

Isaiah Chapter 12, Hebrew Text with Translation and Footnotes

Singing the Song of Salvation

Through YHWH's Forgiveness and Mighty Acts

12:1' וְאָמַרְתָּ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא

¹Slotki states that “This chapter, consisting of two hymns, is regarded by certain authorities as the conclusion of the first division of Isaiah’s prophecies which began with **chapter 1.**” (P. 59)

Alexander states that here in **chapter 12** “taking occasion from the reference to Egypt and the exodus in the close of the preceding chapter, the prophet now puts into the mouth of Israel a song analogous to that of Moses, from which some of the expressions are directly borrowed. The structure of this psalm is very regular, consisting of two parts, in each of which the prophet first tells the people what they will say, or have a right to say, when the foregoing promises are verified, and then addresses them again in his own person and in the usual language of prediction...

“In the first stanza, they are made to acknowledge the Divine compassion and to express their confidence in God as the source of all their strength, and therefore the rightful object of their praise (**verses 1-3**). In the second stanza, they exhort one another to make known what God has done for them, not only at home but among all nations, and are exhorted by the prophet to rejoice in the manifested presence of Jehovah (**verses 4-6**)...

“Ewald rejects this chapter, as an addition made by some reader or transcriber of **Isaiah** later than the exile...Umbreit gives a sufficient answer when he says that the prophet, intending to wind up his prophecy with a composition in the nature of a psalm, adopts of course the general style, which from the time of David had been used for that purpose.” (P. 263)

Gray entitles **chapter 12** “Songs of Deliverance: to be sung on the occasion of the New Exodus (**11:11, 15**).”

He comments that “The chapter consists of two songs, (a) **verses 1-3**, (b) **verses 4-6**...Each song written for the new exodus...is suitably enough reminiscent of the song (**Exodus 15:1-18**) which, according to the tradition already current in the writer’s age, had been sung by Moses and the children of Israel on the occasion of the first exodus...

“The first song expresses Israel’s gratitude that though Yahweh had been angry (compare **Isaiah 10:5**), His anger had turned away (**10:25**), and He had comforted His people (compare **Isaiah 40:1-2**), delivering them and restoring them to their land, and to an unmolested...and glorious life there (**chapter 11**). The second song calls for the proclamation to the nations of the might of Yahweh displayed in the restoration of His people, and (**verse 6**) for Zion to cry out joyously at the presence in her midst of her

(continued...)

¹(...continued)
great and Holy God.

“It thus seems obvious that the chapter was written to occupy its present position after a collection of prophecies that spoke of Yahweh’s anger with His people, but concluded with an account of the new exodus. Whether this collection of prophecies was **10:5-11:16** only or **chapters 1-11, chapter 12**, being the sequel to **11:10-16**, is no earlier than that passage, and therefore, post-exilic.” (Pp. 228-29)

Kaiser entitles **chapter 12** “The Thanksgiving of the Redeemed.”

He comments on **verses 1-6** that “The recollection of the exodus from Egypt in **11:15-16** led the editor to whom we owe at least the final form of the collection known as Proto-Isaiah, extending from **chapter 1** to **chapter 39**, to make the redeemed people sing an eschatological hymn of thanksgiving as they did once when delivered from the sea (compare **Exodus 15**). Thus he transports his own community, that of the second temple, still suffering as a result the exile, to the moment in which the prophecies given in **10:5-11:16** have been fulfilled. The world power has been destroyed, the kingdom of the king of peace has dawned, and the scattered people of God have returned to a homeland freed from foreign rule. With the insertion of this hymn he provided a powerful conclusion to the prophecies about his own people contained in **chapters 1-11**, which set them apart from the following **chapters 13-23 (33)**, with their sayings about foreign nations...

“**Verse 5** concludes the artistic composition with a summons to joy of the kind that belongs to the prophetic promise of salvation...The poem is a prophetic composition which the community finds to have the property of a promise of salvation. The lateness of the composition is evident from its mosaic style, its character and its thought, made up of quotations and allusions to other hymns in the **Old Testament** and words from the **Book of Isaiah** [see his footnote 12 for details].” (P. 269)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 1**: “*And thou—Israel, the people of God—shalt say in that day—when the foregoing promise is accomplished—I will praise Thee—strictly acknowledge Thee as worthy, and as a Benefactor—for Thou wast angry with me, but Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortest me...*”

“It was not simply because God was angry that the people praise Him, but because He was angry and His anger had passed.” (P. 263)

Slotki comments on **verses 1-2** that “the two verses are thought to compose hymn that was sung by the community here visualized as one individual. (P. 60)

Motyer states that “**Verses 1 and 2** could not be bettered as a poetic summary of **6:1-7**. The themes of Divine anger turning to comfort (**verse 1**) and the joy of trusting a saving God (**verse 2**) reflect Isaiah’s own experience [in **chapter 6**].

(continued...)

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He comments that “When the holiness of God made Isaiah aware of his sin (**6:5**) his eyes were opened, at the same time, to his membership of a sinful community...The tiny beginning of one man’s salvation has grown into the company of the redeemed. In **chapter 12** one man’s song modulates into a singing community and the Holy One, Who was the sinner’s greatest threat (**6:3-5**), now dwells in the midst of an exultant city (**verse 6**)...

“No doubt the whole collection, **chapters 6-12**, was put together by Isaiah for this purpose: to give heart to a beleaguered remnant of the Lord’s people by sharing his own experience, reviewing and explaining the way of God and the certainty of His promises, and strengthening them with a diet of truth, experience and sure hope.” (P. 127-28)

He adds that “The song [**chapter 12**] is a prediction in which the prophetic voice first addresses an individual and puts a testimony in his mouth (**verses 1-2**). He then turns to the community, describing their enjoyment of salvation (**verse 3**) and putting in their mouths what they will say to each other (**verses 4-5**). Finally, returning to the individual (the feminine singular of **verse 6** balancing the masculine of **verse 1**), the Jerusalemite woman is commanded to exult in the presence of the Holy One.” (P. 128)

Watts entitles **chapter 12** “Hymns for ‘That Day.’”

He comments that “There are two distinct parts. In the first, the herald instructs the city (**verses 1-2**) and uses the singular...In the second, instruction is directed to its inhabitants (plural). It gives a promise (**verse 3**) which completes the admonition of **10:24** not to fear the Assyrian. Then it instructs them in the proper liturgical response for ‘that day’...The events to which the hymns should respond are viewed as yet to come.” (P. 182)

Oswalt entitles **chapter 12** “The Song of Trust.”

He comments that “This brief paeon [song of praise or triumph] incorporating two shorter fragments (**verses 1b-2, 4-6**) brings **chapters 7-12** (or **6-12**) to a fitting close...It must be obvious that the chapter was written as a conclusion to the preceding ones...

“Throughout **chapters 7-11** there is the recurring appeal to the house of David and to Judah to put aside their fears of the nations around them and to focus their primary attention upon God, Who is Master of the nations and Who is utterly trustworthy. That trustworthiness is underlined by the promise that although their refusal to trust will issue in defeat and despair, it will not result in complete destruction of Israel as a people. Although God is under no external obligation to do so, He will deliver them from the chains which their own hands have forged...

(continued...)

אִוְדַךְ יְהוָה
 כִּי אֲנַפֵּה בִי
 יֵשֶׁב אִפְךָ
 וְתִנְחַמְנִי:

And you (singular)² shall say in that day,³

¹(...continued)

“**Chapter 12** looks to a time when the people will have drawn the appropriate conclusions, the very ones Isaiah has been pressing, as a result of God’s gracious activity. The truths are made the more powerful because they are put in the lyrical language of worship rather than in mere discursive prose.

²Slotki comments that here “the prophet addresses the community.” (P. 59)

Gray likewise states that the 2nd person singular is “Israel, who speaks in the first person singular in the following poem, as so often in the **Psalter**, [and] is here addressed.” (P. 230)

Watts states that “*You* is masculine singular and apparently refers to Zion.” (P. 182)

³Slotki holds that “in that day” refers to the “day of deliverance and return to Zion.” (P. 59)

Motyer likewise states that they “link the song to the day when the old exodus will be superceded by the new (**11:10-11**).” (P. 127)

Oswalt comments that “Here, the frequently repeated phrase *in that day* takes on a diametrically opposite tone from the one found in such places as **2:20; 3:18; 4:1; 7:18, 20, 21, 23**. There the coming day was one to be dreaded, but here, as in **4:2; 10:20**; and **11:10**, it is a day to be hoped for...

“The central focus of these **verses [1-2]**, as well as the entire song, is upon God. This is what Isaiah has been appealing for...Praise and thanks are essential to robust spiritual life, not because God needs them like some neurotic Tyrant, but because we need to give them. It is only in this way that we can refocus our attention upon how much we have received from a loving Father and in that appreciation stop attempting to use Him as our Servant (idolatry)...

(continued...)

I will praise You / give You thanks,⁴ YHWH!
because (though) You were angry⁵ at me--⁶
Your anger turned back,
and You had compassion on me!⁷

³(...continued)

“The source of the praise is the amazing discovery that God’s anger has been removed and that He, the former Enemy, has in fact become a source of encouragement and tender support.” (P. 292)

⁴Gray states that the Hebrew word **נָתַתְּ** (1st person singular of the hiphil imperfect of **נָתַתְּ**, “throw”) “occurs also in **verses 4, 25:1, 38:18, 19**, and nowhere else in the **Book of Isaiah**: it occurs in **Genesis 29:35**, very frequently in the **Psalter**, and elsewhere most frequently in [**1 and 2**] **Chronicles**.” (P. 230)

⁵Gray comments that “The verb **אָנַח** [be angry] is used here only in the **Book of Isaiah**; other occurrences of it are worth comparing in illustration of the similarity in tone and temper of this psalm and late liturgical pieces: see **Psalms 60:3, 79:5, 85:6**, and **1 Kings 8:46** (with the following verses).” (P. 230)

Watts states that “God’s anger is a direct reference to **10:25**...On the basis of [Isaiah’s great theophanic vision of **10:27d-32**], faith saw the Mighty God approaching His land and His city like a great Forester (**10:33-34**) and sang out beside the old promises of history in God’s hands and of God’s Own king and the peace he brings (**11:1-10**) a newer promise that the scattered exiles will be returned (**11:11-16**). Now the hymns respond to the great Theophany, daring to hope for an end very soon to God’s period of anger.” (P. 183)

⁶Oswalt comments on this line, which begins with the particle conjunction **כִּי**, “because,” “that,” “for,” that **כִּי** “normally has a causal function in this setting: a song of praise with the **כִּי** introducing the reason for praise. But the singer is not praising God because He was angry, which the simple ‘for’ would suggest. Rather the praise is for the entire process and its outcome; anger, anger removed, comfort instead. In English it is necessary to add ‘though’ to make the point clear.” (P. 289)

We say, the singer praises God because in spite of His being angry, His anger has turned to compassion, comforting him.

⁷Kaiser comments on **verses 1-2** that “The poet directs the thoughts of his community towards the day on which it will be free from the burden of its present servitude and from being scattered among the nations as an expression of the Divine anger, and Yahweh Himself has comforted it by creating all-embracing salvation.” (Pp.

(continued...)

12:2⁸ הִנֵּה אֵל יְשׁוּעָתִי

אֲבַטַח וְלֹא אֶפְחַד

כִּי־עֲזִי וְזַמְרַת יְהוָה

נִיהְיֶה־לִּי לְיְשׁוּעָה:

⁷(...continued)
270-71)

Oswalt states that “**Chapter 12** asks a question by implication. How can God’s anger be turned to comfort? From whence will come the atoning sacrifice? The question is not answered until it is considered in detail in **chapters 40-55**. Yet its presentation here prepares the way for that eventual answer and forces the reader to begin to think about it.” (P. 293)

All of this is being read into the text by Oswalt. The text itself does not raise the question, either actually or by implication. God’s anger has turned away, and instead He has acted in compassion. Only a doctrinaire legalist could begin to question God’s mercy—claiming that it could only come as a result of “an atoning sacrifice.” See again **Isaiah 40:1-2**, which in our mind completely undermines Oswalt’s position on this matter. YHWH had completely forgiven Israel, long before Isaiah’s mention of the “suffering servant,” or its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

⁸Slotki comments that “the second section of the **verse [2]** is almost a repetition of **Exodus 15:2** [the ‘Song of Moses,’ depicted as being sung immediately following Israel’s miraculous crossing of the Red Sea / Sea of Reeds], and both **verses 2 and 3** form the beginning of the *Habdalah* or the benediction and scriptural texts recited at the termination of the Sabbath.” (P. 61)

It is our understanding that the *Habdalah* varies greatly in various Jewish communities, and not all of them contain these verses of **Isaiah 12**.

Alexander translates **verse 2**: “Behold God is my salvation. I will trust, and not be afraid; for my strength and song is Jah Jehovah, and He is become my salvation.” (P. 264)

Motyer comments on **verses 2-5** that “Just as the Lord moved from forgiveness (**6:7**) to commissioning and proclamation (**6:8ff.**), so here those who drink from the wells of salvation (**verse 3**) call one another to make His doings known to the world (**verses 4-5**).” (P. 127)

Look–El,⁹ (is) my salvation / deliverance--¹⁰

I will trust, and I will not be in dread!¹¹

Because my strength and song (is) Yah, YHWH!¹²

And He came to me for salvation / deliverance!¹³

⁹Gray comments that “God, אֱלֹהִים [El, the supreme God of the Canaanite pantheon], without the definite article, is used absolutely of the one true God.” (Pp. 230-31)

1QIs^a has the double אֱלֹהִים, אֱלֹהִים.

¹⁰Oswalt comments that this line, *Behold, God is my salvation*, “expresses the truth that there is no salvation apart from God. It is not merely *that* He saves; He *is* salvation. To know Him is to know deliverance.” (P. 293)

¹¹Oswalt comments that this line, *I will trust and not fear* “is what Isaiah was attempting to get Ahaz to say in **7:2-9**. In fact, Ahaz could not say it. Overcome by his fear of Ephraim and Syria, he could not believe that God was with him. As a result, he put his trust in an alliance with his ultimate enemy, Assyria.

¹²Alexander comments on the phrase אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה for which he has *Jah Jehovah*, that אֱלֹהֵינוּ “is a shortened form of אֱלֹהֵינוּ, and as such occurs at the end of many compound proper names. In the song of Moses, from which this expression is borrowed, אֱלֹהֵינוּ is omitted (**Exodus 15:2**), as also in **Psalms 118:14**, which is copied from the same [passage]. Nor does the combination אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה occur elsewhere, except in **Isaiah 26:4**.” (P. 264)

Gray claims that the Divine name Yahweh “is inserted in the Hebrew text after Yah, but is absent from [the Greek translation] and from **Exodus 15:2**, and it overloads the line.” (P. 231)

Such a conclusion is bristling with assumptions—such as that the Greek preserves the original text, and that the author of Isaiah was dependent on, or was quoting **Exodus 15:2**—neither of which is certain.

¹³Motyer comments on **verse 2** that “The opening and concluding truth that ‘my salvation’ is found in God Himself forms a bracket round the four characteristics of the saved: trust, the end of fear, strength and song...

“The Lord, Who was under no obligation to do so and might well either have done nothing or acted otherwise, has become my salvation, i.e. freely cast Himself into

(continued...)

12:3¹⁴ וּשְׂאֲבַתְּם־מַיִם בְּשִׂשׂוֹן

מִמְעֵיֵן הַיְשׁוּעָה:

And you (plural)¹⁵ shall draw water¹⁶ with rejoicing,
from springs of the salvation / deliverance!¹⁷

¹³(...continued)

the role of Savior. This stresses the element of Divine decision as well as of Divine action, without which no sinner is ever saved.” (P. 129)

Of course, much of Motyer’s language is not found in the text—“cast Himself into the role of Savior,” “sinner being saved,” “Divine decision” and “Divine action.” We believe that YHWH God has always been a “Savior God,” and this is not something that YHWH just decides to do on occasion. Even His judgment is intended to bring the guilty to repentance and salvation. What do you think?

¹⁴Oswalt comments on **verses 3-6**: “The prophet now expands the scope of the song. Whereas **verses 1** and **2** tended to be more inner-directed, these verses are directed outward. The world must know Who God is (**Isaiah 2:1-4**)...Far from trusting in the nations for her own salvation, Israel is intended to be the vehicle whereby the nations can come to know God.” (P. 294)

Motyer comments on **verse 3** that “The prophet speaks again in his own voice.” (P. 129)

¹⁵Motyer comments that “Within the poem there is a change from the second and first person singular of **verses 1-2** to the second person plural of **verses 3-5**.” (P. 127)

¹⁶Motyer states that “Water us a recurring motif in the exodus story. The crossing of the Red Sea [no—the text has יַם־סוּף, ‘Sea of Reeds / Rushes’] was followed by the disappointing waters of Marah (**Exodus 15:22-24**), but then came the wells...of Elim (**Exodus 15:27**) and the water from the rock (**Exodus 17**). This is the model Isaiah is following. The God Who saves continues to minister salvation to His people as an ever available reality to enjoy.” (P. 129)

Perhaps...but we see no indication of Isaiah’s dependence on the story in **Exodus**. Do you? The motif of “water”—yes. But specific relation to **Exodus**?

¹⁷Slotki states that this matter of drawing water from wells of salvation is “a metaphor of special appeal to an Eastern people which depended for life upon wells. [It is] a promise of God’s bounty.” (P. 61) Compare **Jeremiah 2:13**,

For two evil things my people have done--
they forsook Me, a fountain of living waters,

(continued...)

12:4¹⁸ וַאֲמַרְתֶּם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא

הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה

קִרְאוּ בְשֵׁמוֹ

הוֹדִיעוּ בְעַמִּים עֲלִילַתּוֹ

הַזְכִּירוּ כִּי נִשְׁגַּב שְׁמוֹ:

And you will say¹⁹ in that day,

¹⁷(...continued)

to dig out for themselves cisterns—
broken cisterns that will not contain the waters!

See also **Jeremiah 17:13** and **Psalms 36: 9^{Heb} / 10^{Eng}; 87:7**.

Alexander translates by “And ye shall draw water with joy from the springs of salvation,” and comments that “This is a natural and common figure for obtaining and enjoying Divine favor.” (P. 264)

¹⁸Kaiser comments on **verses 4-6** that “The brief hymn which ends in an invitation to rejoice assures the community that the day will in fact come when they confess in praise of God the deeds of Yahweh before the nations...The people of Jerusalem, who in the present suffer in grievous servitude because their God is hidden from the world, will then truly shout and sing for joy, because Yahweh now dwells in their midst in all His splendor, which the world can no longer ignore...The God Who is set above all the world will make use of this shattered Israel to manifest Himself before the peoples.

“It is a strange accentuation of this paradox, which will not be resolved before the eschaton [final end], that Christianity confesses that this revelation of God has taken place in the crucified one (**Philippians 2:5ff.**).” (P. 272)

Oswalt comments on **verses 4-5**: “**Verse 4** has many parallels in the **Psalms**. **Psalms 105:1** and **148:13** are almost identical, but the thought is also expressed in such places as **Psalms 145:4-7**...Here Isaiah predicts that the restored people will gain a new conviction of God’s holy character, so much so that they will not only commit themselves to Him but will also want all those around to know what He is like as well.” (Pp. 294-95)

¹⁹Where our Hebrew text has the 2nd person plural וַאֲמַרְתֶּם, “and you (plural) will say,” **Rahlfs** has the 2nd person singular, καὶ ἐρεῖς, “and you (singular) will say.”

(continued...)

Give praise to the YHWH!

Call on His name!

Make known among the peoples His deeds!

Cause to be remembered that His name is exalted!²⁰

12:5 זָמְרוּ יְהוָה

כִּי גִּאֲוֹת עָשָׂה

(מִיִּדְעָת) [מִזְמֶרֶת] זֹאת בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ:

Sing with musical accompaniment²¹ to YHWH!

Because He has acted majestically!

This is to be made known in all the earth!²²

¹⁹(...continued)

Motyer comments on **verse 4** that “The prophet now puts words into the mouth of the community.” (P. 129)

²⁰Alexander translates / comments on **verse 4**: “*And ye shall say (to one another) in that day, praise (or give thanks to) Jehovah, call upon His name (proclaim it), make known among the nations His exploits (or achievements), remind (them) that His name is exalted...*”

“*Name is here used in the pregnant sense of that whereby God makes Himself known, including explicit revelation and the exhibition of His attributes in all.*” (Pp. 264-65)

²¹Alexander comments that “זָמַר means properly to play upon stringed instruments, then to sing with the accompaniment, then to sing in general, then to praise by singing or by music generally.” (P. 265)

Gray translates by “make melody,” and states that “this word (זָמַר) is very characteristic of the **Psalter**, and occurs outside it only here and in **Judges 5:3**.” (P. 231) We have found it also in **2 Samuel 22:50**, and in **1 Chronicles 16:9**.

²²Alexander translates / comments on **verse 5**: “*Praise Jehovah (by singing, and perhaps with instruments) because He has done elevation (or sublimity, i.e. a sublime deed). Known is this (or be this) in all the earth.*”

Motyer comments that “This universalism matches **Isaiah 9:6**^{Heb} / **7**^{Eng} and explains by what means Isaiah expected the Messiah’s kingdom to spread. This is the

(continued...)

12:6 צְהִלִי וְרַנִּי

יוֹשֶׁבֶת צִיּוֹן

כִּי־גָדוֹל בְּקִרְבְּךָ קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Cry shrilly and cry aloud,

dweller (feminine singular participle) in Zion!

Because great in your midst (is) Set-apart One of Israel!²³

²²(...continued)

reality behind the military metaphor of **11:14**.” (P. 130)

What do you think? Is the military language of **chapter 11** only “metaphor”?

²³Alexander translates / comments on **verse 6**: “*Cry out and shout (or sing), oh inhabitant of Zion (the people or the Church personified as a woman), for great in the midst of thee (residing in thee by a special manifestation of His presence) is the Holy One of Israel (that Holy Being Who has bound Himself to Israel, in a peculiar and extraordinary manner, as their covenant God).*” (P. 265)

Gray translates by “inhabitress of Zion,” and states that what is meant is “the entire population of the city [of Jerusalem].” (P. 231)

Oswalt comments that “It is hardly coincidence that the final verse of this section of the **book** closes with the phrase *the Holy One of Israel*...What Isaiah had discovered in an experiential way was what the whole faith of Israel was about, namely, that the only Holy One in the universe is Israel’s God...The phrase ‘The Holy One of Israel’ occurs 29 times in the **Bible**. Of these, 26 are in **Isaiah**, 13 in **chapters 1-39** and 13 in **chapters 40-60**. The remaining 3 occurrences are in the **Psalms (71:22; 78:41; 89:19^{Heb} / 18^{Eng})**.” (P. 295)