

Isaiah Chapter 26, Hebrew Text with Translation and Footnotes
A Song of Praise and Thanksgiving
for Deliverance That Is Soon to Come to Judah,
Including Bodily Resurrection from Death to Life,
for Those Who Put Their Trust in YHWH and Wait for Him¹

¹**Chapter 26** has four end-notes: (1) Trusting in YHWH in the Hebrew Bible; (2) Occurrences of יָהּ, “Yah” in the Hebrew Bible; (3) “Peace” as YHWH’s Gift to His People, and His Goal in History in the Book of Isaiah’ (4) Article on “Dew” by Peter J. Leithart.

Alexander states that **chapter 26** “contains a song of praise and thanksgiving, to be sung by Israel after his deliverance (**verses 1-19**). To this is added a postscript, intimating that the time for such rejoicing was not yet at hand (**verses 20-21**).

“The song opens with an acknowledgment of God’s protection and an exhortation to confide therein (**verses 1-4**). This is founded on the exhibition of His righteousness and power in the destruction of His foes and the oppressors of His people (**verses 5-11**). The [Jewish] Church abjures the service of all other sovereigns, and vows perpetual devotion to Him by Whom it has been delivered and restored (**verses 12-15**). Her utter incapacity to save herself is then contrasted with God’s power to restore His people to new life, with a joyful anticipation of which the song concludes (**verses 17-19**). The additional sentences contain a beautiful and tender intimation of the trials, which must be endured before these glorious events take place, with a solemn assurance that Jehovah is about to visit both His people and their enemies with chastisement (**verses 20-21**).” (P. 419)

We say, Yes—the vision of universal salvation (**25:6-9**) does not at all mean that YHWH’s chastising and visitation in judgment will no longer occur in history!

Motyer entitles **chapter 26** “The strong city: waiting in hope.” He comments that “Here at last the people of the Lord are secure within the bulwarks of salvation, enjoying a faith-based peace (**verses 1-4**). Here is the ‘strong city,’ in contrast to a city that is no more (**17:1**), forsaken cities (**17:2**), strong cities (**17:9**) and a broken, cannibalized city (**22:9-10**). Security is not attained by associative strength or sturdy self-reliance; it is a matter for song (**verse 1**), i.e., a Divine provision received with joy.”

But of course, this strong, secure city, is a city envisioned in the future, for which the people of God in the present must wait in hope. That was the case in the time of Isaiah, and it is still the case today! Do you agree? The **New Testament** author of the **Book of Hebrews** claims that it was also true of Abraham—see **Hebrews 11:8-12**.

Motyer outlines the chapter as follows:

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A¹ Secure in peace (verses 1-4)

The strong city, within the security of salvation (verse 1). The gates are open to the righteous and the trusting (verse 2). Peace is assured to those who trust in the Divine Rock (verses 3-4)

B¹ Down to the dust (verses 5-6)

The lofty city humiliated (verse 5a) to the ground, into the dust (verse 5b), downtrodden by the oppressed and poor (verse 6)

C¹ The Divinely smoothed pathway (verses 7-9)

The righteous walk in the smoothed way of Divine laws (verses 7-8a), waiting for and desiring the Lord, communally (verse 8b) and personally (verse 9a), accepting that this gives the world its best chance of 'learning righteousness' (verse 9b)

D Impenetrable blindness (verses 10-11)

Neither grace (verse 10a), nor straightforward circumstances (verse 10b), nor Divine action (verse 11a) make any impression. But they will recognize that the Lord is on the side of His people and experience the fire due to His enemies.

C² The Divinely ordained peace (verses 12-15)

Everything the Lord's people have He has done for them (verse 12). This is the lesson of their history. Rulers who formerly dominated them are dead and gone (verses 13-14) and the people have known numerical, and territorial increase (verse 15)

B² Out of the dust (verses 16-19)

The people of God are often in extreme distress (verse 16), pained but fruitless (verses 17-18a), achieving neither salvation for, nor dominion over, the world (verse 18b). Yet hope is sure: resurrection from the dust of the earth

A² Secure from wrath (verses 20-21)

The doors are locked for a last, brief waiting period while wrath is executed over the whole earth

Motyer comments that "No theme could be more suited to the place of this oracle in the scheme of **chapters 13-27** than that the people of God owe everything to Him and that in the last analysis no credit, merit or achievement can be put to their account." (P. 212)

Oswalt entitles **26:1-27:13** "The Lord's Day" [based on the opening phrase of **27:1**], and entitles **26:1-27:1** "Judah's Song."

He comments that "**Chapters 26-27** continue the thought of **chapters 24** and **25**...Whereas **chapters 24** and **25** focus on the victory and the feast which follows, **chapters 26** and **27** reflect in a somewhat more solemn vein upon the meaning of this victory for Judah. This is only a relative change in emphasis, however, for the general theme of God's sovereignty remains of central importance as does the atmosphere of [hope stemming from that conviction...

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“The thematic development seems to proceed in this fashion:

- (1) **26:1-6**, a song of thanksgiving in which Judah encourages herself to keep faith with God Who has kept faith with her;
- (2) **26:7-15**, a reflection on the truth that the wicked can understand nothing except the rod of judgment upraised on behalf of God’s people;
- (3) **26:16-19**, a lament recognizing that God’s people are helpless in themselves;
- (4) **26:20-27:1**, the promise that God will indeed act; and
- (5) **27:2-12**, God’s passion for His vineyard...

“The chapter moves from contemplation of the glorious future and the kind of steadfast trust necessary to participate in that future (**verses 1-6**) to a sober view of the present in which the people are not delivered (**verses 7-19**). Nevertheless, in this sober view there is the repeated affirmation that God can and will keep His word. This train of thought is then met by the promise that God will punish the sinful earth and triumph over it for His people’s sake (**26:20-27:1**)...

“This movement from future to present to future has the function of assuring the reader that the promises are not merely rosy daydreams which ignore the contradictory present. In fact, these promises are made more convincing because they are made in the full light of the present. The **Book of Revelation** served a similar purpose in **New Testament** times. It assured the people that God was aware of the present but was not defeated by it, and it called them to continued steadfast trust. Compare **Revelation 2:10-11**,

- 10 Fear nothing--the things you are about to suffer.
Look--the accuser is about to throw some of you into prison
so that you may be tested;
and you will have tribulation (for) ten days.
Become faithful, unto death,
and I will give to you the crown of life.
- 11 The one who has an ear,
let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.
The one who is conquering
will surely not be hurt by the second death.

“We are called to the same kind of confidence today. We do not deny the present, nor do we know of any power to help ourselves. But we know a God Whose strength is as limitless as His love and Whose purposes remain steadfast: to bless all those who will commit themselves to Him.” (Pp. 468-70)

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What do you think? Does the God you know only bless those who will commit themselves to Him, or does He make His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and send rain on both the just and the unjust (see **Matthew 5:44**)? Does Jesus only bless those who commit themselves to him? Does Jesus simply condemn those who oppose him? Or, does He pray and die for the very people who murdered him?

Watts entitles **26:1-21** “Judeans on Pilgrimage to Jerusalem.”

He imagines the scene as follows: “Pilgrims from the land of Judah approach the Holy City during the uneasy calm that has settled over the land after the fall of Tyre. Jerusalem has remained relatively untouched by the war that has ravaged the land and other cities. The pilgrims try to make this a normal festival occasion such as had been the custom in Jerusalem before the bad times. But the pall of war still hangs heavy in the air.

The chorus is strong in this scene. Solo voices represent a teacher as well as other pilgrims with different moods. Then Yahweh appears with His herald. His announcement picks up the theme of His reaction to the death of His people (**25:7-8**) and of further judgments (**23:17; 24:21**).

“The opening song (**verses 1b-4**) is a pilgrim’s song. The themes of the city, the gates, the righteous, and trust in Yahweh are typical...The assembly begins to be unruly with critical observations in **verses 14-16** and a despairing chorus in **verses 17-18**.

“This is brought to an abrupt end by an epiphany (**verses 19-21**). Yahweh and His herald appear to the group with an astonishing announcement in line with that of **25:8**. They are called to rejoice, but then warned to return to their homes, for Yahweh is about to emerge from Jerusalem in judgment on the land...

“Thus the chapter consists of three formal structures. The pilgrim song (**verses 1b-4**) opens the scene. The dialogue of the pilgrims (**verses 5-18**) is the body of the scene. The epiphany (**verses 19-21**) brings it to a close.” (P. 340)

But we ask, where is anything said in the passage about the different speakers that Watts identifies? This is all imaginary construction—none of it made specific by the text.

²Slotki comments on **verses 1-6** that they are “a song of rejoicing and thankfulness for the protection of Jerusalem and the fall and humiliation of the enemy cities. The prophet is thinking of what has taken place.” (Pp. 117-18)

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But where is Jerusalem named in the text? Where “the enemy cities”? We see mention of a strong city the righteous may enter, and a lofty city that has been cast down, but neither city is given a name, and there is no plural “cities.”

Gray entitles **verses 1-6** “Jerusalem made impregnable; the city set on high destroyed.” He comments that “The strong city that belongs to those who in the land of Judah sing this song is, though unnamed, unquestionably Jerusalem; the unnamed subject is Yahweh.” (P. 438)

And we observe that the ambiguities in the text are typical of prophetic messages, which are anything but crystal clear and exact.

Ackerman states that **verses 1-6** are “a poem closely related to **25:1-5**, celebrating the redemption that the righteous will experience after the apocalyptic destruction of the wicked.” (P. 990)

We sense in the text that the strong city is in the future, and being awaited, but where is anything resembling “apocalyptic”?

Kaiser entitles **verses 1-6** “The Chorus of the Redeemed.” He comments that “Like **chapter 25**, **chapter 26** also begins with a prophetic song which anticipates the fall of the world power and the beginning of the time of salvation...

“The song begins in **verse 1b** with the spontaneous rejoicing which sounds the first basic note of the poem, the security of the singers’ own city. **Verse 2** follows with an address to the gates, and rapidly reveals the situation envisaged, in which warriors or pilgrims (it is not certain which) are demanding entry. **Verse 3** is difficult to describe. It is perhaps best to see it as an expression of confidence. **Verse 4** follows with a demand to trust in Yahweh, including a reason, which is followed in **verses 5 and 6** by an account of the saving act which Yahweh has carried out, while **verse 6** dwells on the activity of the poor and needy. **Verse 5**, with its theme of the destruction of a lofty city, provides a contrast with **verse 1b**...

“The poet imagines his community at the longed for moment of the fall of the world capital and the world power (compare **25:1ff.**), but at the same time keeps their present situation in mind and thereby intensifies their trust in Yahweh. Thus with **verses 3 and 4** in mind, we can summarize as follows: If only you go on trusting firmly and unshakeably in Yahweh, then it will actually come about that you will enter Jerusalem as His liberated people, because He has destroyed the world power and world capital, and you who are now defenseless will be able to destroy every trace of it [but where is any mention of ‘the world capital’ or ‘the world power’?]....

“[The poet] is imagining his own city as secure and incapable of capture, because it is protected by a wall, an outer wall and an embankment [but we wonder, are

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these literal stone walls, or 'spiritual' walls?]. We can assume that the demand to open the gates is made, as in **Psalm 118:19** and **24:7, 9**, by pilgrims to a festival. Just as in **Psalm 118:20** the righteous can enter through the gate of Yahweh, i.e. of the sanctuary, the people, which is righteous because it is faithful and obedient to Yahweh, demands entry, and this of course is accorded to it...

“Verse 3 can be compared with **Psalm 112:7**

[‘He (the good person) will not be afraid of an evil / bad news / rumor / report;
his heart was established,
trusting in the YHWH’],

and **Psalm 143:8**

[‘Cause me to hear in the morning Your steadfast-love!
Because in You I trusted.
Cause me to know (the) way in which I will walk!
Because to You I lifted up my innermost-being.’].

Verse 4 also takes up this theme, with a clear call to trust in Yahweh Whose reliability is described by means of a similar likening Him to a rock which lasts for ever. The background to this verse seems to be formed by **Psalm 62:7-8**^{Heb} / **8-9**^{Eng}

[‘Upon God (rests) my salvation / deliverance and my glory / honor--
Rock of my strength,
my Refuge (is) in God!
Trust in Him at all time(s), O people!
Pour out your heart(s) before Him!
God (is) a Refuge for us! Selah’]

Verse 5 is in sharp contrast to what precedes, replacing the concept of the everlasting rock with the contrasting picture of the lofty city cast down to the ground and in to the dust...

“The height is emphasized in order to make the fall into the depths even more impressive. After Yahweh has taken away the power of the world capital and its inhabitants, the poor and lowly, who have no power in the present world, will be able to stamp it out completely with their feet and destroy every trace of it upon the earth...

“We can certainly compare this with **Psalm 37:10-11**, which envisages the end of the godless and which promises possession of the land to the meek and oppressed (compare **Matthew 5:5**)...

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“It must be acknowledged that the poet-prophet, learned in the scripture and imbued with the language and conceptions of the **Psalms**, has brought the prophetic song to a successful conclusion with this threefold repetition (compare **Judges 5:30**).” (Pp. 205-08)

There can be little doubt that Kaiser is right in showing the relationship of Isaiah’s words to those of the **Book of Psalms**. We will see the same thing in Westermann’s commentary on **Isaiah 40-6**.

Motyer entitles **verses 1-4** “Secure in peace,” and comments that “Following the introduction of the song (**verse 1a**) there are four three-line stanzas:

the city’s strength (**verse 1b-d**),
the entrance qualifications (**verse 2**),
perfect peace and its ground (**verse 3**)
and a call to maintain trust in the trustworthy Lord (**verse 4**).” (P. 213)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 1**: “*In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; salvation will He place (as) walls and breastwork.* The condition and feelings of the people after their return from exile are expressed by putting an ideal song into their mouths...It is written in the form and manner of the **Psalms**, with which it exhibits many points of resemblance.” (P. 419)

Oswalt comments on **verses 1-6** that “In place of the city of chaos towering over the oppressed in grim splendor

Isaiah 24:10,

A city of confusion, was broken;
every house was shut up from entering.

Isaiah 25:2,

Because You placed / transformed (it)--
from a city to the heap (of ruins);
(from) a fortified city to a ruin;
a citadel / fortress of foreigners, from a city--
to long-lasting time it will not be (re-)built!

Isaiah 26:5,

Because He prostrated / laid low those dwelling (in) a height--
a city exalted / made inaccessibly high, He will bring low / abase;

(continued...)

עִיר עֲז־לָנוּ

יְשׁוּעָה יִשְׁתָּחַד הַיּוֹמֹת וְחָל:

In that day,³ this⁴ song will be sung⁵ in (the) land of Judah:⁶

²(...continued)

He will bring it low / abase it as far as earth / land;
He will cause it to touch as far as dust!

God has another city, one whose walls are salvation [i.e., a ‘spiritual city’], whose gates are open to all who will enter, whose might is not in arrogance but in humble commitment (**Isaiah 65:17-25; Revelation 21:9-27**). As always, God destroys the false, only to raise up the true.” (P. 470)

Oswalt comments on **verse 1**: “Walls of stone and earth can hardly save us from that which most threatens our existence. The only true defense is the deliverance which comes from God...The point is that access to God’s city is free for those to whom righteousness and faithfulness are paramount.” (P. 471)

³Slotki comments on the phrase “that day,” stating that it means that day “of victory.” He adds that “If this chapter is connected with the preceding [**chapter 25**], the day is the time of Moab’s humiliation.” (P. 118)

Watts holds a different view: “*In that day* refers to the time of the great throne appearance in **Isaiah 24:23-25:8**.” (P. 340) And of course, both views can be held—as the prophetic vision is puzzling, and marked by ambiguous phrases.

Motyer comments that **chapter 26** “brings us into the experience and inner consciousness of those who are the Lord’s people. Upon them the last days [we wonder where Motyer gets this phrase ‘the last days’! We would say, ‘the promised times of Divine blessing’] have come as they possess their possessions (**verse 1**), expect the coming Divine victory (**verses 5-6**), wait and endure (**verses 7-9**), mourn over a continually unresponsive world and their own fruitlessness (**10-18**), look forward to a life-giving act of God (**verse 19**) and shelter securely through the final Divine Passover (**verses 20-21**).” (P. 213)

⁴Where our Hebrew text has הַזֶּה, **hazzeh**, literally “the this” (masculine singular adjective), 1QIs^a has הַזּוֹאת, **hazzo**th, with the feminine adjective.

⁵Where our Hebrew text has the hophal imperfect יִשָּׂר, **yushar**, “it will be sung,” 1QIs^a has the qal imperfect יִשִּׁיר, **yashir**, “(the song / it) will sing.”

⁶Gray states that “The rubric [title], **verse 1**, fuller than in **25:9** and **27:1**, quite

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clearly defines what follows to be a song which is to be sung in the land of Judah *in that day*, i.e. at the time when Yahweh will have delivered His people, and begun His glorious reign in Jerusalem.” (P. 437)

He adds that “The poem...is remarkable for its concatenated [‘linked together’] structure: that is to say, a word or idea is taken up from one verse and suggests a new thought for the next...The writer expresses his hopes and reflections during the night (**verse 9**) of sorrow through which he is passing rather than the triumphant joy in Yahweh’s deliverance and the overthrow of ‘the city (now) set on high’ (**verse 5**) which he expects His people to experience when night has given place to morning...

“The line of thought and the relation of ideas within the poem seem to be as follows: The Jews exult in Jerusalem made impregnable, **verse 1**, and refilled with righteous observers of the law, **verse 2**, but only with such, **verse 10**; they find [those who steadfastly relied on Him unharmed], **verse 3**, and whose loyalty to Yahweh no temptations had shaken, **verse 13**, ground for continued and enduring trust in Him, **verse 4**. The other side to the exaltation of Jerusalem is the humiliation and

destruction of the City now set on high, **verses 5-6**, and of all Yahweh’s adversaries, **verse 11e**.

“All this has not yet happened; but there are steadfast minds, **verse 3**, waiting for Yahweh’s judgments, **verses 7-8**, or renewed judgments (compare **verse 9**), to teach the world righteousness. But even in Judah, the land of true religion, there are wicked men who are contumaciously [‘with stubborn resistance to authority’] neglectful of the law, and blind to the majesty of Yahweh that was to be revealed, and even then was revealed to the eye of faith, **verses 10-11**.

“The Jews of themselves had achieved nothing; all that has yet been achieved is Yahweh’s work, the pledge of what He will do for His people who, though aliens have exercised political dominion over them, have never swerved in their religious fidelity to Him, **verses 12-13**. But once these tyrants have been destroyed by Yahweh (**verse 11e**), they being dead cannot rise and again afflict the Jews, **verse 14**.

“Already, in fact, or to faith, the Jews have grown and their land has been enlarged, **verse 15**; but once again the writer insists that the misery—‘the night’ of **verse 9**—through which the Jews have been passing as a chastisement for their sins (**verse 16c**) had not been (or will not have been) escaped by their own efforts: they had not made the land of Judah safe (compare **verse 2**), nor overthrown their foes (compare **verses 5-6, 11c**); this was Yahweh’s work alone, **verses 16-18**. Nor will the power of Yahweh be exhausted in re-establishing His people who have survived on earth the perils past: He will raise from the dead the Jews who had died, and these will resume on earth the ordinary earthly life, and join their fellows who had not died in praising God in the land of the living, **verse 19**.” (Pp. 437-38)

(continued...)

A city of strength⁷ is ours!
He will place⁸ salvation / deliverance (for) walls and a fortress!⁹

⁶(...continued)

What a confusing comment on this chapter! And we ask, Why? Our answer is that this is the nature of the prophetic message—it is based on visions and dreams, and is filled with ambiguities and riddles, that mean its interpretation will always be uncertain and confusing. Can you improve on Gray's summary of **chapter 26**?

⁷1QIs^a reads עָרָה, “seek refuge,” where our Hebrew text has עָרָה, “strength,” “might.” **Rahfs** has ὀχυρά, “strong,” “firm,” “sturdy.” Watts holds that the Qumran reading means the same thing as our Hebrew text, i.e., is just another way of spelling the same word. We think this is possible, but not certain.

Ortlund says “Contrast ‘the wasted city’ in **24:10**.” (P. 1285)

Watts states that “A *strong city* is Jerusalem, the goal of the pilgrimage. It stands in contrast to ‘the ruined city’ of **24:10, 12** and **25:2**.” (P. 340)

But we wonder. Is Isaiah talking about the literal City of Jerusalem, or an exalted, spiritual city? What do you think? Does a literal city have “salvation / deliverance” for “walls”?

⁸The Hebrew verb is qal imperfect / future, יִשֶׁת, “he will place / put / set.” Oswalt translates the verb as a perfect / past tense, “(He) has made,” and comments that the verb is “without an expressed subject. Evidently, the main point is not who has made salvation the defense, but that it is.” (P. 468) We say, “but that it will be.”

⁹Slotki observes that instead of the translation “Walls and bulwarks doth He appoint for salvation,” “others prefer, ‘salvation will He appoint in place of walls and moats.’ Jerusalem needs no material defenses, for God is its Guardian and Protector.” (P. 118)

We think Isaiah is depicting a “spiritual Jerusalem,” not the literal city, perhaps the Jerusalem that is lifted up above the hills as in **Isaiah 2:1-4**.

Oswalt notes that the meaning of the noun translated “bulwarks / moats / ramparts,” חֵל, **chel**, a singular noun, “is not clear. It appears to refer to an outer structure beyond the main wall (compare **2 Samuel 20:15**), perhaps even the smooth incline, or glacis, leading up to the base of the wall (compare Y. Yadin, **The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands**, 1:178-79).” (P. 468)

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26:2¹⁰ פִּתְחוּ שַׁעֲרֵי־יְרוּשָׁלַיִם

וַיָּבֹא גֹי־צָדִיק

שֹׁמֵר אֱמֻנָה:

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Gray comments that “Yahweh’s saving presence will serve the city instead of walls.” (P. 438) Similar imagery is found in:

Isaiah 60:18, in the good times coming,

It will not be heard again—

violence in your land, devastation and crushing within your borders;
and you (singular) will call salvation / deliverance your walls,
and your gates, praise!

(We think this passage in “Third Isaiah” is written in contrast to the program of **Ezra / Nehemiah** of building walls to keep out “foreigners.”)

Zechariah 2:9a^{Heb} / **5a**^{Eng},

And I, I will be for her (Jerusalem)—it is a saying of YHWH—
a wall of fire around (her)...

Psalms 125:2,

Jerusalem—mountains (are) around it;
and YHWH (is) around His people (literally, to His people),
from now and until long-lasting time.

¹⁰Alexander translates / comments on **verse 2**: “*Open ye the gates, and let the righteous nation enter, keeping truth (or faith)*...The speakers are the same as in the first verse, and the words are addressed to those who kept the doors. Knobel understands this as the language of the remaining Jews, exhorting themselves or one another to receive the returning exiles. These are described as righteous and as keeping faith, probably in reference to the cessation of idolatry among the Jews during the exile.” (P. 420)

We don’t know where Alexander got the idea that idolatry ceased during the exile. But one thing we do know, idolatry didn’t cease from Israel following the exile, as will be made crystal clear in **Isaiah 57:1-13**; **Isaiah 65:1-7** and **Isaiah 66:17**!

Open (plural imperative) gates!¹¹

And a rightly-related / righteous nation will enter,¹²
one keeping / guarding true-faithfulness!¹³

¹¹Where our Hebrew text has שַׁעֲרֵיִם, **she(ariym)**, “gates,” 1QIs^a has שַׁעֲרֵיךָ, **she(areyka)**, “your gates.”

Watts states that “The *gates* are those of Jerusalem (compare **Psalm 24:7**.” (P. 340)

We ask, To whom is this imperative plural command given, “Open...gates!”?

Motyer states that “This poem may well have started life as an ‘entrance liturgy’ connected with one of the festival processions of Zion (compare **Psalms 15** and **24**), and the call to *open the gates* retains the same significance.” (P. 213)

However, neither of these two **psalms** has the imperative call to open gates. We assume that the Levites, as keepers of the temple precincts, who would daily open the temple gates in order for worshipers and pilgrims to enter in to worship, lie in the background of this statement. But here, in **Isaiah 26**, it is much more likely that the city-gates of a spiritual Jerusalem are intended.

However, it seems to us that no literal Jerusalem is meant, but the heavenly Jerusalem, lifted up above the hills, the “spiritual Zion.” Perhaps we should assume that this is the voice of YHWH, calling on His servants—those who are called by His name—to do whatever it takes to make sure the entrance into His worship and benefits are open to all.

Ortlund comments that the command to open the gates should be contrasted with the statement that “every house is shut up” in **Isaiah 24:10**. “Zion welcomes pilgrims and fears no threats.” (P. 1285)

¹²Slotki comments that “Only the righteous and faithful deserve to live in the holy city...A beautiful homiletic interpretation of the Rabbis gives to the phrase the meaning ‘a righteous Gentile,’ on the principle ‘the righteous of all peoples will have a share in the world to come.’” (P. 118)

¹³Ackerman states that “Elsewhere in ancient Near Eastern literature and in the **Bible**, descriptions of victory processions, like descriptions of banquets (see **25:6-10a**), often follow an account of a military triumph.” (P. 990)

We are reminded of Paul’s language in **2 Corinthians 2:14**, concerning God always leading in triumph, which sounds very much like a victory procession. But does **Isaiah 26** depict a “victory procession”? We think not. Rather, we think, it depicts national pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

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Motyer goes to great extent in his commentary to insist there is nothing for the people of God to do, other than wait for the Divine action / blessing / future.

But the entrance liturgies that he has referred to list characteristics necessary for entering into YHWH's presence—such things as walking blamelessly, doing what is right, speaking truth in the heart, not slandering with the tongue, doing no evil to a neighbor, etc. (**Psalm 15**); having clean hands and a pure heart, etc. (**Psalm 24**).

Here in **Isaiah 26:2**, the statement is that it is “a righteous nation keeping true faithfulness” that may enter. And we take that to mean that in order to enter, people must be righteous and keep true faithfulness.

As Gray comments, “those only will have right of entry into the city who are *righteous ...and keep faith* with Yahweh by observance of the law.” What do you think?

Compare:

Isaiah 1:21,

How a faithful city became a prostitute!
I filled (her with) justice;
righteousness spent the night in her.
And now murderers!

Isaiah 1:26-27,

- 26 And I will return your judges like at the first,
and your counselors like at the beginning.
Afterwards, it will be called to her,
City of the Righteousness,
faithful city (synonym)!
- 27 Zion by justice will be redeemed;
and her returnees by righteousness.

Isaiah 33:14-15,

- 14 Sinners were afraid in Zion;
trembling took strong hold of the profane / irreligious people.
Who will reside temporarily for us (in) a devouring fire?
Who will reside temporarily for us in long-lasting burning masses?
- 15 One who walks (in) righteousness,
and speaks upright / fair things;
one who refuses / rejects gain by extortions;

(continued...)

¹³(...continued)

one who shakes his hands from grasping a bribe;
one who shuts his ear from hearing (plans for) bloodshed,
and one who closes his eyes from looking upon evil.

Psalm 15:2,

One who walks (with) integrity,
and does righteousness,
and speaks (with) true faithfulness in his heart / mind.
(see the entire **Psalm**, and **Psalm 24**, both of which depict who can dwell with
God.)

In the light of these **Psalms**, we say that there is plenty for the people of God to do in order to enter into the Divine sanctuary / Zion of God! This may not be in accord with Motyer's theology, but we should not change the biblical teaching to accord with our modern theological views!

Ortlund comments that the phrase "the righteous nation" is "a reference to many and various human beings, all keeping faith in the promises of God." (P. 1285)

What do you think? Is there such a thing as a "righteous person"? Paul, and his Calvinist interpreters insist that there is no such thing. But numerous passages in the **Bible** say the opposite!

Oswalt comments that "*Open the gates* seems very reminiscent of such **Pilgrim Psalms** as **118:19, 20; 15:1-5** and **24:3-10**, where the mark of acceptability is not cultic purity [that is, observance of Levitical laws of cleanliness] but that of ethical righteousness (**Isaiah 1:26; 32:16-17; 33:13-16; Hosea 2:18-20; 6:6; Amos 5:21-24**) which is the result of the faithful keeping of the covenant (**Deuteronomy 6:25**). Again, over-literalism is not in order. We need think neither that the city is not yet inhabited (Young) nor that the gatekeepers are angels (Jerome). The point is simply that none can live in this city for whom God's character is not the passion of their lives. (See **Revelation 21:6-8**,

- 6 And He said to me, They have happened!
I, [I am] the A / Alpha and the Z / Omega,
the beginning and the end.
I, to the one who is thirsting,
I will give out of the spring of the water of the life, freely.
- 7 The one who is conquering will inherit these things,
and I will be to Him a God,
and he, he will be to me a son.

(continued...)

26:3¹⁴ יִצֵּר סְמוּךְ

תִּצְרֵן שְׁלוֹם

שְׁלוֹם כִּי בְךָ בִטְחוֹחַ:

¹³(...continued)

- 8 But then for the cowardly, and unbelieving, and ones having become detestable,
and murderers, and sexually immoral people, and magicians,
and idolaters, and all the liars,
their part--in the lake, the one burning with fire and sulphur,
which is the death, the second one!

“and this entry formula is a way of expressing this truth.” (P. 471)

¹⁴Alexander translates / comments on **verse 3**: “*The mind stayed (on Thee) Thou wilt preserve in peace (in) peace (i.e. in perfect peace), because in Thee (it is) confident (literally confided).*” (P. 420)

¹⁵יִצֵר, **yetser**, means “form,” “forming,” “purpose.” Origen’s Greek transliteration of the Hebrew text has ιερο, “iesro,” which is an attempt to put the Hebrew word into Greek letters. **Rahlfs** has ἀντιλαμβανόμενος, “assisting.”

Slotki suggests the translation “a disposition,’ for what is literally “a formation.” (P. 118)

Alexander holds that יִצֵר “is the *invention* (or perhaps the *constitution*) of the mind, put for the mind itself.” (P. 420)

Watts translates by “attitude,” but then in a comment has “shape,” and states that it refers to “the willing and malleable spirit of the worshiper,” that is “not willful or rebellious.” (P. 340)

Oswalt notes that the noun “comes from the root idea ‘to form.’ Thus as a noun it frequently refers to that which is formed (**Isaiah 29:16** [where הַיִצֵר, **hayyotser**, is ‘the potter / former’]; **Psalm 103:14** [YHWH knows יִצְרָנֵנוּ, ‘our framing / form / purpose’]; **Habakkuk 2:18** [similar to **Isaiah 29:17**]), often thoughts, purposes, or intentions (compare **Genesis 6:5** [בְּכָל-יִצְרָא מַחְשְׁבֹת לְבָבוֹ, ‘every form / framing / purpose of thoughts / devices of his heart’]; **8:21** [יִצְרָא לִבְ הָאָדָם, ‘framing / form / purpose of the human’s heart’]; **Deuteronomy 31:21** [YHWH says, יָדַעְתִּי אֶת-יִצְרוֹ, ‘I knew his form / framing / purpose which he is doing / making today’]; **1 Chronicles 28:9** [כָּל-לְבָבוֹת הַדּוֹרֵשׁ יְהוָה וְכָל-יִצְרָא, ‘all hearts YHWH is seeking / searching, and every framing / form / purpose of thoughts / devices He understands’], **29:18** [David prays, שְׁמַרְהָ-זֹאת, ‘keep this to long-lasting time, to (the) framing / form / purpose of thoughts / devices of Your people’s heart’])...The Hebrew seems to place ‘the steadfast mind’ in an emphatic position in an independent clause at the beginning of the sentence.” (P. 468)

Motyer states that the Hebrew noun יִצֵר means “the constitution and tendency of the mind (**Genesis 6:5**), meditated purposes (**Deuteronomy 31:21**) or the human constitution (**Psalm 103:14**)...what we might call a ‘frame of mind’ or a ‘mind-set,’ a total way of looking at things.” (Pp. 213-14)

(continued...)

¹⁵(...continued)

A **Wikipedia** article states: “In Judaism, *yetzer hara*, “the evil inclination”) refers to the congenital [present at birth] inclination to do evil, by violating the will of God. The term is drawn from the phrase “the imagination of the heart of man [is] evil” at **Genesis 6:5** and **8:21**. The Sages of the **Talmud (Berakhot 32a)** have spoken about the ‘evil inclination’ in poignant terms, making a comparison to what it is like: ‘To what is it like, the evil inclination in man? It is like a father who takes his small son, bathes him, douses him with perfume, combs his hair, dresses him up in his finest accoutrements, feeds him, gives him drink, places a bag of money around his neck, and then goes off and puts his son at the front door of a brothel. What can the boy do that he not sin?’

“The evil inclination in man, or what is often called man's natural inclination, has been the subject of debate since time immemorial. The traditional Jewish view on this complex subject is well-defined in rabbinic literature. The *yetzer hara* is not a demonic force, but rather man's misuse of things the physical body needs to survive. Thus, the need for food becomes gluttony due to the *yetzer hara*. The need for procreation becomes sexual abuse, and so on. The idea that humans are born with a *yetzer ra* (physical needs that can become ‘evil’), but that humans don't acquire a *yetzer tov* (‘a good inclination’) until an age of maturity—12 for girls and 13 for boys--has its source in **Chapter 16** of the Talmudic tractate **Avot de-Rabbi Natan**.” (2/2/2017)

¹⁶The **יָצַר**, “mind-set,” is described as **סָמְנוּךְ**, a qal passive participle, which means “leaned against,” or “laid upon.” We take this to mean the person who finds peace is the person who has settled his mind, leaned it against, laid it upon YHWH—and this understanding is made clear in the third line of this verse, “because in You it is trusting.”

But the text itself does not say what the mind-set or disposition or inclination is leaned against or laid upon. Translations vary, from “*whose mind is stayed on thee*,” to “The confident mind,” to “Those of steadfast mind,” to “whose minds are steadfast,” to **ἀντιλαμβανόμενος ἀληθείας**, “laying hold of truth.” Gray translates by “the steadfast disposition.”

The qal passive participle is found three times in the **Hebrew Bible**, here and in

Psalm 111:8, YHWH's deeds and judicial decisions are:

laid down for the perpetuity, for long-lasting time,
to be done in true-faithfulness and uprightness.
(That is, they “lean upon” His people as continuing obligations.)

Psalm 112:8, the person who reveres / fears YHWH is described in detail, including:

his heart is leaned against / laid upon (YHWH),
he will not be afraid.

(continued...)

You will watch / guard (with / in) peace--¹⁷
peace,¹⁸ because in You it is trusting!¹⁹

¹⁶(...continued)

(Here the same problem of meaning is encountered as in **Isaiah 25:3**.)

Motyer holds that the participle means “maintained,” “steady,” “undeviating.” He states that “The Lord keeps in peace ‘the undeviating cast of mind’...that essential element within the person which makes all the difference and is the key to Divine peace.” (P. 214)

What do you think the passage means? Is it describing a “firm, determined inclination,” that doesn’t bounce from one inclination to another, “hot today, cold tomorrow”? We think it does.

¹⁷Compare **Isaiah 30:15**,

For in this way my Lord YHWH, Set-apart One of Israel, spoke:

In retirement / withdrawal and quietness / rest you (plural) will be saved;
in showing quietness and in trust will be your strength!

And you people were not willing.

We think this being quiet and trusting is the same thing as having a mind-set of leaning on YHWH. What do you think?

¹⁸Our Hebrew text has the doubled **שְׁלוֹם | שְׁלוֹם**, literally “peace, peace...” which **King James** and **New International** translate by “perfect peace.” **Tanakh** has “in safety, in safety.” **New Revised Standard** has “in peace, in peace.” **New Jerusalem** has “peace, the peace.” This is an example of what is technically called “anadiplosis.” See footnotes 20, 27, 30, 35, 44 and 82. Both the Greek and the Syriac translations have only the one word “peace.”

Alexander comments that “The idiomatic iteration [repetition of an utterance], peace, peace, to express a superlative, is perfectly in keeping with the frequent reduplications of the **twenty-fourth chapter** [of **Isaiah**].” (P. 420)

See **Isaiah 24:16** (with its duplication **רְזִי-לִי רְזִי-לִי**, ‘leanness / wasting is mine, leanness / wasting is mine,’ followed by five occurrences of the root **בגד**; **27:5**

יַעֲשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם לִי שְׁלוֹם יַעֲשֶׂה-לִּי, ‘He will make peace for me, peace he will

make for me’]; **57:19** [**יְהוָה אָמַר וְלִקְרוֹב אֶמַר**]; **שְׁלוֹם | שְׁלוֹם לְרַחוּק וְלִקְרוֹב אֶמַר יְהוָה**, ‘peace,

(continued...)

¹⁸(...continued)

peace to the far away and to the near, said YHWH’]; **Jeremiah 6:14** [Jeremiah quotes the pseudo-healers as **לֵאמֹר שְׁלוֹם | שְׁלוֹם וְאֵין שְׁלוֹם**, ‘saying peace, peace, and there is no peace’]; **8:11** [almost identical to **6:14**].

Motyer states that “Here it is true peace, as compared with pseudo-peace, and total, as excluding every disturbing element.” (P. 213) Neither the word “perfect” or “total” occurs in the Hebrew text, and the text says nothing about “pseudo-peace.”

Ortlund comments that “The peace described here is first the corporate peace of the city (**verse 1**) and the nation (**verse 2**) that comes from the ‘hand of the Lord’ (**25:10**); but it is also the individual peace of the person whose *mind is stayed on* God. The source of such peace is the righteous, sovereign, saving God (**25:9**)—Who ‘will swallow up death forever’ and ‘will wipe away’ every tear (**25:8**; compare **Revelation 21:4**), and Who alone is worthy of trust.” (P. 1285)

In the **New Testament**, see **John 14:27**:

Peace I leave (remaining) for / with you people,
my peace I am giving to you;
not as the world gives, I, I give to you.
Don’t let your heart be troubled, neither be cowardly.

What do you think? If Isaiah says the mind that trusts in YHWH has “peace, peace,” what **King James** and **New International** call “perfect peace,” is that the same peace that Jesus gives? Do Isaiah’s words mean that hundreds of years in the future, when the Messiah comes, peace will then come? Or do they in fact describe a peace that those who trusted in YHWH experienced centuries before the coming of Jesus, a peace that is embodied and fulfilled in Jesus? We choose the latter.

¹⁹Here, we think, is Isaiah’s definition of his earlier statement concerning one’s inclination / purpose / mind-set being “leaned upon” YHWH: **בְּיָדְךָ בָטַחְנָה**, **beka batuach**, “in You it / he is confident, trusting.” **Batuach** is either an adjective meaning “confident,” “trusting,” or a qal passive participle, with the same meaning. It occurs only here and in **Psalms 112:7** (with a slightly different spelling:

he will not be afraid of hearing a bad report,
his heart is established, being trusted in the YHWH!

Motyer translates by “in You (emphatic) trust is reposed.” (P. 214)

Oswalt comments that “To experience the security of God’s city one thing is required: a fixed disposition of trust. This is the opposite of James’s ‘double-minded man’ (**James / “Jacob” 1:6-8**) or Jesus’ ‘servant of two masters’ (**Matthew 6:24**)...

(continued...)

26:4²⁰ בַּטַּח בְּיְהוָה עַד־עַד

כִּי בִיה

יְהוָה צוֹר עוֹלָמִים:

Trust (plural imperative) in the YHWH forever,^{21, 1}

because in Yah--²

YHWH--²² (is) a Rock of ages / a Rock of long duration!²³

¹⁹(...continued)

“[Such an attitude] makes possible a confident outlook on the darkest scene. For our mortality, short-sightedness, and weakness, we receive in exchange God’s immortality, omniscience, and omnipotence. That is security.” (P. 472)

²⁰Alexander translates / comments on **verse 4**: “Trust ye in Jehovah for ever (literally, even to eternity), for in Jah Jehovah is a rock of ages (or an everlasting rock).” (P. 421)

Oswalt states that Trust in the Lord forever is the logical result of the assertion in **verse 3**. (Note the anadiplosis wherein the same word, here **batach**, ‘trust,’ is used to close one clause and open the next [see footnotes 18, 27, 30, 35, 44 and 82]. If it is true that trust in God results in a steadfast mind which is kept in peace, then all persons should be urged to trust in Him, and that is exactly what the singers in this passage do...

“The issue of trust is the key to the entire segment beginning at **7:1** and concluding at **39:8**. Will Judah commit her security to the nations or to God?” (P. 472)

²¹Ortlund comments that to “trust in the Lord” is “the practical challenge that the **Book of Isaiah** lays down for God’s people.” (P. 1285)

For this phrase, בַּטַּח בְּיְהוָה, literally “trust in the YHWH,” elsewhere in the **Hebrew Bible**, see our end-note 1.

²²Where our Hebrew text reads בְּיְהוָה יְהוָה, “in Yah, YHWH,” **Rahlfs** has ὁ θεὸς ὁ μέγας ὁ αἰώνιος, “the God, the great One, the eternal One.”

Watts calls the Greek translation “paraphrase rather than translation.” He adds that “This, like ‘peace’ in **verse 3**, is an example of the tendency to repeat words in this section.” (P. 338)

(continued...)

²²(...continued)

Slotki states that “The Hebrew is literally ‘in Yah is the Lord’; the grammarians term this use of the preposition *beth*, ‘in,’ ‘the *beth* of essence.’” (P. 118)

But the Hebrew phrase is literally, כִּי בֵּיהּ יְהוָה צוּר עוֹלָמִים, “Because in Yah YHWH a Rock of ages / a Rock of long duration,” and this can be understood literally as the author’s explaining Who “Yah” is: “Because in Yah–YHWH, (is) a Rock of ages / a Rock of long duration.”

Brown-Driver-Briggs states that יְהִי is a proper name for God, contracted from יְהוָה, that first appears in early poems. For the occurrences of יְהִי, “Yah” in the **Hebrew Bible**, see our end-note 2. Alexander holds that the proper translation is *Jah is Jehovah*, and as one of those names is explained by [Gesenius] to be a mere abbreviation of the other, the clause becomes an identical proposition, meaning nothing more than that Jehovah is Himself.” (P. 421)

Oswalt states that “As for the repetition of the Divine name, note that such a repetition appears also in **Isaiah 12:2**, which is a similar song of trust.” (P. 473)

The phrase in **12:2** is כִּי־עֲזָרְתִּי יְהוָה יְהִי, “because my strength and song (is) Yah, YHWH.”

²³Motyer comments on **verse 4** that “Having emphasized in **verse 3** that faith is the essential thing, Isaiah now turns to the persons who exercise faith, calling not for a once-for-all act of faith but an ongoing life of faith. *The Lord, the Lord is yah yahweh...* A literal translation would be ‘in Yahweh is an everlasting rock,’ i.e. ‘Yah Yahweh is the very essence of what an everlasting rock should be.” (P. 214) Compare:

Isaiah 17:10a, where Isaiah charges,

Because you forgot (the) God of your salvation / deliverance;
and (the) Rock of your place of safety you did not remember!”

Isaiah 30:29,

The song will be for you people like a night for setting-apart a pilgrimage-festival,
and rejoicing of heart / mind like the walking with the flute,
to go / enter into YHWH’s mount,
to Israel’s Rock.

Isaiah 44:8b,

Is there an Eloah / God beside Me?

(continued...)

²³(...continued)

And there is no Rock I did not know.”

King James has “Is there a God beside me? yea, *there is* no God; I know not *any*.” (Note the words in italics, signaling that they are not in the Hebrew text. Other English translations are similar to **New Revised Standard’s** “There is no other rock; I know not one.” **Rahlf’s** has “If there is a God beside Me; and they were not then.”) See also:

Deuteronomy 32:4, Moses proclaims the greatness of YHWH:

The Rock—His work (is) complete / sound / wholesome;
because all His ways (are) justice!
A God of true-faithfulness, and there is no injustice;
rightly-related and upright (is) He!

Deuteronomy 32:31,

Because their Rock is not like our Rock,
and our enemies are witnesses!

1 Samuel 2:2, Hannah says in her prayer,

There is no one Set-apart like the YHWH,
because there is none except You!
And there is no Rock like our God!

Psalm 18:3^{Heb} / **2**^{Eng}

YHWH , my Cliff and my Masada / Stronghold and my Deliverer,
my God, my Rock—I will take refuge / hide in Him!
My Shield, and Horn of my salvation / deliverance, my Secure Height!

Psalm 61:3-4^{Heb} / **2-3**^{Eng}

3/2 From the earth’s / land’s end / extremity, to You I will call,
when my heart / mind faints / is feeble.
4/3 In / to a Rock—it is higher than I (am), You will lead me,
because You were a Refuge / Shelter for me,
a Tower of Strength from before an enemy!

How do you understand all of this? We say, To come to know Yah—YHWH—is to come to know the solid Rock upon which life can be built with confidence. As the Christian hymn says, “All other ground is sinking sand.” Where is Yah—YHWH to be found in the **New Testament**? He is to be found in Jesus—whose full Hebrew name is

יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, **yehoshu(a)**, means “Yeho / Yah / YHWH Is Salvation!”

(continued...)

²³(...continued)

Alexander comments that “This figurative name, as applied to God, includes the two ideas of a *hiding-place* and a *foundation*, or the one complex idea of a *permanent asylum*.” (P. 421)

Oswalt comments that “the Rock is a favorite **Old Testament** description of the Lord. (See **Deuteronomy 32:4**; **1 Samuel 2:2**; **2 Samuel 22:2, 32**; **Psalm 19:15**^{Heb} / **14**^{Eng}; **61:3**^{Heb} / **2**^{Eng}; **Isaiah 30:29**. Compare also **Exodus 33:21, 22**; **1 Corinthians 10:4**...

“The Greek translation [our **Rahfs**], apparently being over-scrupulous about identifying God with an inanimate object, never translates the metaphor literally.) It describes a rocky crag upon which a harassed person could climb, sheltering himself in one of its crannies and there being able to beat off all attackers.” (P. 473)

²⁴Slotki comments on **verses 5-6** that “God may well be trusted, for He can bring down to the dust even the high and mighty, and make the oppressed to triumph over their oppressors.” (P. 118)

Gray comments on these verses that “Yahweh has just given proof that the trust (**verse 4**) of the righteous (**verse 2**) in Him is well founded: for He has, according to His wont [habit of behavior] exalted the poor and lowly...and humbled the proud (**verse 5**). He has laid in the dust the City that seemed out of reach, too high...to be taken, challenging His sole exaltation...and has brought low...its inhabitants, who deemed themselves high up out of harm’s way, secure in the height...He has given over the city to be trampled under foot.” (P. 439)

Motyer entitles **verses 5-6** “Down to the dust.” He comments that “The ‘strong city’ is secure in this respect, that the *lofty city* has been laid low. The verses hold together thoughts familiar throughout this whole section: victory is solely the Lord’s work (**verse 5**) and His people’s part is to enter upon what He has accomplished. Here they do not fight, but simply trample the dust left by the Divine overthrow.” (P. 214)

Oswalt states, “In language reminiscent of **Isaiah 25:12**, the writer gives the reason for trusting Yahweh. He has brought the proud oppressive city down to the dust...In words reminiscent of the Beatitudes (**Matthew 5:1-12**), Isaiah says it is better to be among the poor and the lowly who will triumph than to be among the mighty who will be triumphed over. This is contrary to all human wisdom, but it is the true wisdom (**Jacob / “James” 3:13-18; 5:1-11**).” (P. 473)

Yes, and we are amazed at the wisdom expressed in the little **Book of Jacob** [**“Jacob”**]. We wonder if he has been a student of the **Book of Isaiah**, as well as being the physical brother of Jesus, who had heard Jesus on occasion teaching, even though he and his family once thought Jesus was crazy (see **Mark 3:20-21** and **6:1-6**)?

(continued...)

קָרִיָּה נִשְׁגַּבְּהָ יִשְׁפִּילָנָה
 יִשְׁפִּילָהּ עַד-אַרְצָא
 יִגִּיעֶנָּה עַד-עֶפְרָא:

Because He prostrated / laid low²⁵ those dwelling (in) a height–
 a city exalted / made inaccessibly high,²⁶ He will bring low / abase;

²⁴(...continued)

Alexander translates and comments on **verse 5**: “For He hath brought down the inhabitants of the high place, the exalted city; He will lay it low, He will lay it low, to the very ground; He will bring it to the very dust. He has proved Himself able to protect His people, and consequently worthy to be trusted by them, in His signal overthrow of that great power by which they were oppressed.” (P. 421)

²⁵Motyer calls the hiphil perfect verb הִשְׁפִּיל, “He prostrated / humbled,” a “prophetic perfect” which really means “He has determined to [prostrate / humble].” (P. 214) 1QIs^a has הִשְׁתִּי, which Watts says is “apparently a scribal error.” (P. 338)

We think this is unnecessary—and typical of Christian interpreters of the **Hebrew Bible** who want to make everything fit perfectly into their view of everything pointing to the future work of God in Christ.

It is much better, in our opinion, to take the perfect tense as it is, and interpret the text as affirming that the Divine humbling has happened in the past, to Babylon, and Tyre, and is continuing to happen in the present, to Samaria, and will happen in the future, to Jerusalem, and all other proud, egotistical, self-sufficient cities as the following imperfect verbs state, and as indeed it did happen following the coming of Jesus Christ, with a repeated fall of Jerusalem and then the fall of Rome.

²⁶Alexander comments that the niphil verb נִשְׁגַּבְּהָ, **nishgabhah** “means *lofty* in the sense of being inaccessible, and is especially applied to fortresses.” (P. 421)

Motyer comments that “*On high* (גִּבּוֹרִים) may refer to the pride of the city’s inhabitants (compare **22:16**; **24:4**) or it may be a glance at the supernatural dimensions of the victory (**24:21**). Did Isaiah originally have Babylon in mind here, or (more likely) the Nineveh of Sennacherib? The matter is no longer of importance. Just as his Jerusalem in these chapters has become an idea rather than a place (what Jerusalem could entertain the whole world to a banquet? **25:6-8**), so the *lofty city* is an ideal construction, symbolizing the world organized without God.” (P. 214)

(continued...)

He will bring it low / abase it²⁷ as far as earth / land;

He will cause it to touch as far as dust!²⁸

26:6²⁹ תִּרְמַסְנָה רַגְלֵי

רַגְלֵי עֵנִי

פְּעַמֵי רַגְלָיו:

A foot³⁰ will trample it--

²⁶(...continued)

Ackerman says “The image of a *lofty city* laid low echoes the imagery of **25:2** and should be contrasted to **26:1** and its image of the *strong city* (i.e., the redeemed Jerusalem).” (P. 990)

²⁷Where our Hebrew text has the two phrases, יִשְׁפִּילְנָה יִשְׁפִּילֶהָ, “He will bring low / abase it; He will bring low / abase it,” both 1QIs^a, the Syriac translation and **Rahlfs** omit the second phrase. Compare **Isaiah 21:9**, “It fell, it fell, Babylon!”

Oswalt notes that “The repetition of יִשְׁפִּילֶהָ after יִשְׁפִּילְנָה, has been called an error in the Masoretic Text that is missing in 1QIs^a, **Rahlfs**, and the Syriac translation. However, the omission in the versions may be due to haplography [a scribal or typographical error where a letter or group of letters that should be written twice is written once], and as a result of failing to recognize an anadiplosis [the repetition of the last word of a preceding clause. The word is used at the end of a sentence and then used again at the beginning of the next sentence; see footnotes 18, 20, 30, 35, 44 and 82]...If the first verb is construed with the preceding clause, the difficulty disappears.” (P. 469)

²⁸Compare **Isaiah 25:12**,

And (the) fortification stronghold of your walls,
He laid low, He abased,
He brought to the earth, as far as dust! (Also, see **25:2**.)

²⁹Alexander translates **verse 6**: “The foot shall trample on it, the feet of the afflicted, the steps of the weak. The ruins of the fallen city shall be trodden under foot, not only by its conquerors, but by those whom it oppressed.” (P. 422)

³⁰Where our Hebrew text has the singular noun רַגְלֵי, “a foot,” 1QIs^a along with **Rahlfs**, the Syriac translation and the Aramaic Targum omits the noun. As our Hebrew text stands, it is another example of anadiplosis—see footnotes 18, 20, 27, 35, 44 and 82.

feet of poor people,
steps of weak people (synonym)!³¹

26:7³² אֲרַח לְצַדִּיק מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל

³¹Slotki says that the “poor and needy” are Israel, “as in **Isaiah 25:4**.” (P. 118) But **Isaiah 25:4** makes no such identification.

Watts comments that this verse “implies that the city was guilty of oppressing the poor.” (P. 340) We agree.

Motyer comments that “The Lord’s people are described in a way that rules out any contribution by them to His victory...They are the oppressed (עֲנִי), and poor (דָּל), the down-trodden’ and ‘feeble or resourceless’ (compare **3:14; 10:2; 14:30**).”

Yes—but these are the very people who are able to do what **Psalms 15** and **24** insist on, and we hold that it is the poor and the oppressed peoples of the earth that YHWH both can and does use in the gaining of His victories.

Compare for example the story of the **Book of Ruth**, in which the penniless widow and foreigner, “the Moabitess,” becomes the prime example of practicing **chesedh**, steadfast-love, and thereby is entered into the family tree of King David!

Ortlund comments that *the poor and the needy* are “those despised by proud conquerors (**Isaiah 10:2** [this is not written concerning proud conquerors, but rather concerning those who make decrees / statutes in Judah]), but who trust in God (**Zephaniah 3:12**).” (P. 1285) Isaiah gives no such definitions here, but only affirms that the poor will be the ones who trample on the heads of the former inhabitants of the lofty city—truly a Divine victory!

By contrast, the former condition of the poor and their treatment by their own city-rulers are depicted in **Isaiah 3:14-15**:

- 14 YHWH will come with justice,
(contending) with (the) officials of His people and its princes:
And you burned / consumed the vineyard;
plunder of the poor people (is) in your houses!
- 15 What (is it) for you people—you crush My people,
and you grind (the) faces of poor people?
(It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH of Armies!

Isaiah insists that the tables are going to be turned; what they have done to the poor is going to be done to them, in the good times coming!

³²Ackerman holds that in **26:7-27:1** “The righteous entreat the Lord to inaugurate the apocalyptic destruction of the wicked so that their redemption may swiftly follow.”

(continued...)

³²(...continued)

(P. 990) But the word “apocalyptic” is not found in the text.

Kaiser entitles **26:7-21** “The Community in the Distress of the Final Age”, and we wonder where the text says anything concerning ‘the Final Age.’

He comments that “The poet now turns away from the eschatological salvation which he has invoked in his prophetic anticipation of the future, the song in **verses 1-6**...

“Instead, in **verses 7-18**, a lamentation of the people, wordy, meditative in effect and going beyond the strict laws of this category [we ask, were there indeed ‘strict laws’ for the writing of different categories of literary material? Can any documentary evidence be give for this from the time of Isaiah? We think not!], he speaks as though leading his people in prayer (compare **verse 9**) and diverts the attention back to the distress which has not yet been brought to an end...

“The eschatological prophet goes on in **verses 20-21** to tell his community how this time of distress has to be endured when it grows worse, when it is no longer a matter of human enemies, but of Yahweh Himself carrying out His final, decisive act of judgment upon the world...

“Later, under the influence of the much more recent hope of resurrection [Kaiser seems very certain in dating the origin of the belief in resurrection], **verse 19** was interpolated to provide an answer to the lamentation. It both promises the resurrection of the dead in a form appropriate to the context and at the same time gives a new interpretation to **verse 20**...

“On the basis of the classical elements of the psalm of lamentation, **verses 7-9** may be described as a confession of trust, **verses 10-11** as a petition for Yahweh’s intervention, **verse 12** as the expression of the certainty of being heard, **verses 13-15** as a renewed expression of trust, and **verses 16-18** as a description of the distress, the lamentation proper...

“The theme of trust, taking up half the song, is particularly prominent, and so is the introduction of a didactic note in **verses 7a, 9b** and **10a**, where the prayer takes on the form of the proverbs used in the wisdom literature...

“The poet’s purpose is to show his congregation how to endure the distress of the final age, patiently trusting in Yahweh’s righteous actions and in His help alone, praying and withdrawing into the privacy of home life.” (Pp. 209-10) And we ask, where does the text say anything like “withdrawing into the privacy of home life”?

Oswalt entitles **26:7-19** “Psalm of Dependence.”

(continued...)

³²(...continued)

He comments that “The poem now moves from thanksgiving to an expression of dependence. The writer declares that it is only as God manifests His power on the earth that the peoples will learn the level paths of righteousness...

“Attempts to cast **verses 7-21** in lament form are not successful...Elements of lament and wisdom are here, but neither of the precise forms is dominant.” (Pp. 476-77)

Gray entitles **verses 7-11**, “Waiting for Yahweh’s discriminating judgments.”

Slotki says **verses 7-10** teach “Implicit trust in God, and prayer to Him Whose direction and judgments are a wholesome discipline for mankind.” (P. 119)

Motyer entitles **verses 7-9** “The divinely smoothed path,” and comments that these verses contain “a striking contrast to **verses 1-5!** Very far from peace, it would seem, is the way in which the righteous have to walk. They are still waiting for the Lord to act (**verse 8**), filled with longing (**verse 9a, b**) and still in this world (**9c d**). But the spirit which fills the verse is faith. They look on their earthly path as God-given (**verse 7**), they hold on to Him in believing expectation and desire (**verses 8-9b**) and they are steadfast in obedience (**verse 8a**).” (Pp. 214-15)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 7**: “*The way for the righteous is straight (or level); Thou most upright wilt level (or rectify) the path of the righteous.* A man’s way is a common Scriptural figure for his course of life. A straight or level way is a prosperous life. It is here declared that the course of the righteous is a prosperous one, because God makes it so.” (P. 422)

But does **verse 7** say the way of the righteous will be “prosperous”?

Gray likewise states concerning **verse 7** that “God makes for the righteous a smooth way of life free from stumbling-blocks such as cumber the way of the wicked and cause them to fall: the righteous thus pass through life easily and free from disaster.” (P. 440)

We say, Tell that to Job, or to Naomi—or to Jesus! What do you think?

Kaiser comments on **verses 7-9** that “The prayer opens in **verse 7** with a confession which comes to be the theme of all the rest of the poem, that the way of life of one who remains faithful to Yahweh and is therefore regarded by Him as righteous (compare **Isaiah 26:2**), is straight and level, because Yahweh Himself makes it smooth and removes obstacles from his path. See:

(continued...)

³²(...continued)

Psalm 1:6,

Because YHWH knows (the) pathway of rightly-related people;
and (the) pathway of wicked people will perish.

Psalm 25:10,

All YHWH's paths are steadfast-love and true-faithfulness--
for those who guard His covenant and His testimonies!

Psalm 27:11,

Teach me, O YHWH, Your way!
And lead me in (the) path of uprightness,
on account of my hostile critics,

Proverbs 1:3, Solomon's proverbs enable the learner

to take in discipline / correction imparting prudence,
right-relationship, and justice, and upright ways;

Proverbs 2:9,

Then you (singular) will understand right-relationship and justice,
and uprightnesses—every good track!

“In a time in which this principle does not seem to hold, faithfulness to Yahweh is shown (**verse 8**) by the refusal of the community to doubt that the confused course of history, of which man cannot make sense, is nevertheless subject to Yahweh's righteous guidance. As a result they do not cease to hope in Yahweh.” Compare:

Psalm 25:3,

Also, let those who wait-with-hope in You
not be put to shame!
Let them be put to shame,
those who act treacherously without a cause!

Psalm 69.7^{Heb} / 6^{Eng}

They will not be ashamed / let them not be ashamed in me,
ones waiting for You, my Lord YHWH of Armies!
They will not be humiliated / let them not be humiliated in me,

(continued...)

³²(...continued)

ones seeking You, God of Israel--

Isaiah 40:23, describing YHWH as:

The One giving / bringing rulers to nothing--
earth's judges, He made like the chaos / confusion!

Psalm 37:9,

Because evil-doers will be cut off;
and ones waiting-in-hope (for) YHWH,
they will inherit / possess land / earth!

"This unshakable confidence is shown in the constancy of the hope placed in Him. Compare:

Isaiah 26:9,

(With) my innermost-being I desired You in the night;
also (with) my spirit / breath within me I will seek You early.
Because just as Your judgments / judicial decisions--
righteousness for the earth--world's inhabitants learned!

Psalm 77:7,

I will remember my music in the night;
with my heart / mind I will meditate,
and my spirit searched (to understand).

Psalm 6:7,

I have grown weary with my groaning!
Every night I make my bed swim,
with my tears, I melt my couch!

Psalm 88:2,

YHWH, God of my salvation / deliverance,
(by) day I cried out;
in the night (my cry is) before You.

"This finds its support in the experience, asserted as a matter of principle, that what Yahweh's judgments bring upon men is justice; that He does right to the righteous and ultimately destroys the godless." (P. 211) Compare:

(continued...)

³²(...continued)

Psalm 71:16-18,

- 16 I will come with my Lord YHWH's strengths;
I will cause remembrance of Your right-relationship, Yours alone!
- 17 God taught me from my youth,
and until here / now, I will declare Your marvelous acts!
- 18 And also until old age and grey hair,
God, You will not forsake me,
until I shall declare Your Arm('s strength) to a generation,
Your strength to everyone (who) will come!

Psalm 119:7,

I will praise you with uprightness of heart,
as I learn your judgments of right-relationship.

Psalm 119:71,

Good is mine, because I was humbled,
so that I might learn your statutes.

Jeremiah 12:17,

And if they will not listen,
and / then I will pull up / root out that nation,
pulling up / rooting out and destroying!
—A saying of YHWH.

Deuteronomy 31:13,

And your children who did not know will listen,
and they will learn to reverence / fear YHWH your God
all the days which you people (are) alive
upon the ground which you are crossing over the Jordan to dispossess it.”
(Pp. 210-11)

Kaiser refers to all these passages in order to demonstrate that the author of **Isaiah 26** is a learned student of the **Hebrew Bible**, in particular of the **Book of Psalms**, and the statements made in this chapter can be paralleled elsewhere in the **Hebrew Bible**. What do you think? Has Kaiser made his point? We think he has. And again we note that Westermann, in his commentary on **Isaiah 40-66**, makes the same point, even more forcefully, showing the close relationship between the **Book of Psalms** and **Isaiah 40-66**.

(continued...)

³²(...continued)

Should we conclude that the historic Isaiah was just such a student of the **Book of Psalms**? To answer this question demands a detailed study of all the Psalms, and determining their most likely origin / dating—something beyond our reach.

Oswalt comments on **verse 7** that “As is typical of the entire [passage, **Isaiah 26:7-19**], this verse builds on the preceding thought. The image of the feet of the poor and needy naturally leads to a discussion of the road on which they walk. In a land where roadways went up and down with grueling regularity, the most delightful thought was of a road which was level and straight. It was that way because of the character of the One Who formed it (**Isaiah 40:3-5**). Because He is not crooked or twisted, the way on which His people were called to walk was not either...

“This is not to say that this way is easy or that its outcome is always obvious. But it is to say that it is not devious or deceptive, with the hidden pitfalls which await the godless. Its demands are clear in advance and its final destination sure. Such a way may not be filled with illicit pleasures (Can it be only accidental that the word ‘straight’ has come to have a contemptuous connotation in American colloquial speech?), but it will offer excitement in plenty for those with the courage to take God at His word.” (P. 477) Compare:

Psalms 1:6, (see above)

Proverbs 3:6,

In all your ways, know / acknowledge Him,
and He will make straight your pathways.

Proverbs 4:26,

Weigh / make level your foot's track,
and all your ways will be established.

Proverbs 5:21,

Because in front of--YHWH's eyes--a man's ways!
And all his tracks He is weighing / leveling!

Proverbs 11:5,

Complete / sound righteousness will make straight his way;
and by his wickedness a wicked man will fall.

Proverbs 15:19,

(continued...)

יֵשֶׁר מִעֵגַל צְדִיק תְּפִלָּס:

A pathway³³ for the rightly-related person³⁴—uprightness / straightness;

³²(...continued)

(The) way of a sluggish / lazy person—like a hedge of briars;
and (the) path (synonym) of upright people is lifted up / a highway.

Oswalt, like Kaiser, thinks the author of **Psalm 26** is well acquainted with Israel's wisdom literature. He is not introducing something new, but is making his statements on the basis of biblical teaching, especially in the **Book of Proverbs**. Do you think that the historic Isaiah was acquainted with the **Book of Proverbs** as well as the **Book of Psalms**? Again we ask, Do you agree with Oswalt? Has he made his point? We think he has.

³³Oswalt states that “As J. Jensen comments, it is significant that פֶּתַח, **orach**, ‘path,’ appears 8 times in **Isaiah (2:3; 3:12; 26:7, 8; 30:11; 33:8; 40:14 and 41:3)** and nowhere else in the prophetic corpus. This is a strong argument for at least the literary unity of the **Book**.” (Pp. 473-74)

We do not see this as a particularly “strong argument” for the literary unity of the **Book of Isaiah**. What do you think?

³⁴English translations vary between “the just,” “the righteous man,” “the righteous,” and “the Upright One.” **Rahlf's** has εὐσεβῶν, “Godly people / pious people.”

In fact, the Hebrew text is ambiguous, and can be taken in these different senses.

And we ask, is it the fact that there is no such person, no one who is “just” or “righteous” as Paul and his interpreters have insisted? Those who hold to such a rigid view have to downplay passages such as this, which apparently claims, or assumes that there are such! What do you think?

an upright / straight³⁵ track of a rightly-related person,³⁶ You will make level!³⁷

³⁵The adjective **יָשָׁר**, **yashar** “straight,” “right,” is omitted by our Greek translation (**Rahlfs**). It makes for easier reading of the line to omit it, but that is probably an indication of its originality.

Oswalt notes that there is an “anadiplosis” (compare footnotes 18, 20, 27, 30, 40 and 82) “in which the first clause ends with the [plural] abstract noun **מִישָׁרִים**, **meyshariym**, ‘straight [ones],’ and the second clause begins with the same root [in the singular], **יָשָׁר**, **yashar**, ‘straight one.’” (P. 474) He translates the word in the second clause by “O Straight One.”

We say, this is a possible translation, and is found in **King James, Tanakh, New Revised Standard, New International** and **New Jerusalem**; but is not by any means the most obvious translation.

English Standard Version has “The path of the righteous is level; you make level the way of the righteous.” **Rahlfs** has ὁδὸς εὐσεβῶν εὐθεία ἐγένετο καὶ παρεσκευασμένη ἡ ὁδὸς τῶν εὐσεβῶν, “Way of godly / pious people became straight; and the way of the godly / pious people is having been prepared.”

³⁶Where our Hebrew text has the adjective **צַדִּיק**, **tsaddiyq**, “righteous,” 1QIs^a has **צֶדֶק**, **tsedeq**, “righteousness.”

English translations vary between “thou, most upright,” “O Just One,” and “O Upright One.” **Rahlfs** again has εὐσεβῶν, “Godly people / pious people.” Again, in fact, the Hebrew text is ambiguous, and can be taken in these different senses. In such a situation, it is foolish to take a dogmatic stand as to exactly what the text means.

Ackerman arbitrarily comments that “The name *Just One* is found in the **Bible** only here [but is it actually found here? We think not]; it alludes to the apocalyptic conviction that, while God is ultimately just, this justice is not manifest in the corrupted world of the present. Hence, the cosmos must be destroyed and be replaced by a new creation in which righteousness will be properly rewarded.” (P. 990)

We wonder if Ackerman has genuinely found this “apocalyptic conviction” in the text of **Isaiah 24-27**, or whether she has read that conviction into the text. We see these chapters as certainly teaching the necessity for Divine judgment of destruction upon the “city of chaos,” and upon a world of wickedness, but do not find “the destruction of the cosmos.” We see the replacement of chaos by order, and the replacement of wickedness by righteousness and justice—but that is far from destruction of the cosmos. And this passage, we think, depicts the possibility of “righteous people”

(continued...)

³⁶(...continued)

in the present world of the text, with God making their pathway straight and level. What do you think?

³⁷Where our Hebrew text has תִּפְּלֵם, **tephalles**, “You will weigh / make level,” 1QIs^a has תִּפְּלֵט, **tephalet**, “You will deliver.”

English translations of **verse 7** vary slightly:

King James, “The way of the just *is* uprightness: Thou, Most Upright, dost weigh the path of the just.”

Tanakh, “The path is level for the righteous man; O Just One, You make smooth the course of the righteous.”

New Revised Standard, “The way of the righteous is level; O Just One, you make smooth the path of the righteous.”

New International, “The path of the righteous is level; O upright One, you make the way of the righteous smooth.”

New Jerusalem, “The path of the Upright One is honesty; you smooth the honest way of the upright.”

Rahfs, “A way of Godly people became straight; and the way of the Godly people was prepared.”

Motyer comments that “This is the voice of faith, not a description of experience. It is how those who are ‘right with God’ look at life—like the pilgrim of **Psalm 84:6** who treats the valley of Baca [the balsam tree] as if it were full of springs!” (P. 215)
Compare the promise of **Proverbs 3:6**:

In all your ways, know / acknowledge Him,
and He will make straight your pathways.

This matter of making straight paths for YHWH's people occurs again in:

Isaiah 40:3-4,

- 3 Make clear YHWH's way!
Make straight in the *arabah* / desert-plain
a highway for our God!
- 4 Every valley will be raised up,
and every mountain and hill will be made low.
And the hilly ground will become a level place,
and the rough places a valley-plain!

Isaiah 42:16,

(continued...)

³⁷(...continued)

And I will lead / cause to walk blind people in a way they did not know,
in pathways they did not know I will cause them to walk (synonym).
I will place / turn a dark place before them to the light,
and rough places to a level place!
These (are) the things I did,
and I will not forsake them!

Isaiah 45:13, YHWH says He will make all of Cyrus's ways level.

³⁸Alexander translates / comments on **verse 8**: “Also in the way of Thy judgments, O Jehovah, we have waited for Thee; to Thy name and Thy remembrance (was our) soul's desire. For this manifestation of Thy righteousness and goodness we have long been waiting in the way of Thy judgments, i.e. to see Thee come forth as a Judge, for the vindication of Thy people and the destruction of their enemies.” (P. 422)

Oswalt comments on **verse 8** that “This verse makes it plain that the way is not an end in itself...We walk on the way that we do so that God may meet us there in His way and in His timing. ‘In the path...we wait.’

“We wait is the biblical expression of confident hope. It expresses the believer's expectation that God will demonstrate His faithfulness at the most appropriate moment. Compare

Psalms 25:3, None who wait for You shall be put to shame;

Psalms 37:9, Those who wait for YHWH shall inherit the land;

Isaiah 25:9; This is our God; we have waited for Him that He might save us;
this is YHWH; we have waited for Him; let us be glad and rejoice in His salvation
/ deliverance!

Isaiah 33:2, O YHWH, be gracious to us; we wait for You!

Isaiah 40:31, Those who wait for YHWH will renew their strength!...

Isaiah 49:23, Those who wait for Me shall not be put to shame!

Isaiah 51:5, The coastlands hope for Me, and for My arm they wait;

Isaiah 59:19, We hope / wait for light, and behold, darkness...

Isaiah 60:9, For the coastlands shall wait / hope for Me...

(continued...)

יְהוָה קִיִּינוּךְ
לְשִׁמְךָ וְלִזְכָּרְךָ
תְּאַוֶּת־נַפְשׁ:

Also,³⁹ (in the) way of your judicial decisions--⁴⁰
YHWH, we waited (for) You!⁴¹

³⁸(...continued)

Hosea 12:6, So you, by the help of your God, return! Hold fast to steadfast-love and justice! And wait continually for your God!

Micah 7:7, But as for me, I will look to YHWH; I will wait for the God of my salvation / deliverance; my God will hear me.

“Waiting is very difficult for most people, for it is an admission that there is nothing we can do at the moment to achieve our ends. Yet that admission is the first requirement for spiritual blessing. Until we have admitted that we cannot save ourselves, God cannot save us [but, are not all things possible for God?]. So this waiting becomes a spiritual statement wherein we say, above all to ourselves, that we are not the key to our problems and that we are confident that God is the key...

“It is significant that the stress here is not so much upon waiting for God’s salvation as it is upon God Himself.” (Pp. 477-78)

³⁹**King James** and **New International** translate the first word of this verse, אַיִן, by “Yea” and “Yes.” Our other English translations omit the word. **Rahlf**s has “for.”

Gray comments on **verse 8** that “Speaking in the name of the community, the writer claims that they have patiently and longingly waited for the manifestation of Yahweh’s power.” (P. 440).

⁴⁰Slotki holds that the judgments (our “judicial decisions”) are “judgments of the wicked.” (P. 119)

⁴¹Where our Hebrew text reads קִיִּינוּךְ, “we waited (for) You,” 1QIs^a, **Rahlf**s and other ancient versions omit the suffixed object, reading simply קִיִּינוּ, “we waited” (**Rahlf**s has ἠλπίσαμεν, “we hoped”).

Motyer comments that “Whether they are holding to the path of obedience or proving durable amid life’s providential orderings, the Lord’s people *wait for Him*,

(continued...)

For Your name and for Your memory / memorial--⁴²

desire / wish of an innermost-being!⁴³

⁴¹(...continued)

exercise believing patience till the Lord performs His final act (**verses 5-6**). They do not long for altered circumstances but for fuller experience of Him.” (P. 215)

But is this really the case? Why then the **Psalms** of individual lament, which cry out against the circumstances in which many psalmists find themselves? What about the **Book of Job**, in which Job constantly cries out against Divine justice due to his circumstances, and is approved by YHWH at the close of the **Book of Job** for having spoken rightly? See **Job 42:7**. If Job has spoken rightly, it certainly indicates that life is an excruciating test of patience, and there are many of us who can heartily affirm that life is such!

⁴²Where our Hebrew text reads וְלִזְכָּרְךָ, **ulezikhreka**, “and for Your memory / memorial,” 1QIs^a has וְלִתּוֹרַתְךָ, **ulethoratheka**, “and for your Torah / Teaching.”

Gray states that the “name” and the “memory / memorial” are synonymous. (P. 441) See **Exodus 3:15**,

And God again spoke to Moses:

In this way you shall speak to Israel’s children:

YHWH, God of your fathers, God of Abraham,

God of Isaac and God of Jacob,

sent me to you people.

This [YHWH] (is) His name for long-lasting time,
and this (is) His memorial to generation (after) generation.

Also, see **Psalms 135:13**,

YHWH (is) Your name to long-lasting time;

YHWH (is) Your memorial / remembrance to generation and generation.

⁴³The translations of this last line of **verse 8** vary:

King James, “the desire of *our* soul *is* to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee.”

Tanakh, “We long for the name by which You are called.”

New Revised Standard, “your name and your renown are the soul’s desire.”

New International, “your name and renown are the desire of our hearts.”

New Jerusalem, “your name, your memory are all our soul desires.”

Rahlf’s, ἠλπίσσαμεν ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί σου καὶ ἐπὶ τῇ μνεΐα ὃ ἧ ἐπιθυμεῖ ἡ ψυχὴ ἡμῶν “We hoped upon the name of Yours, and upon the memory⁹ for which the innermost-being of ours desires.”

נַפְשִׁי אֲוִיתִיךָ בַּלַּיְלָה 26:9⁴⁴

אֶפְרוּחַי בְּקִרְבִּי אֶשְׁתַּחֲוֶה
כִּי כַּאֲשֶׁר מִשְׁפַּטֶּיךָ לָאָרֶץ צֶדֶק
לְמַדּוֹ יֵשְׁבִי תְּבֵל:

(With) my innermost-being I⁴⁵ desired⁴⁶ You in the night;⁴⁷

⁴⁴Alexander translates / comments on **verse 9**: “(With) my soul have I desired Thee in the night; yea (with) my spirit within me will I seek Thee early; for when Thy judgments (come) to the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.” (P. 423)

Slotki maintains that in **verse 9**, “Israel is speaking.” (P. 119) We think it is Isaiah himself speaking.

Oswalt comments that “The first half of **verse 9** continues the thought of the previous one. Notice that **verse 8** ends with **נַפְשִׁי**, **naphesh**, ‘soul’ [our ‘innermost-being’], and that **verse 9a** opens with the same word [**נַפְשִׁי**, **naphshiy**, ‘my soul / innermost-being’], yet another case of anadiplosis [see footnotes 18, 20, 27, 30, 35 and 82].” (P. 478)

⁴⁵Motyer comments that “The change to first person singular is unexpected but apt. There is no such thing as the people of God apart from the individuals composing it.” (P. 215)

Yes, but we ask, Who is speaking here in the first person? Is this the human author, Isaiah, expressing his deep-seated longing and desire for YHWH? We think it is. What do you think? See footnote 44.

⁴⁶Alexander comments that “The desire here expressed is not a general desire for the knowledge and favor of God, but a special desire that He would manifest His righteousness by appearing as a Judge.” (P. 423)

⁴⁷Slotki comments on the phrase “in the night,” that it is “a metaphor for sorrow or exile. Even when in trouble and distress the pure soul longs for its Creator.” (P. 119)

Alexander, differently, states that “The night is mentioned, not as a figure for calamity or ignorance, nor as a time peculiarly appropriate to meditation, but for the purpose of expressing the idea, that he feels this at all times, by night and by day.” (P. 423)

(continued...)

also (with) my spirit / breath within me I will seek You early.⁴⁸
Because just as⁴⁹ Your judgments / judicial decisions⁵⁰--righteousness for the earth--
world's inhabitants learned!⁵¹

⁴⁷(...continued)

Why not, then, say “by night and by day”? Or does the text mean “by night and by day” when the phrase “in the night” is followed by the vow to “seek God early”?

⁴⁸Oswalt mentions the opinion of Young that the meaning of the piel verb **אַשְׁחַרֶּכָּה**, **ashachareka** “contains the idea of ‘to rise early’ [that is its meaning in the qal], and so in itself balances ‘night.’” (P. 478)

Ortlund comments that “God Himself is the wholehearted desire of His people,” noting how many times in **verses 8-9** God is mentioned. (P. 1285)

⁴⁹Oswalt states that **כַּאֲשֶׁר**, **ka)asher**, ‘according as’...may be used to express a proportionate effect: to the degree that God’s judgments are recognized, the world learns righteousness.” (P. 479)

What do you think? Do you agree with Oswalt? We do.

There are Divine laws that govern our world and human history. When those laws are observed and learned and lived by, the world is on its way to righteousness and peace. When those laws are unobserved, and disregarded, chaos ensues.

⁵⁰Where our Hebrew text has **מִשְׁפָּטֶיִךָ**, **mishpateyka**, “Your judgments / Your judicial decisions,” **Rahfs** has φῶς τὰ προστάγματα σου, “light—the commandments / orders of Yours.”

⁵¹The last line of **verse 9** is given slightly differing English translations:

King James, “the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.”

New Jerusalem, “the inhabitants of the world learn what saving justice is.”

Rahfs, δικαιοσύνην μάθετε οἱ ἐνοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς “Learn (plural imperative) righteousness, the ones dwelling upon the earth!”

None of the English translations follow the Hebrew’s past tense, “learned.” But we think Isaiah is looking at the experience of the nations, and concluding that through YHWH’s righteous, just actions, including His judgments on evil behavior, the nations have learned in the past. YHWH is not just Israel’s Teacher—He has also been the Teacher of the nations!

Slotki comments that the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness, “Seeing as they do that ultimately the wicked do not escape their due retribution.” (P. 119)

(continued...)

⁵¹(...continued)

Gray states that “When the judgments of God no longer remain high out of sight of the wicked (see **Psalm 10:5**, [where it is said of the wicked person,

His ways are firm at all time(s);
Your judgments are high before him;
All his adversaries—he puffs at them.]

“allowing him to flatter himself that he can sin on with impunity, but [when God’s judgments] come down to earth, then the inhabitants of the world at large learn righteousness, though the wicked do not do so, with the result that the wicked are punished...

“Something like this seems to be intended, if the Hebrew text is in the main correct; but the text of the Hebrew and the Greek differ considerably, and the original text cannot be detected with any certainty, and some of the exact turns of thought remain very obscure; but apparently this writer distinguishes...(between)...*the inhabitants of the world (18:3)*, that is, the heathen nations, and *the unrighteous*. Convinced by Yahweh’s judgments...the nations learn righteousness of life from the God of the Jews...But there is a class of wicked people who persistently shut their eyes...to the majesty of Yahweh...and refuse to learn and follow the way approved by Him.” (P. 441)

Again we note the obscurity of the text—exactly what we should expect in the light of **Numbers 12:6-8** and **1 Corinthians 13:9-12** with their insistence that the prophetic message, relayed through dreams and visions, is “enigmatic / puzzling” in nature.

Motyer comments that “One of the things that holds the people of God in this patient continuance and spiritual longing is the fact that the judgments of the Lord on earth enable its people / ‘inhabitants’ to learn righteousness...Obedience, a different way of life based on a supernatural code, is a telling testimony...” (P. 215)

Motyer’s phrase “based on a supernatural code” is his language, not found in the text.

Alexander states that “The doctrine of the verse is, that a view of God’s severity is necessary to convince men of His justice.” (P. 423)

Oswalt comments that in the latter half of **verse 9**, continuing through **verse 11**, “a further explanation is given as to why the author is looking to God so earnestly. It is not merely that God’s people may be delivered from oppression, but that the wicked may learn righteousness. He is convinced that only Divine retribution for their sins will ever bring the wicked to recognize the folly of their way (compare **Psalm 78:34**,

If He killed them—
and they would seek Him,

(continued...)

⁵¹(...continued)

and they would repent,
and they would earnestly seek (synonym) El / Supreme God.

“So long as their way is easy and prosperous, there is no reason for them to turn to the way of the righteous (**verse 8**). The Jewish people have not been able to teach the folly of wickedness, he says. Only God can do this through His hand of judgment.

“*Judgments* conveys not only the negative connotation usually applied to it, but also the more positive aspect of ‘government.’ This aspect is recognized in the **Book of Judges**, where the heroes are neither judicial figures nor merely avenging angels. Rather, they are those who establish God’s order and God’s ways in Israel and with relation to the surrounding countries [perhaps so, ideally—but can this be said of Samson? We think not]. So here, when God’s governance is recognized in the world, when the laws of cause and effect, of justice, are seen to operate, then the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” (Pp. 478-79)

Watts comments that this verse “reflects that God’s judgments are intended for other peoples, not Israel.” (P. 341) Surely, we say, this is a mistake. The Divine judgments / judicial decisions are given first of all to and for Israel—but the nations both can and do learn from those judgments, if they will pay heed to them.

⁵²Motyer entitles **verses 10-11** “Impenetrable blindness,” and comments that “In seeking to enable the ‘inhabitants of the world’ to ‘learn righteousness’ the people of God have a hard task! The world is impenetrably unaware of God.” (P. 216)

But if Isaiah is saying that the world is “impenetrably unaware of God,” why has he just said that the world learned righteousness and justice? And why should Isaiah call upon his disciples to be “signs” and “portents” in the midst of an unbelieving world? Why should Isaiah preach to the nations, arguing with them concerning the futility of their idols, and calling upon them to see the mighty hand of YHWH in the raising up of the non-Israelite Cyrus, Whom He called by name and sent on his messianic task? Why should Isaiah predict that Egyptians, Ethiopians and Sabeans will come to the Israelites, confessing that God is with them, and there is no other God (**chapter 45**)? Has not Isaiah, if Motyer’s understanding of his words is correct, overstated the impenetrability of the world to the knowledge of God?

Additionally, we ask, If Motyer’s view is true, why is it that people all over the world constantly worship, in one form or another, reaching out in awe to a creative power greater than themselves?

Ortlund comments on **verses 10-11** that “This cry for vindication is the centerpiece of **chapter 26**...In a world of spiritual blindness, God’s people long for the truth to be seen. That truth is God’s judgment on His enemies and His zeal for His Own people, reversing the reproach of **25:8** and fulfilling the hopes of **24:14-16a, 23b; 25:1-**

(continued...)

⁵²(...continued)

12; 26:1-6.” (P. 1285) But this is to overlook the fact that God’s judgment begins at the House of Israel!

Ackerman states that in **26:10-11** “the righteous protest that the wicked prosper but that they must be punished if righteousness is to prevail.” (P. 990)

Watts comments on these two verses that “the discussion begins to get out of hand as they turn their attention to the world’s *inhabitants*. The pilgrims [who he understands to be the speakers] see little chance that the *wicked* can be changed much less *learn righteousness*. They are blamed because they do not recognize God’s uplifted hand. This is exactly the criticism that the [**Book of Isaiah**] has leveled against Israel / Judah from the beginning. They are ‘blind, deaf, and without understanding.’ Here the pilgrims can see that in the *wicked*, but not in themselves.” (P. 341)

Kaiser comments that “The confession of trust concluded with a wisdom proverb, and the petition for Yahweh’s intervention in **verse 10** begins in the same way, with a statement in the form of a proverb emphasizing the necessity of Yahweh’s acts of judgment, as the only way the wicked man can be brought back to righteousness...

“When **verse 10b** states that they do not see the majesty of Yahweh...[it is] referring to their present blindness with regard to Yahweh’s power. If they fail to recognize that He is already present and ready to strike them (compare:

Exodus 14:18,

And Egyptians will know that I--YHWH;
when I am honored through Pharaoh, with his chariot(s) and with his
horsemen!

Numbers 33:3,

And they pulled out from Rameses in the first month,
on the fifteenth day of the first month,
On the day following the Passover the children of Israel went forth with a high
hand,
in the eyes of all Egypt!

“The moment of truth will come for them when they see Yahweh’s zeal for His Own people and are ashamed. Compare:

Psalm 86:17,

Make a sign with me for good—
and those hating me will be afraid and will be ashamed.

(continued...)

בְּאַרְץ נִכְחֹת יְעוּל

וּבִלְיָרְאָה גְּאוּת יְהוָה:

A wicked person⁵³ shown mercy⁵⁴ did not learn righteousness;⁵⁵

⁵²(...continued)

Because You, O YHWH, helped me and had compassion on me!

“The prayer of the oppressed should be that this will happen, and that the hour of their destruction by Yahweh will come.” (P. 211)

Alexander translates **verse 10**: “*Let the wicked be favored, he does not learn righteousness; in the land of right he will do wrong, and will not see the exaltation of Jehovah.*” He comments that “The reasoning of the previous verse is here continued. As it was there said that God’s judgments were necessary to teach men righteousness, so it is here said that continued prosperity is insufficient for that purpose. The wicked man will go on to do wickedly, even in the very place where right conduct is peculiarly incumbent...”

“Though the verse is in the form of a general proposition, and as such admits of various applications, there is obvious reference to the Babylonians, who were not only emboldened by impunity to do wrong in the general, but to do it even in the land of right or rectitude, the holy land, Jehovah’s land, where such transgressions were peculiarly offensive.” (P. 423)

Yes...But does not the whole earth belong to YHWH? And is not transgression of His laws offensive to Him, regardless of the location in which they occur? May not Isaiah mean that in any land where the majority of people practice righteousness and uprightness, there are still those who act wrongly?

⁵³Where our Hebrew text has רָשָׁע, *rasha*(, “an evil / wicked person,” **Rahlf**s, the Aramaic Targum and the Syriac translation all have the definite article, “the evil / wicked person.”

⁵⁴Or, shown grace (חֲסֵד, hophal imperfect from חָנַן). H. Wolf comments that “Perhaps the blessings of harvest and general prosperity” are meant.” (P. 1052) See **Matthew 5:45b**, where Jesus is depicted as saying that God causes

the sun of His to rise upon evil people and good people,
and sends rain upon rightly-related and unjust people.

Oswalt comments that “*Shown favor* expresses one of the oddities of human behavior. We tend to interpret grace as weakness and to take advantage of it. It has been shown again and again, as recently as 1938 [Adolph Hitler and Neville

(continued...)

in a land / earth⁵⁶ of uprightness⁵⁷ he acts wrongly,
and he does not see YHWH's majesty.⁵⁸

⁵⁴(...continued)

Chamberlain; with Chamberlain opting for 'peace in our time'], that aggressors see conciliation as an opportunity for further aggrandizement." (P. 479)

Where our Hebrew text has רָשָׁע יָחַן, **yuchan rasha**(, "a wicked person shown grace," **Rahlf**s has πέπαυται γὰρ ὁ ἀσεβής, "for the impious / ungodly person has ceased."

⁵⁵How do you understand this statement? Is it a universal law, that the wicked who are shown mercy / compassion did not and will not ever learn righteousness? Does this not fly in the face of those instances of YHWH's compassionate mercy being shown to notorious sinners such as Kings David and Manasseh, which resulted in the transformation of their lives? Or, is Isaiah thinking of an individual instance, in which a wicked person was graciously forgiven, but who continued on in his sinful life-style?

We think the latter is the case, and that this is the reason Isaiah uses singular verbs in this verse, not plural verbs.

⁵⁶Where our Hebrew text reads בְּאֶרֶץ, "in a land / earth," **Rahlf**s has "upon the earth / land." Observe that the phrase is not "in the land of Israel."

⁵⁷Alexander comments that "There are two explanations of אֶרֶץ נִכְחוֹת, **erets nekhochoth** which deserve attention. The first understands the phrase to mean, in the midst of a righteous population, surrounded by examples of good conduct. The other supposes an allusion, not to moral but to physical rectitude or straightness, as a figure for prosperity...But neither of these latter explanations agrees so well with the last words of the verse...according to which they represent the wrong-doer as not knowing or believing or considering that the land in which he practices his wickedness, belongs to the most High God." (Pp. 483-84)

⁵⁸Slotki takes the phrase to mean that the wicked person "does not want to behold" YHWH's majesty. (P. 119)

Motyer again takes this last line of **verse 9** as a universal law—"For even when in life's circumstances people have a fleeting recognition of God He remains marginal, incidental, in reality insignificant." (P. 216)

The author of these notes grew up in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and for many years knew and lived among the Navajos and other Indians, who shared in a typical religion of the American Indians. These people had far more than a "fleeting recognition of God." God, for the devout Indians, was not by any means "marginal," or "incidental," or "insignificant." Just the opposite was true—their whole life and culture

(continued...)

⁵⁸(...continued)

were built around God. Of course that was not, and is not, the case with every American Indian—for there are many who reject and turn away from their native religions, or pay little attention to them, just as happens in all religions, including Christianity.

What do you think? How do you evaluate world religions? Can you, with Motyer, charge Hindus, and Buddhists, and Muslims, and American Indians with treating God as marginal, incidental, insignificant? We agree with Isaiah that there are individuals who, confronted with the majesty of God, do not respond in any meaningful way. But this is not the case with all people—as Motyer holds.

And the fact of Christian missions is that when people of any culture who are caught up in serious problems—imprisoned, or suffering from disease or disaster or addictions—and are reached out to by caring people of different religions, their hearts are oftentimes touched, and their lives transformed. I saw this happening in the prisons of North Carolina, where Black Muslims had more success in reaching out to black inmates than did the Christians attempting to do the same.

Oswalt comments that “Ploeger argues that a distinction is made between *the inhabitants of the earth* (**verse 9**) and *the wicked* and that the wicked are in fact the opposing party in the Jewish apocalyptic community [Ploeger, **Theocracy**, p. 65]...

“While it is true that the Qumran community appears to have used such language for its opponents [see, for example, the **Damascus Rule, VIII**], automatic extension to this passage is unwarranted for two reasons. First, ‘the wicked’ are parallel with the ‘nations of the earth’ elsewhere (compare **Psalm 9:18**^{Heb} / **17**^{Eng}). Second, the parallelism exhibited by **verses 9b** and **10ab** says they do not learn it under another set of circumstances. It is the circumstances that have changed, not the people. The two terms are then synonyms.” (P. 479)

From this wordy comment, Oswalt concludes that the inhabitants of the earth are wicked—which is, in our opinion, unfair, and overstatement. The fact is that not all non-Jews are wicked, and not all Jews and Christians are righteous. We need to beware of such broad-sweeping generalizations, even though they often occur in biblical literature and in comment upon it!

⁵⁹Slotki states that **verses 11-15** contain a “Prayer for the destruction of the adversaries of God and for the peace of Israel,” also, “thanks for His mercies and a brief reverence to past history.” (P. 119)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 11**: “*Jehovah, Thy hand is high, they will not see; (yes) they will see (and be ashamed) Thy zeal for Thy people; yea, the fire of Thine enemies shall devour them.* The tenses in this verse have been variously and arbitrarily explained. Some make them all past, others all future, and a few all present

(continued...)

בַּל־יִחְזִיּוּן
 יִחְזַר וַיִּבְשׁוּ
 קִנְיַת־עַם
 אֶף־אֵשׁ צָרִיף תֹּאכְלֵם:

YHWH, Your hand was high / lifted up--⁶⁰

⁵⁹(...continued)

... It is advisable to adhere somewhat rigidly to the proper meaning of the forms.” (P. 424)

Oswalt comments on **verse 11** that “In typical Isaianic manner, this verse picks up the final thought of the previous one as well as beginning with that verse’s final word, the Divine name. The author is troubled by the situation in which the wicked are not responding. They do not see the hand which he sees. His solution is for them to see God’s concern for His people. That is the positive side. Let them look with envy at the faithfulness of Israel’s God. The negative side is the destruction that will fall on the wicked as God wrests His people from their hands...

“These words have been precious to oppressed believers across tens of centuries. One day they will come to their final fulfillment and need be said no more (**Revelation 21:4**). That time is envisioned in **26:1-5**, and here the prophet calls for it to come quickly.” (P. 480)

⁶⁰YHWH’s hand being lifted high is a sign of power, and here signals Divine opposition and war against what is happening. See:

Deuteronomy 32:27, YHWH did not want the enemy to be able to say,
 our hands (lifted) high,
 and not YHWH, did all this.

2 Samuel 24:16,

And the messenger / angel sent forth his hand (towards) Jerusalem, to ruin it;
 and YHWH was sorry for the evil,
 and He said to the messenger / angel,
 the one of the destruction against the city,
 Great / enough now; let your hand drop...

Isaiah 5:25 (YHWH’s hand stretched out against His Own people); **9:12, 17, 21; 10:4**
 (all four passages His hand stretched out against Israel!); **14:26, 27** (YHWH’s

(continued...)

they will not see / envision (it);
they will see / envision⁶¹ and be ashamed--⁶²

⁶⁰(...continued)

hand stretched out over Babylon and all the nations); וְעוֹד יָדוֹ נְטוּיָהּ, “and still His hand (is) stretched out.”

Ezekiel 20:33-35,

- 33 Living—I / by My life—a sworn oath of my Lord YHWH—
if I will not by a strong hand and with an arm stretched out,
and with rage poured out, reign over you people!
- 34 And I will bring you forth from the peoples,
and I will gather you from the lands in which you were scattered;
with a strong hand and with a stretched out arm
and with rage poured out!
- 35 And I will bring you to a wilderness of the peoples,
and I will enter into judgment there face to face with you!
(Here it is YHWH’s arm that is stretched out, with its strong hand; and it not only
reaches out to bring Israel back from captivity, but also to enter into judgment
with Israel herself!)

Psalm 89:14 ^{Heb} / 13 ^{Eng},

Yours (is) an arm with strength;
Your hand is strong;
You raise high Your right hand!

Slotki states that YHWH’s hand was lifted up “to punish the wicked who wantonly oppress Israel.” (P. 119) Perhaps, but the text does not make this explicit.

⁶¹Alexander states that “The seeming contradiction instantly explains itself, as being a kind of after-thought. They will not see, (but yes) they will see.” (P. 424)

The Hebrew text is: בַּל־יִחְזִיּוּן יִחְזוּ וַיִּבְשּׁוּ, “they will not see; they will see and will be ashamed.”

Or, can it mean, some will not see, while others will see? What do you think? It is somewhat puzzling language—just as we should expect in the prophetic message.

⁶²Where our Hebrew text has בַּל־יִחְזִיּוּן יִחְזוּ וַיִּבְשּׁוּ קְנֵאת־עַם, “they did not see; they will see and they will be ashamed; jealousy of a people,” the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has καὶ οὐκ ἠδρασαν γρόντες δὲ αἰσχυνθήσονται, ζήλος

(continued...)

jealousy / zeal of a people!⁶³

⁶²(...continued)

λήμψεται λαὸν ἀπαίδευτον “and they did not know; but then knowing, they will be ashamed; jealousy will take receive an untaught people.”

Oswalt comments that “be ashamed expresses the result of seeing God’s passion for His people. When the wicked see how the One in Whom Israel has trusted is jealous for Israel, then they will recognize how foolish were all the things in which they trusted—most of all, their own pride.” (P. 480)

⁶³Gray claims that this line “makes no sense, whether connected with what precedes...or with what follows.” (P. 442)

Translations of lines 3 and 4 vary:

King James, “*but* they shall see, and be ashamed for *their* envy at the people.”

Tanakh, “Let them be shamed as they behold Your zeal for Your people.”

New Revised Standard, “Let them see your zeal for your people, and be ashamed.”

New International, “Let them see your zeal for your people and be put to shame.”

New Jerusalem, “The antagonists of your people will look and grow pale.”

Rahifs, γνόντες δὲ αἰσχυνθήσονται ζήλος λήμψεται λαὸν ἀπαίδευτον, “but then knowing, they will be ashamed. Zeal / jealousy will take hold of an untaught people.”

Young, “They will see and be ashamed at Thy zeal for Thy people.”

Gray notes that the phrase *jealousy of the people* “might mean either jealousy displayed by the people, i.e., the Jews, or jealousy...displayed by Yahweh for...the Jews.” (Pp. 442-43) There is no definite article in the Hebrew text.

Oswalt states that “three meanings are possible for the text as it stands:

- (1) objective genitive, God’s jealousy for His people;
- (2) subjective genitive, the people’s zeal against their enemies;
- (3) subjective genitive, the jealousy of the people (of earth) against Israel.

“The context favors the first meaning...But if that is correct, why is the phrase not so defined, at least by pronouns? Delitzsch suggests plausibly that an abstraction is intended. If this is correct, then the sense would be: Let them see what a (Divine) passion for humanity looks like.” (P. 475)

We say, In fact, the Hebrew text is very obscure, and the suggested meanings are all guesses, exactly as we should expect in the light of **Numbers 12** and **1 Corinthians 13**. What do you think?

Also, fire of / for Your adversaries⁶⁴ will devour them!⁶⁵

26:12⁶⁶ יהוה תִשְׂפֹּת שְׁלוֹם לָנוּ

⁶⁴Where our Hebrew text has צַרִיָּקָה, **tsareyka**, our Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has τοὺς ὑπεναντίους, “the adversaries / opponents,” with the definite article and without the pronominal suffix.

For a “fire” that burns up wicked people, compare **Isaiah 1:31**:

And the strong person will be for an (inflammable) wick,
and his work / deeds for a spark;
and they burn, (the) two of them together,
and there is no one quenching (the fire)!

Slotki comments that “The enemies of Israel are the adversaries of God.” (P. 119)

But such a nationalistic comment overlooks the fact that in many of the prophecies of the **Hebrew Bible** Israel itself is addressed as the enemy of YHWH, and the object of YHWH’s fiery, wrath-dealing, stretched out arm / hand!

⁶⁵This request / prayer in **verse 11** sounds similar to the “Imprecatory Psalms” [psalms that that invoke judgment, calamity, or curses, upon enemies], in which Israel prays for the destruction of its enemies. See especially **Psalms 69** and **109**, and then in addition, **Psalms 5, 6, 11, 12, 35, 37, 40, 52, 54, 56, 58, 69, 79, 83, 137, 139** and **143**, all of which contain elements of imprecation, meaning “a spoken curse,” calling for vengeance to be taken.

⁶⁶Gray summarizes **verses 12-19** by stating: “The Jews achieve nothing for themselves but Yahweh everything for them, including the raising from the dead of those who had died.” (P. 443)

Motyer entitles **verses 12-15** “The Divinely ordained peace,” and comments that “The thought of the Lord’s zeal for His people, to be demonstrated climactically on the last day [where does Motyer get ‘the last day’ from this passage? We suggest, ‘in the future’], prompts the recollection that His people owe everything to the fact that He has concerned Himself with them. **Verse 12**, in this context, must refer primarily to spiritual blessings and **verses 13-15** look back into history for examples of what the Lord has done for His people. The message is consistent: everything has been undertaken by the Lord.” (P. 216)

Oswalt comments on **verses 12-15** that “In these verses the mood swings back from the petition for God to act to an expression of confidence in God. The general theme remains one of dependency. In herself Israel can do nothing, but God can do all

(continued...)

⁶⁶(...continued)

things, and in the light of what He has done in the past, He will make all things well.”
(P. 480)

Kaiser states that the petition in **verses 10-11** “is followed in **verse 12** by the affirmation of the certainty of being heard, which is based upon the fact that in the people’s past history all decisive help has come from Yahweh. This is an understanding of the relationship between human and Divine action which was basically formed in Israel by the event of salvation at the Red Sea. Compare **Exodus 14:14**,

YHWH will fight for you people;
and you will be silent.

“In its defenselessness, the Jewish community could expect no change to be brought about by its own power, or rather impotence. Compare **Isaiah 26:17-18**,

- 17 Like / when a pregnant woman—she draws near to giving birth;
she will writhe; she will cry out in her labor-pains;
so we were before Your face, YHWH!
- 18 We were pregnant; we writhed just like we gave birth (to) wind;
salvations / deliverances we will not make (for the) earth / land;

“But it looked forward to such a transformation from Yahweh, Who can bring down even mighty kingdoms...

“As a sign of the close link between Him and those who are praying, and of the trust placed in Him, He is addressed as ‘our God.’ Against the background of this confessional formula the contrast between the claim it implies and the outward reality, between the fact that Israel belongs to this God and their actual state of political servitude, is particularly marked. This contradiction is of course evoked not in order to raise doubts about Yahweh’s power, but to provide the occasion for interventions...on the part of Him Whose name alone they call and from Whom alone, therefore, they look for help.” (P. 212)

Alexander translates, then comments on **verse 12**: “*Jehovah, Thou wilt give us peace, for even all our works Thou hast wrought for us.* This is an expression of strong confidence and hope, founded on what has already been experienced. God certainly would favor them in the future, for He had done so already.” (P. 424)

Oswalt states that “Although Judah’s immediate future is dark, Isaiah is certain of the ultimate outcome. God’s upraised hand will set up wholeness and well-being for His people.” (P. 480)

Watts comments on **verse 12** that “The pilgrims get back on track with a confession that Yahweh has in fact provided *peace for them*. In the midst of violence

(continued...)

כִּי גַם כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂינוּ

פַּעַלְתָּ לָנוּ:

YHWH, You will establish⁶⁷ peace⁶⁸, ³ for us;
because also all our deeds
You accomplished / worked for us!⁶⁹

⁶⁶(...continued)

and turmoil they have survived.” (P. 341) But the verse has the imperfect / future tense, and the statement is that YHWH *will provide* peace for them.

⁶⁷The Hebrew verb here is the qal imperfect / future תִּשְׁפֹּת, **tishpoth**, which **Brown-Driver-Briggs** defines as “You will set / establish.”

Oswalt notes that the verb appears only here and in **2 Kings 4:38; Psalm 22:16**^{Heb} / **15**^{Eng} and **Ezekiel 24:3**... 1QIsa has תִּשְׁפֹּט, **tishpot**, “You will judge.”

He states that while this is a much easier reading than the Masoretic Text, it is therefore suspect (p. 475).

⁶⁸Motyer comments that “Peace, as in **verse 3**, is the peace which arises from a trusting relationship with the Lord and membership of the strong city.” (P. 216)

Isaiah is very explicit in stating his view that “peace” is both the gift of YHWH to His people, and His goal in history. See passages from **Isaiah** that reflect this teaching in our end-note 3.

⁶⁹English translations of **verse 12** vary slightly:

King James, “LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us.”

Tanakh, “O LORD! May You appoint well-being for us, Since You have also requited [‘repaid,’ ‘avenged’] all our misdeeds.”

New Revised Standard, “O LORD, you will ordain peace for us, for indeed, all that we have done, you have done for us.”

New International, “LORD, you establish peace for us; all that we have accomplished you have done for us.”

New Jerusalem, “Yahweh, you will grant us peace, having completed all our undertakings for us.”

The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) changes the entire verse:

(continued...)

⁶⁹(...continued)

O Lord, the God of ours,
give peace to us!
For You gave all things to us.

Slotki comments that “Without God’s help all Israel’s efforts to save himself would be of no avail.” (P. 120)

But the text doesn’t say God helped Israel’s efforts. What it says is much more than that--**לְנוּ--כָּל-מַעֲשֵׂינוּ פָּעַלְתָּ**, “all our deeds You worked for us.” The Greek translation avoids this difficulty in the Hebrew text, changing it to say πάντα γὰρ ἔπιδωκας ἡμῖν, “For You gave all things to us.”

Gray interprets the latter part of **verse 12** as teaching that “National welfare... must come from Yahweh; the Jews themselves can achieve nothing.” (P. 443)

Ortlund comments that “The future is bright, because salvation belongs to God alone.” (P. 1286)

This is a somewhat typical Protestant Christian interpretation of this passage, which longs to find proof-texts for the doctrine of salvation by Divine grace alone.

However, the passage does not mention salvation, and it may mean that YHWH is the One Who created humanity, and Israel, and has wrought mighty saving acts in humanity’s and Israel’s history that human beings were incapable of. Isaiah recognizes his dependence on YHWH for everything he and his people have, and everything they have accomplished.

But that is quite different from claiming that they have no role to play, no responsibility for what happens in their lives or in their future.

We, along with Isaiah, affirm that when we have done all in our power, we have been dependent on Divine gifts every step of the way, and cannot boast of our achievements—but that doesn’t mean at all that we have had no role to play, no responsibility. What do you think?

Alexander comments that “It is commonly agreed among interpreters, that *our works* here means not *the works done by us* but *the works done for us*, i.e., what we have experienced...”

“The version of the last clause in the text of the **English Bible** (‘Thou hast wrought all our works *in us*’) is connected with an old interpretation of this verse, as

(continued...)

⁶⁹(...continued)

directly teaching the doctrine of human dependence and efficacious grace [Irresistible grace (or efficacious grace) is a doctrine in Christian theology particularly associated with Calvinism, which teaches that the saving grace of God is effectually applied to those whom He has determined to save (the elect) and, in God's timing, overcomes their resistance to obeying the call of the gospel]...

“This translation, however, is equally at variance with the usage of the Hebrew proposition לָנוּ, **lanu**, ‘for us,’ and with the connection here. The context, both before and after, has respect, not to spiritual exercises, but to providential dispensations. It is not a little curious that while Cocceius, in his Calvinistic zeal, uses this verse as an argument against the Arminian doctrine of free will, Calvin himself had long before declared that the words cannot be so applied.” (P. 425)

We think this is a good example of how biblical statements, especially those from prophetic messages, taken as the basis for doctrinal teaching, are easily misused and abused. What do you think?

⁷⁰Oswalt states concerning **verses 13-15** that “A glance at Israelite history might cause one to question such an assertion [as is made in **verse 12**]. Many times foreign overlords had dominated Israel, and the prophet knows by inspiration that worse is yet to come. Does this not discredit the idea of God’s Lordship of Israel and His capacity to establish peace for them? Compare **Isaiah 63:19**,

We became for a long-lasting time (a people) You did not rule over;
Your name was not called over them.

“Isaiah’s answer is twofold: First, Israel has never adopted the foreign ‘lords.’ ‘Our God’ has always been the Lord [YHWH]. Israel has not believed that might makes right [but is this the truth? We see passage after passage in the **Hebrew Bible** in which Israel is depicted as serving Baal and Asherah, and adopting the religion of the Canaanites with their ‘foreign lords’]...

“His second answer is the continued existence of the nation long after the overlords are dead and forgotten. Again and again throughout its history Israel has been ground under the heel of some tyrant bent upon annihilating it, only to emerge and survive to dance on his grave. The present century is no different. Without minimizing the horror or the unanswered questions of the Holocaust, we may still observe that Israel has triumphed in the end. And if most Israelis assert that they did it without God’s help, it only shows how far they have drifted from a correct understanding of their existence [we wonder where Oswalt got the idea that ‘most Israelis assert that they did it without God’s help’? The Israelis I know devoutly believe they are ‘God’s nation,’ and that God has aided Israel with His miraculous power!].”

(continued...)

לְבַר-בְּדָ נִזְכִּיר שְׁמֶךָ:

YHWH our God, Lords other than You⁷¹ ruled over us—⁷²

⁷⁰(...continued)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 13**: “*Jehovah, our God (other) lords beside Thee have ruled us; (but henceforth) Thee, Thy name, only will we celebrate.*” (P. 425)

The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) is quite different: κύριε ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν κτῆσαι ἡμᾶς κύριε ἐκτὸς σοῦ ἄλλον οὐκ οἶδαμεν τὸ ὄνομά σου ὀνομάζομεν, “O Lord, the God of ours, acquire / take possession (2nd person singular imperative) of us! Besides You, Another we did not know! The name of Yours we name!”

Slotki comments that the “other lords” refers to “foreign despots like the kings of Assyria.” (P. 120)

Ackerman likewise states that “The other Lords who have ruled over the Israelites are the kings of Assyria and Babylon who conquered them in the past. These kings and their followers are now dead and their nations will not rise up again (contrast the promises extended to the Israelites in **verse 19**).” (Pp. 990-91)

Motyer states that “The reference to *other lords* includes Pharaoh, the many alien rulers in the period of the Judges, the Philistines and, more proximately, the Assyrians.” (P. 217)

Ortlund similarly states that the “other Lords” means “human tyrants” (p. 1286), but we think it may well include other Deities, such as Baal and Asherah, whom the Israelites notoriously served at various times in their history. However, the following statement that they are “dead,” would much better apply to human tyrants.

Alexander maintains that “a singular fact in Jewish history” is “that since the Babylonish exile they have never even been suspected of idolatry. That such a circumstance should be adverted to in this commemorative poem, is so natural that its omission would be almost unaccountable.” (P. 426)

But we ask, Is this in fact the case? Are there not clear indications in **Isaiah 56-66** that idolatry continued in Israel following the return from Babylon? See **Isaiah 57:1-13**, **65:1-7** and **66:17**. We wonder how such an excellent student of Isaiah could make such a comment.

⁷¹**Rahlfs** interpolates the phrase, “(another / other) οὐκ οἶδαμεν, we did not know.”

⁷²The phrase in Hebrew is בְּעַל־וֹנֵנוּ, **be(alunu)**, “they *baaled* us,” “married us,”

(continued...)

only in / by You will we remember Your name!⁷³

26:14⁷⁴ מִתִּים בְּלִיְחִיוֹ

⁷²(...continued)

“ruled over us,” “took possession of us and treated us like a concubine.” Oswalt notes

that the verb here, בַּעַלְנוּ, **be(alunu** suggest “owned us” even more than “lord.” (P. 475)

⁷³Slotki states that this means “Through Thy [YHWH’s] help alone [we will] *make mention of Thy name* in gratitude.” (P. 120)

Oswalt translates this line by “but Your name alone have we recommended.” He comments that the hiphil of זָכַר, **zkr**, נִזְכִּיר, **nazkiyr**, literally “we will cause to remember,” means “to commemorate, praise.” (P. 475)

Motyer comments that “The Hebrew really requires ‘only by You do we keep Your name in remembrance’; fidelity is not an attribute native to the people of God but a gift which He enables them to exercise.” (P. 217) We agree.

Gray comments on **verse 13** that “Politically the Jews have passed into other ownership... than that of Yahweh...Lords...i.e., foreign rulers, have made Judah part of their property; yet, though the Jews have not been politically free, they have not acknowledged the right of any except Yahweh to own them. They have been loyal to their religion, not confessing any other God.” (P. 443)

Watts likewise comments that this verse “notes that it has not been easy under foreign domination, but they had continued to worship Him.” (P. 341)

But is this the way the **Hebrew Bible** depicts the history of the Jewish people? We think that story tells how, precisely because of Israel’s acknowledgment of other Gods, both Northern Israel and Judah have brought down Divine punishment on their nation.

What do you think? Do you agree with Gray that the Jews “have been loyal to their religion, not confessing any other God”? We say, While there have been noble examples of Jews like Daniel and his three companions who have remained loyal to YHWH in the midst of foreign domination, they are the exception rather than the rule, and far too often the Jews themselves have worshiped other Gods. See footnote 70.

Why do you think Northern Israel went into captivity / exile? Why do you think the southern kingdom, Judah, likewise went into captivity / exile?

⁷⁴Alexander translates, then comments on **verse 14**: “*Dead, they shall not live: ghosts, they shall not rise: therefore Thou hast visited and destroyed them, and made*

(continued...)

⁷⁴(...continued)

all memory to perish with respect to them. Those whom we lately served are now no more; Thou hast destroyed them and consigned them to oblivion, for the very purpose of securing our freedom and devotion to Thy service. Most of the recent [mid-19th century] writers follow Clericus in referring this verse to the Babylonians exclusively...It seems best, however, to refer it to the strange lords of the foregoing verse, i.e. the idols themselves, but with some allusion, as in that case, to the idolatrous oppressors of the Jews." (P. 426)

Translations of **verse 14** vary, especially in the Greek:

King James, "*They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish.*"

Tanakh, "They are dead, they can never live; Shades, they can never rise; Of a truth, You have dealt with them and wiped them out, Have put an end to all mention of them."

New Revised Standard, "The dead do not live; shades do not rise-- because you have punished and destroyed them, and wiped out all memory of them."

New International, "They are now dead, they live no more; their spirits do not rise. You punished them and brought them to ruin; you wiped out all memory of them."

New Jerusalem, "The dead will not come back to life, the shadows will not rise again, for you have punished them, annihilated them, wiping out their very memory."

Rahlfs, οἱ δὲ νεκροὶ ζῶην οὐ μὴ ἴδωσιν οὐδὲ ἰατροὶ οὐ μὴ ἀναστήσωσιν διὰ τοῦτο ἐπήγαγες καὶ ἀπώλεσας καὶ ἦρας πᾶν ἄρσεν αὐτῶν, "But then dead ones will certainly not see life; neither will physicians raise (them) up; because of this: You brought and destroyed (them), and You took away every male of theirs."

Oswalt comments on **verse 14** that "As in **chapter 14**, the prophet sees death as the mocker of human pride and the source of at least temporary relief from pride's oppression. The overlords are gone and nothing of them remains, not even a memory. (**Verse 13** ends with God's name being remembered. Here the overlord's memory has perished. The God Whom they thought to have proven impotent still lives when they are forgotten) [but is this in fact the case? Has the memory of the Assyrian and Babylonian overlords or Gods perished / been forgotten? Israel's own **Bible** will not permit that to happen!]

"This verse should not be taken as proof against the doctrine of a general resurrection. That is not the question being addressed [We say, Isaiah is not addressing or answering a question]. The point is that mortal flesh has no hope of supplanting immortal God." (P. 481)

We say, No. The point is that the overlords who once ruled Israel are dead, and the affirmation of the text is that they will not arise from death—whether the human

(continued...)

⁷⁴(...continued)

rulers of Assyria or Babylon, or the Assyrian / Babylonian Gods. The text is not that

mortal flesh has no hope of supplanting immortal God.” It does not mention “mortal flesh” or “immortal God.”

What do you think? Would you have ever drawn Oswalt’s conclusion from this text?

Oswalt adds in a footnote that other passages that depict the hopelessness of death should not be appealed to as denying the doctrine of a general resurrection [even though they obviously do!]. Those passages are:

Isaiah 38:18, a quotation from a writing of King Hezekiah, who is bemoaning his too-soon coming death:

Because (inhabitants of) Sheol / grave / underworld will not confess You,
(or) death / (those who have died) praise You.
Those going down (to the) pit will not hope to / for Your true-faithfulness!
(In his grief, Hezekiah affirms that there is no confession or praise or hope for God’s true-faithfulness by those who have died and entered into Sheol.)

The Greek translation is:

For those in hades / grave / underworld will not praise You,
neither will those having died bless You;
neither will those in hades / grave / underworld hope for Your compassion!

Psalms 6:6^{Heb} / 5^{Eng}, a psalm for David—a plea for salvation by one surrounded by evil foes / death-dealing enemies:

Because there is not in the death memory of You;
in Sheol / grave / underworld who will confess to You?
(The affirmation of the first line is that in death YHWH is forgotten; and the implication of the second line’s question is that no one in Sheol will confess to YHWH.)

Psalms 30:10^{Heb} / 9^{Eng}, another psalm for David; the psalmist has been rescued from death by YHWH, and is thanking YHWH. In the midst of the psalm, he asks three questions:

What profit (is there) in my blood / death,
in my going down to (the) pit (of Sheol)?
Will (the) dust confess You?
Will it declare Your true-faithfulness?

(continued...)

⁷⁴(...continued)

(The implication of these questions is that there is no profit in the psalmist's death, in his going down to the grave / underworld; dust—the condition of those in Sheol—will not confess YHWH, nor declare His true-faithfulness.)

Psalm 115:17,

The dead will not praise Yah;
and not all those descending (into) silence!

Oswalt states that these passages must be placed alongside expectations to praise God forever, such as

Psalm 23:6,

Surely good and steadfast-love will pursue me all my life's days;
and I will return into YHWH's house / temple for length of days!
(We do not see the relevance of this passage for Oswalt's point. If its last phrase is translated "forever," it might support his view, but that is a mistranslation. The Greek translation is an exact translation of the Hebrew: εἰς μακρότητα ἡμερῶν, "for length of days.")

Psalm 30:13^{Heb} / 12^{Eng}, a psalm of thanksgiving for YHWH's deliverance, which asks the question in this verse:

What profit (is there) in my blood / dying,
in my going down to a pit (of Sheol)?
Will dust confess You?
Will it proclaim Your true-faithfulness?

(The implication of these questions is there is no profit in the psalmist's dying, and going into the pit of Sheol, where he will be nothing but dust, will cause him to be unable to confess YHWH or proclaim His true-faithfulness.)

Psalm 48:15^{Heb} / 14^{Eng}, a voice that arises from the City of Zion, where YHWH's salvation is experienced, and this message is told to the next generation:

that this God (is)
our God (to) long-lasting time and perpetuity!
He will lead us over death!

The Greek translation is quite different from the Hebrew:

that This is the God,
the God of ours, into the ages and into the ages of the age!
He Himself will shepherd us into the ages!

(continued...)

⁷⁴(...continued)

We note that not one of these passages speaks of praising God forever! The last passage affirms that God will “lead us over death,” but even so says nothing about our praising God beyond death.

Oswalt adds that in **Psalm 49:11-16**^{Heb} / **10-15**^{Eng}, both ideas are expressed, and the psalmist expects not to remain in Sheol.

- 11/10 Because he will see wise men will die,
 both together, fool and brute will perish;
 and they will leave their abundance / wealth to the others.
- 12/11 Their grave—their houses for long-lasting time,
 their dwelling places for generation and generation.
 They called by their names over their lands.
- 13/12 And a human—in honor will not spend the night!
 He was likened—like the beasts they were cut off!
- 14/13 This (is) their way--
 stupidity / folly belongs to them!
 And after them, they were pleased with their mouth / saying(s). Selah
- 15/14 Like sheep they were appointed for (the) grave / underworld;
 death will shepherd them,
 and upright people will rule over them in the morning!
 And their rock to wear out in (the) grave / underworld—
 from a dwelling-place for it.
- 16/15 Surely God will ransom my innermost-being from Sheol’s hand / power,
 because He will take me. Selah

This is, we think, another example of Oswalt’s piling up proof-texts some of which are irrelevant to his point. This last passage says nothing about those in Sheol praising YHWH, but does express the psalmist’s conviction that God will ransom him from Sheol, “taking” him, but not saying anything about “resurrection.”

This demonstrates the danger of “proof-texting.” Sometimes the so-called “proof-texts” do not say what the one quoting them is arguing for. And the simple fact of biblical literature is that many of its passages consist of enigmatic visions and dreams which the prophet or psalmist has been given, visions which are not at all exact, or clear, or precise, and which oftentimes differ from or contradict visions given others. It is a mistake to treat these visions and their interpretations as precise doctrinal statements, which can be turned into dogmatic assertions which agree with one another. We think it is most important for biblical interpreters to recognize this!

Oswalt has to downplay the visions of hopelessness over against the visions of hope beyond death, claiming that they are dealing with some other question. But they are not. They express hopelessness, no praise arising from Sheol. At the same time,

(continued...)

רפאים בל-יקמו
לכן פקדת ותשמידם
ותאבד כל-זכר למו:

⁷⁴(...continued)

there are biblical visions which express ringing hope in the face of death, such as **Isaiah 25:6-8**, and the conviction that God will “lead us over death” (**Psalms 48:15**^{Heb} /

14^{Eng}) It is foolish, we think, to deny this reality of the biblical texts, in seeking to defend an “infallible **Bible**.”

Again we remember **Numbers 12:6-8**, with its depiction of YHWH saying that the prophetic visions will not be “clear,” but will be in riddles / enigmas; and Paul’s affirmation in **1 Corinthians 13:8-12**, taking up the language of **Numbers 12**, saying that he, as a prophet, does not see things clearly or fully, but “in an enigma / puzzle,” translated into English by “now we see in a mirror dimly.” It is a mistake, and a disservice to the biblical texts, to try and turn them into clear, exact passages, that contain no puzzles or disagreements, and that must be forced to agree with one another.

We far too often want to pretend that in studying the **Bible** we are able to obtain clarity, and doctrinal correctness that answers all questions. But such is impossible, and we, with Paul, must “walk by faith, and not by sight, confessing our human limitations,” refusing to pretend that we “know all the answers.”

We say, God knows all the answers, but we, and the biblical prophets and psalmists and apostles don’t either! What do you think?

This is not to say that there is no clear Divine revelation in the **Bible**. There certainly is, and we gladly acknowledge that—for example, in the Ten Commandments, and in the good news of Jesus’ death and resurrection. We hear the authoritative voice of YHWH in many of the prophetic messages, where there is clarity, as they call their hearers to justice and righteousness and hope in YHWH. But when they depict their visions and dreams of the future, their messages are quickly characterized by lack of clarity, and puzzling elements, which we should acknowledge. When Paul proclaims the good news, and tells of his vision of the risen Lord Jesus—we should cling to his message and make it the basis of our own hope. But when Paul begins to depict the future of Israel (as in **Romans 9-11**), or gives his advice concerning marriage (as in **1 Corinthians 7**), or directions concerning women speaking in assemblies / churches (as in **1 Corinthians 14**), we should not expect his every word to be Divine words from God, but rather, his pastoral advice, or things he has “seen through a mirror darkly.”

Dead Ones (Lords)⁷⁵ will not live / revive—⁷⁶
departed spirits⁷⁷ will not rise up.⁷⁸

⁷⁵Slotki states that “the dead ones” means “the despots just mentioned.” (P. 120) But we wonder exactly who is meant. Is it the human overlords such as Tiglath-Pileser II of Assyria, or Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon? Or is it referring to the Assyrian / Babylonian Gods? Or is it referring to both? The text is not specific as to who is meant, and we assume it includes both.

⁷⁶Slotki says that this statement is “an expression of the sense of security, now that the oppressors have gone and perished for ever.” (P. 120)

The verse can certainly be included among those that deny a general resurrection—while admittedly, there are other passages that affirm a general resurrection (see footnote 74). There they are, side by side in the **Hebrew Bible**. And we should leave it at that, refusing to reject one side in favor of the other, or seeking to make the passages say something other than what they clearly say. We should acknowledge that different biblical authors had differing views—just as it is today among Jews and Christians. We don’t all see everything alike!

⁷⁷The noun **רְפָאִים**, **repha)iyim**, means “dead spirits.” See **Isaiah 14:9-10**, where it is said concerning the King of Babylon’s becoming a departed spirit:

- 9 (The) grave / underworld from below quaked for you,
to meet your coming;
it roused dead spirits for you,
all earth’s goat-like leaders
it raised up from their thrones,
all kings of nations!
- 10 All of them will answer, and they will say to you,
You also have become weak like us!
You have been made like us!

Alexander states that “**רְפָאִים** is here a poetical equivalent to **מְתִיּוֹת**, **methiyim**, and may be variously rendered, shades, shadows, spirits, or the like. The common version (*deceased*) leaves too entirely out of view the figurative character of the expression. *Giants*, on the contrary, is too strong...The **Septuagint** [our **Rahlfs**] gives a curious turn to the sentence by reading **רְפָאִים** physicians (ἰατροὶ οὐ μὴ ἀναστήσωσιν) [physicians will not cause (them) to arise]...

“The meaning of the verse, as connected with the one before it is, that the strange lords who had ruled them should not only cease to do so, but, so far as they were concerned, should cease to exist or be remembered.” (Pp. 426-27)

(continued...)

⁷⁷(...continued)

Yes, but the fact of biblical history is that the strange lords are remembered in the biblical writings, and we still know their names and their stories some 2500 years later!

⁷⁸As noted in the passage just quoted in the previous footnote, the grave / underworld “raises up” the dead spirits from their thrones to welcome the coming of the King of Babylon. But that is quite different from the “rising up” that Isaiah denies here, a return to life on this earth.

Slotki comments, “Their spirits will not return to haunt the earth.” (P. 120)

Kaiser states that “While **verse 14a** is widely understood to apply to the fate of the enemy, the use of this theme in:

Psalm 6:5-6^{Heb} / **4-5**^{Eng},

5/4 Turn back, O YHWH, rescue my innermost being!
Deliver me for the sake of Your goodness!
6/5 Because in death there is no remembering You;
in the shadowy world of the dead, who praises You?

Psalm 88:11-13^{Heb} / **10-12**^{Eng},

11/10 Will You make / do a marvel for the dead?
Or will dead spirits rise up, will they praise You?, Selah
12/11 Will Your steadfast-love be recounted in the grave?
Your true-faithfulness in the place of destruction?
13/12 Will Your wonder be known in the darkness?
And Your right-relationship in a land of forgetfulness / oblivion?

Psalm 30:10-11^{Heb} / **9-10**^{Eng},

10/9 What profit (is there) in my blood / death,
in my descending to (the) pit?
Will dust confess / praise You?
Will it declare Your true-faithfulness?
11/10 Hear / listen O YHWH, and show favor / be merciful to me!
O YHWH, be One Helping me!

“[These passages suggest] that the reminder that death is final may perhaps be one of the themes meant to be the occasion for Yahweh’s intervention on behalf of those who pray to Him. Because without the help of Yahweh they are lost and without salvation, He will so completely destroy the foreign overlords who have arrogated to themselves His position as the Ruler over Israel, that even the memory of them will be extinguished...

(continued...)

Therefore⁷⁹ You visited (for punishment) and You destroyed them,
and You caused all remembrance of them to perish!⁸⁰

⁷⁸(...continued)

“When Yahweh is glorified in this way in His enemies and the enemies of His people, this will take the form not only of their destruction, but also of an unexpectedly great extension of the borders of Israel...This hope is very easy to understand in view of the considerable contraction of Jewish territory after the catastrophe of 587 [capture of

Judah and Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon], the break-up of the ancient Israelite settlements and the ancient promise of the possession of the land, as well as the memory of the size of David’s empire.” (Pp. 212-13)

⁷⁹Slotki’s translation has “To that end,” and he explains, so “that they never again rise to dominate the world.” (P. 120)

Watts notes that the phrase לָכֵן, **lakhen**, “in the sense of ‘therefore’ does not fit well here. Perhaps the meaning of ‘indeed / surely’ is better.” (P. 339)

Translations of the phrase vary, from “therefore,” to “of a truth,” to “because,” to not being translated, to “for,” to διὰ τοῦτο, “because of this.”

⁸⁰Where our Hebrew text reads וְתִאַבֵּד, “and You caused to perish,” 1QIs^a reads וְתִאַסֵּר, “and You caused to be imprisoned.”

Gray sums up **verse 14** by saying, “No more will a foreign yoke rest on the Jews, for Yahweh has destroyed these alien rulers, banished all memory of them, all that would call them to mind, such as foreign coinage, taxes, and the like; these lords are dead men all, shades (**14:9**) that will never return to vex the earth.” (P. 444) See:

Isaiah 14:21, where it is said of the King of Babylon,

Prepare for his sons a slaughtering-place for the iniquity of their fathers,
(so that) they will not arise and dispossess (the) earth / land,
and fill (the) world’s surface (with) cities!

Jeremiah 51:57, where YHWH says of Babylon,

And I will make drunk her princes and her wise people,
her governors and her leaders and her strong men;
and they will sleep a long-lasting sleep, and will not awake!
It is a saying of the King, YHWH of Armies (is) His name.

Gray notes that “The writer shares the old view. Compare **Job 14:14**,

(continued...)

⁸⁰(...continued)

If a strong man shall die / dies, will he revive / live again?
All (the) days / time of my warfare I would wait,
until my change / relief comes!]

[The “old view” is] that, so far as mankind at large is concerned, there is no resurrection, no ascent from the realm of the shades to a fuller or higher life. For the Jews he has a different expectation (**verse 19**). Resurrection is national, not universal.” (P. 444)

We say, Perhaps...there are passages that imply resurrection from the dead belongs to the Jews alone—but in **Isaiah 25:6-8** the promise is made to “all peoples” that death will be swallowed up forever, and all tears and signs of death will be wiped away forever—not a promise made to Jews alone, and certainly a “higher life”! Then in **Isaiah 26:19** the promise of bodily resurrection from the dust of death is given, and it is not stated as a promise made only to Israel.

Motyer comments that “Such complete obliteration can only be explained by an act of God, blotting them out even from *memory*. Who, for example, is the Pharaoh of the exodus?” (P. 217) Yes—but what about the Assyrian Rulers, and Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and the exile of Israel? Has that memory been obliterated? Hardly!

Ortlund notes that “Evil is not only defeated; it even fades from memory.” (P. 1286) Compare:

Isaiah 65:17,

Because look at Me—creating new heavens
and a new earth!
And the former things will not be remembered,
and they will not come up upon heart / mind!

Of course, anyone who knows the history of the Jewish people, knows that this biblical promise that the Jews, after the fall of Babylon, would never again be subject to overlords or the kind of suffering inflicted on them by Babylon, simply did not come true. The history of Israel is one of continued suffering across the centuries, unbelievably terrible suffering inflicted on them by such Christian rulers as Pope Urban the Second in 1095, Martin Luther in the 1500's; and then Adolph Hitler in the 20th century with his “holocaust” of the Jews.

Watts comments that the teaching of **verse 14** “recalls **Isaiah 24:21-22** where the kings and armies are imprisoned against the day of their judgment.” (P. 341)

We think biblical commentators such as Watts should take up the problems

(continued...)

⁸⁰(...continued)

raised by the texts they are commenting on, refusing to side-step the difficulties, or just refusing to talk about them. What do you think?

We say that this is another text that shows the nature of the prophetic message, when it begins to foretell the future. Here, it is simply mistaken, as we can tell now, more than 2700 years after its writing. What do you say?

⁸¹Gray comments on **verses 15-19** that “The writer is certain (prophetic perfect in **verse 15**) that Yahweh will magnify the Jewish nation and extend far and wide the borders of their land. Compare:

Isaiah 9:6

To an increase / abundance of the rule, and to peace, there is no end,
upon David’s throne and upon / over his kingdom,
to establish it and to support it with justice and with righteousness
from now and until long-lasting time.
YHWH of Armies’ zeal will do this!

Isaiah 33:17,

A king in his beauty, your (plural) eyes shall see;
you shall see a land of distances / distant places.

Isaiah 54:2-3,

- 2 Enlarge (the) place of your tent;
and stretch out your dwelling-places’ curtains!
Do not hold back!
Lengthen your cords!
And strengthen your stakes!
- 3 Because (to the) right and (to the) left you will break through;
and your seed / descendant(s) will dispossess nations,
and desolate cities they will dwell (in)!

(Gray continues:) “...Yahweh will listen to the cry of His people, withdraw His chastening hand, achieve for them (compare **verse 12**) what they could not achieve (compare **verse 18**), making their land secure, enlarging it, and filling it with inhabitants by calling back to life those Jews who had died loyal to their religion (**verse 19**).” (P. 444)

But look at **verse 19**—it does not say one word about “those Jews who had died

(continued...)

⁸¹(...continued)

loyal to their religion.” That is being read into the text by Gray. It does say “your dead,” using the 2nd person masculine singular pronominal suffix, which we think is referring to YHWH, meaning that those who have died belong to YHWH. Later in the verse it is said “your dew of lights,” again using the 2nd person masculine singular, and definitely meaning YHWH, Whose “dew of lights” brings life to the dead who belong to Him.

And we should ask, What part of humanity belongs to YHWH? Only loyal Jews? Only confessing Christians? Or all humanity, all peoples and nations, for whom YHWH will give His great drinking banquet, with its rich food and drink, and the swallowing up of death and all its signs forever (**Isaiah 25:6-8**)!

Alexander translates then comments on **verse 15**: “*Thou hast added to the nation, O Jehovah, Thou hast added to the nation; Thou hast glorified Thyself; Thou hast put far off all the ends of the land.* By this deliverance of Thy people from the service both of idols and idolaters, Thou hast added a great number to the remnant who were left in the Holy Land, so that larger territories will be needed for their occupation; and in doing all this, Thou hast made an exhibition of Thy power, justice, truth, and goodness. Thus understood, the whole verse is a grateful acknowledgment of what God had done for His suffering people...

“A more common explanation of the verse is that which supposes the last clause to describe the exile, and the first the restoration...But the obvious meaning seems to be that God had added to the number of the people, not by an aggregate increase of the whole nation, but by the reunion of its separated parts, in the restoration of the exiles from Babylon...

“The enlargement of the boundaries may either be explained as a poetical description of the actual increase and expected growth of the nation (**chapter 49:19**), or literally understood as referring to the fact, that after the return from exile the Jews were no longer restricted to their own proper territory, but extended themselves more or less over the whole country.” (P. 427)

What do you think? Do you take this prophecy to be a true account of Israel’s future history? We do not—it is the expression of a hope for Israel’s future, but a hope that was not fulfilled for centuries, and is still not fulfilled today.

Watts holds that “*The nation* [גֹּיִם, **goy**] would normally be used for someone other than Israel [but **Brown-Driver-Briggs** notes that this noun is used some 121 times in the **Hebrew Bible** for the descendants of Abraham!]. Here it would properly be related to the other masters and must be the Assyrian Empire which in this period grew to its greatest proportions. Yahweh did allow the nation to grow, gain glory, and extend all borders of its land...It is hard to see and understand the workings of God in history from the perspective of only a few years. The [**Book of Isaiah**] calls for us to trace it through the centuries, three centuries.” (P. 341)

(continued...)

יִסַּפֶּה לְגוֹי

נִכְבְּדָה

רַחֲקַת כָּל-קְצוֵי-אֶרֶץ:

You added to the nation, YHWH,

You added to the nation!⁸²

⁸¹(...continued)

What do you make of this comment? **Verse 14** is obviously in contrast to **verse 13**, which depicts the former overlords of Israel as having perished—and therefore, **verse 14** must be speaking of Israel, not of the Assyrian Empire! And the fact of history is that the Assyrian Empire did not continue for three centuries after Isaiah wrote!

Oswalt comments on **verse 15** that “Far from being wiped out by those who have lorded it over her, Israel has increased while those oppressors have vanished from the earth. The verbs are in the perfect [qal] form so that it is legitimate to translate them with the past tense (so virtually all translations)...

It seems...that the prophet speaks from the point of view of the final restoration [of Israel as a nation] and that these are to be taken as prophetic perfects...an expression of prophetic certitude. He has said that God will (imperfect) establish peace for them (**verse 12**) and now he see that as an accomplished fact...The fertility cults sought this end through manipulation of the life forces. God promised His people the same results if only they would walk in His ways.” (P. 482)

We think that on occasion prophets in Israel used what is called “the prophetic perfect” in their description of the “good times coming.” But interpreters like Oswalt, we think, are all too prone to call for a “prophetic perfect” understanding of a passage when its predictions have obviously been mistaken. We think this is the case here.

⁸²The repetition of the statement “You added to the nation” is omitted by one Hebrew manuscript. The repetition is another case of anadiplosis in this chapter. See footnotes 18, 20, 27, 30, 35 and 44.

Ortlund comments that “God glorifies Himself by reversing His suffering people’s lot in life.” (P. 1286) See the preceding footnote for related passages.

Gray quotes Driver with approval in stating that the past tense is here “spoken from the standpoint of the future.” Perhaps, but the continued use of the perfect (“past”) tense makes us wonder. Gray states that “The only alternative...which is worth considering, is that, like **verses 13-14**, it refers to the recent past: Yahweh has already not only overthrown the foreign domination, but also widely extended the borders of

(continued...)

You were honored;

You made far distant all ends / boundaries (of the) land!⁸³

⁸²(...continued)

Judah.” (P. 444) But were the borders of Judah “widely extended” after the exile? We do not think that this is the case.

Oswalt notes that “For גוי, ‘nation,’ as a reference to Israel, see **Isaiah 10:6**; **Deuteronomy 4:6** and **Jeremiah 7:28**.” (P. 475) See also **Psalms 33:12**,

Blessed (is) the nation [גוי], **haggoy**] whose God is YHWH,
the people He chose for His inheritance!

⁸³Slotki’s **American Jewish** translation has:

Thou hast gotten Thee honour
with the nations, O Lord,
Yea, exceeding great honour with the nations;
Thou art honoured unto the furthest ends of the earth.

But Slotki thinks this translation “is doubtful, and a closer translation of the text is:

Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord,
Thou hast increased the nation,
(and thereby) glorified Thyself;
Thou hast enlarged all the borders of the land.

He comments that “By destroying the oppressive nation and bringing salvation to Israel, God has vindicated Himself as Ruler of the world.” (P. 120)

But if Babylon’s being destroyed, and Israel’s being delivered from exile vindicated God as Ruler of the world, what does Israel’s being under the rule of Persia, and then Rome, with Jerusalem being destroyed, and Jews being scattered in exile all over the planet for two thousand years say concerning God? Was He Ruler of the world for a short while, but then no longer Ruler of the world for centuries / millennia? Was He Ruler of the world while Hitler, Stalin, and Chairman Mao murdered millions and millions of innocent people?

Rahfs’ translation is quite different from the Hebrew. It is a prayer for taking vengeance on the nations of the earth:

πρόσθες αὐτοῖς κακά κύριε
πρόσθες κακὰ πᾶσιν τοῖς ἐνδόξοις τῆς γῆς
Add to them evil things, O Lord,
add evil things to all the glorious ones of the earth!

(continued...)

⁸³(...continued)

It is difficult to see how this is an attempt to translate our Hebrew text!

⁸⁴Slotki sums up **verses 16-19** as containing: “Israel’s appeal to God. The unbearable sufferings of the people as well as their prayers seem to have no purpose. The promise of resurrection.” (P. 120)

Motyer entitles **verses 16-19** “Out of the dust,” and comments that “there is a link with **verses 5-6**. There, the Lord brought down the lofty into the dust; here (**verse 19**) He will yet bring His people out of the dust.” (P. 217)

Oswalt states that here, in **verses 16-19**, “Isaiah turns back again to the present [having lapsed in **verses 12-15** to the ‘prophetic perfect’], as in **verses 7-11**. As Delitzsch points out, this oscillation between the present and the future is typical of this section (**chapters 24-27**). But it is also typical of the life of faith. However strong the conviction of God’s ultimate triumph, there come those moments when the believer is brought face to face with the contradiction which the present sets over against that conviction. And perhaps the most painful of all those contradictions is the recurring, humiliating evidence of one’s own inability to do the work of salvation.” (P. 482)

Ortlund entitles **verses 16-18** “An admission of failure,” and comments that “The nation’s historic pattern of failure (*they*, **verse 16** is owned by the present generation (*we*, **verses 17-18**). Although Israel was to be God’s agent of deliverance in the world (**Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6**), they failed, and the world went on as before.” (P. 1286)

H. Wolf holds that in **verses 16-18** “The prophet [Isaiah] speaks to the Lord on behalf of God’s people.” (P. 1052)

Kaiser comments that “The poet moves on from the promise, expressed in the stylized form of a profession of trust, to a direct lamentation in **verses 16-18**...The admission it contains, that the present distress is a visitation and chastening from Yahweh, leaves no doubt that He stands above the distress and can therefore avert it...

“The poet portrays his community as confessing their inability to help themselves or to bring about the longed for time of salvation...He makes a comparison between their own efforts and those of a woman about to give birth...But while she bears a child, they as it were bring forth only wind, that is, nothing at all...This means that with all their efforts they have shown themselves incapable of bringing the country any help.” (P. 213)

Alexander translates, then comments on **verse 16**: “*Jehovah, in distress they visited Thee; they uttered a whisper; Thy chastisement was on them*. It was not merely after their deliverance that they turned from idols unto God. Their deliverance itself was

(continued...)

צָקוֹן לַחֵשׁ מוֹסְרָךְ לָמוֹ:

YHWH, in the tight place / distress,⁸⁵ they attended to / visited You,⁸⁶

⁸⁴(...continued)

owing to their humble prayers. *Visit* here [is] used in the unusual but natural sense of seeking God in supplication...The meaning...is beautifully expressive of submissive humble prayer like that of Hannah when she spake in her heart and only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard, although, as she said herself, she poured out her soul before God, which is the exact sense of צָקוֹן, **tsaqun** in this place...It is implied, though not expressed, that their prayer was humble and submissive because they felt that what they suffered was a chastisement from God.” (Pp. 427-28)

⁸⁵H. Wolf suggests that perhaps this tight place or distress is referring to “the Assyrian oppression,” described in:

Isaiah 5:30b, the nations that YHWH has summoned from far away will growl over the land, and,

look—darkness of a tight place / distress,
and light became dark by its clouds.

Isaiah 8:21-22,

- 21 And it (a people?) will cross over / pass through it,
hard pressed and hungry
and it will happen when it is hungry, and angers itself,
and it will curse its king and its God,
and will turn upwards.
- 22 And it will look to a land / earth,
and look—a tight place / distress and darkness,
gloom, distress (synonym),
and darkness (synonym), thrust out!

⁸⁶Where our Hebrew text reads פִּקְדוֹנֶיךָ, **peqadhuka**, “they visited You,” two Hebrew manuscripts, a number of Greek manuscripts, along with both the Ethiopic and Arabian translations read פִּקְדָנוֹךָ, “we visited You.” See, for this meaning:

Judges 15:1a,

וַיְהִי מִיָּמִים בְּיַמֵּי קְצִיר־חֲטָיִם
וַיִּפְקֹד שְׂמֹשׁוֹן אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ בְּגִדֵי עֲזִים

And it happened from / after days, in (the) days of wheat-harvest;
and Samson visited his wife with a kid of female goats.

(continued...)

they poured out⁸⁷ a whisper⁸⁸ (of prayer when) Your discipline was on them.⁸⁹

⁸⁶(...continued)

Ezekiel 23:21, a difficult text which is part of YHWH's accusation against His daughters / wives Oholah (Samaria) and Oholibah (Jerusalem):

וְהִפְקַדְתִּי אֶת זִמְתֵּךְ נְעוּרֶיךָ
בְּעֲשׂוֹת מִמְצָרִים דְּדִיךָ
לְמַעַן שְׂדֵי נְעוּרֶיךָ:

And you visited (the) wickedness of your youth,
in the making your (breast-) nipples from Egypt,
in order that (they would be) breasts of your youth!

Translations vary:

King James, “Thus thou calledst to remembrance the lewdness of thy youth, in bruising thy teats by the Egyptians for the paps of thy youth.”

Tanakh, “Thus you reverted to the wantonness of your youth, remembering your youthful breasts, when the men of Egypt handled your nipples.”

New Revised Standard, “Thus you longed for the lewdness of your youth, when the Egyptians fondled your bosom and caressed your young breasts.”

New International, “So you longed for the lewdness of your youth, when in Egypt your bosom was caressed and your young breasts fondled.”

New Jerusalem, “You were hankering for the debauchery of your girlhood, when they used to handle your nipples in Egypt and fondle your young breasts.”

Rahfs, καὶ ἐπεσκέψω τὴν ἀνομίαν νεότητός σου ἃ ἐποίησες ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ ἐν τῷ καταλύματί σου οὗ οἱ μαστοὶ νεότητός σου, “and you (feminine singular) visited [NETS translates ‘you reflected upon’; we see no justification for this] the lawlessness of your youth, which things you were doing in Egypt in the lodging of yours, where the breasts of your young (were?).”

Brown-Driver-Briggs holds that here in **Isaiah 26:16**, the verb פִּקְדוֹן means “seek (with interest, desire).” Watts says that it means “we decide[d] Your fate” (p. 339), but we doubt that such a meaning was intended.

Slotki's translation has “in trouble have they sought Thee.” But Slotki suggests the translation “they missed Thee,” that is, “they felt how dependent they were on Divine help.” (P. 120)

We see no indication that the Hebrew verb פִּקְדָה, **paqadh** means “missed.”

⁸⁷Where our Hebrew text reads צָקוּן, **tsaquin**, “they poured out,” or “they melted,” **Rahfs** has ἐμνήσθη σοι, “I remembered You.”

(continued...)

⁸⁷(...continued)

Watts defines **וַיִּקְרָא** by “they deter” and states that the word “has been a problem for the translations.” (P. 339)

For the second half of **verse 16**, **Rahlfs** has ἐν θλίψει μικρᾶ ἡ παιδεία σου ἡμῖν, “in / with a little affliction Your discipline / chastening (was) to / on us.”

⁸⁸Gray holds that the Hebrew text here, **וַיִּקְרָא**, which we translate by “they poured out a whisper (of prayer),” “is altogether improbable. It ought to be rendered they melted (**Job 28:2**) a charm...and this has been supposed to mean, they poured out a whisper, i.e. they prayed (in a low voice).” (P. 445) We disagree.

⁸⁹Where our Hebrew text reads **וְלָנֶם**, “on / to them,” **Rahlfs** has ἡμῖν, “to / for us,” reflecting a Hebrew text with **וְלָנֶם**.

Translations of **verse 16** vary:

King James, “LORD, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer *when* thy chastening was upon them.”

Tanakh, “O LORD! In their distress, they sought You; Your chastisement reduced them To anguished whispered prayer.”

New Revised Standard, “O LORD, in distress they sought you, they poured out a prayer when your chastening was on them.”

New International, “LORD, they came to you in their distress; when you disciplined them, they could barely whisper a prayer.”

New Jerusalem, “Yahweh, in distress they had recourse to you, they expended themselves in prayer, since your punishment was on them.”

Rahlfs, κύριε ἐν θλίψει ἐμνήσθη σου ἐν θλίψει μικρᾶ ἡ παιδεία σου ἡμῖν, “O Lord, in affliction I remembered You; in / with small affliction, Your discipline (comes) to us.”

Oswalt comments that the meaning of **verse 16** “is very obscure. The Masoretic Text is not clear and the versions vary from it considerably, as does 1QIs^a. (The Masoretic Text reads: ‘O Lord, in straits they visited You, they poured out a charm (whispered incantation), Your discipline (is) to them.’ The second part of the verse is obviously difficult, but the first part is questionable as well, since this is the only place **וַיִּקְרָא**, ‘to visit (appoint, muster, judge, reward),’ is used with humanity as its subject instead of God. The Greek translation [our **Rahlfs**] has ‘O Lord, in straits I remembered You, in slight affliction Your discipline was upon us’).” (P. 483)

Oswalt proposes the understanding that “the hard experiences of Israel’s history
(continued...)

⁸⁹(...continued)

are seen as chastisements from God for her sin. Far from driving her away from God, they have driven her to Him.” (P. 484)

We agree with Oswald concerning the “obscurity” of this verse. And again we say, isn’t this what we should expect in the prophetic message that originates in dreams / visions, and is “enigmatic,” “riddle-like”?

⁹⁰Gray comments on **verses 17-18** that “The elaboration of the figure [of the woman suffering labor-pains]...may have suggested the later technical term for the troubles which were expected to herald the Messianic age, חבלי המשיח, “the birthpangs of the Messiah.” (P. 445)

Oswald states that “In these two verses the figure of a woman in labor is used to convey Israel’s situation (compare also **Isaiah 13:8; 21:3; 42:14; Hosea 9:14; Micah 4:10**). The various judgments of God have made the people twist and groan. But the one thing which helps a woman through her labor is the expectation that the pain will end in joy—the birth of the child. Not so in this case, says Isaiah. After all the grief and struggle, what has Israel produced? Nothing. It is as though they had given birth to wind...

“It is frequently suggested that this mood would have been typical of the postexilic returnees, and it certainly was (compare **Malachi 3:14-15**), but it did not first appear then, as indicated by Hezekiah’s statement in **Isaiah 37:3**. That verse suggests that the events of 710-701 B.C.E. could have provided the impetus for the writing of this chapter as well as **chapters 24, 25 and 27.**” (Pp. 484-85)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 17**: “As when a pregnant (woman) draws near to the birth, she writhes, she cries out in her pangs, so have we been, from Thy presence, O Jehovah! Before we thus cast ourselves upon Thy mercy in submissive prayer, we tried to deliver ourselves, but only to the aggravation of our sufferings.” (P. 428)

Slotki comments on **verse 17** that “The agony of the times is compared with the agonizing pains of a woman in travail. The comparison is used by other prophets.” (Pp. 120-21) Compare:

Hosea 13:13,

Pains of a woman giving birth will come to him—
 he is not a wise son;
 because time won’t stand (still),

(continued...)

תַּחִּיל תִּזְעַק בַּחֲבָלֶיהָ

כֵּן תִּינֵן מִפְּנֵיךְ יְהוָה:

Like / when⁹¹ a pregnant woman⁹²—she draws near to giving birth;
she will writhe; she will cry out⁹³ in her labor-pains,⁹⁴

⁹⁰(...continued)

at the womb's mouth of sons.

Micah 4:10,

Writhe and burst forth, daughter of Zion, like the one giving birth!
Because now you will go forth from (the) city,
and you will dwell in the field;
and you will come to Babylon!
There you will be delivered!
There YHWH will redeem you from your enemy's hand!
(But, this is not the empty outcome of labor-pains which Isaiah depicts.)

⁹¹Alexander states that “כִּמּוֹ, **kemo**, [‘just like’], like the corresponding English *as*, is properly a particle of comparison, but constantly applied to time, as a synonym of *when*.” (P. 428)

⁹²Where our Hebrew text has the adjective הַרְרָה, **harah**, “pregnant woman” serving as the subject of the verb “draws near,” **Rahlfs** changes to ἡ ὀδύνησσα, “the one with labor pains.

⁹³Alexander comments that “The future [tenses, ‘she will writhe,’ ‘she will cry out’] are here used to denote a general fact which not only does, but will occur.” (P. 428)

⁹⁴H. J. Fabry, in **Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament IV**, p. 192, states that labor pains (חבל IV) are used as a metaphor that “can be applied directly to the relationship between man and God. Here the image of the woman crying out...and writhing in her pangs (**Isaiah 26:17**) is used for man's total impotence; it stands as a description of man's existential condition before God (**verse 17b**). As was true in the concrete and natural realm, the [labor pains] in the metaphorical sense must not be viewed in isolation as the pain of God's judgment.

“In the former case they are followed by the birth of a new human being; in the latter, they are the necessary transition to a new age of salvation.”

Also, see A. Bauman's article in this same volume, pp. 344-47, which discusses

(continued...)

⁹⁴(...continued)

the many occurrences of the verb לָיִל. “The **Old Testament** contains hardly any descriptions of childbirth; from **Isaiah 26:17-18; 66:7-8**, however, we can determine that לָיִל begins with the first contractions and ceases with the actual יָלַד [giving birth].” (P. 345) Compare **John 16:21**

The woman, when she gives birth, has pain,
because her hour came;
but then when the child is born,
she no longer remembers the distress / tribulation,
because of the joy that a person / man was born into the world.

“Much more common than direct reference to actual birth is the figurative use of the verb in situations of anxiety or fear, which outwardly recall the manifestations of labor...The metaphorical nature of the statement is often emphasized (**Isaiah 26:17**: ‘like a woman with child...when she is near her time’). (Pp. 345-46)

Since it clearly signifies the state of incipient, continuing, or culminating pregnancy, its major emphasis is on the anxious uncertainty and uneasiness with which the expectant mother awaits the approaching birth. See especially **Isaiah 13:8**, where it is said concerning the coming day of YHWH, in judgment upon Babylon:

And they will be disturbed:
pangs (of childbirth) and labor-pains take strong hold;
like a woman giving birth will writhe,
each man to his neighbor will be astounded / look in astonishment,
faces to flames their faces,
like a woman giving birth they will writhe.

Also, compare **Isaiah 37:3b**, where Hezekiah’s messengers tell Isaiah, it is

a day of a tight-place / distress and rebuke / correction,
and contempt–this day.
Because children came as far as (the) cervical opening / place of birth,
and there is no strength to give birth!

We are reminded of Paul’s use of the metaphor of birth through labor-pains in **Romans 8:22-23**:

- 22 For we have known that the whole creation groans together
and suffers labor-pains together until the present;
23 but then not only (this), but rather,
even we who have the first-fruit of the Spirit, we also groan within
ourselves,

(continued...)

so we⁹⁵ were before Your face,⁹⁶ YHWH!⁹⁷

26:18⁹⁸ הָרִינוּ חֲלֵנוּ כְּמוֹ יִלְדְנוּ רִוַח

⁹⁴(...continued)

awaiting adoption as children–
the redemption of our body.

It is a profound way of viewing human suffering, even suffering under the judgment of God. It is not the end; it is only the beginning of something wonderful to be brought to birth through labor-pains!

And we wonder: could this be the background for Jesus' question to Nicodemus in **John 3:10** as to how he, as a rabbi in Israel, did not understand the necessity for a new birth?

⁹⁵Motyer comments that “The story is now brought more up to date. *They* (**verse 16**) becomes *we* [here in **verse 17**].” (P. 218)

⁹⁶Alexander observes that “There are three explanations of the phrase מִפְּנֵיךָ, **mippaneyka**: “its strictest sense as meaning *from Thy presence*, i.e. cast out or removed far from it...*on account of Thee*, i.e. *because of Thine anger*...and *before Thee, in Thy presence*...The translation from Thy presence is to be preferred, but whether with the accessory idea of removal, alienation, or with that of infliction, is a question not determined by the phrase itself, but either left uncertain or to be decided by the context.” (Pp. 428-29)

Translations of the phrase vary from “in Thy sight” to “because of You” to “in Your presence” to “in Your sight.” **Rahfs** has διὰ τὸν φόβον σου, “because of the fear of You.”

⁹⁷Motyer comments that “The distress (**verse 16**) of the past has continued in pains as severe as those of childbirth. Isaiah could certainly be thinking of the Assyrians, the enslavement of northern Israel, and all the contemporary trauma.” (P. 218)

⁹⁸Alexander translates and comments on **verse 18**: “*We were in travail, we were in pain, as it were we brought forth wind. Deliverances we could not make the land, nor could the inhabitants of the world fall.* The figure introduced in the preceding verse is here carried out and applied...The general sense is evident...The simplest supplies a preposition before אֶרֶץ, ‘land,’ *in or for the land.*” The one now commonly adopted is, we could not make the land safely, i.e. could not make it safe or save it...

“Gesenius and the other German writers understand this as a description of the Holy Land after the return from exile. We cannot save the country, and the inhabitants

(continued...)

יְשׁוּעַת בַּל-נַעֲשֶׂה אֲרֶץ

וּבַל-יִפְּלוּ יוֹשְׁבֵי תְּבֵל:

We were pregnant; we writhed just like⁹⁹ we gave birth (to) wind;¹⁰⁰

salvations / deliverances¹⁰¹ we will not make (for the) earth / land;¹⁰²

⁹⁸(...continued)

of the land will not be born, (יִפְּלוּ, **yippelu**, ‘will fall’) i.e. it is still very thinly peopled. This is far from being an obvious or natural interpretation.” (P. 429)

Watts states that in **verse 18** we hear “critical rejoinders” which “indicate the despair of the times.” (P. 341)

⁹⁹Where our Hebrew text reads כְּמוֹ, “just like,” “like,” “as,” “when,” **Rahfs** omits the word.

¹⁰⁰Motyer comments that “The reference to travail in **verse 17**, there used only of the severity of suffering, prompts here an enquiry whether any fruit came of it all. But sadly there was no other parallel to childbirth except the pain.” (P. 218)

Israel’s confession is, instead of giving birth to children through their labor-pains, they have only brought forth wind!

As Alexander states, “wind is here used, as in **Isaiah 41:29** and **Hosea 12:2**, as a common metaphor for failure, disappointment.” (P. 429)

¹⁰¹Where our Hebrew text has the plural noun יְשׁוּעַת, **yeshu(oth)**, “deliverances / salvations,” **Rahfs** has σωτηρίας σου, “Your salvation / deliverance.”

¹⁰²Where our Hebrew text has the difficult phrase יְשׁוּעַת בַּל-נַעֲשֶׂה אֲרֶץ, literally, “salvations / deliverances not we will make earth / land,” which we translate by “salvations / deliverances we did not make (for the) earth / land.”

Isaiah evidently understands Judah’s / Israel’s vocation to be that of being a light to the nations, bringing deliverance / salvation to others—see:

Isaiah 42:6-7,

6 I, YHWH, I called you (singular) in righteousness;
and I took strong hold by your hand, and I guarded you,
and I gave you for a covenant of / with a people,
for a light of / to nations—

(continued...)

and (the) world's inhabitants will not fall.¹⁰³

¹⁰²(...continued)

7 to open both eyes of blind people,
to bring forth prisoner(s) from dungeon(s),
from a house of imprisonment those dwelling (in) darkness!

Isaiah 49:6, spoken to YHWH's servant (identified both as Israel and as Israel's servant):

And He said, It was too trifling for you to be for Me
a servant to raise up Jacob's tribes,
and to return those preserved of Israel;
and I will give you (singular) for a light of nations,
to be My deliverance / salvation as far as the land's / earth's end!

But here, in **26:18**, he evidently depicts the nation as saying they cannot accomplish this YHWH-given task.

Gray comments on the last line of this verse that "We could not, as Yahweh can and will (**verse 1**), deliver our country from the enemy. *The inhabitants of the world* (**verse 9**), who were all attacking us, *did not fall* before us in battle...Commentators, however, have...given to the line...another sense: *inhabitants of the world*...meaning 'young, new-born mortals'...*do not fall*, that is, from the womb, that is, are not born." (P. 445)

Oswalt comments that the passage continues the thought of Israel's total dependency upon God. "We cannot save ourselves or anyone else. We labor and struggle, but nothing comes to birth. We are not able to demonstrate God's power to the wicked. The final proof of our helplessness is death, which stalks every person with the same quiet, relentless tread. To some who loudly proclaim human potential, this is a counsel of despair. But it should not be so. For just as **verse 19** ends the segment on a note of triumph, so the recognition of human helplessness paves the way for the receiving of God's power. So the gloom here is not a hopeless one, but productive. It illustrates what the entire first thirty-nine chapters of the **book** are about: trust in human potential must bring disaster (**Isaiah 8:16-22; 24:1-23; 30:1-5; 39:5-7**)..."

"This message of Divine ability for our human inability comes to its climax in the **New Testament** teaching of life in the Spirit (compare **Galatians 5:16-26; Ephesians 5:18-23**)." (Pp. 482-83)

¹⁰³Translations of **verse 18** vary, especially the Greek:

King James, "We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen."

(continued...)

¹⁰³(...continued)

Tanakh, “We were with child, we writhed -- It is as though we had given birth to wind; We have won no victory on earth; The inhabitants of the world have not come to life!”

New Revised Standard, “we were with child, we writhed, but we gave birth only to wind. We have won no victories on earth, and no one is born to inhabit the world.”

New International, “We were with child, we writhed in pain, but we gave birth to wind. We have not brought salvation to the earth; we have not given birth to people of the world.”

New Jerusalem, “we have been pregnant, we have writhed, but we have given birth only to wind: we have not given salvation to the earth, no inhabitants for the world have been brought to birth.”

Rahlfs, ἐν γαστρὶ ἐλάβομεν καὶ ὠδινήσαμεν καὶ ἐτέκομεν πνεῦμα σωτηρίας σου ἐποίησαμεν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἀλλὰ πεσοῦνται οἱ ἐνοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, “In (the) belly we received (semen), and we had labor-pains; and we gave birth to a spirit / wind of Your deliverance / salvation; we worked upon the earth, but rather those dwelling upon the earth will fall.”

The second line, **וְיִשׁוּעַת בְּלִ-נַעֲשֶׂה אֶרֶץ**, is literally “salvations / deliverances not we will make earth / land,” an obscure, difficult statement.

Oswalt states that this “explains what would have made Israel’s anguish worthwhile: bringing deliverance into the world...The writer expects that his people should have helped the whole world to a sort of rebirth...Isaiah says that the people have not been able to deliver themselves from oppression in all its forms and demonstrate God’s power to the world by striking down the oppressive world power. As the following verse makes plain, the implication is that instead of new life resulting from the struggle, only death has resulted (**Isaiah 59:10** [‘We grope for the wall like the blind; we grope like those who have no eyes; we stumble at noon as in the twilight, among those in full vigor, we are like dead men’]). This raises the underlying question of the lament: it is fine to believe that God will one day be crowned on Mount Zion and invite all His saints [no—all nations] to feast with Him in the presence of their enemies, but what about all those saints who have lived and struggled and died in the meantime with no apparent result? **Verse 19** is the answer to that implicit question.” (P. 485)

The last line, **וְבַל-יִפְּלוּ יֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֵל**, is literally “and not they will fall, inhabitants of (the) world.” **Rahlfs** has ἀλλὰ πεσοῦνται οἱ ἐνοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, literally, “but rather they will fall, those dwelling upon the earth.”

Watts say concerning the verb “they will fall” that “It is often assumed that this can be an idiom for birth or even for miscarriage because of the context. The meaning is obscure.” (P. 339)

(continued...)

¹⁰³(...continued)

And again we emphasize the nature of the prophetic message as being characterized by obscurity, by riddles / enigmas.

¹⁰⁴Ortlund states concerning **verses 19-21**, “The hope of glory is coming, but an interim caution is given.” (P. 1286)

H. Wolf describes these verses as “a word of reassurance to God’s people.” (P. 1053)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 19**: “*Thy dead shall live, my corpses shall arise; (awake and sing ye that dwell in the dust!) for the dew of herbs is thy dew, and (on) the earth (on) the dead, thou wilt cause it to fall.* This verse is in the strongest contrast with the one before it...

“To the ineffectual efforts of the people to save themselves, he now opposes their actual deliverance by God. They shall rise because they are thy dead, i.e. thy dead people...

“The construction of נִבְלָתִי [‘my corpse’] with יִקְוּמוּן [‘they will stand up / arise’] is not a mere grammatical anomaly. The noun and suffix is singular, because the words are those of Israel as a body. The verb is plural, because the corpse of Israel included in reality a multitude of corpses...Neither the prophet, nor the house of Israel, in whose name he is speaking, could refer to their own body as distinct from the bodies of Jehovah’s dead ones.” (P. 430)

Slotki describes **verse 19** as “An antiphonal song [a song performed by two semi-independent choirs in interaction, often singing alternate musical phrases] on the resurrection of the dead introduced as an answer to the apparently meaningless suffering and sorrow:

First voice: *Thy dead shall live.*

Second voice: *My dead bodies shall arise.*

Both voices in unison, singing the proclamation the Almighty will make on the day of resurrection: *Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust.*

Third voice, turning towards heaven: *For Thy dew is as the dew of light.*

All in unison: *And the earth shall bring to life the shades.*

Again we are reminded of Watts’ interpretation of the entire **Book of Isaiah**, with his constant introduction of different voices / speakers.

Slotki admits that “the verse has been variously interpreted of personal and national resurrection. For the latter [i.e. national resurrection], compare **Ezekiel 37**.” (P. 121)

(continued...)

¹⁰⁴(...continued)

Ackerman comments on **verse 19** that “This verse is often taken as evidence of an ancient Israelite doctrine of individual resurrection, but the roughly contemporary **Ezekiel 37:1-14** suggests it is better understood as the rebirth of the Israelite community after an experience of disaster.” (P. 991)

Oswalt comments that **verse 19** “flashes into the prophet’s mind as the inspired response to his own musings [are we then to think of some of Isaiah’s statements as uninspired, nothing more than ‘his own musings’? This is a strange comment, coming as it does from Oswalt]...

“As such, it, along with **Isaiah 25:8**, represents the highest conception of resurrection in the **Old Testament** (**Daniel 12:2** teaches the same truth, while **Hosea 6:2** and **Ezekiel 37:1-14** speak more of a national restoration to life). It asserts that the dead will be revived with shouts of joy to partake in the festivities of God’s final triumph. This conviction was to become the anchor point of the Christian faith, in the light of Christ’s resurrection.” (Pp. 485-86)

But we wonder. Was this verse in fact “the anchor point of the Christian faith”? We do not see it actually quoted in the **New Testament**, though perhaps alluded to. Rather, we think, if there is an “anchor point of the Christian faith” (i.e., speaking of the resurrection from the dead) in the **Hebrew Bible**, it would be **Isaiah 25:8** and **Hosea 13:14**, both of which are quoted by Paul in **1 Corinthians 15:54b-55**.

Watts states that in **verse 19** “The pilgrims are interrupted by the appearance of Yahweh and His herald. One may imagine a scene like that in **Acts 9:3** [a light that flashed around Saul as he was on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians]. As the pilgrims fall back because of the bright epiphany, God speaks: Your dead will live! My corpses [the Hebrew text is singular, ‘My corpse’] will rise! He reasserts the announcement made at the banquet on His mountain (**25:7-8**). It is significant that the dead are recognized as belonging to Israel and to Yahweh. This does not contradict the statement of **verse 14** that *dead do not live* [perhaps—but it contradicts the universalistic statement in **25:7-8!**]. That was said of foreign masters whom God had condemned to be forgotten. A distinction is made between them and these that belong to Israel and to God. God has decided their fate, too. They will live!

“The herald addresses the dead, calling for them to awake and sing. Dew is a very important element in Palestine’s eco-system. During the long dry months it is the only moisture the vegetation receives. It became a symbol for life. Light is also an important symbol of life and well-being...

“Egyptian texts claim a heavenly origin for dew. It is the tears of Horus and Thot and bears the power of resurrection in itself.” (P. 342)

(continued...)

¹⁰⁴(...continued)

Kaiser separates **verse 19** from **verses 20-21**, and places it after them, entitling it “The Resurrection of the Dead.”

He notes the irritation that is caused by the change of possessive pronouns in **verse 19**, and states that “The attempt to work out who is speaking and to identify the literary category is like solving a puzzle.” (P. 215)

Yes! And this is exactly what we should expect if we take seriously **Numbers 12:6-8**, where YHWH tells Aaron and Miriam that the vision and dream given to the prophet will not be mouth to mouth, or clearly, as it is with Moses; but rather the prophet’s message will be **בְּחִידוֹת**, **bechiydhoth**, “in riddles, enigmatic, perplexing sayings or questions.” The Greek translation of this plural noun is δι’ αἰνιγμάτων, “through that which requires special acumen to understand because it is expressed in puzzling fashion, riddles.”

The apostle Paul takes up this Greek phrase in **1 Corinthians 13:12**, as he discusses his ability to speak for God / prophesy. He says, βλέπομεν γὰρ ἄρτι δι’ ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι, τότε δὲ πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον, “for now we see through a mirror in an enigma / puzzle, but then, face to face.” That is, one blessed day in the future, we will see reality face to face, as Moses did in the time of Aaron and Moses; but now, in this present world [long after his having seen the risen Lord Jesus], we have to be content with looking at things “through a mirror” (ancient mirrors were notorious for giving inexact images!), and “in an enigma / puzzle.”

That is, Paul’s knowledge (and ours) is only partial, and unclear at best; it is filled with puzzle. And in this light, we should quit pretending that the biblical messages of the prophets and apostles are clear, exact, easily understood, all of them direct from God messages. No—oftentimes their messages are puzzling, inexact, partial in nature! Realization of this fact will keep us from claiming that the prophets and apostles (and we, their students) know everything!

Kaiser continues: “If the profession of trust in Yahweh is uttered by the praying community...or an individual leading the prayer, then the dead are departed Israelites who are particularly close to him, or perhaps even the righteous. Then the phrase that follows, if the Hebrew word **נְבִלָה**, **nebhelah** [‘corpse’] is to be understood as a collective [meaning ‘corpses’], says the same thing from the point of view of the person or persons who are praying, and also emphasizes the reality of the bodily resurrection. In this case the interjection would be addressed to the dead themselves, and the prayer that follows would be addressed once again to Yahweh and would describe the dew, by means of the pronoun, as coming from Him...

“On the other hand, if Yahweh is the speaker, as most modern commentators accept, what we have is a promise in reply to the praying community...

(continued...)

נְבִלְתִי יְקוּמוּן
 הִקְיֵצוּ וְרִנְנוּ שְׁכֵנֵי עֶפְרַיִם
 כִּי טַל אֹרֶת טַלֶּה
 וְאֶרֶץ רַפְאִים תִּפְיֵל:

Your¹⁰⁵ dead ones will live!¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴(...continued)

“Though one must realize that different interpretations are possible, the speakers can also be identified in the following way. After Yahweh has begun by giving a brief promise of the resurrection and has awakened the dead by His word, the community replies, proclaiming and marveling that His dew has achieved the impossible...

“A very complicated tradition of the actual text is presented by the contrast between the Masoretic Hebrew text and the Latin translation of Jerome, the Vulgate, on the one hand, and the Qumran roll and the Greek, Syriac and Aramaic traditions on the other. The main difference lies in the change of the imperatives into imperfects...It has also been suggested that נְבִלְתִי, **nebhelathiy** [‘my carcass / corpse’; Kaiser translates by ‘my body (bodies)], is perhaps a reader’s gloss, giving expression to his own personal hope...

“The verse can also be understood as a later continuation of the prayer, a renewal of the theme of confidence following the lamentation, and a confession of the certainty of resurrection, a certainty which enabled the prayer to look beyond the end of the visitation and the final distress and anticipate the moment in which the dead will rise again. As though this moment had come he can speak to the dead and conclude by referring to the life-giving dew of heaven which calls the shades of the underworld back into existence.” (Pp. 215-17)

Kaiser’s comment demonstrates how uncertain and ambiguous the prophetic message is!

¹⁰⁵We take the second person masculine singular pronominal suffix attached to the qal plural construct participle מֵתֵיךָ, **metheyka**, to be referring to Judah, since the preceding **verse 18** has Judah expressing its failures. Thus the statement is not about a universal resurrection of the dead in line with **Isaiah 25:6-8**, with its “all peoples” and “all nations,” but rather about resurrection of the Jews.

¹⁰⁶Slotki holds that this promise of life for the dead “is addressed to Israel.” (P. 121)

(continued...)

¹⁰⁶(...continued)

Gray likewise holds that the meaning of this first line of **verse 19** is that “the Jews who have died will not share the common lot of man (**verse 14**), but they will rise from their graves, not as spirits of the dead, but bodily, and to resume with gladness life upon the earth, in the new vast territory of the Jews (**verse 15**)...”

“This remarkable expression of what must have been already a well-defined and clear belief in a bodily resurrection of Jews who had died before the new age began (compare **Daniel 12:1**), forms an abrupt but effective close to the poem...It uses the belief in resurrection with all its emotional richness at once as an answer to the question How shall the nation be increased (**verse 15**), and as a climax to the whole poem.” (P. 446)

Ortlund notes that “In contrast with the finality of death in **verse 14**, **verse 19** rejoices in a bodily resurrection of all God’s people [certainly including more than just Israel!]. The long standing failure described in **verses 16-18** will be dramatically reversed by God’s power alone.” (P. 1286) But the text does not say “all God’s people,” and in the light of **Genesis 1-10** we can affirm that every human being on earth is one of God’s people.

H. Wolf takes this statement in **verse 19** to be “a reference to the restoration of Israel” (p. 1052) and refers to Ezekiel’s depiction of the valley of dry bones being resurrected in **Ezekiel 37:11-12**:

- 11 And He said to Me, Son of a human / man, these bones—
 they are all Israel’s household.
 Look—(they) are saying,
 Our bones are dried up,
 and our hope perished.
 We are cut off for ourselves!
- 12 Therefore, speak for Me / prophesy!
 And you shall say to them,
 In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:
 Look I am opening your graves;
 and I will bring you people up from your graves, My people!
 And I will bring you to Israel’s ground / land!

He adds that Isaiah’s statement “perhaps includes the resurrection of the body,” and compares **Daniel 12:2**. **Daniel 12:1-3** reads:

- 1 And at that time he shall arise,
 Michael the great prince,
 the one standing over your people’s children.
 And It will be a time of a tight place / distress
 which has not happened from a nation’s being

(continued...)

My corpse¹⁰⁷—they will arise!¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶(...continued)

until that time.

And at that time your people will be delivered / escape,
everyone that is found written in the scroll / book.

2 And many from those sleeping (in the) ground's dust will awake,
these for long-lasting life / lives,
and these (others) for the reproaches,
for long-lasting abhorrence.

3 And those having insight / understanding
will shine like the shining of the atmosphere;
and those making the many rightly-related
(will shine) like the stars for long-lasting time and perpetuity!

Gray states that this teaching is not “a hope in resurrection that is merely breaking through, as in **Job**, but a belief well established in the circle to which the writer belonged, though not necessarily, nor probably, throughout the entire nation (compare **Ecclesiastes** and later the Sadducees).” (P. 446)

We certainly agree with Gray at this point. It is foolish to believe that because the **Hebrew Bible** teaches something in one or more passages, that this was the conviction of all Israel!

Study of the entire **Tanakh**, combined with serious reading of the **Apocrypha**, and now the **Dead Sea Scrolls**, will quickly inform the reader of the kaleidoscopic varying theological convictions held by groups in Israel. Gray's reference to the **Book of Ecclesiastes** and the Sadducees in the time of Jesus speaks directly to this fact.

The same thing is true of the **New Testament**, which combines writings of Christian leaders with differing views—as can be seen immediately by comparing the **Book of Jacob** [“**James**”] with Paul's **Letter to the Galatians**, or comparing the **Gospel of Mark** with the **Gospel of John**. Christians of all different groups were united in their love for and loyalty to Jesus, but they had many differing theological and christological convictions, and freely and openly expressed them. It was not until the fourth century, with the entry of Constantine and the Roman government into Christianity that dogmatic creeds began to be officially drawn up and dissenters were punished, oftentimes with death, as Christian bishops became Roman mayors and governors, with the power of the sword. The command of Rome was, Get rid of all dissenting views, and all dissenters! Demand that all believers march lock-step to the tune of the decrees handed down by Rome-ordered councils!

¹⁰⁷The Hebrew phrase is נְבִלְתִי, “my corpse / dead body.” We do not understand why, except for **King James**, our English translations change this to “Let corpses arise!”, “their corpses shall rise,” “their bodies will rise.” Slotki's **American Jewish Translation** has “my dead bodies shall arise.”

(continued...)

¹⁰⁷(...continued)

We suspect that it is because of the Greek translation: καὶ ἐγερθήσονται οἱ ἐν τοῖς μνημείοις, “and they will arise, the ones in the tombs.” But in addition, the phrase “my corpse” is immediately followed by a plural verb, and perhaps this has led to the change from “my corpse” to “their corpses.”

We wonder what this means, and how it should be understood. Can it be that Isaiah interjects in astonishment, “(including) my corpse!”, and then returns to the plural, relating to the opening words “your dead ones,” saying “they will arise”?

Watts notes that “if the speaker is God Himself, the 1st person suffix lays claim to all the corpses of the righteous as His Own.” (P. 339) But why use the singular “corpse”? And the text says nothing concerning whether the “corpse” is righteous or unrighteous.

All of these questions again bear witness to the “enigmatic” nature of the prophetic message.

Gray comments that “The writer emphasizes the belief that the actual body that died will be revived, that it is no mere ghost that is to arise.” (P. 446)

¹⁰⁸It is a confusing statement. Is this Isaiah himself, speaking about his own corpse? We think it is. Having said “your dead will live,” he interjects the joyful exclamation that this means his own dead body will be included—and then returns to the plural, “they shall arise.” What do you think?

Oswalt comments that “The task of determining the speaker through the **verse [19]** is not easy, particularly in view of the change in persons in the first line (*your* dead...*my* corpses [but the Hebrew text has נַבְלָתִי, “my corpse / dead body”]). Presumably these words could have been said by God, the people, or the prophet. The people are the easiest to dismiss in the light of **verse 20**, where they are directly addressed...

“It appears that **verse 19**, like **verse 20**, is intended as a consolation to the people and an encouragement to their faith. The other two choices are more difficult to decide between. If God is the Speaker, then He answers the questions and speaks the imperative to the ‘dwellers in the dust.’ This is attractive and logically correct, since, as Young says, only God can command the dead to rise. At the same time, there is no indication of a change of speaker from the previous verses where God was being addressed. Thus, it seems that the prophet remains the speaker. In that case ‘*your / Your* dead could refer to God or to the people. If it is to God, it is reminiscent of **Psalm 116:15**, ‘Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints’...

“The dead are not abandoned, they still belong to God. This interpretation would be consistent with the Masoretic Text ‘my corpses’ (collective) in which the reference

(continued...)

Awake!¹⁰⁹ And shout for joy,¹¹⁰ those dwelling (in the) dust!¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸(...continued)

would be to the prophet speaking as a member of the nation.” (P. 486)

And we say, Yes...according to this text, the dead are not abandoned—they still belong to God, and God’s loving care for His people doesn’t terminate with their deaths! And this is good news! Death is not the final victor, but our God is!

Again we say, Let’s learn to sing the song of Isaiah, in spite of the ambiguity and the puzzling questions that are raised in the text!

¹⁰⁹Where our Hebrew text reads the hiphil masculine plural imperative **הִקְיִצּוּ**, “awake!”, 1QIs^a reads the hiphil imperfect **יִקְיִצּוּ**, “they will awake,” or “let them awake!” **Rahfs** translates by **ἐγερθήσονται**, “they will be raised,” and adds the subject **οἱ ἐν τοῖς μνημείοις**, “the ones in the tombs.”

Kaiser comments that “Following the usual comparison of death with sleep, the dead are called upon to awake, a command which one cannot read without recalling not only **Psalm 88:11**,

Will You make / do a marvel for the dead?
Or will dead spirits rise up, will they praise You?
[This passage, **Isaiah 26:19**, answers: Yes! He will, and they will!]

“but also **Ezekiel 37:4-6**,

4 And He said to me, Prophecy over these bones!
And you shall say to them, the bones, the dry ones,
Hear / listen to YHWH’s word!
5 In this way my Lord YHWH spoke to the these bones:
Look—I am bringing on you (plural) a Spirit / spirit,
and you will live!
6 And I will give to / place upon you (plural) sinews;
and I will cause to come up on you flesh;
and I will spread skin over you,
and I will give / place spirit / Spirit on you,
and you will live!
And you will know that I (am) YHWH!

“...When those who are asleep are called dwellers in the dust, because of their stay in their graves, the whole phrase is reminiscent of **Daniel 12:2a** [‘And many from

(continued...)

¹⁰⁹(...continued)

those sleeping (in the) ground's dust will awake']...

“The concluding sentence, giving the reason for the hope and acknowledging Yahweh’s life-giving activity, presents certain difficulties in the ideas it contains. The dew, which in Palestine replaces the rain in summer, and increases in quantity in the autumn, is qualified by an expression which has been differently explained, and in fact was already differently rendered by the versions. Luther followed the **Greek Bible** by translating the doubtful word (אֲרוֹתָ,)**oroth**, ‘lights’) as in **2 Kings 4:39**, by ‘herbs,’ whereas it is more usual nowadays to take it, following the Latin Bible, the Vulgate, as a plural of אֲרוֹהַ,)**orah**, ‘light’...

“It is possible to find here a conception according to which Yahweh in His world of light disposes of a miraculous and miracle working dew, which is able to bring to life the shades in the underworld. Whereas the beginning of this profession of confidence gives the impression of referring only to a partial awakening, affecting the devout in Israel, or the whole of Israel, regarded as devout, the conclusion seems to point to nothing less than the end of the power of the kingdom of death, the resurrection of the dead, and if we connect it with **25:8a**, the abolition of death altogether...

“This belief, regardless of the concrete forms it has taken in accordance with the world view of particular periods, is essential to Christian faith...

“In the Babylonian Gilgamesh epic the woman Siduri, the wine-bearer, says to the hero who is in despair at the death of his friend and brother Enkidu:

You will never find that life for which your are looking.
When the Gods created man
they allotted to him death,
but life they retained in their own keeping.
As for you, Gilgamesh, fill your belly with good things;
Day and night, night and day,
dance and be merry, feast and rejoice...
Make your wife happy in your embrace;
for this too is the lot of man!

“In Israel too this seems to be the most that anyone could say to man, even from the point of view of the fear of God. Compare:

Ecclesiastes 11:7-10,

7 And the light--sweet,
and good to the eyes,
to see the sun.

(continued...)

¹⁰⁹(...continued)

- 8 Even if the human shall live many years,
in all of them let him rejoice.
And let him remember the days of darkness,
because they will be many.
All that comes—a vapor / breath!
- 9 Rejoice, young man, in your youth!
And let your heart be good to you in days of your youth!
And walk in your heart's ways,
and in sights of your eyes.
And know that concerning all of these,
the God will bring you into the judgment.
- 10 And remove anger from your heart;
and put away evil from your flesh.
Because the youth and the dawn of life--
a vapor / breath!

Proverbs 5:18-19,

- 18 Your fountain will be blessed!
And rejoice with a wife of your youth!!
- 19 A female deer of loves,
and a female mountain goat of favor / grace—
her breasts will saturate you / water you
in every time / at all time(s);
with her love you shall be intoxicated constantly!

“Individual groups in Judaism went further than this sceptical realism, and ultimately one can regard this as being due less to external influences as to the spelling out of the meaning of faith in God’s righteousness to its final conclusion...The **Book of Job** shows how comfort was sought, in the face of the contradiction between the actions and fate of the devout and the godless, on the one hand by an insight into the fundamental wickedness of man (compare **Job 4:17**,

Will a (weak) human be justified more than Eloah [God]?
Or will a (strong) man be pure more than his Maker?)

“and on the other hand by submission to God’s control over the world, which was beyond human understanding (compare **Job 38:1-3**,

- 1 And YHWH answered Job from the storm-cloud,
and He said:
- 2 Who (is) this—
darkening counsel with words,
without knowledge?
- 3 Dress for action like a man!

(continued...)

¹⁰⁹(...continued)

and I will ask you–
and you make it known to Me!)

“But the question and distress associated with it must have become more intense in the period of the religious persecution by Antiochus IV, because it was now quite obvious that a devout person could be killed, whereas an apostate might escape with his life [did this only become obvious in the time of Antiochus IV? Surely it was completely obvious long before then!]. Was the God Who demanded unconditional loyalty and unconditional obedience from Israel, and tolerated no other God beside Himself, no longer keeping the promises which He had made to the obedient? Compare **1 Maccabees 2:31-38**,

- 31 And it was announced to the king's men
and to his forces that were in Jerusalem, the city of David,
that the men who had spurned the commandment of the king
went into hiding in the wilderness.
- 32 And many chased after them and overtaking them,
marshaled against them and engaged them in battle
on the day of the sabbath.
- 33 And they said to them,
Enough! Come out,
and do according to the dictum of the king,
and you will live.
- 34 And they said, We will not come out.
Nor will we execute the dictum of the king
to defile the day of the sabbath.
- 35 And they increased the battle against them.
- 36 But they neither answered them
nor threw a stone against them
nor even secured their hiding places,
- 37 saying, Let us all die in our simplicity.
Heaven and earth bear witness to us
that you destroy us unjustly.
- 38 And they fell upon them in battle on the sabbath,
and they and their wives and their children and their livestock died,
as many as one thousand human souls.

2 Maccabees 7 (the story of a Jewish woman and her seven sons, all of whom willingly died under torture of Antiochus IV, for refusal to eat what the law of Moses called unclean food. As they died, they claimed the hope of resurrection:

- 9 And when he was at his last breath,
[the second brother] said, You accursed wretch,
you dismiss us from this present life,
but the King of the universe will raise us up

(continued...)

¹⁰⁹(...continued)

to an everlasting renewal of life,
because we have died for his laws.

14 When [the fourth brother] was near death, he said,
It is desirable that those who die at the hands of human beings
should cherish the hope God gives of being raised again by him.
But for you there will be no resurrection to life!

22 [The mother of the seven sons said to them] I do not know
how you came into being in my womb.
It was not I who gave you life and breath,
nor I who set in order the elements within each of you.

23 Therefore the Creator of the world,
who shaped the origin of man
and devised the origin of all things,
will in his mercy give life and breath back to you again,
since you now forget yourselves for the sake of his laws.

Kaiser continues: "If experience is in radical conflict with ethical faith, but man must still take ethical demands seriously, he must either abandon belief in God's

righteousness or accept that God's righteousness is exercised within a horizon which goes beyond the limits of a single life...

"At the same time the idea of creation, which grew out of the idea of cosmic order, was able to evolve into that of *creatio ex nihil*, creation from nothing. In this form it became an argument for what God can do for man in regard to his death. Compare

2 Maccabees 7:28, where the mother of the seven sons said to the seventh son:

28 I implore you, my child,
to look at the heaven and the earth
and see everything that is in them
and recognize that God did not make them out of things that existed.
And in the same way the human race came into being.

Romans 4:17,

As it is written [concerning Abraham],
A father of many nations have I made you
in the sight of Him Whom he believed, *even* God,
Who gives life to the dead
and calls into being that which does not exist.

"When we look for adequate grounds for belief in the future of man beyond his

(continued...)

¹⁰⁹(...continued)

own death, we find that...it is a postulate of practical reason [so, Immanuel Kant, **Kant's Critique of Practical Reason**], an ethical faith implied in ethical action as such." (Pp. 217-20)

Yes, people of faith, who are willing to stand steadfast in the face of overwhelming evil, to do what is right, because it is right, and die in so doing, are filled with this conviction—that the God Who created the universe, and us, will vindicate us beyond death. It is this belief that has given, and continues to give courage to martyrs throughout history. Only, we say to those with radical faith, Be sure what you are doing is right!

¹¹⁰Where our Hebrew text reads וַיִּרְנְנוּ, "and cry aloud!", 1QIs^a reads וַיִּרְנְנוּ, "and they cried aloud" (we are taking the waw as "waw-conversive.")

Slotki's translation has "awake and sing," and he comments that "The resurrection will lead to a new spiritual life, the resurrected engaging in devotional exercises and in the singing of hymns and praises to God." (P. 121)

Oswalt comments that "*Awake and shout for joy* introduces a note of jubilation and excitement. The previous line talked *about* the dead. Now they are spoken *to*. The change is from theory to fact. If the prophet was speaking for the people to God, he now speaks to the dead in the light of God-given faith. Surely this confidence in God's resurrection power is the logical conclusion of the key points of **Old Testament** faith: God is life; God is dependable; God's ways bring blessing...

"The resurrection of Christ confirms that this alternative is not merely wishful thinking, but indeed the capstone of our belief." (Pp. 486-87)

¹¹¹Gray states that the same idea that has just been expressed, that the actual body of the dead will arise, "is implicit in the next line, *they that dwell in the dust* (compare **Job 21:26, Psalm 22:16**), now sleeping there the sleep of death (compare **Daniel 12:2**), which is not to be for them eternal (**Jeremiah 51:39, Job 14:12**), *will awake and ring out their joy.*" (Pp. 446-47)

Motyer states in a footnote that, "Gray, Box and Kaiser see this verse as a reference to the resurrection of the righteous dead; Wade, Kissane, Wildberger and Johnson to a national resurrection. Rowley says that while there is no thought of individual resurrection the passage may have prepared the way for such an idea... Skinner, Mauchline and Herbert do see here the promise of individual resurrection. Many who espouse the thought of genuine resurrection date the passage very late (e.g. Kaiser)." (P. 218)

We have great respect for H. H. Rowley, but cannot imagine why he would say there is no thought of individual resurrection in this passage, when it uses the language

(continued...)

¹¹¹(...continued)
“My corpse...they will rise.”

Motyer adds that “While we might not have expected this particular word of encouragement, some word of encouragement is appropriate, even essential, following the despair of **verses 16-18**...

“Whatever this verse promises, its purpose is to give assurance that the world-wide gathering of **25:6-10a**, with its assurance of salvation, is no mirage but rests on secure promises of Divine action.” (P. 218)

We think the verse is very specific in its expression of hope / assurance of salvation—it is the conquering of death, and resurrection for God’s people! What do you think?

Oswalt comments that “*dwellers in the dust* depicts the common understanding of the underworld in the ancient Near East. Not only was it in the dust in the sense of being underground, it was also a gray, dusty place:

Yea, the daughter of [the Near-Eastern God] Sin set (her) mind
 To the dark house, the abode of Irkal[la [sheol, hades, underworld],
To the house which none leave who have entered it,
 To the road from which there is no way back,
To the house wherein the entrants are bereft of li(ght),
 Where dust is their fare and clay their food,
(Where) they see no light, residing in darkness,
 (Where) they are clothed like birds, with wings for garments,
(And where) over door and bolt is spread dust.
(From Pritchard, **Ancient Near Eastern Texts**, p. 107)

Job 21:26, speaking of the dying:

Together upon (the) dust they lie down,
 and worm(s) will cover them!

Psalm 22:16^{Heb} / **15**^{Eng},

My strength has dried up like a broken piece of pottery,
 and my tongue is stuck to my jaws.
You are setting me in the dust of death! (P. 487)

Over against that dire, pessimistic view of the grave / underworld / sheol / hades, this text (**Isaiah 26:19**) proclaims the good news that those dwelling in the dust will awake and shout / sing for joy!

Can we, will we, learn to sing Isaiah’s song? It is a song of Divine victory over

(continued...)

Because (of) dew of lights,¹¹² your / Your dew!¹¹³,⁴

¹¹¹(...continued)

death, anticipating the joy that burst forth upon the world in the first century with the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead! And in Isaiah's song, an unidentified individual voice sings out, "My corpse!," meaning "I too am included in this hope!"

¹¹²Alexander states that "There are two interpretations of אֲוֹרֹת,)oroth ['lights'], both ancient, and supported by high modern authorities...

"The first gives the word the usual sense of אֹר, 'light'; the other that of 'plants,' which it has in **2 Kings 4:39**...To the former it may be objected, that it leaves the plural unexplained, that it arbitrarily makes light mean life, and that it departs from the acknowledged meaning of אֲוֹרֹת in the only other place where it occurs...

"The second interpretation, on the other hand, assumes but one sense of the word, allows the plural form its proper force, and supposes an obvious and natural allusion to the influence of dew upon the growth of plants...

"In either case the reference to the dew is intended to illustrate the vivifying power of God...

"The obvious meaning of the words is an expression of strong confidence and hope, or rather of prophetic foresight, that God will raise the dead, that His life-giving influences will be exerted." (P. 430)

See our end-note 4 for an article concerning "dew" in the **Bible**.

¹¹³Slotki comments that "The vivifying principle which God sends to bring the dead to life [is] as the dew revives vegetation. Tradition speaks of the 'dew of life,' a supernatural dew which will descend on the dead and bring them back to life." (P. 121)

Gray comments that "God's dew...falling on the graves of His dead, and, descending to the bodies that rest there, will cause them to live again; in the case of God's dead there is not the difference that Job bewailed between the vegetable world [specifically, trees], which, when apparently dead, is revived by water, and man (**Job 14:7-12**), who, once dead, cannot revive...

"As God revives the vegetable world [the stump of a tree] by dew, so He will cause new flesh to sprout...and cover the skeletons (compare **Ezekiel 37:6**) of the Jews now lying in the grave, thus preparing them for rebirth." (P. 147)

Motyer comments that "Dew has a wide metaphorical coverage but, very significantly, it is linked with the manna of **Exodus 16 (verses 13-14)**; compare **Numbers 11:19**, the Divine gift which cancelled the threat of death (**Exodus 16:3**).

(continued...)

¹¹³(...continued)

Morning is (literally) 'lights,' a plural amplitude meaning 'full light.' Death is darkness, life is light... Here, as dew descends, so He will come to His dead, bringing heavenly refreshment and vitality; with the light of His presence He will impart the light of salvation...

"In sum, therefore, the verse is a promise of life for the world, the fulfilment of **25:6-10a**...We need to recall that **25:7-8** looked forward to the abolition of death itself. In this regard, the terms of the present verse go beyond the figurative to the literal and declare a full resurrection, including the resurrection of the body. Within the progressive revelation of the **Old Testament** only **Daniel 12:2** is comparable.

"The Egyptians had an intricate and highly developed mythology of the dead and the life to come centuries before Isaiah. Even Canaanite religion, with all its brutishness, ascribed to its executive God an annual victory over death. We are expected, however to accept that Israel's 'emphasis on Yahweh as the living God' put 'the shadowy realm of the dead...outside His jurisdiction' (Herbert). In the name of all logic, how could this be so? Mauchline observes that the faithful in Israel must often have despaired of seeing the salvation of God in the land of the living; here, therefore, is expressed the conviction that they shall rise again...The great hope must have required a great prophet...It may easily be described as too high a doctrine for Isaiah's days; but that is always a precarious basis for judgment in the case of a prophet who was, in spiritual stature, far above the common levels of his day.

"In a word, why look for a great unknown when it is our humbling privilege to have the greatest of all before us?" (Pp. 219-20)

We oftentimes disagree with Motyer, and question his interpretations. But here, we agree with him fully. What a powerful, hope-filled message this is—certifying for us (as for Motyer) that Isaiah is the greatest of the writing prophets of the **Hebrew Bible**.

Along this same line, Gray notes that "Most modern commentators see in אִוְרָה an intensive plural of אִוְרָה (**Psalm 139:12, Esther 8:16** [when the Jews were able to destroy their enemies in the Persian empire, they had 'light and gladness and joy and honor'])—and in *the dew of light* 'the dew of the highest heavenly region, where is the light with which Yahweh wraps Himself' (**Psalm 104:2**)...or, light and life being 'interchangeable ideas.'" (P. 447)

That is, the rising of the dead bodies from the dust of death is because of the the shining of Divine "dew of light" in and on those who arise to new life. What a hope!

Oswalt states that "For the cry, crumbling dust of eternal night, there is the fresh dew of morning...The most the pagans could hope for was to be an unknown part of the vast cycle of life, but the biblical faith proclaims that individuals are important to God

(continued...)

¹¹³(...continued)
and live forever in His memory.” (P. 487) See:

Isaiah 49:15-16, where YHWH says to Zion and her inhabitants:

- 15 Will a woman forget her nursing child?
–from showing mercy (to) a son of her womb?
Even these will forget,
but / and I, I will not forget you!
- 16 Look–upon (My) hands I inscribed you;
Your walls are before Me constantly!

Malachi 3:16,

Then those fearing / revering YHWH spoke together,
each one with his neighbor;
and YHWH gave attention, and He heard.
And a book of remembrance was written before Him,
for those fearing / revering YHWH,
and for those thinking of His name.

Oswalt adds that “The equation of rain and dew in the **Old Testament** points to the great importance of dew in Canaan during some parts of the year (See **Genesis 2:5-6; 27:28, 39; 2 Samuel 1:21; 1 Kings 17:1; Zechariah 8:12**). This importance seems to have given rise to a mythological figure who is one of Baal’s maidens [whose name was] ‘Thy (Dew?) Daughter of Rbb.’ That she is always accompanied by Pdry, daughter of ‘Ar (Light?) and ‘Arsy (Earth?)...is very suggestive for this passage since both [lights and earth] appear here...

“It seems possible that, as in **Isaiah 27:1**, Isaiah is using some of the literary stock of Canaan to make a much more profound statement than Canaan ever could. God’s dew will rest upon the dead as He will force earth to give them up to life in His presence forever.” (Pp. 487-88) Compare:

Psalms 133:1-3,

- 1 Look–How good and how pleasant / delightful,
brothers dwelling, even together / united!
- 2 Like the good oil upon the head,
descending upon the beard,
Aaron’s beard--
which descends upon his robes’ collar / mouth--
- 3 like (Mount) Hermon’s dew,
that descends upon Zion’s mountains.
Because there YHWH commanded the blessing,
life to the long-lasting time!

(continued...)

And (the) land of departed spirits will fall!¹¹⁴

¹¹³(...continued)

Proverbs 19:12,

Growling like the young lion—rage of a king;
and like dew upon vegetation, his goodwill / favor.

We say, not only do these biblical texts proclaim the good news that those who have died live in the Divine memory; this present text (**Isaiah 26:19**) proclaims that those “inhabiting dust” will return to life through YHWH’s life-giving “dew of lights.”

And this text poses the question to all of us who read it, and take it seriously, Do we dare to share its hope-imparting good news? Will we learn to sing its song?

Will we believe that the dust of death is our and humanity’s ultimate fate, or will we choose to believe that the conquering of death through Divine power and gift is what the future holds for us? What a powerful vision of hope is presented to the readers of the **Book of Isaiah** in **25:6-8**; and now in **26:19** the promise is made that “Your dead ones will live! My corpse—they will arise! Awake! And shout for joy, those dwelling (in the) dust! Because (of) dew of lights, your / Your dew!

These two passages express the faith that death is not the final word in human history—but rather, the love and grace of YHWH God our Creator and Father, Who will not let His children perish, but has a wondrous future in store for them beyond death!

We mortals, surrounded by death, can gladly worship such a God!

¹¹⁴Where our Hebrew text has **וְאֶרֶץ רְפָאִים תִּפֹּל**, literally “and land / earth of **repha(iym)**, it will fall,” **Rahlfs** has ἡ δὲ γῆ τῶν ἀσεβῶν πεσεῖται, “but then the earth of the impious / ungodly ones will fall.”

The meaning of the verse depends on the definition of **repha(iym)**. Does it mean the “shades,” or “ghosts,” those who have died, and are in sheol / hades / the grave / underworld, no matter their godliness or piety, i.e., “those who dwell in the dust”? We think it does.

Translations of **verse 19** vary:

King James, “Thy dead *men* shall live, *together with* my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew *is* as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.”

Tanakh, “Oh, let Your dead revive! Let corpses arise! Awake and shout for joy, You who dwell in the dust!--For Your dew is like the dew on fresh growth; You make the land of the shades come to life.”

New Revised Standard, “Your dead shall live, their corpses shall rise. O dwellers in the

(continued...)

¹¹⁴(...continued)

dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a radiant dew, and the earth will give birth to those long dead.”

New International, “But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead.”

New Jerusalem, “Your dead will come back to life, your corpses will rise again. Wake up and sing, you dwellers in the dust, for your dew will be a radiant dew, but the earth will give birth to the shades.”

Rahfs, ἀναστήσονται οἱ νεκροί καὶ ἐγερθήσονται οἱ ἐν τοῖς μνημείοις καὶ εὐφρανθήσονται οἱ ἐν τῇ γῆ ἢ γὰρ δρόσος ἢ παρὰ σοῦ ἴαμα αὐτοῖς ἐστὶν ἢ δὲ γῆ τῶν ἀσεβῶν πεσεῖται, “The dead will arise, and the ones in the tombs will be raised up, and those in the earth will rejoice; for the dew that is from You is healing for them. But then the earth / land of the godless / impious will fall.”

Especially notice the great differences in the last line:

“and the earth shall cast out the dead,”

“You make the land of the shades come to life,”

“and the earth will give birth to those long dead,”

“the earth will give birth to her dead,”

“but the earth will give birth to the shades.”

“And the land of departed spirits will fall!”

“but then the earth of the godless / impious will fall.”

What should we take this to mean? Does it claim that *sheol*, the “land of the dead,” will cease to be, because God’s life-giving dew will fall on all the dead, and all will be raised? We think that this is most probably its meaning.

Alexander comments that “The use of תִּפִּיל [hiphil imperfect, 3rd person feminine singular, ‘you (feminine) will cause to fall’] is certainly obscure. [Some] suppose it to denote the act of *bearing, bringing forth*...according to some writers, *to be born*...[But it is an] incongruity making the earth *bring forth the dead*...Retaining the construction of תִּפִּיל as a second person, and supposing the allusion to the influence of dew upon the growth of plants to be continued, we may render the words thus: (upon) the earth, (*upon*) *the dead thou wilt cause it to fall*. As if he had said, thou hast a life-giving influence and thou wilt exert it; as thy dew makes plants to grow, so shall it make those dead to live...

“All these interpretations coincide in applying the verse to a resurrection of the dead, and the question now arises, what resurrection is referred to? All the answers to this question may be readily reduced to three...

“The first is, that the prophet means the general resurrection of the dead, or

(continued...)

¹¹⁴(...continued)

according to an old rabbinical tradition, the exclusive resurrection of the righteous at the last day...

“The second is, that he refers to a resurrection of the Jews already dead, not as an actual or possible event, but as a passionate expression of desire that the depopulated land might be replenished with inhabitants...

“The third is, that he represents the restoration of the exiles and of the Theocracy under the figure of a resurrection, as Paul says the restoration of Israel to God’s favor will be *life from the dead*. [**Romans 11:15**]” (Pp. 430-31)

However this may be understood, there can be little doubt that Isaiah is affirming the Divine conquering of death. Death and the grave are not the final answer, but God’s life-giving power is!

All of these possible interpretations point to the puzzling nature of the prophetic message—and we do not do well to try and draw explicit conclusions such as these from it. It is undoubtedly a message of ringing hope—proclaiming that death is not the final word. But, we think, we should leave it at that. What do you think?

¹¹⁵Gray entitles **26:20-27:1**, “The Jews are to keep safe, while Yahweh is abroad in the world exacting from it penalty for its crimes,” which he takes to be a continuation from **25:8**, and comments that “As of old He pierced the dragon, the personification or leader of chaos, before creating the present world, so now is He about to slay these monsters who have misled His creatures, as the immediate prelude to a new heaven and new earth over which He will exercise sovereignty (**24:23**)...”

“In the same way in Babylonia the killing of a monster precedes Marduk’s accession to sovereign power.” (P. 449)

We think this is a misrepresentation of the **Genesis** story of creation, in which chaos (waste and void) is the first condition of the world God created, and which instead of being a monster which God killed, is simply filled with light and ordered design. The dragon which God / YHWH pierced is personified in the **Hebrew Bible** as Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

Oswalt entitles **26:20-27:1** “Oracle of salvation,” and comments that “These verses are...in response to the lament and its immediate reply in **26:16-19**. The resurrection is not yet; it is still necessary to exercise that confident waiting (**26:8**), but the outcome is sure. The dead who have suffered at the hands of the city of chaos (**24:10; 25:2; 27:10**) will be restored to life and their blood avenged. All this is summed up in a concrete way typical of Isaiah by reference to the well-known picture of the

(continued...)

¹¹⁵(...continued)

defeat of the chaos monster. All that threatens the Divine order (**26:7-8**) will be forever destroyed. The verses express the conclusion to the them of dependency.” (P. 488)

Slotki states that **verses 20-21** are “a call to Israel or to the people of Jerusalem to retire into seclusion until the indignation be overpast.” (P. 121)

Motyer entitles **verses 20-21** “Secure from wrath.”

Ortlund has “Shut your doors,” and says, “Contrast ‘open the gates’ in **verse 2.**” (P. 1286)

Ackerman comments on these two verses that “the apocalyptic destruction and redeemed creation that the poem’s speakers hope for will come soon, but not quite yet.” (P. 991)

Kaiser comments on **verses 20-21** that “The lamentation is uttered by the poet himself, as it were, in the name of the community...It is not answered by an oracle of salvation. Instead, the poet gives an instruction, to which a reason is added, concerning their attitude when the distress increases. When he calls upon the people to enter into their chambers, to close the doors behind them, to hide and wait until the wrath is passed...he does not mean that they are to face death fearlessly and lie down in the grave without terror, because they will soon be raised by Yahweh, as one might assume from **Daniel 12:13**...

“Rather, he is advising his community to withdraw into the innermost rooms of their houses, in preparation for the expected but brief distress which is to come...and there to await the end of the Divine wrath...

“The passage has been compared with the visitation upon Egypt and the sparing of Israel in the Passover night...and even of the saving of Noah and his family from the flood in the ark...But it may also be compared with **Ezekiel 9** which speaks of a selective act of judgment in Jerusalem itself...

“It is perhaps possible that...he is thinking of a powerful storm which will break out over Jerusalem and the nations gathering together outside its gates...

“In this case the call to draw into the inner rooms of one’s house would be meant literally and would not just be a metaphor based on behavior during a storm. Behind this time of distress, which with its conclusion is the last to be expected, stands Yahweh Himself. He intervenes even more directly than when He visited His Own nation by handing it over to foreign rulers...

(continued...)

¹¹⁵(...continued)

“In words taken from **Micah 1:3**, it prophesies that Yahweh will come forth from His heavenly dwelling to what we may interpret as the last judgment upon men, whose guilt...is now punished. The totality and finality of His action can be seen from **verse 21b** which prophesies that the earth will then disclose all blood that has not been atoned for, every secret, forgotten or concealed murder...so that the blood can cry out to Yahweh as its avenger...

“The last judgment is the final cleansing of both the earth and of mankind. But here the scholarly prophet breaks off...Yahweh will ultimately set everything to rights, even and above all where human help can do nothing. And perhaps present or future readers will be pleased that a later writer has added the promise in **verse 19**, opening up a vista which makes it easier to believe in the righteousness of God.” (Pp. 213-15)

We note that having just given a powerful statement of hope in **verse 19**, **verses 20-21** go on to say that there is still Divine judgment and punishment coming. We have found throughout our biblical studies that this is oftentimes the case, that “doom and hope” are intertwined, that both “Divine judgment and Divine salvation,” including the ultimate goal of universal salvation, are likewise intertwined. What do you think?

But however this may be, **verses 26:20-27:1** proclaim astonishingly good news—all the evil powers of darkness, signified by Leviathan...the dragon in the sea...are going down, slain by YHWH’s powerful sword—while those dwelling in the dust of death will be brought to life by YHWH’s life-imparting “dew of lights”!

Alexander translates and comments on **verse 20**: “*Go, my people, enter into thy chambers, and shut the doors after thee, hide thyself for a little moment, till the wrath be past.* Having wound up the expectations of the people to a full belief of future restoration from that state of civil and religious death, the prophet by an exquisite transition intimates, that this event is not yet immediately at hand, that this relief from the effects of God’s displeasure with His people must be preceded by the experience of the displeasure itself, that it is still a time of indignation, and that till this is elapsed the promise cannot be fulfilled...

“This painful postponement of the promised resurrection could not be more tenderly or beautifully intimated than in this fine apostrophe [a figure of speech sometimes represented by exclamation ‘O!’ A writer or a speaker, using an apostrophe, detaches himself from the reality and addresses an imaginary character in his speech]...

“The period of suffering is described as very small in comparison with what had gone before and what should follow it, as Paul says (**Romans 8:18**), that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us.” (Pp. 432-33)

(continued...)

¹¹⁵(...continued)

Oswalt comments on **verse 20**: “Go, My people, enter your rooms is an expression of that compassion of God which has always made possible an escape from His wrath for those who would avail themselves of it. So Noah escaped the flood, Lot escaped Sodom, and the Hebrew people escaped the death of the firstborn. God does not want any to perish (**Matthew 18:14; 2 Peter 3:9**).” (P. 488)

But tell that to the millions and millions of Jews who perished in Hitler’s concentration camps, or to the untold millions of human victims of Josef Stalin and Chairman Mao! What “room” were those victims, many of them confessing Jews and Christians, able to enter? Was it the gas-room or crematorium-room? Some of the innocent people escaped—is that all that this passage promises?

Oswalt states that “Delitzsch calls special attention to the attitude of prayerful dependence as seen in:

Psalm 27:4-5,

- 4 One thing I have asked from YHWH--
that I will seek:
my dwelling in YHWH's house / temple all my life's days,
to behold YHWH's delightfulness,
and to seek (for guidance) / inquire in His temple.
- 5 For He will hide me in His den / shelter on (the) day of trouble.
He will hide me in (the) hiding-place of His tent!
He will raise me up (high) upon a rock!

Psalm 31:21^{Heb} / 20^{Eng},

You will hide them in a secret-place before You
from conspiracies of man;
You will store them up in a shelter,
from contention of tongues!

That is, in going into the presence of YHWH, His temple / tent / hiding-place / secret-place / shelter, they will find refuge and be safe from opposition or trouble. But is this the case? Is it the experience of the Jews, or of Christians under persecution?

How will you answer this pressing question, which is being asked constantly by the modern world in its rejection of organized religion, especially against those religions which claim Divine causality of everything that happens in human history?

We say that God has given freedom of choice to humanity, and that life is a test—an excruciating test confronting seemingly insurmountable problems of evil choices in a world governed by survival of the fittest, in which humans must choose between love and hate, between good and evil, and must stand bravely, fighting for the survival of

(continued...)

וּסְגְרוּ (דְּלִתֵּיהֶם) [דְּלִתֵּיהֶם] בְּעֵדְרָה

חֲבֵי כַמְעֹט־רִגְעָה

עַד- (יַעְבֹּר-) [יַעְבֹּר-] זַעֲמָם:

Go My people, enter into your chambers / rooms,¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵(...continued)

Divinely given values, in struggle to the death--in which they have oftentimes paid the ultimate price--but the final outcome of that struggle will be one of great joy based on Divine grace and steadfast-love. What do you think?

¹¹⁶What do you think is meant by “your chambers / rooms”? The Hebrew plural noun is **חֲדָרֵיהֶם**, **chadhareyka**. The noun is used of private rooms, such as the bedroom, or the toilet, etc. See the following passages where the noun occurs:

Genesis 43:30 (Joseph rushes out from his brothers, to a private place where he can weep, unobserved); **Exodus 7:28^{Heb} / 8:3^{Eng}** (the frogs sent against Egypt will even enter into the bedrooms); **Deuteronomy 32:25** (in-doors, while terror lurks in the streets outside); **Judges 3:24** (Eglon, King of Moab's private latrine on the roof of his house, where he goes to uncover his feet / relieve himself); **15:1** (Samson wants to go into his wife's chamber / bed-room); **16:9, 12** (an inner chamber of a house, where men lie hidden), **2 Samuel 4:7** (Ish-Bosheth's bedroom where he is murdered); **13:10** (Amnon's bedroom, where he pretends to be sick, and rapes Tamar); **1 Kings 1:15** (Bathsheba goes to the elder King David in his bedroom, to request him to make Solomon King); **20:30** (Ben-Hadad the Syrian flees from King Ahab and enters into a private chamber); **22:25** (an inner chamber where Zedekiah will go to hide himself from the wrath of YHWH); **2 Kings 6:12** (the King of Syria is told that Elisha hears the words he speaks in his private chamber); **9:2** (Elisha tells a son of the prophets to take Jehu into a private chamber and anoint him King); **11:2** (Jehosheba hides Joash in a bedroom from being murdered by Athaliah); **Isaiah 26:20** (here; people are told to go and hide in their inner chambers); **Ezekiel 8:12** (the elders of Israel are practicing false religion in the privacy of their rooms); **Joel 2:16** (the private room of a bride); **Psalms 105:30** (same as **Exodus 7:28^{Heb} / 8:3^{Eng}**); **Job 9:9** (the name of a constellation of stars); **37:9** (“chamber” of the wind); **Proverbs 7:27** (chambers, private rooms of death); **18:8** (inner parts of the human body); **20:27** (similar), **30** (similar); **24:4** (rooms of a human being which Wisdom fills); **26:22** (similar to **18:8**); **Song of Solomon 1:4** (the King has brought his lover into his chambers); **3:4** (the female lover brings her beloved into her mother's bedroom); **Ecclesiastes 10:20** (even in your bedroom, don't curse the rich!); **1 Chronicles 28:11** (David gives Solomon the plans for the temple, including its inner chambers); **2 Chronicles 18:24** (same as **1 Kings 22:25**); **22:11** (same as **2 Kings 11:2**).

(continued...)

and shut your (singular) door¹¹⁷ behind you.¹¹⁸
Withdraw / hide like a little moment,¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶(...continued)

In the light of this usage, there can be little doubt that Isaiah's words mean the people are to go into the inner chambers / bedrooms of their homes to hide themselves from the wrath that is occurring outside.

And we ask, Do you have such a private place, an "inner chamber," where you can be in private intimacy with God, seeking Him in prayer, committing yourself unreservedly to His service and keeping—from which you can come forth right with God, ready for whatever fate awaits you?

¹¹⁷The Masoretes give two choices of text: first, the *kethibh*, "it is written," דַּלְתוֹתַי, "your doors," and second, the *qere*, "to be read," דַּלְתַּי, "your door." Watts holds that the *kethibh*, with its plural "your doors" is correct. (P. 339)

Slotki observes that the Rabbis understand "your chambers" to mean "the places of worship and study," while they understand "your doors" to mean "the doors of one's mouth, the lips. One must not question or doubt the justice of the Divine decree." (P. 122)

How often we have heard such statements from religious leaders—you must not question, you must not doubt! Those who make such statements are obviously ignorant or disdainful of the contents of biblical books such as **Job** and **Ecclesiastes**, both of which question God's justice and express doubt on page after page!

No serious student of the biblical writings can forget the cry of Jesus as he died: "My God, my God, Why have You forsaken me?" (**Mark 15:34; Matthew 27:46**; Jesus' cry is a quotation of **Psalms 22:1**)

¹¹⁸Motyer comments that "The call to 'open the gates!' with which the poem began (**verse 2**) is matched here by 'shut the doors!' Security in peace (**verses 1-4**) is matched by security from wrath. The wording Go...shut recalls **Genesis 7:1, 16** and the safety of the Noachic community in the flood [that is, six people out of an entire world!]. The picture of going indoors recalls **Exodus 12:22-23** and the safety of the Passover community while judgment was in process." (P. 220)

And again we ask, where can entire populations of nations "go indoors" when a Hitler or Stalin or Mao does his work of annihilation / genocide?

¹¹⁹Gray comments that the people are instructed to hide, "not in terror, as in **2:10**, for Yahweh now intends to do His people no hurt, but as a precaution, lest the wrath of God, as it roams abroad, should unintentionally do hurt to the Jews as well as to others." (P. 449)

(continued...)

until indignation will pass by.¹²⁰

26:21¹²¹ כִּי־הִנֵּה יְהוָה יֵצֵא מִמְּקוֹמוֹ

לִפְקֹד עֹן יֹשְׁבֵי־הָאָרֶץ עָלָיו

וְגִלְתָּה הָאָרֶץ אֶת־דַּמֶּיהָ

וְלֹא־תִכַסֶּה עוֹד עַל־הַרוֹגְנִיהָ:

¹¹⁹(...continued)

What do you think? Do you believe the wrath of God “roams about,” “unintentionally doing hurt to the innocent”? We think that is a very poor view of God!

But we think of the **Book of Job’s** picture of “the satan” as a member of the Divine court, who goes about in the earth, by Divine commission, checking on the integrity, and testing the integrity of those who claim to honor and serve God.

¹²⁰Motyer correctly observes that “passed by” is the Passover verb, עָבַר (Exodus 12:12, 23).” (P. 220)

Ortlund holds that “until the fury has passed by” means “the remainder of history until the city of man is laid waste.” (P. 1286) But there is nothing said in this text about “the remainder of history,” as if there will be no more history when YHWH’s people come to live in Zion.

¹²¹Alexander translates / comments on **verse 21**: “For behold, Jehovah (is) coming out of His place, to visit the iniquity of the inhabitant of the earth upon him, and the earth shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain. This is a reason both for expecting ultimate deliverance and for patiently awaiting it. The reason is that God has a work of chastisement to finish, first upon His Own people, and then upon their enemies. During the former process, let the faithful hide themselves until the wrath be past. When the other begins, let them lift up their heads, for their redemption draweth nigh...”

“This large interpretation of the verse is altogether natural and more satisfactory than those which restrict it either to the judgments upon Israel or to those upon Babylon. On the latter, the eye of the prophet of course chiefly rests, especially at last, so that the closing words may be applied almost exclusively to the retribution which awaited the Chaldean for the slaughter of God’s people...”

“The blood, which the earth had long since drunk in, should as it were be vomited up, and the bodies of the murdered, which had long been buried should be now disclosed to view.” (P. 433)

Because look¹²²—YHWH is going forth¹²³ from His place,¹²⁴
to visit (for punishment)¹²⁵ (the) iniquity of the earth's / land's inhabitant upon him;¹²⁶

¹²²1QIs^a does not have our Hebrew text's הִנֵּה, **hinneh**, “Look!”

¹²³Oswalt comments that “*the Lord is coming forth* is expressed by a participle of imminence [יֹטֵס, **yotse**), qal masculine singular participle], ‘He is just about to.’ This posture of anticipation is typical of the faith of Israel and the [Christian] Church and is necessary for a correct perception of existence...

“We live immersed in time and the succession of days often makes the future appear hopelessly far away. But perceptions change. The child for whom December 1 to 25 was endless becomes the man who looks with astonishment at ten years which seem to have passed in a moment [or an old man who looks back at 64 years of marriage that have passed away so quickly!]. The Lord is about to come, and it is His counting of days which must color ours and not vice versa. With His perspective we will not lose hope, nor let our eyes slip from the supreme objective—Christ-likeness—to the day-to-day round.” (P. 489)

That is to say, what seems like an eternity to us, may be only a moment of time in God’s eyes. We believe that this is God’s world, and that ultimately God’s purposes of steadfast-love and the conquering of all evil will prevail. With such a faith, we must not seek to judge God’s actions by our time-tables!

Do you agree? If not, can you say exactly why not?

¹²⁴Where our Hebrew text has מִמְּקוֹמוֹ, **mimmeqomo**, “from His place,” **Rahlfs** has ἀπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου, “from the set-apart / holy (place) / sanctuary.”

Slotki holds that this means “From heaven.” It is “understood by the Rabbis as from His attribute of mercy to that of judgment.” (P. 122) The rabbinic view is strange to us—as if God is bi-polar, changing from a God of mercy to a God of judgment!

¹²⁵For a similar prediction of coming Divine judgment, see:

Isaiah 66:15-16,

- 15 Because look—YHWH in / with the fire will come,
and His chariots like the storm-wind,
to return His anger with rage,
and His rebuke with flames of fire.
- 16 Because with fire YHWH judges,
and with His sword, all flesh!

(continued...)

and the earth / land will reveal its bloods,
and it will not cover up again over its murdered ones!¹²⁷

¹²⁵(...continued)

And the slain by YHWH will be many!

Oswalt comments that “*to punish* [our ‘visit (for punishment)’] is expressed by the verb פָּקַד, **paqadh**, which conveys the idea of personal visitation. In the end the Master will return to set all things right and to balance all accounts...

“The result of that intervention is here expressed especially in terms of those unjustly killed. The earth which had received their blood now gives a full accounting, and all the murdered are brought to life. This is in keeping with **Isaiah 26:14**. The tables are now fully turned: the killers and the killed are alive forevermore. (As the **New Testament** makes plain, the killers are not annihilated but rather ‘die’ forever (**Revelation 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8** [all of which have the phrase ‘the second death’]).” (P. 489)

Part of this comment sounds like “mental gymnastics.” How are we to equate “alive forevermore” with “dying forever”? And is “the second death” not really death, but life?

¹²⁶Where our Hebrew text reads the prepositional phrase עָלָיו, “upon him,” **Rahfs** omits the phrase.

¹²⁷Slotki comments that “Murder will be duly exposed and the criminal will not have immunity.” (P. 122)

Such a view is good news for all of those who have suffered death under the hand of tyrants like Hitler, Stalin, Chairman Mao and Muslim jihadists. Ultimately, justice will be done!

H. Wolf comments that “The blood and bodies of the innocent / righteous who have been slaughtered by the oppressive powers will no longer be hidden in the ground, but will be brought forth to testify against their murderers, so that God may in judgment avenge their deaths.” (P. 1052) See

Genesis 4:10-11,

- 10 And He (YHWH) said, What did you do?
Your brother’s blood(s) are crying out to Me from the ground.
11 And now, you (are) cursed from the ground,
which opened its mouth to take your brother’s blood(s) from your hand.

Job 16:18, where Job cries out,

(continued...)

¹²⁷(...continued)

Earth! You shall not cover up my blood!
And it shall not be a place for my outcry!

Ezekiel 24:7-8, where YHWH says of Jerusalem,

- 7 Because her blood in her midst was
upon a shining / smooth rock (where) she placed it;
she did not pour it upon the earth
to cover over it (with) dust!
- 8 To raise wrath high, to take vengeance
I placed her blood upon a shining / smooth rock,
so that it could not be covered up.

Motyer comments that “*Sins* (עֲוֹנוֹת) [our ‘iniquity,’ ‘guilt’] is the most ‘internal’ word in the sin vocabulary...and *blood shed* is the most flagrant outward violation of God’s law. Concealed sin, long undiscovered, will be exposed. Thus, Isaiah indicates a Divine settlement with all and every sin. *The earth* is seen as actively participating with God by exposing what lay hidden.” (P. 220)

Watts explains the meaning of **chapter 26**: “By using the device of a pilgrimage scene, the [Book of Isaiah] has presented the dilemma of Judean faithful worshipers. They want to go to Jerusalem and worship Yahweh. They want to believe and repeat the usual rituals of faith in Yahweh to bring peace and safety. But they have also experienced the heel of the invader and the tyrant. They have seen what happened to their neighbors and their friends over a long time. They have lived with the constant fact of death all around them for three-quarters of a century. It is not surprising that pious songs are mixed with cynical observations and that despair lies not far beneath the surface of their thoughts.

“The epiphany is dramatic and powerful. Once more they are asked to wait a little while. The wrath is not quite finished. But they are assured that God’s terrible acts are effectively dealing with the curse of death which has hung over the land so long.” (P. 342)

(continued...)

¹²⁷(...continued)

1. **Trusting in YHWH in the Hebrew Bible**

Isaiah 26:4,

Trust (plural imperative) in the YHWH forever,,
because in Yah--
YHWH (is) a Rock of Ages / Long Duration!

Jeremiah 17:7,

Blessed (is) the strong man who will trust / trusts in the YHWH;
and YHWH will be his confidence!

Psalms 4:6^{Heb} / 5^{Eng},

Sacrifice sacrifices of righteousness,
and trust to / in YHWH!

Psalms 21:8^{Heb} / 7^{Eng},

Because the king is trusting in the YHWH;
and by (the) steadfast love of (the) Most High, he will not be shaken /
moved!

Psalms 31:15^{Heb} / 14^{Eng},

And I, upon You I trusted, YHWH;
I said, You (are) my God!

Psalms 32:10,

Many (are the) pains for the wicked person;
and the one trusting in the YHWH--
steadfast love will surround him!

Psalms 37:3,

Trust in the YHWH,
and do good;
inhabit (the) land / earth,
and be a friend of true-steadfastness!

Psalms 40:4^{Heb} / 3^{Eng},

And he placed in my mouth a new song,
a song of praise to our God.
Many will see, and will fear / reverence,
and they will trust in the YHWH!

Psalm 112:7, among other things said of the rightly-related person:

From an evil report / bad news, he will not be afraid;
his heart (is) established, trusting in the YHWH!

Psalm 115:9-11,

Israel, trust in the YHWH!
Their Help and Shield (is) He!
House of Aaron, trust in the YHWH!
Their Help and Shield (is) He!
Those who fear / reverence YHWH, trust in the YHWH!
Their Help and Shield (is) He!

Psalm 125:1,

The ones trusting in the YHWH,
like Mount Zion--
it will not be shaken / moved;
to long-lasting time it will remain!

Proverbs 3:5,

Trust to / in YHWH with all your heart / mind,
and to / in your (own) understanding you shall not lean / be supported!

Proverbs 16:20,

One who looks at / considers a matter / word will find good;
and one trusting in the YHWH, blessed (is) he!

Proverbs 28:25,

(A person with) a spacious appetite will stir up strife!
And one trusting upon / in YHWH will be fattened / enriched!

Proverbs 29:25,

Anxiety of a human being will give / yield a snare;
and one trusting in the YHWH will be set on high!

For the verb בָּטַח in the **Book of Isaiah**, see:

Isaiah 12:2, In the good times coming, the returning exiles will say,

Look—God of my salvation / deliverance--
I will trust, and I will not be afraid!
Because Yah, YHWH (is) my Strength and my Song,
and He was for me, for salvation / deliverance!

Isaiah 26:4,

Trust (piel imperative, 2nd person plural) in the YHWH until perpetuity!
Because in Yah, YHWH (is) a Rock of long-lasting ages!

Isaiah 30:12b, to the sinful nation YHWH says,

Because of your rejecting this, the word,
and you people trusted in oppression and crookedness,
and you rely on them (YHWH's destruction is coming on the nation!)
(We say, human beings will trust in something. If it is not YHWH / Jesus Christ,
it will something else—like money, power, possessions, pleasure, etc.)

Isaiah 31:1,

Woe to those who trust in chariots,
and they did not gaze at / look to Israel's Set-apart One,
and they did not seek YHWH!

Isaiah 32:9-11, three times the phrase בְּנוֹת בְּטָחוֹת, literally “daughters, trusting ones,” occurs, but meaning “complacent ones,” or “careless daughters,” i.e., those trusting in their economic advantages.

Isaiah 36:4-15, 37:10, the Rabshakeh of Sennacherib says to Hezekiah's representatives, speaking for the Assyrian king,

What is this the trust which you (singular) trusted?...
Upon whom did you trust, that you rebelled against me?
Look--you trusted upon a staff of the reed, this broken one, upon Egypt,
a man will be leaned upon it, and it will come into his hand and pierce it!
So (is) Pharaoh king of Egypt to all the ones trusting upon him.
And if you say to me, To / in YHWH our God we trusted--
is He not the One Whose high places and altars Hezekiah removed?...
And Hezekiah shall not cause you to trust to / in YHWH,
saying, YHWH will certainly deliver us;
this city will not be given into (the) hand of Assyria's king!
(Again we say, human beings will trust in someone, or something. Will they
choose YHWH / Jesus Christ? Or will they choose some powerful king, like the
king of Assyria, or the king of Egypt? Will they trust in themselves, and their own
abilities, or in their possessions, power, etc.? Isaiah's basic message is, Trust in
YHWH!

Isaiah 42:17,

They turned back,
they were certainly ashamed,
the ones trusting in the idol,
the ones saying to a metal image,
you (plural) (are) our God / Gods!
(Again we say, human beings will trust in something—if not in God, then in something their own hands have made!)

Isaiah 47:10, Babylon is told:

And you (feminine) trusted in your evil;
you said, there is no one seeing me;
your wisdom and your knowledge—
it led you astray.
And you said in your heart,
I (am), and there is no other!”
(Babylon thinks she is God!)

Isaiah 50:10,

Who among you people (is) a fearer of / one revering YHWH,
listening to His servant’s voice?
Who walked (in) dark places,
and there is no light for him,
he will trust in YHWH’s name,
and he will lean upon his God.

Isaiah 59:4, Among Israel’s iniquities is: trusting in emptiness / confusion.

See also:

Isaiah 30:15:

For in this way my Lord YHWH, Set-apart One of Israel, spoke:
In withdrawal and quietness you (plural) will be saved / delivered;
in showing quietness and in trust will be your strength!
And you people were not willing.

For the noun בְּטוּחַ, “security” in **Isaiah**, see:

Isaiah 14:30a,

And (the) first-born of poor people will pasture / graze,
and the needy people (synonym) for the security.

Isaiah 32:17,

And the righteousness' s work / product will be peace,
and the righteousness's service, to be quiet,
and security until long-lasting time.

Isaiah 47:8, Babylon is described as:

the one dwelling to / in the security.

2. Occurrences of יהַ, “Yah” in the Hebrew Bible

Exodus 15:2,

My strength and song is Yah.

(This line of the song of Moses is quoted in **Isaiah 12:2** and **Psalms 118:14**.)

Exodus 17:16, which **Brown-Driver-Briggs** calls a “poetic extract,”

a hand upon (the) throne of Yah.

Isaiah 26:4b,

Because in Yah YHWH, a Rock of ages.

Isaiah 38:11, the song of Hezekiah,

שְׁלֵה בְּתִיָּהּ, “which, a flame of Yah.”

Song of Solomon 8:6b, where it is said of קִנְאָה, jealousy,

its flames, flames of fire,
which are a flame of Yah.

Psalm 68:5^{Heb} / **4**^{Eng}

Sing to God!

Make music (to) His name!

Lift up (a song) to the Rider in (the) desert-plains!

In / for Yah (is) His name,
and they exult before Him!

Psalm 68:19^{Heb} / **18**^{Eng}

You went up to the height,

You took captive captivity.

You took gifts in / among the human beings,

and also rebellious people,
to dwell—Yah God.

Elsewhere יהַ is used only in late **Psalms**, in the phrase הַלְלֵי-יְהוָה, “praise Yah you people”: **104:35, 105:45, 106:1, 48, 111:1, 112:1, 113:1, 9, 115:18, 116:19, 117:2, 135:1, 3, 21, 146:1, 10, 147:1, 20, 148:1, 14, 149:1, 9, and 150:1, 6.**

Compare also:

Psalm 102:19^{Heb} / 18^{Eng},

This will be written for a generation coming after,
and a people (that was) created will praise Yah.

Psalm 115:17,

The dead people will not praise Yah,
and all those going down (to) silence (will) not.

Psalm 150:6,

Everything (that has) the breath,
you (feminine singular) will praise Yah.
You people, praise Yah!

In various other phrases in the **Psalms**, see:

Psalm 77:12,

I will remember Yah's deeds,
because I will remember from ancient times Your wonder!

Psalm 89:9^{Heb} / 8^{Eng}

YHWH, God of Armies,
who (is) like You, mighty Yah?
And Your true faithfulness surrounds You!

Psalm 94:7, wicked oppressors of the poor:

And they said, Yah will not see,
and (the) God of Jacob will not understand!

Psalm 94:12,

Blessed (is) the strong man whom You will discipline, Yah;
and from Your **torah** / teaching / law you will teach him!

Psalm 115:18,

And we, we will bless Yah,
from now and until long-lasting time!
You people praise Yah!

Psalm 118:5,

From the distress I cried, Yah;
You answered me in the broad place, Yah!

Psalm 118:17-19,

- 17 I will not die,
because I will live;
and I will declare Yah's works!
18 Disciplining, Yah disciplined me;
and He did not give me to the death.
19 Open for me, gates of righteousness!
I will enter by them,
I will confess / give thanks, Yah!

Psalm 122:4b, mentions the שְׁבִייעֵי יְהוָה, "tribes of Yah."

Psalm 130:3,

If You should guard / watch iniquities, Yah,
my Lord, who will stand?

Psalm 135:4,

Because Jacob–Yah chose for Himself;
Israel for His possession / property.

3. **“Peace” as YHWH’s Gift to His People,
and His Goal in History in the Book of Isaiah**

Isaiah 9:5-6, the wondrous child to be born will be called “Prince of Peace,” and there will be no end to peace in His kingdom;

Isaiah 26:3,

An inclination / mind-set leaning (on You),
You will guard with / in peace–peace...

Isaiah 26:12, YHWH will establish peace for us.

Isaiah 27:5,

let it make peace for Me,
peace let it make for Me!

Isaiah 32:17-18, when the Spirit is poured out from on high,

And (the) product of the righteousness will be peace;
and (the) work of the righteousness to be quiet and security until long-
lasting time.

And My people will dwell in a dwelling of peace, and in dwelling-places
(synonym) of confidences
and in places of rest, secure ones.

Isaiah 33:7, messengers / envoys of peace weep bitterly.

Isaiah 38:17, in a writing, Hezekiah states that he was bitter for his personal welfare / health.

Isaiah 39:8, Hezekiah, having been told that Judah and some of his grandsons would in the future be taken captive to Babylon, including some of his offspring, says that it is good--because there will be peace and true-faithfulness in my days! (words reminiscent of Nevill Chamberlain report to Great Britain on his treaty with Hitler prior to World War II.)

Isaiah 41:3, the servant raised up by YHWH in the east pursues kings, then passes over in peace.

Isaiah 45:7, YHWH affirms, in contrast to Zoroastrian dualism, that He:

Forms light and creates darkness,
makes peace and creates evil--
I, YHWH--One doing all these things!

Isaiah 48:18,

O that you had paid attention to My commandments;
and your peace would be like the wadi / river,
and your righteousness like waves of the sea!”

Isaiah 48:22,

There is no peace, said YHWH,
for the wicked people!

Isaiah 52:7,

How beautiful upon the mountains, feet of one announcing good news,
causing peace to be heard, proclaiming good news,
causing salvation / deliverance to be heard,
saying to Zion your God reigned!

Isaiah 53:5,

And he (the suffering servant) was pierced from / for our transgressions;
crushed for our iniquities;
discipline / correction of our peace (was) upon him;
and by his blows / stripes it was healed for us.

Isaiah 54:10,

If the mountains should depart, and the hills should be shaken—
and My steadfast love will not depart from you;
and (the) covenant of My peace will not be shaken—
said One having compassion on you, YHWH!

Isaiah 54:13,

And all your children—ones taught by YHWH;
and great peace—your children!

Isaiah 55:12,

Because in gladness you people shall go forth;
and in peace you shall be borne along;
the mountains and the hills will break forth before you (with) a ringing-cry;
and all trees of the field will clap (their) hand(s)!

Isaiah 57:2, the rightly-related perish, with none who care, but,

he enters peace;
they will rest upon their beds—
one who walks uprightly.

Isaiah 57:18-19,

I saw his (back-sliding) ways, and I will heal him;
and I will lead him,
and I will make complete compassions for him and for his mourners,
creating fruit of lips—
Peace, peace for the (ones) far away and for the (ones) near, said YHWH,
And I will heal him!

Isaiah 57:21,

There is no peace, said my God, for the wicked!

Isaiah 59:8,

(The) way of peace they did not know;
and there is no justice in their tracks;
they made their pathways crooked for themselves;
everyone walking on it did not know peace!

Isaiah 60:17, in the good times coming,

Instead of the bronze, I will bring gold;
and instead of the iron, I will bring silver;
and instead of the woods, bronze;
and instead of the stones, iron;
and I will make your visitation peace,
and your oppressors / taskmasters, righteousness!

Isaiah 66:12,

Because in this way YHWH spoke:
Look at Me, reaching out to her peace like a river,
and like an overflowing wadi, glory / honor of nations;
and you people will nurse;
upon a side you shall be carried;
and upon knees you shall be fondled!

4.

Article on "Dew" by Peter J. Leithart

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The Hebrew word for dew (*tal*) refers both to morning dew and nighttime mist. Dew was important to Ancient Near Eastern agriculture. The climate was so hot and dry that often only the dew kept vegetation alive during drought and heat. According to the **New Bible Dictionary**, "Dew is beneficial to summer crops. This has been proved conclusively by agronomical field-studies since 1937."

It is thus not surprising that the Bible uses dew as a symbol of God's blessings in general. It is among the blessings that Jacob received as the firstborn; Isaac promised Jacob that as the earth would produce its fatness of grain and new wine, so also the heavens would produce dew (**Genesis 27:27-29**). Hence, when Jacob's faithful remnant is restored to God's favor after the exile, they receive again the blessings of Jacob, including the promise of dew (**Zechariah 12:8**). As a symbol of blessing in general, it is fitting that dew is depicted as coming out of heaven, since all blessings come down from the Father of lights.

Just as dew is a symbol of blessing, its absence is a symbol of cursing. Esau was to be "away from" (Heb., *min*) the dew of heaven (**Genesis 27:39**). Dew was withheld along with rain from Israel during the ministry of Elijah (**1 Kings 17:1**). Because the restoration community left the temple in disrepair, God withheld the dew from them (**Haggai 1:10**).

This symbolism adds an additional dimension to the insanity of Nebuchadnezzar. Throughout **Daniel 4-5**, it is emphasized that the beastly king was "drenched with the dew of heaven" (**Daniel 4:15, 23, 25, 33, 5:21**). Nebuchadnezzar thus represents all rebellious men, who defy God like wild beasts, all the while literally drenched with blessings from heaven. As with Nebuchadnezzar, God continues to send down dew upon the just and unjust, so as to drive them to repentance and thanksgiving.

What specific kinds of blessings are associated with dew? First, as we have already noted, dew comes from above. It comes, according to the biblical worldview, out of heaven, from the clouds. This reminds us of the glory-cloud from which God sends His blessings. More generally, dew is a gift from a superior to his subjects. It is thus not only associated with God's favor and love, but with the favor of a king (**Proverbs 19:2**; compare **Psalms 72:6**). Because it is a symbol of the favor of our King and Judge, dew is a reminder of the sovereignty of God's grace.

Second, dew is a symbol of the resurrection in **Isaiah 26:19**. Just as the earth brings forth its dew, so also it shall bring forth the dead to new life. Dew thus is a symbol of the redeemed and resurrected people of God...

Third, dew is associated with manna, and thus with food (**Exodus 16:13-21**). It is also noteworthy that Moses prays that his inspired words would be like dew

(Deuteronomy 32:2). Manna too is compared to the Word of God (**Deuteronomy 8:3**), and Jesus compares manna to His own Body that is offered for the life of the world (**John 6:49-51**). Dew daily refreshes the plants and the earth, and recalls the refreshment of God's Word and Sacrament. Fittingly, dew is also associated with the strength of youth (**compare Psalm 110:3**)...

Fourth, dew is a symbol of the ministry of the people of God in the world. **Micah** compares the remnant of Israel to dew among the nations (**Micah 5:7**). The heavenly people of God goes into the world to bring refreshment and new life to a sinful world. Throughout the **Proverbs**, a wise man is compared to a fountain and tree of life, whose words and deeds refresh and encourage...

Hosea uses the symbolism of dew in a different manner. He compares the fair-weather loyalty of Ephraim and Judah to the dew that evaporates in the heat of affliction (**Hosea 6:4**). In **13:3**, dew, chaff, smoke blowing away, and a morning cloud are all used as symbols of Israel's unfaithfulness. The **book** ends, however, with a promise that God Himself will become the dew of Israel, causing Israel to blossom like a lily and take root (**14:5-7**)...

