

integrity or faithfulness. Fundamentally, these are two characteristics of God upon which the whole biblical understanding of life is built (**Isaiah 5:16; 65:16; Psalms 40:11^{Heb} / 10^{Eng}; 119:75, 142; Zechariah 8:8**)...

“Righteousness is that capacity for doing the right thing in all circumstances and frequently involves keeping one’s promises...Faithfulness comes from the root which means to be dependable or true. So, fundamental to both words is the idea of an integrity or consistency which results in complete dependability. These were the characteristics that the Israelite people saw in their God and longed for in their king.” (P. 282) We say, see **Isaiah 58**, for an understanding of genuine “righteousness”—which “pours itself out for others.”

²⁷Translations of **verse 5** vary:

King James, “And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins [kidneys].”

Tanakh, “Justice shall be the girdle of his loins, And faithfulness the girdle of his waist.”

New Revised Standard, “Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins.”

New International, “Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist.”

New Jerusalem, “Uprightness will be the belt around his waist, and constancy the belt about his hips.”

Rahlf, καὶ ἔσται δικαιοσύνη ἐζωσμένος τὴν ὀσφὺν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀληθεία εἰλημένος τὰς πλευράς, “And righteousness will have girded his waist; and truth wrapped the sides.”

The coming king is prepared, “girded” for action. The “belt” with which he girds himself is two-fold: **וְהָאֱמוּנָה וְצִדְקָה**, righteousness and the true-faithfulness (or ‘firmness,’ ‘steadfastness,’ ‘fidelity’).” Compare **Isaiah 59:16-17** (where YHWH wraps himself with fury as a mantle, etc.); **61:10; Psalm 132:9, 16, 18**, for similar usages of the imagery of “clothing.”

Kaiser states: “That the king makes justice and faithfulness or constancy the girdle of his loins means that his constant and inviolable righteousness do him honor and give him freedom to act.” (P. 258)

Just as we have commented concerning the way in which Jesus embodied all of those six-fold attributes of the coming king, so we add here that Jesus entire life and

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ministry was dedicated to “righteousness” and to “true faithfulness.”

This great coming king will not make great campaign promises, and then as soon as he gets into office forget the very people who elected him. No, his entire life will be the fulfillment of every promise: “Righteousness will be his belt; and true faithfulness to commitments will be the sash around his waist”--they will be the mark of his every action and thought, of his life-style and of his kingdom! Who doesn't want to live in such a kingdom, and loyally follow such a leader?

This ideal king is clothed in moral attributes--what holds his dress together is a combination of the very best of morality--righteousness and true faithfulness to commitments.

Alexander translates and comments as follows: “*And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins* [kidneys], i.e. he shall be clothed or invested [Medieval Latin *investire*, from Latin, to clothe] with these attributes, and they shall adhere closely to him.” (P. 252)

Kaiser comments that “Israel was not the only nation in its environment to have this understanding of the kingship as the authority which was called to preserve justice on this earth. One can cite parallels from the world of the Sumerians, Babylonians and Assyrians, the Egyptians and even the Canaanites. In this connection Israel had not created any special ethos for the monarchy. (For a similar understanding of kingship among the Sumerians, see S. N. Kramer, **The Sumerians...in Mesopotamia**, A. L. Oppenheim, **Ancient Mesopotamia...among the Egyptians**, R. Frankfort, **Kingship and the Gods...and among the Canaanites**, J. Gray, **The Legacy of Canaan**.)

“As far as we know, the unique and special feature of Israel was that after the downfall of its monarchy it looked for the foundation of a new kingship which lived up to the Divine will not only ideally, but also in reality. Messianic faith is the special instance of this. In the present text we find this expectation in a remarkable blend of elements from the old tradition of kingship in Judah and from wisdom thinking.” (P. 258)

²⁸Here, in **verses 6-9**, Isaiah draws an idyllic picture of “the return of Paradise,” the overcoming of the consequences of human disobedience that resulted in the distortion of human history, as described in **Genesis 3**.

Oswalt states concerning these verses that “With a classic set of images the prophet portrays the kind of security and safety which will result in [which will be the result of] the rule of the Messiah [coming king]. The most helpless and innocent will be at ease with those who were formerly the most rapacious and violent...”

“There are three ways of interpreting such statements. The first is literalistic, looking for a literal fulfillment of the words...A second means of interpretation is

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spiritualistic. The animals represent various spiritual conditions and states within human beings (compare Calvin)...The third way...is the figurative. In this approach one concludes that an extended figure of speech is being used to make a single, overarching point, namely, that in the Messiah's [coming king's] reign the fears associated with insecurity, danger, and evil will be removed, not only for the individual but for the world as well (**Romans 8:19-21**).” (P. 283)

Motyer comments on these verses that “There is an ‘Edenic’ element in Isaiah’s thinking...and there is no ground for denying this present passage to him.

“In **8:23-9:6**^{Heb} / **9:1-7**^{Eng} Isaiah saw light breaking in on the dark earth, proceeding to illuminate the people, and finding the explanation in the birth of the Messiah. That order is now reversed: first the Messiah buds forth and then, through him, new life for people becomes possible on a world-wide scale and the life of nature itself is transformed. **Verses 6-8** offer three facets of the renewed creation and **verse 9** is a concluding summary.

“First, in **verse 6** there is the reconciliation of old hostilities...Secondly, in **verse 7**, there is a change of nature within the beasts themselves...Thirdly, in **verse 8** the curse [is] removed.” (P. 124)

Kaiser entitles **verses 6–9** “Universal peace,” and comments that “It is striking that the expectation of primal peace, embracing both men and animals, is limited in the **Old Testament** to this passage [but see also **Isaiah 65:25** and perhaps also **Hosea 2:20**]...

“The notion that in primeval times human beings and animals did not hurt one another, but were content with vegetarian food, in accordance with a Divine command (compare **Genesis 1:29-31**)...shows the connection between this conception and a fundamental ascetical-vegetarian view...Here we have the expression of a sensibility which is aware of the primal guilt in all life, which can only survive through the death of other life.” (P. 259)

Slotki comments on **verses 6-8** that “Universal peace and harmony among men will also be extended to the animal world. The wild beasts will not prey on the weak and domesticated animals, nor will man and beast stand in fear of each other. This picture of ideal life is paralleled in the **Eclogues of Virgil** and in the **Sibylline Oracles**...

“Harmonious association of the beasts of prey, the domestic animals and the human being” is depicted in **verse 6**...A similar idyllic scene is drawn in **Isaiah 65:25**:

Wolf and lamb will feed as one;
and lion like the ox will eat straw;
and a snake—dust (will be) its food.

(continued...)

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They will not do evil, and they will not destroy
in all My set-apart mountain.
YHWH said (it)! (P. 57)

Alexander translates / comments that “Here, as in **chapter 2:4**, and **9:5, 6**, universal peace is represented as a consequence of the Messiah’s reign, but under a new and striking figure. *And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and young lion and fating together, and a little child shall lead them...*

“Most Christian writers, ancient and modern, with Aben Ezra and Maimonides among the Jews, explain the prophecy as wholly metaphorical, and descriptive of the peace to be enjoyed by God’s people...It is commonly regarded as descriptive of the change wrought by Christianity in wicked men themselves...Calvin and Hengstenberg suppose the passage to include a promise of a future change in the material creation, restoring it to its original condition...while they agree with other writers in regarding the pacific effects of true religion as the primary subject of the prophecy.” (P. 253)

Gray entitles **verses 6-8** “The return of the golden age.” He comments that “Nature will be transformed in the days of this king; the golden age of the past will return; wild beasts will no longer prey on one another, or be hurtful to men. The harmlessness of the wild beasts is clearly connected in **verse 7c** with the expectation that in the age to come they will cease to be carnivorous [meat-eaters] and become graminivorous [grain-eaters], as they, like man (compare after the flood, **Genesis 9:3**), were first created (**Genesis 1:30**)... The idea was wide-spread.” (Pp. 218-19)

There can be no doubt that taken literally, the vision has never been fulfilled in history—not, of course, in King Hezekiah, or in Zerubbabel, and we must admit, not in Jesus either. Jesus has certainly embodied the characteristics of the coming king, as described in **Isaiah’s** vision. But if he has fulfilled this vision of a “return to Paradise,” it can only be in a symbolical or futuristic way, as his message and ministry have succeeded in transforming former enemies into brothers and sisters in the one family of God, and the hostilities of the past are (hopefully) ended.

We do not think it can honestly be denied that a powerful dynamic has entered into human history through Jesus and his good news, through which human character has been transformed and renewed in untold multitudes of believers all across the world. But also, we must admit, followers of Jesus have not always been consistent, and instead of following the guidance of their anointed king, have split up into divisive, competing factions, hating and fighting against their opponents and one another, instead of embodying his loving compassion and mercy.

Perhaps we should say that while all the elements for a “Return to Paradise” are present in Jesus and his ministry, the actual fulfillment of this part of the vision awaits fulfillment in the future. What do you say?

(continued...)

וְנֹמֵר עִם־גֹּדִי יִרְבֵּץ
וְעֵגֹל וְכַפִּיר וּמְרִיא יַחְדָּו
וְנֶעֱר קִטָּן נִהְג בָּם:

And the wolf will live temporarily / sojourn²⁹ with the lamb;³⁰
and the leopard will lie down with the young goat;³¹
and a calf and young lion and fatted animal (will be) together;
and a small youth will lead them.³²

²⁸(...continued)

Watts comments on these two verses that “The picture of pastoral tranquility depends on the custom of having a boy (or girl [remember the story of Rachel in **Genesis 29!**]) who serves as the village herder for domestic animals, gathering the sheep, the goats, and the calves to lead (or drive) them out to pasture in the morning and bringing them back at night...The innocence of the child-herder, the suckling, and the toddler accent a world without harm or danger.” (P. 173)

²⁹Motyer, like others before him, comments that the verb used here, נֹמֵר, from the root **gur**, which means to “live temporarily,” “is a delightful touch, meaning literally, ‘will be welcome as a temporary resident,’ like ‘the stranger (**ger**) within your gates,’” protected by the sacred rules of hospitality.” (P. 124)

³⁰Oswalt states that this line “expresses the sense of these verses that the apparently strong become dependent upon the apparently weak. The word *sojourn* is the word used of a stranger whose survival in foreign land is dependent upon the goodwill of the natives [i.e., immigrants]. Likewise, these wild animals are depicted as depending upon the leadership of a child, the one supposedly least able to control their voracious [gluttonous] instincts. But this mention of the child fits one of the recurring themes of **chapters 7-12**: a child, not a strutting monarch, is the one whom God chooses to rule this world’s great. In innocence, simplicity, and faith lie the salvation of a globe grown old in sophistication, cynicism, and violence.” (Pp. 283-84)

³¹Gray comments that “Wolves will no longer devour lambs, nor leopards kids, but these strong and ferocious beasts will dwell together with the others and under their protection! They will be גֹּדִים, [temporary residents] of these domestic animals.” (P. 219) See footnote 29.

³²Slotki comments that “The superiority of the human race, represented by a young child, with its potentialities for universal good, will be acknowledged by the submission of the animal kingdom.” (P. 57)

(continued...)

11:7 וּפְרָה וְדָבָר תִּרְעִינָהּ

יַחְדָּו יִרְבְּצוּ יְלְדֵיהֶן

וְאַרְיֵה כִּבְבֵּק יֹאכַל-תָּבֵן:

And the cow and the bear will graze,³³
together, their young will lie down;³⁴
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.³⁵

³²(...continued)

Motyer states that “So secure is this peace that a youngster can exercise the dominion originally given to human-kind.” (P. 124) He is referring to **Genesis 1:26, 28**.

Of course, taken literally, such an experience has not been fulfilled in human history, whether in succeeding Jewish kings, or in Jesus the Messiah. Taken in a symbolical sense, there can be no doubt that Jesus made children of central importance in his kingdom, and taught those who considered themselves much wiser and more powerful to turn and become like children.

³³Compare **1 Samuel 17:34-36** for this matter of the bear as a predator:

- 34 And David said to Saul,
Your servant was a shepherd for his father among the sheep;
and when the lion would come, even with the bear,
and would carry off a sheep from the flock,
35 and I would go out after it,
and I would strike it (dead),
and I would deliver (the sheep) from its mouth.
And it would arise against me,
and I would take strong hold by its jaw,
and I would strike it, and I would kill it.
36 Both the lion and the bear also your servant has struck (dead).
And this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them--
because he has reproached (the) battle-lines of the Living God!

³⁴Motyer comments that “The mention of *their young* indicates that the change in the adult beast reappears in the next generation also, a permanently new state enjoyed by heredity.” (P. 124)

³⁵Slotki comments on **verse 7** that “The animals will no longer prey on each other. Even the wild beasts will lose their blood-thirstiness and be satisfied with a meal of straw.” (P. 58) That is, the wild animals of this earth—including Africa—will be totally transformed, according to Isaiah’s vision.

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Alexander translates by “*And the cow and the bear shall feed—together shall their young lie down—and the lion like the ox shall eat straw.*” He comments that “According to Hitzig, the wonder is not that the bear grazes *with the cow*, but that it grazes at all, the cow being mentioned only to show what kind of pasture is intended...The lion’s eating straw implies not only cohabitation with domestic cattle, but a change of his carnivorous [meat-eating] habits...

“The truth is that neither the straw nor the lion means anything by itself; but the lion’s eating straw denotes a total change of habit, and indeed of nature, and is therefore a fit emblem for the revolution which the gospel, in proportion to its influence, effects in the condition of society, with some allusion possibly...to the ultimate deliverance of the [creation] or irrational creation from that bondage of corruption, to which, for man’s sake, it is now subjected.” (Pp. 253-54)

We think Alexander is referring to Paul’s statement in **Romans 8:18-21**,

- 18 For I reason that the sufferings of the present time (are) not comparable to the glorious radiance that is drawing near to be uncovered for us.
- 19 For the eager expectation of the creation waits expectantly the uncovering of the children of the God.
- 20 For the creation was subjected to vanity--not willingly, but rather because of the One subjecting it--upon hope
- 21 that even the creation itself will be liberated from the slavery of the corruption, into the freedom of the glorious radiance of the children of the God.

In this “return to Paradise” of Isaiah’s visionary future, the original “vegetarian diet” as described in **Genesis 1:29-30** is once again resumed. This, of course, has not happened in any literal way in the rule of any of the later Jewish kings, and neither has it happened in the ministry of Jesus, as Jesus declared all foods clean, and never taught a vegetarian diet.

³⁶Alexander translates / comments that “To express the idea still more strongly, venomous serpents are represented as innoxious [not poisonous], not to other beasts, but to the human species. *And the sucking child shall play on (or over) the hole of the asp, and on the den of the basilisk (or cerastes) shall the weaned child stretch (or place) its hand.*

In Hellenic and Roman legend, a basilisk (also called a cockatrice) was a serpent-like creature capable of destroying other creatures by way of its deadly stare. The cerastes is a North African viper that has a spike over each eye.

But Alexander states that “The precise discrimination of the species of serpents here referred to, is of no importance to the exegesis. All that is necessary to a correct

(continued...)

וְעַל מְאוֹרַת צְפֵּוֹנֵי גַמּוּל יָדוּ הַדָּהָה:

And the nursing-baby³⁷ will play beside the venomous serpent's hole;

and the little child will reach out his hand beside the poisonous snake's den.³⁸

³⁶(...continued)

understanding of the verse is that both words denote extremely venomous and deadly reptiles...

“According to Jerome, this verse predicts the casting out of devils by our Lord's disciples; according to Vitranga, the conversion or destruction of heretical teachers; while Cocceius makes it a specific prophecy of Luther, Calvin, and Huss, as the children who were to thrust their hands צְפֵּוֹנֵי into the den of the anti-Christian serpents...

“It is really a mere continuation of the metaphor begun in **verse 7**, and expresses, by an additional figure, the change to be effected in society by the prevalence of the true religion, destroying noxious [poisonous, harmful] influences and rendering it possible to live in safety.” (P. 254)

Do you agree with Alexander that the Isaiah's language describing the change in diet of the animal kingdom is only a “metaphor” for what happens to people in “the true religion”?

³⁷Motyer comments that “The ‘infant’ (יוֹנֵק, **yoneq**, the ‘sucking child’) is utterly helpless should anger threaten. The ‘young child’ (גַּמּוּל, **gamul**, ‘weaned’), the toddler, runs thoughtlessly into danger. These two contrasting ways of being at risk summarize all risks, but there is no danger now.” (P. 124)

³⁸Gray comments that “Not only with one another, but with man will animals, now hurtful, be friends: the point is expressed by picturing the safety with which the weakest members of the human race, babies under two or three years of age, will approach with safety the most malignant of beasts (**Genesis 3:15**), the serpent, and make its haunts their favorite playground.” (P. 220)

Oswalt states that “The contradiction of a child playing about the den of poisonous snakes can almost be felt physically. One wants to snatch the child away from the presence of sudden, arbitrary death. In what more effective way could a writer communicate his conviction that in the Messiah's [coming king's] day, death itself will be conquered? One thinks of the **New Testament's** appropriation of **Hosea 13:14** in **1 Corinthians 15:55**, ‘Death, where is thy sting?’” (P. 284)

We say, what this dream / vision of the future looks for, is all of the hostilities and antagonisms that so characterize history will be ended as a result of the reign of this coming king. Wolves will live side-by-side with sheep; leopards with baby-goats; calves, young lions and fatted animals will follow side-by-side, with a little child leading

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³⁸(...continued)

them; milk-cow and bear will feed together, with their offspring lying down together; the carnivorous lion will eat straw like an ox; the age-long hostility between the “seed of the serpent” and the “seed of the woman” (see **Genesis 3:15**) will be ended, with the nursing infant playing over a poisonous cobra’s den, and the weaned-child stretching out his hand to a poisonous serpent, without suffering any harm.

And what all of this means is that because of the rule of this coming king, paradise (the “Garden of Delights” of **Genesis 1-2**) will be restored in human history.

If meant literally, then, of course, the vision has never been fulfilled in human history. However, if understood in a symbolical way, we can honestly understand it as having been at least partially fulfilled in Jesus and his ministry.

However, regardless of how we interpret the vision, it is obvious that according to this vision, human history has a goal; and that goal is nothing less than universal peace!

For this idyllic depiction of the coming future, compare **Isaiah 65:17-25**, especially **verse 25**,

The wolf and the lamb shall feed together,
the lion shall eat straw like the ox;
but the serpent—its food shall be dust!
They shall not hurt or destroy on all my set-apart mountain, says YHWH.

See **Hosea 2:18^{Eng} / 20^{Heb}**) and **Romans 8:19-22**, where Paul predicts that the whole creation will “be set free from its bondage to decay...” See Virgil’s **Eclogue 4:18-25; 5:60**, for similar expectations of the return of a golden age of the past, and also the **Sybylline Oracles III, 766-95**:

And then, indeed, he will raise up a kingdom for all ages among men,
he who once gave the holy Law to the pious,
to all of whom he promised to open the earth and the world...
All the paths of the plain and rugged cliffs, lofty mountains,
and wild waves of the sea
will be easy to climb or sail in those days,
for all peace will come upon the land of the good.
Prophets of the great God will take away the sword...

There will also be just wealth among men...
He will dwell in you.
You will have immortal light.
Wolves and lambs will eat grass together in the mountains.
Leopards will feed together with kids.
Roving bears will spend the night with calves.

(continued...)

³⁸(...continued)

The flesh-eating lion will eat husks at the manger like an ox,
and mere infant children will lead them with ropes.

For he will make the beasts on earth harmless.

Serpents and asps will sleep with babies and will not harm them,
for the hand of God will be upon them.

We think there can be no doubt that large parts of this **Sybilline Oracle** have been based on this vision of **Isaiah 11**.

It is easy to dismiss all of this as little more than religious fantasy (just as sceptics do with the Christian conviction of a “heavenly home” awaiting the people of God beyond this life).

But Biblical Theology insists that because this is God’s world, and that God has created every bit of it “very good” (**Genesis 1**), it is impossible to believe that human history is “going nowhere,” or that God does not have a wonderful future in store for the future. Biblical Theology embraces that hope with passion, and refuses to give in to pessimism and despair!

What is your hope for the future? If we don’t have hope, we’re “hopeless”!

³⁹Gray entitles **verses 9-16** “The Return of the Dispersion to the Holy Land.”

He comments that “The well-marked and sustained rhythm and parallelism, which is so conspicuous in **verses 1-8**, is not continued in **verses 9-11**...

“**Verses 9-16** appear to be a collection of brief pieces, in part prose, in part poetry. They are arranged in no very obvious order, but they deal with related subjects, viz. the future glory of Zion, and its attractiveness, as the home of true religion, for the Gentiles (**verses 9-10**); the restoration of the Jews at present dispersed throughout the world, (**verses 11-12, 15-16**); the freedom of the future community from attack and internal dissensions (**verse 13**), and its success in establishing its authority over its neighbors (**verse 14**).

“It is very doubtful whether any part of this section is the work of Isaiah: most of it is clearly post-exilic, since it presupposes the exile and the dispersion of the Jews as existing facts.” (P. 223)

But the dispersion of the Jews began with the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C.E., and that was well within the lifetime of Isaiah (about 740-681 B.C.E.).

Slotki states that “The first part of the **verse (9)** may have as its antecedent the animals mentioned in the preceding three verses, or the subject may be indefinite and the meaning be ‘none shall hurt,’ etc.” (P. 58)

(continued...)

בְּכָל־הָר קָדְשֵׁי
 כִּי־מִלְאָהּ הָאָרֶץ יִדְעָה אֶת־יְהוָה
 כַּמַּיִם לַיָּם מִכִּסֵּי־:

They will not do wrong, and they will not destroy,
 in all My set-apart mountain!⁴⁰

³⁹(...continued)

Motyer comments on **verse 9** that it “is both a summary of **verses 6-8 (9a)** and an explanation (**9b**).” (P. 125)

Oswalt comments on **verse 9** that “Those who take a literal interpretation of the passage, as Delitzsch does, find themselves constrained to argue that *they* here continues to refer to the animals, whereas a more figurative understanding allows for a wider, more natural interpretation...

“There will be safety and removal of anxiety because of a relationally based understanding of God and His ways...Only mutual commitment to the Holy one Who is righteous and faithful can produce an environment where human beings can commit themselves to one another in trust (**34:14-18**).” (P. 284)

In this way, Oswalt removes the voracious animals from the picture, and makes it simply a symbolic picture of human relationships, based on their relationship to God. Do you agree with Oswalt?

We wonder why Oswalt chooses to interpret in this manner. Is it because of his “Messianic” interpretation, which sees Isaiah’s prophetic hope fulfilled in Jesus Christ—and no such world was brought about by Jesus? We hold that the chapter depicts a world at peace—not just the world of human beings, but the entire world, including humans and animals. It is part of Isaiah’s dream / vision; and even though that dream was not fulfilled literally in Jesus, that doesn’t mean we should try to change the vision. No, it can still be a dream shared by the followers of Jesus—depicting the kind of world that Jesus gave his life to enable, and one that all of us, his followers, should work for, including care for animals. What do you think?

⁴⁰Compare **Isaiah 65:25b**,

They will not do evil, and they will not destroy
 in all My set-apart mountain. YHWH said (it)!

For the phrase, “My set-apart mountain,” see **Psalms 2:6** (“I have set My king on

(continued...)

Because the earth was filled⁴¹ with the knowledge of YHWH,

⁴⁰(...continued)

Zion, My set-apart mountain”); **Isaiah 11:9** (here); **56:7** (the location of YHWH’s “house of prayer for all peoples”); **57:13** (“whoever takes refuge in Me shall possess the land, and inherit My set-apart mountain”); **65:11, 25** (same as **11:9**); **66:20** (Jerusalem, the place of ‘home-coming’ for God’s people); **Joel 4:17** (God’s “dwelling-place”) and **Obadiah 1:16**.

Watts comments that the phrase “My holy mountain” is literally “*the mount of My holiness* and is a fixed part of Zion’s traditions. But here it parallels *the earth* and implies the totality of God’s redeemed and re-created world. The *knowledge of Yahweh* imparted by His Spirit has made it possible for all the world to be as God’s Own sanctuary with no need for separations and barriers.” (P. 173)

In the **Greek New Testament**, see **Hebrews 12:22**

But you have come to Mount Zion,
and to the city of the living God,
the heavenly Jerusalem...

meaning, we think, a “spiritual location,” that can be entered by faith, regardless of one’s geographical location on planet earth. Compare **Isaiah 2:2-3**, where the mountain of YHWH’s house is established as the highest of the mountains, to which all the nations come, to learn and to make peace. It is obvious that YHWH’s “set-apart mountain” is being “spiritualized” in this treatment, becoming not the literal Mount Moriah or Mount Zion in Jerusalem—which could not possibly accommodate “all the nations,” but rather, a mountain lifted up above all other mountains, turned into a universal spiritual home for all God’s people.

Slotki, however, comments that “‘My holy mountain’ (means) Zion, or all the Land of Israel.” (P. 58) And Motyer states that “When the true order of creation is restored the whole earth is the Lord’s hill, indwelt by His holiness.” (P. 125)

What do you think? Do you agree with Slotki, or with the author of **Hebrews** and Motley’s and Watts’ “spiritual” view, that makes any geographical location the possibility of being YHWH’s “mountain”?

See in the **New Testament**, the **Gospel of John, chapter four**, where Jesus tells the Samaritan woman that the place where true worship occurs is not on physical mountains such as Gerizim or the mountain on which Jerusalem is situated, but in the hearts of human beings—certainly a “spiritual” view!

⁴¹See footnote 1 for the use of the perfect tense in this verse, whereas the majority of the verbs elsewhere in this passage are in the future tense. Gray pays no attention to this perfect tense, translating “For the land will have become full...” (P. 222)

(continued...)

like the waters cover the oceans!⁴²

⁴¹(...continued)

We hold that the prophet who has received a Divine vision can describe the elements in that vision by the past tense, even though the fulfillment of the vision lies far out in the future—that is, using the so-called “prophetic perfect.”

⁴²Alexander translates / comments on **verse 9** that “The strong figures of the foregoing context are now resolved into literal expressions. *They* (indefinitely, men in general) *shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, because the land is full of the knowledge of Jehovah* (literally, of knowing Him) *like the waters covering the sea...*

“*My holy mountain* does not mean the whole land of Israel...but Zion, or Moriah, or the city built upon them...as the seat of the true religion...What was true of the church there, is true of the church everywhere...**אֶרֶץ** [‘land’] may mean the land of Israel as the abode of the true religion, and the whole earth so far as the church was to become co-extensive with it...

“This passage is descriptive of the reign of the Messiah, not at any one period, but as a whole...The prophecy is therefore one of gradual fulfilment. So far as the cause operates, the effect follows, and when the cause shall operate without restraint, the effect will be complete and universal. The use of the future in the first clause and the preterite [past tense] in the second may imply, that the prevalence of the knowledge of Jehovah must precede that of universal peace. It is not till the land *has been filled* with that knowledge, that men will cease to injure and destroy.” (P. 255)

We say, Under the reign of this coming king, the entire earth is depicted in **Isaiah’s** vision as having been filled with YHWH’s knowledge, “like the waters are covering the sea.” Compare the almost identical statement made in **Habakkuk 2:14**,

But the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of YHWH,
as the waters cover the sea
(where the future tense is used, and in which the “earth” is clearly universal in nature, not limiting the matter to Israel.)

Gray comments that “In **Habakkuk 2:14** **אֶרֶץ** clearly means ‘the earth,’ and not merely ‘the land of Judah.’” (P. 223) We see no reason that the same meaning should not be understood here in **Isaiah 11:9**, although oftentimes **אֶרֶץ** refers to “the land (of Israel).”

Furthermore, YHWH’s “set-apart mountain” is depicted as having universal influence—just as the temple mount in Jerusalem is described as being lifted above the mountains (**Isaiah 2:2**), with all the nations of earth being taught YHWH’s ways, and YHWH’s bringing peace to the earth. As Motyer notes, “When the true order of creation is restored the whole earth is the Lord’s hill, indwelt by His holiness.” (P. 125)

(continued...)

⁴²(...continued)

What will the kingdom of this great coming king be like? Isaiah paints a word-picture of an earth that has returned to the garden of Eden. The nature of that kingdom is no longer “red in tooth and claw.” Rather, it is a world at peace--where the former enemies are friends, where the dangerous adversaries have become intimate companions, where creatures once feared and trembled before have lost all their fearsomeness and danger. What a kingdom!

If you have ever lived in ranching country, you know that the wolf is the mortal enemy of the lamb. It is just as true that the leopard stalks the goat, to kill it and satisfy its hunger with its flesh. As it is in nature, the lion is likewise the deadly stalker of both the calf and the fatted animal. Nothing can satisfy the lion more than to find a young calf, or a fatted cow, at its disposal!

But there, in the kingdom of this coming king, the “Branch,” the calf and the young lion and the fatted animal will be together, and a small youth will lead them--without any danger to them, or to the youth!

I once worked for a ranch in Southwestern New Mexico, in the Gila Mountains, near Mogollon and Silver City. There were still many bears then, and among them some remaining grizzly bears. We called the bears “predators”--and the ranchers did everything they could to kill them--because you simply cannot raise cattle safely where there are bears--they do everything in their power to stalk out, and kill cattle, and devour them.

But in that kingdom to come, says Isaiah, both the cow and the bear will graze side by side! The calf, and the bear-cub will lie down together, no longer mortal enemies, but friends! The vicious lion, that has always wanted red meat to satisfy its hunger, will be content to eat straw like the ox. Even more, the nursing baby will be able to play beside the venomous serpent’s hole--the little child will reach out its hand beside the poisonous snake’s den, unharmed!

What does all of this mean? Do you think Isaiah intended his readers to take it all literally? Or, is Isaiah describing the future kingdom of this hoped-for king of God’s people in metaphors, in highly symbolical / enigmatic / puzzling language? How do you interpret this?

It seems certain that this is Isaiah’s Divinely-given vision of the future, and that it is not meant simply, and literally, but it also seems certain that Isaiah means for it to be taken very seriously. It means, we take it, that our God has a wondrous future for this world, and for all his creatures, including the animal kingdom! There are those who say or imply that all God cares about is human beings--that God doesn’t care about the animals, or nature, or what we proud human beings sometimes call “the lower forms of life.” But such an idea has certainly not come about as a result of taking Isaiah’s vision seriously!

(continued...)

⁴²(...continued)

We are reminded of the statement of Paul, "...I conclude that the sufferings of the present time are not comparable to the glorious radiance that is drawing near to be uncovered to us. For the eager expectation of the creation waits expectantly for the uncovering of the children of God. For the creation was subjected to vanity--not willingly, but rather because of the one subjecting it--in hope that even the creation itself will be liberated from the slavery of corruption, into the freedom of the glorious radiance of the children of God!" (**Romans 8:18-21**)

Paul states emphatically that there is a gloriously radiant future awaiting the people of God, and all of creation as well (but remember his statement in **1 Corinthians 13:12**). He says that "the creation was subjected to vanity"--or as the Hebrew text in **Ecclesiastes** says, "to breath / vapor." We take this to mean the same thing that **Ecclesiastes** says, again and again--that the world is filled with things that are only momentary, that exist for a little while, but then quickly disappear. It is very similar to what **Genesis three** teaches--that because of humanity's sin, the whole natural creation has been subjected to a curse--to hatred between human beings and animals, in which they fear each other, and in which the serpent is cursed to crawl in the dust, and be at constant enmity with human beings--where human beings stomp snakes on their heads, and serpents bite human beings on the heel in return. It is a world that has gone against the will of its Creator, and that suffers the consequences of suffering and death as a result.

But, Paul says, one day, "even the creation itself will be liberated from the slavery of corruption, to enter into the freedom of the glorious radiance of the children of God!" When? Paul does not say. How? Paul does not speculate. He simply states his conviction that one day the evils that afflict the creatures of God in this world will be overcome, and instead of the suffering and death and enmity, there will be peace, and gladness and happiness, as we all treat one another as brothers, and sisters, and fellow-creatures, in the one family of God! We remember that Paul knows his limitations of knowledge, and that even when inspired by the Divine Spirit, he "sees through a mirror darkly" (**1 Corinthians 13:12**). Nonetheless, he shares in this biblical dream of the future.

We take this vision of Isaiah to mean the same thing. The ancient curse, resting upon humanity and upon the animal world, will be lifted. Under the government of this great coming king, the created earth will become what its Creator intended it to be--a garden of delights--where war and hatred are ended, and where former life-long enemies live together in peace! What a vision, and what a blessed promise!

Listen as Isaiah continues: "They will not do wrong, and they will not destroy, in all my set-apart mountain! Because the earth was (we add, 'in my vision') filled with the knowledge of YHWH, like the waters cover the oceans!" What is the basis for peace on earth? It is of course, the cessation of doing wrong, of stopping our destruction of God's good creatures! Some have understood Isaiah to mean "Jerusalem," or the literal "Mount Zion," when he speaks about YHWH God's "set-apart mountain" here.

(continued...)

⁴²(...continued)

But Isaiah's vision is much grander than any historical City of Jerusalem. Isaiah is describing the whole earth having become God's "set-apart mountain." Just like the waters fill up the oceans, so the entire earth will be filled with the knowledge of God-- and the fruits of knowing God, personally and deeply, and universally, will be that lasting peace will come to this war-filled, bloody planet earth! Again we say, what a vision! What a promise!

If you are a non-believer, and think all of this is nothing more than Joe Hill's "pie in the sky, in the sweet by and by," what then do you hope for? Do you not ever dream of something better in the future, both for yourself, and for your loved ones, and the world? And if you dare to dream or envision the future, how will you improve on this vision of Isaiah, where war and hatred are ended, and all living beings live together in peace? Is such a vision or dream not worth working for, at least in your sphere of influence? If you could create a new world, how different from this sort of world envisioned by Isaiah would it be?

⁴³Slotki entitles **verses 10-16** "The return of the exiles."

He comments on **verse 10** that "This verse seems to be detached from the following, forming by itself a complete thought." In this verse, "root" means a descendant; "an ensign" means a signal for rallying the people. The phrase "unto Him shall the nations seek" means according to some bringing tribute or, according to others, seeking religious guidance and instruction; "resting-place" means "residence." (P. 58)

Oswalt entitles **verses 10-16** "The promised return."

He comments that "Just as the folly of Ahaz was responsible for the defeat of Judah and her ultimate dispersion (**8:6-8**), so the coming of the Messiah [coming king] will result in a great restoration of God's people. From every part of the earth they will come (**11:11**), in a return as dramatic as the exodus itself..."

"Is the prophet speaking of the return in 539 B.C.E.? If so, the Messiah [coming king] had not yet been revealed and could hardly be the ensign around which the people rallied. Is Isaiah in fact speaking of the New Israel, the Church, as the Reformers maintained (compare Calvin)? Certainly, believers were gathered to the Messiah [coming king, Jesus Christ] from every part of the world, and **verse 10**, in a fashion reminiscent of **2:2-4**, seems to begin the section with a reference to the nations at large. Nevertheless, the primary focus of the passage seems to be upon the historical nation of Israel, so that one is led to believe it points to some great final ingathering of the Jewish people such as that referred to by Paul in **Romans 11**. If that

(continued...)

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has begun in the Zionist movement, as many believe, we may look forward with anticipation to its ultimate completion in a turning to God in Christ by the Jewish nation.” (P. 286)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 10** that “Having described the Messiah’s reign and its effects, he now brings [the Messiah’s] person into view again. *And in that day shall the root of Jesse which (is) standing (or set up) be for a signal to the nations—unto him shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest (or residence) shall be glorious...*

“The root of Jesse is explained by Kimchi [known as ‘Radak,’ acronym for Rabbi David Kimchi, 1160-1235 C.E.] and most other writers to be put by metonymy [a figure of speech that replaces the name of a thing with the name of something else with which it is closely associated] for that which grows out of his roots and therefore equivalent to **רֵמֶז** [branch] and **נֶצֶר** [sprout] in **verse 1**. So the $\rho\acute{\iota}\zeta\alpha$ Δαυίδ [‘root of David’] of **Revelation 5:5** and **22:16** is explained by [Moses Stuart, 1845] as meaning ‘not *root* of David, but a *root-shoot* from the trunk or stem of David.’ But Vitranga supposes the Messiah to be called the *root of Jesse*, because by him the family of Jesse is sustained and perpetuated; Cocceius, because he was not only his descendant but his Maker and his Savior...

“But Umbreit takes the word in its proper sense, and understands the prophecy to mean that the family of Jesse now under ground should reappear and rise to the height of a **סֵל**, not a military standard, but a signal...A signal of the nations then is one displayed to gather them [to consult as an oracle or depository of religious truth] ... **עֹמֵד** [‘standing’] describes it as continuing or permanently fixed. The reference is not to Christ’s crucifixion, but to his manifestation to the Gentiles through the preaching of the gospel...

“By *his rest* we are not to understand his grave, or his death, or his Sabbath, or the rest he gives to people, but his place of rest, his residence...The church, Christ’s home, shall be glorious from his presence and the accession [‘addition’] of the Gentiles.” (Pp. 255-56)

Gray comments on **verse 10** that ‘The capital of the monarchy of the restored Jewish community will be famous, and the nations of the world will come and consult the king as an organ of the revelation of the one true God. Compare **Isaiah 2:2-4**. But here prominence is given to the vehicle of Yahweh’s revelation; there the nations are said to obtain instruction from Yahweh Himself.

Kaiser entitles **verse 10** “The Signal for the Nations.” He comments that “Unlike **11:1**, it does not speak of the shoot from the root of Jesse, but of the root of Jesse itself...The world-wide recognition of the kings [but the text mentions only one king]

(continued...)

שָׁרַשׁ יֵשׁוּ אֲשֶׁר עֵמֶד לְנֶס עַמִּים

אֵלָיו גּוֹיִם יִדְרְשׁוּ

וְהִיְתָה מִנְחָתוֹ כְּבוֹד:

And it will happen on that day—⁴⁴

⁴³(...continued)

from the stem of Jesse, David's father... would finally fulfil what had been promised to the kings in Jerusalem since days of old (compare **Psalm 2:8; 18:4ff.; 72:8ff.**)...What is promised in **Isaiah 2:2-4**, the pilgrimage of the nations to Zion, has here been focused specifically on the king."

Again we observe that these differing interpretations of the passage bear witness to the fact that Isaiah's prophetic message is anything but clear and precise, that rather, it is enigmatic, puzzling statements, that can be taken in differing senses. Do you agree? Or is it all clear, easily interpreted?

⁴⁴This phrase, "And it will happen on that day," is a way of pointing into the future. See **Isaiah 7:18, 21, 23; 10:20, 27; 11:10, 14; 17:4; 22:20; 23:15; 24:21; 27:12, 13; 30:23; Jeremiah 4:9; 25:33; 30:8; 39:16; 48:41; 49:22; Ezekiel 38: 10, 18; 39:11; Hosea 1:5; 2:18** (very similar to **Isaiah 11**), **23; Joel 4:18** (also somewhat similar to **Isaiah 11**); **Amos 8:9; Micah 5:9^{Heb} / 10^{Eng}**); **Zephaniah 1:10; Zechariah 12:3, 8, 9; 13:2, 4; 14:6, 8, 9, 13.**

It is somewhat of a "technical phrase," as the prophets of Israel point out into the coming future with its Divine judgments, blessings, and with its coming king, as YHWH's words / promises are fulfilled.

Alexander translates / comments: "*And it shall be (or come to pass) in that day*—not the days of Hezekiah (Grotius), not the days of Cyrus and Darius (Sanctius), nor the days of the Maccabees (Jahn), but the days of the *Messiah—the Lord shall add His hand* (or add to apply His hand) *a second time*—not second in reference to the overthrow of Pekah and Rezin (Sanctius), or the return from Babylon (Forerius), or the first preaching of the gospel to the Jews (Cocceius), but to the deliverance from Egypt...

“קָנִית׃ [to acquire, purchase] is not the infinitive of קָנָא [to be zealous / jealous; **Rahlfs** has ζηλωσαι], but [the infinitive] of קָנָה [to acquire, purchase]. It does not mean merely to possess [so, the Latin Vulgate], but to acquire (Luther), especially by purchase, and so *to redeem* from bondage and oppression (Vitringa)...

“*The remnant of his people*—not the survivors of the original captives...but those living at the time of the deliverance, or still more restrictedly, the remnant according to

(continued...)

Jesse's root,⁴⁵ who will stand as a sign⁴⁶ for the peoples,⁴⁷

⁴⁴(...continued)

the election of grace (Calvin). *From Assyria*, etc, [is] to be construed, not with לְקִנּוֹת [to acquire, purchase] (Abarbenel), but with שָׁאַר [to be left remaining], as appears from **verse 16**...

“The countries mentioned are put for all in which the Jews should be scattered...Assyria and Egypt are named first and together, as the two great foreign powers, with which the Jews were best acquainted...

“This prophecy does not relate to the Gentiles or the Christian Church (Cocceius), but to the Jews (Jerome). The dispersions spoken of are not merely such as had already taken place at the date of the prediction (Gesenius), but others then still future (Hengstenberg), including not only the Babylonish exile, but the present [mid 1800's] dispersion. The prophecy was not fulfilled in the return of the refugees after Sennacherib's discomfiture [frustration, disappointment] (Grotius), nor in the return from Babylon (Sanctius), and but partially in the preaching of the Gospel to the Jews. The complete fulfilment is to be expected when *all Israel shall be saved* [Alexander is taking this from **Romans 11:26**]...

“The prediction must be figuratively understood, because the nations mentioned in this verse have long ceased to exist. The event prefigured is, according to Keith and others, the return of the Jews to Palestine; but according to Calvin, Vitranga, and Hengstenberg, their admission to Christ's kingdom on repentance and reception of the Christian faith.” (Pp. 256-67)

And we wonder—Is the prophecy this complicated, resulting in so many different interpretations, and containing so many ambiguities that can and have been taken in so many different ways, that only by skilled interpreters such as Alexander the true interpretation can be found? Can we call such a prophecy “a lamp shining in a dark place” (**2 Peter 1:19**)? We think it is much more accurate to describe such a prophecy as “enigmatic” or as containing “riddles” (as per **Numbers 12:6-8**), or as “seeing through a mirror darkly” (as per English translations of **1 Corinthians 13:12**).

The prophet is speaking of what he has seen in an enigmatic, puzzling vision or dream. There can be no doubt that it is filled with the hope of a coming messiah—but it is anything but “clear” and “unmistakable” in its details, as Alexander's comment makes obvious. What do you think?

⁴⁵Here, in **verse 10**, this coming king is identified as the “root” of Jesse. Slotki says that this means “a descendant” of Jesse” (p. 58), that is simply the thing that **verse 1** calls a “branch” going forth from Jesse's “stump,” and as a “stem” from (Jesse's) roots.

(continued...)

⁴⁵(...continued)

Some Christian interpreters, however, take this to mean that the coming king is the root from which Jesse came, and refer to **John 1:1-18**'s depiction of the "Word" that was "being in the beginning," and that also entered into human history, "becoming flesh." John the Immerser's testimony concerning him is that "he who comes after me" is at the same time the one who "was before me" (**John 1:15**).

Motyer comments on this that "In the **Old Testament** this is a dilemma awaiting resolution." (P. 121) Of course, for orthodox Christian interpretation, the dilemma is resolved in terms of the "fully human, fully Divine" nature of Jesus, the Word which was from the beginning, but which was also made flesh, entering into human history.

There can be no doubt that the prophet Isaiah had seen a vision of the future that imparted hope in the form of a coming king. But there also can be no doubt that his hope was filled with enigmatic, puzzling elements which have defied the efforts of interpreters across the centuries to decipher and unravel!

So what do you think? Because classical visions of the future such as **Isaiah 11** (or the **Book of Revelation**) are without exception enigmatic and unclear, lending themselves to contrasting interpretations, should we give up on envisioning, on dreaming of what the future might and should hold?

We say, the visions and dreams of prophets such as Isaiah and John in **Revelation** are important, challenging us to look out beyond our present time and situation, to think of how we can strive toward our fondest dreams, and improve the future that awaits us. And while we cannot speak with clarity and certainty concerning the future—for example of what the stock market is going to do, or what our health will be like, or of what the world will be like in future generations—it is still a challenge to all of us to "dream the impossible dream," to try and imagine a future, better world, and then work to make our dream come true.

And we ask, What is your dream, your vision of the future—for yourself, for your family, for your nation, for our world? Can you improve on Isaiah's vision?

⁴⁶The Hebrew **סֵנֶן**, **lenes** means "for a sign (or, 'signal,' 'standard,' 'ensign')." That means, this coming king will be used as a "rallying standard," through whom all the nations and peoples of the earth are called to himself (and through him, to YHWH's service). Compare **Isaiah 5:26** ("He will raise a signal for a nation far away, and whistle for a people at the ends of the earth; here they come, swiftly, speedily!"; **Isaiah 11:12** (a signal for gathering the dispersed of Israel); **Isaiah 13:2** (a signal calling the nations together for battle); **Isaiah 18:3** (a signal raised on the mountain for all earth's inhabitants, calling them to YHWH on Mount Zion); **Isaiah 31:9**; **49:22** (a signal to the nations, to bring Israel's sons and daughters back); compare **Isaiah 55:4-5**, where David is a witness to the peoples and nations calling them to come to himself); **Isaiah 62:10** (a sign for people on the move).

(continued...)

nations⁴⁸ will come, seeking him,⁴⁹
and his resting--place⁵⁰ will be glorious!⁵¹, 1

⁴⁶(...continued)

We think that Jesus of Nazareth, unites within himself both the “branch” and the “root” of Jesse, who has stood as a “rallying signal” to the nations of earth, calling all peoples and nations into the kingdom of God. Surely, in a very literal way, Jesus’ “great commission,” sending his disciples out into all the nations and peoples on earth, to proclaim good news, is at least a partial fulfillment of this Isaianic vision!

Oswalt comments that the phrase “*the root of Jesse which will be standing as an ensign*” is significant for several reasons. The contrast with **Isaiah 5:26** is one of these. There God raises an ensign to call the nations to the dismemberment of His people. Here He raises another ensign to call His people home...Though the hand of God may destroy, it will ultimately be used to redeem. This truth is underlined when we look at the full revelation of the Messiah [coming king] in Jesus Christ.” (P. 287)

⁴⁷Gray comments on this statement: “That a root should stand as a signal, or banner, is an extraordinary combination of figures; root no doubt, as a technical term, might at once suggest a person, the Messianic king...but it remains extraordinary that a person stands like a signal or banner.” (P. 225)

We disagree, thinking that every movement in society that we know of has had “figure-heads,” standing at their forefront, speaking rallying words, calling for united action—becoming symbolically a signal or banner for followers. Jesus of Nazareth has certainly played just such a role for his followers in Christianity!

⁴⁸The combination of these two nouns, עַמִּים and גּוֹיִם, “peoples and nations,” emphasizes that the role of this coming king is far more than simply the descendants of David, or “Israel.” This coming king’s mission is that of being a “sign” to “peoples and nations”; nations will seek him. That means, the coming king’s role is universal in nature. See footnotes 46 and 47, where we affirm that this has been very literally fulfilled in Jesus.

⁴⁹The future verb יִדְרֹשׁוּ means “they will seek.” This is a verb that is commonly used in terms of “seeking YHWH,” or “seeking God.” See **Deuteronomy 4:29; Isaiah 9:12 (verse 13 in English); 31:1; 55:6; 58:2; Jeremiah 10:21; 29:13; Hosea 10:12; Amos 5:4, 6;** etc. It is still the case, in this 21st century, that peoples and nations of the earth are coming, “seeking” Jesus and the spiritual blessings that he imparts.

Gray translates by “*Him shall the nations consult*, so as to obtain oracles (**Isaiah 8:19**), or religious instruction (compare **Isaiah 2:3**) from him.” (P. 225)

⁵⁰For this noun, “his resting-place,” מְנוּחָתּוֹ, see (without the suffix) **Numbers 10:33; Judges 20:43** (Hebrew; not in English); **Ruth 1:9; 1 Kings 8:56; 1 Chronicles**

(continued...)

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22:9; 28:2; Psalms 95:11; 132:14 and **Isaiah 66:1**. See the extensive treatment of this matter of “resting-place” in the **Greek New Testament** at **Hebrews 3-4**, and see the promise given by Jesus in **Matthew 11:28-30**, “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest...”

Millions upon countless millions of believers have found this promise to be true; there is a “place of rest” given by Jesus to his followers! For a sermon on this text, see our end-note 1.

Gray comments on this matter of the Messiah’s resting-place being glorious, that “Glorious things will be spoken of Zion, the city of Yahweh, the resting-place (compare e.g. **Deuteronomy 12:9; 1 Kings 8:56**) of His Messiah and the birthplace of the nations into a new life (compare **Psalms 87**)...**מנוחה** [‘resting-place’] is used also of Yahweh’s abode in the midst of His people (**Psalms 95:11; 132:14**).” (P. 225)

⁵¹What does this last affirmation mean? This “resting-place” that the coming king will provide for all the peoples and nations of the earth, will be filled with the “glorious radiance” of YHWH God Himself! Here is the “Summum Bonum” of human desire and longing. In coming to the “resting-place” of this coming king, humanity (from all peoples and nations) will find ultimate meaning and consummation, being reunited with God Himself! We think that Jesus of Nazareth, in his invitation to all who labor and are heavily laden to come to him, promising to give them “rest,” is obviously the fulfillment of this part of Isaiah’s vision. Again we say, millions upon millions of people from every race and nation on earth have heard that invitation, and have found in Jesus their “resting-place,” and in so finding, have entered into the Divine glorious radiance that gives hope for eternity. Could such a thing be said of any of Israel’s line of Davidic kings?

Isaiah’s final words in this great vision are: “And it will happen on that day (pointing out into an indeterminate future--Jesse’s ‘root,’ who will stand as a sign for the peoples, nations will come, seeking him, and his resting-place will be glorious!”

Here, instead of using the word “branch” or “sprout,” Isaiah uses the word “root”--which means in essence the very same thing as both of those other words. This “branch,” or “sprout,” or “root” of Jesse, is going to stand as a sign for the nations--and all the nations of the earth, says Isaiah, will come, seeking him, and his resting-place will be glorious!

It is not so obvious in English, but in Hebrew this noun “resting-place” (**menuchah**) and the noun “peace” (**shalom**) are synonyms. This coming king of God’s people will act as a “sign” to all the nations of earth. He will be the sign of God’s love for them; he will be the “standard” around which the nations of the earth can rally, and come together; and in coming to this great king, they will find their “resting-place.” It is

(continued...)

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just there, as the nations of the earth find their “resting-place” in this great king sent by God, that this gloriously radiant future of genuine peace will become theirs. So says the great spokesperson Isaiah!

Watts explains **verses 1-10**: “This passage (with **9:5-6^{Heb} / 6-7^{Eng}**) is from the stock of literature belonging to the lore of the Davidic monarchy. Parallels can be found in **Psalms 2, 21, 45, 72, 110; 2 Samuel 7; 1 Kings 2-3; Chronicles**, and in some other prophets like **Micah 5:2-6**.

“The announcement that the Davidic monarchy in that time (i.e., Ahaz’s reign, eighth century B.C.E.) is a centerpiece of God’s design of ‘a beautiful’ thing (**verse 1**) is followed by the promise that God’s Spirit on him will guarantee the spiritual characteristics needed in a king (**verse 2**), while the qualities of insight (**verses 3b-c**), fairness for all his subjects (**verse 4a-b**), and powerful authority (**verse 4c, d**) will follow.” (P. 173)

And we wonder: Where in this text is king Ahaz mentioned? We do not find him mentioned at all. Rather, we see Isaiah’s vision of a future coming king, after the dynasty of Jesse’s descendants has been cut down, and is no more than a surviving “stump” or “root”—but from which a king will come who will be far superior in character to any of the historical royal dynasty of Jesse’s descendants, starting with David, and ending with the carrying away of the Davidic king Zedekiah into Babylon. This hoped for king of Isaiah’s vision will come from the stump or roots of Jesse, but he will be of a totally different character—this cannot, in our mind, simply be a hope expressed for Ahaz himself or for his son, Hezekiah.

What do you think? We have quoted only a portion of Watts’ view—see his pp. 173-76. Do you agree with Watts?

Again we emphasize that the biblical predictions are ambiguous, and differing understandings both can and have arisen from them. It is foolish to think that they are clear and easily understood. Nonetheless, there can be no doubt that the prophets of Israel, Isaiah in particular, envisioned the future with hope, with the deep conviction that “good times are coming,” a conviction rooted in their faith in YHWH. And these predictions ask us, Are we willing to take a stand with them, believing in the future, hoping with them that the God Who created us is leading us out into a blessed future?

⁵²We have entitled **chapter 11** in part “Isaiah’s Double Vision.” Here in **verse 11** begins the second part of that “Double Vision”—a vision quite different from the vision in **verses 1-10!**

Motyer comments on **verses 11-16** that “These verses match the assurance in Isaiah **9:6^{Heb} / 7^{Eng}** that ‘the zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.’ The focus of

(continued...)

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attention swings from the shoot and root of Jesse (**verses 1 and 10**) to the Lord's hand (**verses 11, 15**), the symbol of personal action...Under the Messiah the world was reordered and transformed (**verses 6-9**); now the world-wide kingdom is realized (**verse 14**)."

Watts entitles these verses "Yahweh's Second Deliverance." He comments that this "entire passage is controlled in the opening verse which sets it 'in that day' and which announces God's purpose to 'acquire' His people from distant places. The first part (**verses 12-14**) announces God's signal to the nations to gather the dispersed of Israel and Judah. The result is the unification of the kingdom and the reestablishment of its sovereignty over its neighbors, i.e. the return to the conditions of the United Kingdom which David established.'

"The second part (**verses 15-16**) pictures God's direct intervention to remove the natural barriers to return. His power parallels the crossing of the Red Sea when Israel left Egypt under Moses. The result is a highway for the return." (P. 178) Yes... but we note that the highway is one from Assyria—not highways from every region of the earth.

Gray comments on **verse 11** that "The Lord will repossess Himself of the survivors of His people now scattered over the known world. The style is awkward and some details are ambiguous; but the general impression of a wide dispersion of the Jews as an existing fact is too strongly and clearly conveyed for the passage to be pre-exilic." (P. 225)

Compare **Zechariah 10:6-12**,

- 6 And I shall make the House of Judah mighty,
and Joseph's House I will save!
And I shall cause them to return, because I will have compassion on them--
because I (am) YHWH their God, and I will answer them!
- 7 And they will be like a mighty man—Ephraim (will);
and their heart will rejoice, as with wine.
And their children will see, and will rejoice—
their heart will rejoice (synonym) in the YHWH!
- 8 I will whistle for them, and I will gather them, because I redeemed them;
and they will be multiplied, just as they were multiplied.
- 9 And I scattered them among the peoples;
and in the distant lands, they will remember Me.
And they shall live with their children, and they shall return!
- 10 And I shall return them from Egypt-land,
and from Assyria I will gather them.
And to Gilead land and Lebanon I will bring them.

(continued...)

יוֹסִיף אֲדַנְיָו שְׁנִית יְהוָה
 לְקַנּוֹת אֶת־שָׂאֵר עַמּוֹ
 אֲשֶׁר יִשְׂאֵר מֵאֲשׁוּר
 וּמִמְצָרַיִם וּמִפְתָּרוֹס
 וּמִכּוֹשׁ וּמֵעִלָּם וּמִשְׁנַעַר
 וּמִחַמַּת וּמֵאֵי הַיָּם:

And it will happen on that day,⁵³

⁵²(...continued)

And it will not be found for them.

- 11 And He will pass over in the sea of distress,
 and He will strike waves in the sea.
 And he will dry up all depths of (the) Nile / stream.
 And Assyria's pride will be brought down.
 And Egypt's rod / scepter will turn aside.
- 12 And I will make them mighty in the YHWH,
 and in My name they will go to and fro—
 (it is) a saying of YHWH!

Kaiser entitles **verses 11-14** “The People of God Reunited.” He entitles **verses 11-12** “The homecoming of the Diaspora [Jews living outside Israel].”

He comments on the authorship of this passage that “The knowledge that the greater part of the Jewish people in the post-exilic period lived in exile in Mesopotamia and in a dispersion which ran round the coasts of the Eastern Mediterranean with its focal point in Egypt, the Diaspora, led one well-read reader to make an addition [to the **Book of Isaiah**] announcing this people’s homecoming. For to the Jews, part of the time of salvation in the fullest sense was the complete restoration of the people of Israel in its own land and, as **verses 13-14** show, the restoration of the kingdom as it was in the time of David. Accordingly, this scribal prophet affirms that Yahweh will once again deliver what remains of the people, divided into two kingdoms, and after their downfall scattered throughout the world, as he once delivered them from Egypt.” (P. 264)

⁵³The phrase **וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא**, “And it will happen on that day” occurs some 13 times in **chapters 7-27** of the **Book of Isaiah**, and elsewhere in the **Hebrew Bible**. See:

(continued...)

my Lord⁵⁴ will add a second time⁵⁵ His hand

⁵³(...continued)

Isaiah 7:18, 21, 23; 10:20, 27; 11:10, 11; 17:4; 22:20; 23:15; 24:21; 27:12, 13;
Jeremiah 4:9; 30:8;
Ezekiel 38:10, 18; 39:11;
Hosea 1:5; 2:18, 23;
Joel 4:18;
Amos 8:9;
Micah 5:9;

Zephaniah 1:10;
Zechariah 12:3, 9; 13:2, 4; 14:6, 8, 13.

What the phrase means has to be determined from the context of each place where it occurs. Watts holds that here the phrase “picks up the relation to the event announced in **10:33**.” (P. 178)

⁵⁴Many Hebrew manuscripts insert the name YHWH following “my Lord.”

⁵⁵Concerning the phrase יוֹסִיף אֶדְנִי יְדוֹ שְׁנִיַּת, “my Lord will add His hand a second time,” Slotki notes that “a second time,” implies that “The first time was the exodus from Egypt.” (P. 58) This would mean that the “second time” refers to the return from Babylonian exile.

Gray, however, states that “Taken strictly, this [‘second time’ or ‘again’] should mean that *the remnant* has already once been acquired, to wit, when Yahweh brought back some of the exiled Jews from Babylon...At the exodus, Yahweh *acquired* (**Exodus 15:16**; compare **Psalms 74:2**) a whole people; He is now going to acquire what remains of His people by gathering the exiled Jews from all quarters of the earth.” (P. 225)

Watts holds that the text should be changed: “The best suggestion is to compare with **Isaiah 49:22** and read שָׁאֵת, ‘to lift up’ instead of שְׁנִיַּת “a second time.” (P. 177)

Such a change of text enables Watts to make the statement fit into his overall view—but again we say, it is not wise to change a text to our liking before commenting on it! If the text is not changed in this way, the interpreter will be led to think of a second return beyond the return from Assyria / Babylon, i.e., a world-wide return.

Even so, Watts comments on the word “again.” He says it “concedes the failure of earlier efforts...It announces a further effort.” (P. 178)

to acquire / purchase⁵⁶ a remnant of His people
 which is left remaining from Assyria,
 and from Egypt and from Pathros,
 and from Cush / Ethiopia and from Elam and from Shinar,
 and from Chamath⁵⁷ and from islands of the sea.⁵⁸

⁵⁶Translations of the infinitive לְקַנֹּת vary from “to recover,” to “to redeeming,” to “to reclaim,” to “to ransom,” to τοῦ ζηλωσαι, “to be jealous / zealous for,” or as **Bauer-Danker-Arndt-Gingrich** explains, “to be positively and intensely interested in something, strive, desire, exert oneself earnestly for, be dedicated to.” We translate the Hebrew by “to acquire / to purchase.”

⁵⁷Watts notes that “Hamath [our ‘Chamath’] is a city in Syria. There is no record of Jewish exiles being there.” (P. 177)

We say, “There is no record elsewhere of Jewish exiles being there.”

Kaiser states that “We do not know why Hamath in particular has been selected from among the many cities of Syria. One can only assume that at the time this prophecy was composed there had been a particularly strong Jewish colony there.” (P. 265) We agree.

⁵⁸Kaiser states that “the mention of the islands of the sea...refers to the Jews living round the eastern and northern coasts of the eastern Mediterranean, the Aegean and its islands.” (P. 265) This is the sea between Asia Minor / Turkey and Greece.

The text gives some 8 places from which YHWH will acquire / purchase the remnant / remainder of His people who have been carried away or scattered into other countries / locations:

Assyria, which we understand to be the location of the Northern Israelites, who were taken captive and exiled into some portion or portions of the large Assyrian empire, to the northeast of Israel. Note the assonance in the lengthy phrase
 מֵאֲשׁוּרֵי שְׂאֵר עַמּוֹ אֲשֶׁר יִשְׂאֵר, **meashshur shear ammo asher yishshaer**;

Egypt, which we understand here to mean the northern portion of the Land of Egypt, located to the southwest of Israel, the location of the “first exodus”; Pathros, the “Southland” or upper part of Egypt.

“The Thebaid or Thebais Greek: Θηβαΐς) was a region of ancient Egypt, which comprised the thirteen southern-most nomes [districts] of Upper Egypt, from Abydos to Aswan. The Thebaid acquired its name from its proximity to the ancient Egyptian capital of Thebes (Luxor). During the Ancient Egyptian

(continued...)

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dynasties this region was dominated by Thebes and its priesthood at the temple of Amun at Karnak. In Ptolemaic Egypt, the Thebaid formed a single administrative district under the Epistrategos [Greek, meaning ‘military general’] of Thebes, who was also responsible for overseeing navigation in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. The capital of Ptolemaic Thebaid was Ptolemais Hermiou, a Hellenistic colony on the Nile which served as the center of royal political and economic control in Upper Egypt.” (**Wikipedia**, 6/28/2016) The Egyptian word for Pathros is P-to-res, “Southland.”

Cush / Ethiopia (the Greek translation of the Hebrew כּוּשׁ), which refers to the southernmost, highland region of the Nile, beginning at the first cataract of the Nile; the name is sometimes used for people living on both the western and eastern side of the Red Sea.

Elam, “an ancient Pre-Iranian civilization centered in the far west and southwest of what is now modern-day Iran, stretching from the lowlands of what is now Khuzestan and Ilam Province as well as a small part of southern Iraq.” (**Wikipedia**, 6/28/2016) **Brown-Driver-Briggs** has: “Elam, Αιλαμ, Ἐλαμεῖραι, well-known country and people northeast of the Lower Tigris (mentioned in the **Hebrew Bible**) as early invaders of Palestine, **Genesis 14:1, 14:9**; allies of Assyria, **Isaiah 22:6**; foe of Babylon, **Isaiah 21:2**; abode of dispersed Israelites **Isaiah 11:11**.”

Shinar, Hebrew שִׁנְעָר, “Septuagint Σεννααρ Sennaar) is a biblical geographical locale of uncertain boundaries in Mesopotamia.” (**Wikipedia**, 6/28/2016) **Brown-Driver-Briggs** has “Shinar = Babylonia,” and is the same as the Babylonian Sumer according to some, but denied by others. It is the area where the cities of Babylon, Erech, Accad and Calneh were located.

Chamath, Hebrew חַמַּת, which **Brown-Driver-Briggs** claims is “modern Ḥamâ, on e/-‘A’si (the Orontes River), about 115 miles north of Damascus...It had a king, תֵּי, Toi, in David's time...and in the 8th century B.C.E. Gods of its own...It gave its name to a land (limits unknown)...and contained Israelite exiles (**Isaiah 11:11**); it furnished colonists for Samaria...after being conquered by Sargon... (**Isaiah 10:9**). It is called ‘great Chamath’ by **Amos 6:2**...The name occurs often in the phrase. לְבַא חַמַּת = the entrance to Chamath, i.e. ‘the approach to Chamath, as a territorial limit, usually as denoting the (ideal) northern limit of Israelite territory.”

Islands of the sea, which **Brown-Driver-Briggs** holds here means “coast-lands and

(continued...)

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islands.” Slotki says it means “the Mediterranean coast-lands.” Gray states that this term ‘is a favorite of Deutero-Isaiah, who thereby indicates his far western horizon.” (P. 226)

These names point to Israelites dispersed / exiled in all directions from Israel—to the north and east, to the south, and to the west—indicating the known world of Isaiah’s time. Or, as the last line in **verse 12** puts it, “from the four wings / extremities / corners of the earth.”

Watts comments that “Thus great diagonals [straight lines joining opposite corners] are drawn from Assyria (northeast) to Cush (extreme south) and from Elam (due east) to the islands (west and northwest).” (P. 179)

Oswalt states that “*from Assyria...[to the] sea* covers the known world in a complete way. Assyria and Egypt were the dominant world powers, the one to the northeast and the other to the southwest. Egypt was apparently subdivided into three regions: the Delta (*Egypt*) the Nile Valley (*Pathros* [upper Egypt]), and Nubia or Ethiopia in the far south (*Cush*). *Elam* and *Shinar* refer to extreme southern Mesopotamia and Persia, while *Hamath* is to the north in Syria and the *islands of the sea* lie in the west. This completeness suggests that these names were not being used literally, although the Jews were ultimately dispersed very widely. Rather, the purpose is more figurative, attempting to say that God is able to restore His people from *everywhere* (compare **verse 12**).” (P. 287)

Rahfs translates **verse 11** by:

καὶ ἔσται τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ
 προσθήσει κύριος τοῦ δεῖξαι τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ
 τοῦ ζηλωσαι τὸ καταλειφθὲν ὑπόλοιπον τοῦ λαοῦ
 ὃ ἂν καταλειφθῆ ἀπὸ τῶν Ἀσσυρίων
 καὶ ἀπὸ Αἰγύπτου καὶ Βαβυλωνίας
 καὶ Αἰθιοπίας καὶ ἀπὸ Αἰλαμιτῶν
 καὶ ἀπὸ ἡλίου ἀνατολῶν καὶ ἐξ Ἀραβίας
 And it will be in that day,
 Lord will add to show His hand
 to be zealous / jealous for the left-over remaining of the people,
 the one left over from the Assyrians
 and from Egypt and Babylon
 and Ethiopia and from Elamites
 and from risings of (the) sun [i.e. eastern countries] and out of Arabia.

It is noteworthy that the Greek list omits the islands of the sea or coastlands, i.e., areas to the west.

וְאִסַּף נְדָחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
וּנְפֻצֹת יְהוּדָה יִקְבֹּץ
מֵאַרְבַּע כְּנָפֹת הָאָרֶץ:

And He will lift up a signal / sign for the nations,⁶⁰

⁵⁹Alexander translates **verse 12**: “*And He (Jehovah) shall set up a signal to the nations, and shall gather the outcasts of Israel, and the dispersed of Judah shall He bring together from the four wings of the earth...*”

He comments that “The nations thus addressed are not the the Jews but the Gentiles, and, as most interpreters suppose, those Gentiles among whom the Jews were scattered, and who are summoned by the signal here displayed to set the captives free, or to assist them in returning, or according to the rabbins, actually to bring them as an offering to Jehovah [see **Isaiah 66:18-20**]...”

“There is, however, another view of the passage, which supposes the *nations* or Gentiles to be here mentioned as distinct from the Jews, and unconnected with them. The verse then contains two successive predictions, first, that the Gentiles shall be called, and then that the Jews shall be restored, which agrees exactly with Paul’s account of the connection between these events. Blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in (**Romans 11:25-26**). On this hypothesis, the signal is displayed to the Gentiles, not that they may send or bring the Jews back, but that they may come themselves, and then the gathering of Israel and Judah is added, as a distinct, if not a subsequent event. This last interpretation is favored by the analogy of a **New Testament** prophecy, the first by an analogous prophecy of Isaiah himself.” (Pp. 257-58)

Gray comments on **verse 12** that “The thought that Yahweh will gather home His widely scattered people, expressed in prose and with geographical particularity in **verse 11**, is here expressed in poetry with poetical brevity and expressiveness. The dispersion will be brought back from the four corners of the earth.” (P. 226)

Again we observe that the differing interpretations of Isaiah’s words demonstrate their enigmatic, puzzling nature—exactly what we should expect in the light of Numbers 12 and **1 Corinthians 13**.

⁶⁰Slotki comments that “an ensign for the nations” means “A signal for the aforementioned nations to yield up the Israelite exiles in their midst, or for the exiles to see and gather round it.” (P. 59)

Watts observes that “raising a banner” occurs in **Isaiah 5:26, 11:12** (here), and **13:2**. He states that “In each instance Yahweh raises the banner as a signal to the

(continued...)

and He will gather Israel's thrust out / banished ones,
and scattered ones of Judah He will gather,⁶¹
from the earth's⁶² four wings / extremities / corners!⁶³

⁶⁰(...continued)

nations. Yahweh's use of the nations to accomplish His will is patent [obvious] throughout. In other passages the nations' task is one of war and destruction, but here the task is one of gathering and assembling Israelites and Judeans from distant places." (P. 179)

⁶¹We are taking the two phrases, נִדְחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, "banished ones (masculine plural) of Israel," and נִפְצוֹת יְהוּדָה, "scattered ones (feminine plural) of Judah" as synonymous, perhaps using the combination of masculine plural and feminine plural to indicate all of those scattered from all of the entire nation, Israel and Judah. This is Alexander's view, who states that "Outcasts and dispersed are of different genders... implying that no sex or rank would be passed by." (P. 258)

⁶²The phrase here is a translation of הָאָרֶץ, "the land" or "the earth." But since it is applied to wherever the Israelites and the Judeans have been scattered and driven, we think it must be referring to "the earth," not to "the land of Israel," outside of which the northern Israelites were scattered (i.e. into Assyria), as well as the Judeans (i.e. into Babylon).

⁶³The phrase מֵאַרְבַּע כַּנְפוֹת, "from four corners / wings / extremities," uses the plural form of כַּנֵּף, "wing."

Alexander observes that "it is properly the wing of a bird, then the skirt or edge of a garment, then the extremity of the earth, in which sense it is used both in the singular and in the plural...The reference of course is to the cardinal points of the compass, as determined by the rising and setting of the sun..."

"If this verse be understood as predicting the agency of the Gentiles in restoring the Jews, it may be said to have been partially fulfilled in the return from Babylon under ...Cyrus, and again in all efforts made by Gentile Christians to convert the Jews; but its full accomplishment is still prospective, and God may even now be lifting up a signal to the Gentiles for this very purpose." (P. 258) See:

Ezekiel 7:2,

And you, son of Adam / a human,
in this way my Lord YHWH spoke to land / ground of Israel:

End!

The end came / is coming upon four wings / extremities / corners of the

(continued...)

⁶³(...continued)

earth!

Job 37:3,

Beneath all the heavens He lets it (the noisy thunder) loose;
and His lightning over the earth's wings / extremities / corners.

Perhaps we should mention the fact that in medieval times it was believed that the earth is square, and has “four corners,” with texts like these being used as “proof-texts.

⁶⁴Kaiser entitles **verses 13-14** “The restoration of Israel and its kingdom.”

Oswald comments on **verses 13-14** that “The prophet, having envisioned the return of the scattered population, now pictures a restoration in terms of the conditions under King David. The two parts of the country will be united, no longer will Judah lord it over Ephraim, nor will Ephraim be motivated by jealousy of Judah. Furthermore, the old Israelite hegemony [dominance, supremacy] over the surrounding territory will be reestablished. The Shephelah between the hill country and the coast (*the shoulder of the Philistines*) will be reconquered. The peoples of Moab, Ammon, and Edom will be subdued. No longer will Israel live in fear of her neighbors.

“G. A. Smith denigrated this picture of enforced submission as being unworthy of the great prophet of peace. However, one should not impose nineteenth-century C.E. ideas of a mutually-agreed-upon cessation of war on the eighth-century B.C.E. prophet. In fact, the idea of peace as a result of a mutual agreement of nations is not a biblical one. The biblical (and Isaianic) idea is of a peace which results from mutual submission to an overwhelming Sovereign (e.g., **Isaiah 9:3-6**^{Heb} / **4-7**^{Eng}; **63:1-6**; **Revelation 19:11-16**). Only when God has defeated His enemies and they have submitted to Him is the vision of peace in **11:6-9** a possibility. The difficulty which the Hebrews had was in admitting that they, too, were the enemies of God who needed to submit to Him...

“In a figurative way [Isaiah] points to a coming time of internal and external safety and security similar to that which they knew under David but to be secured by One greater than David.” (P. 288)

What do you think? Do you agree with G.A. Smith or with Oswald? And why do you think Oswald says Isaiah was pointing “in a figurative way” to this coming kingdom of peace? Is it because he believes the chapter is pointing towards the Messiah, Jesus Christ, and the kingdom of Jesus is not at all like the “Davidic Kingdom” depicted here?

We think the passage is not describing a peace that comes from mutual

(continued...)

וְצַרְרֵי יְהוּדָה יִכְרְתוּ
אֶפְרַיִם לֹא יִקְנֵא אֶת־יְהוּדָה
וַיִּתְּוֹדַה לֹא־יִצַר אֶת־אֶפְרַיִם:

And He will turn aside Ephraim's jealousy,

⁶⁴(...continued)

submission to God, but rather a peace that comes from a united Israel ruling over its neighbors. Is that the kind of peace that Jesus Christ brought in his day? Did he attempt to gain dominance over all those who refused to follow him? Did he attempt to make Israel dominant over other countries? Or did he not reach out to all people, regardless of their race or nationality or social standing, to serve them—with healing, and forgiveness, and humble instruction—willingly dying for the very ones who put him to death?

Gray comments on **verse 13** that “Israel, now called Ephraim (compare **Isaiah 9:8**), and Judah, thus restored (**verse 12**), will no more be subject to the envy and opposition of the nations, nor will the internal feuds which marked the actual history of Yahweh’s people (compare **Isaiah 9:20^{Heb} / 21^{Eng}**), be renewed in the age to come. For the future unity of Israel and Judah, see **Ezekiel 37:15ff.** and **Hosea 2:2^{Heb} / 1:11^{Eng}**.” (Pp. 226-27)

Watts comments that “The tensions and wars between Ephraim and Judah have dominated their history since the time of Jeroboam’s split from Rehoboam. This must be overcome for God’s purposes with the kingdom to be achieved.” (P. 179)

Kaiser comments that “The relationship between the community of Jerusalem and the remnant of the population in Ephraim was tense even in the Persian period, and was disturbed further after the Ephraimites built their own temple on Gerizim in the time of Alexander [the Great—356-323 B.C.E.]. A real schism between the Jews and the Israelites, who now understood themselves as Samaritans, came about only in the second half of the second century B.C.E. The claim of the north to be the real Israel and to have the right to pre-eminence, which was rooted deep in history...had constantly led to jealousy of the south and had developed into acts of violence like the Syro-Ephraimite war...

“With the dawn of the time of salvation, the enemies of Judah will be exterminated in Ephraim; enmity between the two peoples will die out, so that instead of tearing each other apart they can present a united front to their old enemies in the neighborhood. As in **Ezekiel 34:23; 37:15ff.**, and not least in **Jeremiah 3:18; 31:31ff.**, here once again we have an expression of the hope for a greater Israel.” (P. 266)

and those harassing Judah will be cut off.⁶⁵

⁶⁵Translations of this second line of **verse 13** vary:

King James, “and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off;”

Tanakh, “And Judah's harassment shall end;”

New Revised Standard, “the hostility of Judah shall be cut off;”

New International, “and Judah's enemies will be destroyed;”

New Jerusalem, “and Judah's enemies be suppressed;”

Rahfs, καὶ οἱ ἐχθροὶ Ἰουδα ἀπολοῦνται, “and the enemies of Judah will perish.”

The translations of **Tanakh** and **New Revised Standard** can be understood as meaning Judah's harassment of others; all the other translations understand the line as meaning the harassment done to Judah by others.

Slotki comments that “The parallelism requires, and the second part of the verse confirms, the translation: ‘the adversaries (of Ephraim) in Judah,’ a rendering which is rather forced, but may be grammatically justified.” (P. 59) But the explanatory phrase, “(of Ephraim)” is ambiguous. Does it mean “from Ephraim,” or “against Ephraim”?

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 13**: “*And the envy of Ephraim shall depart (or cease), and the enemies of Judah shall be cut off. Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex (oppress or harass) Ephraim.*” He explains that “The first three members of the verse...speak of Ephraim's enmity to Judah, and only the fourth of Judah's enmity to Ephraim...There is indeed another construction of the verse...which makes the prophet represent the parties as precisely alike, and predict exactly the same change in both...The jealousy of Ephraim shall cease—the enemies of Judah among them shall be cut off—Ephraim shall then no longer envy Judah—and Judah in return shall no longer be the enemy of Ephraim...”

“The fulfilment of this prophecy is found by Hendewerk in Hezekiah's efforts to reclaim the Israelites to the worship of Jehovah (**2 Chronicles 30**). That it was not fulfilled in the return from exile, is sufficiently notorious [famous or well known; in our study of Second and Third Isaiah it has become clear that the returnees from Babylon were sharply divided into at least two major factions—between those favoring a rigid legalism, fulfilling the 613 commandments of the Mosaic Torah, segregating themselves from half-breed Jews and foreigners, and those favoring serving the half-breeds and foreigners in brotherly love and self-giving]. That it had not been fulfilled when Christ came, is plain from the continued enmity between the Jews, Samaritans, and Galileans. The only fulfilment it has ever had is in the abolition of all national and sectional distinctions in the Christian Church (**Galatians 3:27, 29; 5:6**), to which converted Jews as well as others must submit. Its full accomplishment is yet to come, in the reunion of the tribes of Israel under Christ their common head (**Hosea 1:11**).” (Pp. 259-61)

But is it true that all national and sectional distinctions were abolished in the Christian Church? **Acts 6** tells the story of how the Hellenist / Greek disciples of Christ

(continued...)

⁶⁵(...continued)

made a complaint against the Hebrew / Jewish disciples concerning the care being given to widows. That doesn't sound like all distinctions had been abolished! And in the **Book of Galatians**, to which Alexander is referring, Paul relates the conflict which he had with Peter, concerning Peter's refusal to eat with Gentile Christians (see **Galatians 1:11-14**, where the distinction was still being made by leading disciples, Peter and Barnabas, between circumcised Jews and non-circumcised Gentiles).

And we wonder...How can a great biblical scholar like Alexander fail to see this, or mention it? Is he so convinced that the Christian religion is the "true religion," and the Jewish religion is not, that he overlooks such an obvious fact? And we have mentioned only distinctions being made in New Testament times. In following centuries much greater distinctions began to be made on philosophical / theological differences

between "western" and "eastern" Christian bodies of believers, and then between "Protestant" and "Catholic" Christians in Reformation times. Need we say more?

I am reminded of the present concern with Muslim jihadists, and the condemnation of Islam which has been expressed loudly by many confessing Christians—but who do not mention our own Christian heritage of racist groups such as the Ku-Klux-Klan and their murder of blacks (and Jews and Catholics) throughout our American history. How do you explain this?

Do you claim that members of the Ku-Klux-Klan, with their burning crosses, are not really Christians? Cannot, and do not the Muslims claim that Muslim terrorists are not really Muslims?

When Christians / Jews point to Islam's forcing nations to become Muslims by the sword, Muslims immediately point to the biblical picture of Israel's putting the nations inhabiting Canaan to the sword, and to the historical fact of Roman Catholicism's Crusades and Inquisitions putting untold number of Jews and Muslims to death.

And if Protestants pretend that this excludes them, and that they are innocent, they have to look at their own histories, which all too often contain religious wars and dogmatic condemnation of other Christians who differ from them.

These are facts that we cannot overlook or deny—facts that call upon all people, of all religions, to come together in honest dialogue, to admit our faults, and to seek to find ways in which we can get beyond this impasse. What do you think? If you truly believe in God, do you not think that God will get us beyond our present inability?

I for one believe that the urgent call today is for honest believers to come together, meeting regularly with one another, to share openly and honestly, to learn to read and appreciate one another's religious texts, and through growing familiarity with one another, and with our various beliefs, to become friends rather than enemies.

(continued...)

Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah,
and Judah will not be hostile to Ephraim.

11:14⁶⁶ וְעַפּוֹ בְכַתְף פְּלִשְׁתִּים

⁶⁵(...continued)

What do you think?

I especially think that religious leaders from all religions should take the responsibility to learn one another's languages, becoming able to read, translate, and dig deeply into one another's religious texts—and on that basis to enter into honest dialogue—hopefully to get beyond the religious impasse that so dominates our world today! What ministers, and what churches / synagogues / mosques / temples will take the lead in such a challenging adventure?

⁶⁶Alexander comments on **verse 14** that “Instead of assailing or annoying one another, [Ephraim and Judah] are represented as making common cause against a common enemy. *And they* (Ephraim and Judah, undivided Israel) *shall fly* (like a bird of prey) *upon the shoulder of the Philistines towards the sea* (or westwards)—*together they shall spoil the sons of the east* (the Arabians and perhaps the Assyrians)—*Edom and Moab the stretching out of their hand* (i.e. their subjects)...

“The Jews explain this as a literal prediction having respect to the countries formerly possessed by the nations here enumerated. Many Christian writers understand it spiritually of the conquests to be achieved by the true religion, and suppose the nations here named to be simply put for enemies in general, or for the heathen world... (P. 261)

Alexander adds that there are “almost innumerable meanings put upon this verse” (**Ibid.**) Again we state, this demonstrates the enigmatic, puzzling nature of the message given by the prophets through their visions. Or, it may be that interpreters don't want to accept what the text is saying. What do you think?

Gray comments on this verse that “Reunited (**verse 13**), Yahweh's people will, as of old under David, exercise dominion over the whole of Palestine, east and west of (the) Jordan (River).” (P. 227) Compare:

Amos 9:11-12,

- 11 On that day, I will raise up the tent of David that has fallen;
and I will build up their broken places,
and its ruins I will raise up.
And I will build it as in the days of old!
- 12 So that they may inherit what remains of Edom,
and all the nations over whom My name is called!

(continued...)

יָמָה יַחֲדוּ
 יִבְזוּ אֶת־בְּנֵי־קָדָם
 אֲדוֹם וּמוֹאָב מִשְׁלֹחַ יָדָם
 וּבְנֵי עַמּוֹן מִשְׁמַעְתָּם:

⁶⁶(...continued)

–It is a saying of YHWH, Who is doing this!

Motyer comments that here in **verse 14** “the Davidic motif continues with the conquest of Phistia (**2 Samuel 5:17-25; 8:1**), the people to the east (probably recalling the mercenaries of Zobah and Tob hired against David in **2 Samuel 10:6**), Edom (**2 Samuel 8:14**), Moab (**2 Samuel 8:2-13**) and the Ammonites (**2 Samuel 10-12**)...

“Such warlike references jar against the forecast of the Prince and his kingdom of peace...but we must understand them as fidelity to a metaphor rather than predictive of a course of events.” (P. 126) The reality behind the metaphor, Motyer claims, is the worldwide proclamation of the gospel of Christ, that conquers enemies through spiritual, not literal weapons.

This is, we think, the kind of predicament that biblical literalists like Motyer get themselves into, in their insistence that every word in the **Bible** is Divinely inspired, without recognizing the biblical teaching in **Numbers 12** and **1 Corinthians 13** that the prophetic message is filled with enigma, i.e., puzzles—and should not be expected to be without apparent contradictions and inconsistencies.

No, this “Prince of Peace” of Isaiah’s vision, is depicted here as a conquering warrior, much like David of old—and Isaiah gives no indication that he is speaking metaphorically as Motyer insists. The passage goes on to depict Israel united as one nation under its coming king, and conquering its long-time enemies—to the west and to the east, causing those former enemies to be in subjection to them—hardly a metaphor for preaching the gospel of Christ to them and causing them to be saved! Unless, that is, we think of the “Christian Crusades” as preaching the gospel by murdering Jews and Muslims, and taking over control of the “Holy Land”! What do you think?

And in the light of this passage, it becomes understandable why many Jews in the first century rejected Jesus as “the Christ / Messiah.” They were expecting a “Warrior Messiah,” who would conquer Israel’s enemies by the sword—exactly what this vision of Isaiah depicts!

And they will fly on (the) shoulder of (the) Philistines,⁶⁷

to (the) sea / west together;

they will plunder (the) easterners,⁶⁸

Edom and Moab--a sending forth of their hand;⁶⁹

⁶⁷Slotki explains that “The land of the Philistines sloping towards the Mediterranean may well be viewed from the hills of Judah as a shoulder.” (P. 59)

Watts holds that the Hebrew text must be translated “The Philistines fly on the shoulder to the East.” (P. 177) We disagree.

Kaiser comments that “The expectation of the restoration of the empire of David is in accord with this. So the combined nations are going to swoop down on their neighbors like an eagle on its prey...This first involves the overthrow of the Philistines...

“The united brother kingdoms [of Judah and Ephraim] are to advance eastward through the inhabited regions into the wilderness of Syria and Arabia, to seize their spoil ...These plundering forays presuppose, as is explicitly stated in **verse 14b**, that Edom... Moab...and Ammon...will again be subject to them. It hardly need be pointed out that there is an unbridgeable contrast between this very earthly hope of the kingdom and that of Christianity.” (Pp. 266-67)

See **John 18:36**,

Jesus answered (Pontius Pilate):

The kingdom that is mine is not out of this world.

If the kingdom that is mine was out of this world,
the servants / assistants of mine would be struggling in order that I not be
handed over to the Jews.

But then now, the kingdom of mine is not from here.

(Translations of the last phrase vary: “not from hence”; “is from another place”; “does not belong here.” C.K. Barrett comments that “Kings of this world naturally fight for supremacy; that Jesus and his followers do not do so shows that his kingdom is of a different order.” [Pp. 536-37] We say, the kingdom of Jesus is a spiritual kingdom, not capable of advancement by force of arms, but only by spiritual means. It is not the kind of kingdom being depicted here in **Isaiah 11:14!** What do you say?)

⁶⁸Slotki states that the literal Hebrew, “the children of the east,” means “the Arabian tribes who live in the eastern desert.” (P. 59)

⁶⁹Slotki’s translation has “They shall put forth their hand upon Edom and Moab.” He states that the opening phrase is literally “the putting forth of their hand,” and explains that “Edom, Moab and Ammon were inveterate [deep-seated, long established] enemies of Israel, but they will submit to the ideal ruler.” (P. 59)

and Ammon's children (will be) their obedient servants!⁷⁰

11:15⁷¹ וְהָחֲרִים יְהוָה אֶת לְשׁוֹן יַם-מִצְרַיִם

⁷⁰Rahlf's translation of **verse 14** is quite different:

καὶ πετασθήσονται ἐν πλοίοις ἀλλοφύλων θάλασσαν
ἅμα προνομεύσουσιν καὶ τοὺς ἀφ' ἡλίου ἀνατολῶν καὶ Ἰδουμαίαν
καὶ ἐπὶ Μωαβ πρῶτον τὰς χεῖρας ἐπιβαλοῦσιν
οἱ δὲ υἱοὶ Ἀμμων πρῶτοι ὑπακούσονται
And they will spread out sails / fly in sea-ships of other / foreign tribes;
together they will go foraging / plundering both the ones from (the) east /
sun's risings, and Idoumaia;
and upon Moab first they will lay the hands;
but then sons of Ammon / Ammonites will be obedient.

⁷¹Slotki comments on **verses 15-16**, that "As at the exodus from Egypt, a highway will be prepared for the returning exiles." (P. 69) At least, that is, for those returning from Assyria.

Kaiser entitles **verses 15-16** "The Way for Those Returning Home."

He comments that "The picture of the time of salvation comes to a comforting conclusion with the adopting of the theme, familiar from the prophecy of **Deutero-Isaiah (chapters 40-55)**, of the preparation of a way for the people (compare **40:3; 41:17ff.; 42:15ff.; 43:1ff.** and **35:1ff.**) returning home from captivity: Yahweh Himself will remove the natural obstacles so that those returning home have a free passage...

"The way for the Egyptian Diaspora is again to lead through the sea, for which in the changed conditions of the time of salvation there will no longer really be any occasion. For this purpose it will again be dried up. In a similar way Yahweh will lift up His hand threateningly against the Euphrates and divide it by an east wind into seven (i.e. an indeterminate number) tributaries, so that people can cross it without even taking off their shoes." (Pp. 267-68)

Gray comments on these two verses that "The second exodus (**verse 15**), in which the remnant will depart as easily from Assyria as Israel of old from Egypt (**verse 16**), would in reality be the prelude to the unmolested life and victorious undertakings of the restored exiles (**verses 13-14**)." (P. 227)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 15** that "To the destruction of the enemies of Israel is added a prediction that all obstacles, even the most formidable, to the restoration of God's people, shall be overcome or taken away by His almighty power. This idea is naturally expressed by the dividing of the Red Sea and Euphrates, because Egypt and Assyria are the two great powers from which Israel had suffered and was yet to be delivered. *And Jehovah will destroy (by drying up) the tongue (or bay) of the sea of Egypt (i.e. the Red Sea), and He will wave His hand (as a gesture of*

(continued...)

וְהִנִּיף יָדוֹ עַל-הַנָּהָר בְּעֵים רוּחוֹ
וְהִכְהוֹ לְשִׁבְעָה נַחְלִים
וְהִדְרִיךְ בְּנַעְלִים:

⁷¹(...continued)

menace or a symbol of miraculous power) *over the river* (Euphrates), *in the violence of His wind* (or breath), *and smite it* (the Euphrates), *into seven streams, and make* (His people) *tread* (it) *in shoes* (i.e. dry-shod)...

“*Tongue*, which is applied in other languages to projecting points of land, is here descriptive of a bay or indentation in a shore. The *sea of Egypt* is not the Nile, as some suppose, although the name sea has been certainly applied to it from the earliest time—but the Red Sea, called the Sea of Egypt for the same reason that it is called the Arabian Gulf [i.e., Egypt is on its west, Arabia is on its east]. The *tongue* of this sea is the narrow gulf or bay in which it terminates to the north-west near Suez...

“Through the former the Israelites passed when they left Egypt, and it is now predicted that it shall be utterly destroyed, i.e. dried up. At the same time the Euphrates is to be smitten into seven streams and so made fordable, as Cyrus is said to have reduced the Gyndes by diverting its waters into 360 artificial channels...The terms are probably strong figures drawn from the early history and experience of Israel.” (Pp. 261-62)

“The ‘Gyndes River’ is the Diyala River (Kurdish and Persian: Sirwan)...a river and tributary of the Tigris that originates in Iran as the Sirwan (or Sirvan) River then runs mainly through Eastern Iraq. It covers a total distance of 277 miles. It rises near Hamadan, in the Zagros Mountains of Iran. It then descends through the mountains, where for some 20 miles it forms the border between the two countries. It finally feeds into the Tigris below Baghdad. Navigation of the upper reaches of the Diyala is not possible because of its narrow defiles, but the river's valley provides an important trade route between Iran and Iraq.” (Wikipedia, 7/1/2016)

And YHWH will destroy⁷² (the) tongue of (the) sea of Egypt;

and He will wave His hand over the River⁷⁴ with the glow of His breath / Spirit;⁷⁵

⁷²The Hebrew phrase is **וַיִּחַרְרֵם**, which means something like “and He will ban,” or “...exterminate,” or “...devote to destruction.” Our English translations vary between “utterly destroy” and “dry up.” **Brown-Driver-Briggs** suggests that here it means “to destroy by drying up.” **Rahlfs** has καὶ ἐρημώσει, “and He will dry up.”

Such a thing has not happened thus far in history, not with the return of the exiles from Babylon, or in modern history as Jews have returned to Israel from all over the world.

⁷³Slotki explains that “the tongue of the Egyptian sea” means “The gulf of Suez, for the exiles to cross when returning from the direction of Egypt.” (P. 60)

Motyer agrees, stating that “*Gulf* / ‘tongue’ is an unparalleled use but a clear reference to the Red Sea.” (P. 127)

See on the Internet “Images for Gulf of Suez.” The Red Sea, which separates between Eastern Africa and Arabia, is somewhat like a long, extended rabbit, with its two long ears, the western ear (Gulf of Suez) larger than the eastern ear (Gulf of Aqabah), reaching up on both sides of the Wilderness Peninsula. Yes, they can be called “tongues”—perhaps “forked tongues”—but we think “ears” is more appropriate.

But what does Isaiah mean by predicting that the Red Sea will be destroyed to enable the exiled remnant to return to Israel? How are we to understand this prediction in the light of history? Must we not confess that Isaiah’s prediction has not turned out to be true? And must we not admit that Isaiah, in the language of Paul, “saw the future through a mirror darkly,” certainly not clearly or exactly?

⁷⁴Again Slotki explains that by “the River” [Hebrew: **הַנְּהַר**], that it means “the Euphrates, for those journeying from the direction of Assyria.” (P. 60) Oftentimes this is the case, but we think it is possible here that “the River” refers to the Nile as it spreads out in the different branches of the delta.

Motyer agree with Slotki, that this means the Euphrates, and states that “The reference to the Euphrates River indicates that this new exodus will be a world-wide movement.” (P. 127)

⁷⁵**Rahlfs** translates the Hebrew phrase **בְּעֵיִם רִוְחוֹ**, which we translate by “with the glow of His breath / Spirit” by πνεύματι βιαίῳ, “by a violent wind / spirit.” The Aramaic targum has “by the word of His prophets.” The Syriac translation has “with the

(continued...)

and He will strike it into seven wadis / channels,

and He will lead (people) / cause people to tread in the sandals.⁷⁶

11:16⁷⁷ וְהִיתָה מִסְלָה לְשָׂאֵר עַמּוֹ

⁷⁵(...continued)

power of His wind,” and the Latin Vulgate has “in the strength of His spirit.”

Again we say, the interpretation of the **Bible** is not easily determined; rather, many statements are ambiguous, and both can and have lead to differing understandings.

⁷⁶Translations of **verse 15** vary:

King James, “And the LORD shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make *men* go over dryshod.”

Tanakh, “The LORD will dry up the tongue of the Egyptian sea. -- He will raise His hand over the Euphrates with the might of His wind and break it into seven wadis, so that it can be trodden dry-shod.”

New Revised Standard, “And the LORD will utterly destroy the tongue of the sea of Egypt; and will wave his hand over the River with his scorching wind; and will split it into seven channels, and make a way to cross on foot;”

New International, “The LORD will dry up the gulf of the Egyptian sea; with a scorching wind he will sweep his hand over the Euphrates River. He will break it up into seven streams so that anyone can cross over in sandals.”

New Jerusalem, “Then Yahweh will dry up the gulf of the Sea of Egypt, he will raise his hand against the River with the heat of his breath. He will divide it into seven streams for them to cross dry-shod.”

Rahlf's, καὶ ἐρημώσει κύριος τὴν θάλασσαν Αἰγύπτου καὶ ἐπιβαλεῖ τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸν ποταμὸν πνεύματι βιαίῳ καὶ πατάξει ἑπτὰ φάραγγας ὥστε διαπορεύεσθαι αὐτὸν ἐν ὑποδήμασιν, “And Lord will make desolate the sea of Egypt, and will lay His hand upon the river, with a violent wind; and He will strike seven ravines, so as he will (be able) to go through in sandals.”

⁷⁷Alexander first translates and then comments on **verse 16**: “*And there shall be a highway for the remnant of His people, which shall be left, from Assyria, as there was for Israel, in the day of His coming up from the land of Egypt...*”

“This verse admits of two interpretations. According to one, it is a comparison of the former deliverance from Egypt with the future one from Assyria and the neighboring countries, where most Jewish exiles were to be found...

“According to the other, it is a repetition of the preceding promise, that previous deliverances, particularly those from Egypt and Assyria, should be repeated in the future history of the Church. The fulfilment has been sought by different interpreters, in

(continued...)

אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁאֵר מֵאֲשׁוּר
כַּאֲשֶׁר הִיְתָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל
בַּיּוֹם עָלְתוּ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:

And there will be a highway⁷⁸ for a remnant of His people,
who will be left remaining from Assyria,⁷⁹

⁷⁷(...continued)

the return from Babylon, in the general progress of the gospel;, and in the future restoration of the Jews...

“The first of these can at most be regarded only as a partial or inchoate [just begun, and so not fully formed] fulfilment, and against the last lies the obvious objection that the context contains promises and threatenings which are obviously figurative, although so expressed as to contain allusions to remarkable events in the experience of Israel.” (P. 262)

And we say, Obviously, Isaiah’s written message is anything but clear, exact. Rather, it is filled with ambiguity, with enigma, with puzzling statements, that can be taken in differing senses.

⁷⁸Slotki comments that by “highway” is meant a highway “through gulf and river.” (P. 60) Perhaps...but it seems from the remainder of the verse that the “highway” is one from Assyria, therefore “through the river,” but not the gulf.

Alexander states that מִסְלָהּ is not simply a way, as the ancient versions give it, nor a fortified way...but a highway...an artificial road formed by casting up the earth (from סָלַל to raise), and thus distinguished from a path worn by feet.” (P. 262)

Watts states that the **Book of Isaiah** returns to this thought of the “highway” in **19:23; 35:8; 49:11; 62:10**. The Persians are known to have developed an extensive network of such roads...which were forerunners of the famous Roman roads.” (P. 179)

⁷⁹Motyer comments that “Now the remnant is world-wide, the summoning of the Gentiles, as in **verse 12**. In **verse 11** the thought was the geographical spread of the regathering; here it is the universal people.” (P. 127)

While we agree that a “world-wide” regathering of YHWH’s people is indicated in **verses 11 and 12**, **verse 16** only depicts a highway for return from Assyria, and we see no indication in the text of a “universal people.” What do you think?

Just as there was for Israel⁸⁰

in (the) day of his coming up from Egypt-land!

⁸⁰Watts states that “The parallel to the exodus moves beyond the facts in suggesting that a similar highway existed for Israel’s flight from Egypt.” (P. 179)

Gray observes that there is “persistent alliteration” in the first three lines of **verse 16**. (P. 228) Indeed there is when reading in Hebrew—though not in English. See especially these words:

אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁאֵר מֵאֲשֶׁר כְּאֲשֶׁר
(asher yishsha)er me)ashshur ka)asher

Watts explains **verses 11-16**, stating that they are “united by the single theme of Yahweh’s gathering the scattered exiles of His people (**verses 11** and **15**). The signal with His hand occurs three times (**verses 11, 12, 15**)...

“In **verse 11** two lines are drawn. One from north (Assyria) to south (Cush), a second from east (Elam) to west (Islands of the sea). This parallels the four ‘wings’ of the earth (**verse 12**).

“References to the remnant are careful to include both Israel and Judah (**verse 12**) in accordance with practice throughout the [**Book of Isaiah**]...

“The exile to Assyria began at least as early as 721 B.C.E. (**2 Kings 17:6**) but possibly earlier in 733 B.C.E. (**2 Kings 16:9**) as one of the Assyrian documents claims.

“**Verses 13-14** [predict] a reunited kingdom...**Verses 15-16** emphasize the axis from Assyria through Egypt that crosses Canaan. God’s return of His people from both directions miraculously removes the natural barriers, the gulf and the river, by the power of His Spirit, or wind.” (P. 180)

1.

Preaching on Isaiah 11:1-10

Isaiah believed it, and risked his reputation and his future on the truth of this great hope. This is YHWH God's world, the whole world! And God has a gloriously radiant future in store for His people! This is the stuff out of which hope is generated. Isaiah tells us that even in the midst of this old world, so filled with the noise of war, and threatening enemies, and destruction, as great nations are "felled" and crash to the earth, our God is in the act of creating a new world through his "coming one," the "Root of Jesse," the one called "Branch" or "Sprout." It will be a completely renewed world, in which the old hostilities have been overcome, where the so-called "natural enemies" are at peace, a world where evil and destruction are at an end. Indeed, Isaiah pictures a day when the whole earth will be covered with the knowledge of YHWH, "like the waters cover up the oceans."

What do you make of all this? Will you reject it, saying "It will never happen!?" Will you call it all "fantasy," and claim that it's the meaningless vision of someone who has lost control of his senses--that there is simply too much in-born evil in human hearts, and in nature's creatures, for such a beautiful picture to ever come close to becoming reality? You can say all of that, of course--but at the same time, you cannot deny how deeply we human beings across the ages have wished that such a thing both could and would come to pass.

The good news of the Christian faith is that this "Root of Jesse," this great promised "Branch," or "Sprout," or descendent of David, has come--he has entered into human history! That's the good news--already in our human history, God himself is present in him, remaking our world, creating a new world of hope and life and peace out of this old world so filled with hatred and killing and suspicion and evil intent.

It's not all fulfilled yet, by any means--but one day it's all going to be fulfilled! That's what Isaiah believed--and the apostle Paul after him--and it's what our Christian faith tells us we can believe too! The pessimists are wrong--terribly wrong. The world is not "going to hell in a hand-basket." Quite the opposite is the truth. This old world of killing and hatred and war is headed for renewal. It is going to become the paradise of God, the dwelling-place for peace, and rest, and safety, and tranquility, and reconciliation of former enemies!

Yes, there is hope for our world, and for you and me, and for the so-called "lower forms of life"--because God created us all, and God is at work to bring about that future. Nature itself is going to be transformed by the power that is already working in our history, through our King Jesus, born almost 2,000 years ago, and still alive, risen from the dead. He is the "Root of Jesse," the "Branch," the "Sprout," that has risen out of Jesse's "stump." The genuine Spirit of God is present in him--in all of the Divine wisdom and understanding, in the fulness of God's counsel and strength; in the full light of Divine knowledge and trembling respect for God. His teaching is powerful--it destroys evil and wickedness, and it leads the people of God to do everything in their power to renew this world in terms of righteousness and true faithfulness.

This world is still filled with ignorance, and warring, and killing--nature is still "red in tooth and claw." But the power of the new world is already at work. The forces of evil are under assault--and the day is coming when wrong and destruction will have reached their end, when the world will be renewed, when the garden of Eden will be regrown and inhabited by all earth's peoples--and peace will reign on earth!

Already this great descendant of Jesse, and of David, is standing as a "sign" for the nations. Already his good news is being proclaimed, world-wide, and the knowledge of God is beginning to fill up the earth, just as the waters fill up the oceans. Already the nations of this earth are seeking him, more and more, and the tiny, thin voice of peace, is becoming louder and louder, until one day soon it will become a roaring, thunderous song that captivates the attention of all creation. God has a gloriously radiant future for His people--for all of us! I want to be a part of it, don't you?

Isaiah's vision calls us to share in that vibrant hope. His words call us to watch for, and share in, the coming of this great new day of God, which will one day fully come into our war-torn, hate-filled world. I believe / hope that one day in the near future, Israel is going to give up its hardness of heart towards Jesus, and will accept him as its God-given king--which he truly is. And I believe that all of God's believing people will ultimately join hands, as brothers and sisters in the family of God, to enter into a world-wide mission of loving service and teaching and healing that will transform this battle-weary world into the paradise that our Creator God intended from the beginning.

What about you? Do you live in hope, or in despair? Are you a "confirmed pessimist"? Do you refuse to believe that there really is a future--a good, a blessed future, one filled with vibrant joy and genuine peace for all earth's peoples, including the "lower forms of life"--the animals as well?

Such a vision, and such a hope, are the fruit of faith in the God of the **Bible**, who is truly the "Lord of History." That vision, and that hope, grow out of an open, trusting, obedient relationship with the God of the **Bible**. To accept Jesus as our Lord and King is to enter into the kind of world-view where such a hope is not only a possibility, but where it becomes an integral part of our life, and of our character, as we walk hand in Hand with God through placing our lives in personal relationship with Jesus, His Anointed King! In an amazing way, this Root of Jesse becomes our "resting-place," as he enables us to enter into the "Rest of God" (see **Matthew 11:28-30**.)

This vibrant sense of hope and expectancy, this reaching out eagerly to the future, this longing to know and help to bring to pass God's wondrous future for all his creatures, is the automatic response of faith in, and fellowship with God! Such a living hope can be ours--if we will commit our lives to this great "Root of Jesse"--making him our Lord and King--thereby moving out of the world of destruction, and hopelessness, into his new world of peace with justice!

