

Isaiah 27, Hebrew Text with Translation and Footnotes
Obscurity Continues, as Isaiah Affirms that
Divine Judgments Will Continue, Both on Israel and Its Enemies,
But Ultimate Victory Is Certain!

27:1¹ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִפְקֹד יְהוָה בְּתַרְבּוֹ

¹**Chapter 27** has one end-note: Passages in the Bible that Mention Leviathan, Dragons, Sea Monsters, etc.

Alexander comments on **chapter 27** that it “is an amplification of the last verse of [chapter 26], and contains a fuller statement both of Israel’s chastisements and of Jehovah’s judgments on His enemies. The destruction of the [enemies] is foretold as the slaughter of a huge sea-monster, and contrasted with God’s care of His Own people even when afflicting them (**verses 1-5**). Hereafter Israel shall flourish, and even in the meantime his sufferings are far less than those of his oppressors (**verses 6-7**). The [chastisement of Israel] is visited in moderation, for a time, and with the happiest effect (**verses 8-9**). The [destruction of His enemies is final and total] (**verses 10-11**). This shall be followed by the restoration of the scattered Jews (**verses 12-13**).” (P. 433)

Motyer entitles **27:1-13** “The final gathering: the universal Israel,” and comments that “In literary content this is as fascinating a piece of Isaianic ‘mosaic’ [pattern, arrangement] as anything in the whole literature, carefully composed (note how it begins and ends with two ‘In that day’ oracles in **verses 1-2** and **verses 12-13**) and using pieces from many points in Isaiah’s ministry.” (P. 220)

Motyer outlines the passage as follows:

- A¹ The Lord’s victory in the heavenlies: the great sword (verse 1) [Is there any mention of ‘heavenlies’ in this verse? No! It is a word taken from Paul in **Ephesians**]
- B¹ The Lord’s vineyard people, destined to fill the world (verses 2-6)
 - C The Lord’s dealings with His people (verses 7-11)
 - Past forbearance (verses 7-8)
 - Future atonement (verse 9)
 - Overthrow of the world city (verses 10-11)
- B² The Lord’s harvested people, gathered from the world (verse 12)
- A² The Lord’s jubilee on earth: the great trumpet (verse 13)

He comments that “Within **chapters 13-27** the companion passages are **chapters 19-20** and **23**, both of which climax on the thought of the Lord’s world-wide people (**19:24-25; 23:18**).” (P. 221)

Ortlund entitles **27:1-13** “The Whole World Will Be Fruitful,” and comments that in this passage, God is depicted as “destroying evil and bringing all His people home.”

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(P. 1286)

Slotki comments on **27:1** that “This chapter continues the apocalyptic prophecy of the last verses of the previous chapter. The three monsters symbolize the three greatest powers of the time: probably Assyria, Babylon and Egypt.” (P. 122)

Kaiser entitles **27:1** “The Last Enemy.” He comments that “Whereas **24:21-23** looks forward to the final conquest of the powers of heaven by Yahweh, **27:1** promises that in ‘that day’ (compare **24:21; 25:9; 26:1; 27:12, 13; 28:5**), which Yahweh has destined for His judgment upon His enemies, the powers of the deep, the rebellious sea, will also be defeated...

“As we have known for some decades from the texts found in Ugarit in northern Syria, the Canaanites had for many years recounted how the weather God and Lord of the earth, Baal, had to conquer the rebellious sea, the Sea-God Yam, Lotan, the fleeing and wriggling seven-headed snake, the sea-dragon Tannun. The Israelites took the myth over from the Canaanites, perhaps in a somewhat altered form which told not only of Yam and Leviathan, but also of Rahab (compare:

Isaiah 30:7,

And Egypt—(with) vapor / breath and emptiness they will help.
Therefore I called to this (nation),
Rahab / Arrogant One—they—cessation.

Isaiah 51:9-10,

9 Raise up! Raise up! / Awake! Awake!
Dress (yourself with) strength, arm of YHWH!
Awake as (in) days of old / ancient time,
(in) generations of long-lasting (past) times!
Are You not She,
the One cutting Rahab in pieces,
piercing a Dragon?
10 Are You not She, the One making Yam / a Sea dry,
waters of a great ocean?,
That placed Yam’s / Sea’s depths
a way to pass / cross over (for) redeemed ones?

Psalms 89:10-13^{Heb} / 9-12^{Eng},

10/9 You, ruling over the sea’s / ocean’s swelling;
when its waves lift up, You still them.
11/10 You, You crushed Rahab, like a pierced / dead body;
with Your arm’s strength, You scattered Your enemies.

(continued...)

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Job 26:12-14, speaking of the Supreme God El:

- 12 By His strength, He disturbed the Sea;
and by His wisdom, He severely wounded Rahab.
13 By His wind, He beautified heavens;
His hand pierced (the) fleeing serpent.

“Leviathan, like His Canaanite predecessor, had seven heads...In one tradition Yahweh destroyed Him. See: **Psalm 74:13-14**,

- 13 You divided (the) sea by Your strength;
You crushed (the) heads of dragons upon the waters!
14 You crushed (synonym) Leviathan’s heads!
You gave Him (as) food to a people, to desert-dwellers!

“while according to another He made a powerful toy of Him,

Psalm 104:25-26,

- 25 This, the ocean—great and wide (its) shores!
There—gliding creature(s), too many to count!--
little ones with great ones!
26 There—ships travel;
Leviathan / Sea-monster--this you formed to play with it!

“so that He still had to be taken into account. Compare:

Job 3:8, as Job curses the day of his birth--

Let them curse it, those cursing (synonym) a day,
the ones ready to rouse Leviathan!

Job 26:13,

By His wind, He beautified heavens;
His hand pierced (the) fleeing serpent.

“...As a symbol of a power hostile to God the sea could be associated, like the sea-dragon, with the earthly enemies of Yahweh, the empires of the earth. Their symbolical animals climb out of the sea—compare

Daniel 7:2-4,

- 2 Daniel answered, and he said,
I was envisioning in visions within the night;

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- and look—four winds of the heaven breaking forth to / on the great sea;
- 3 And four great beasts came up from the sea;
changing / being different this one from that one.
- 4 The first, like a lion,
and it had wings of a griffon-vulture.
I was envisioning until its wings were plucked off,
and it was lifted from the earth,
and it was caused to stand upon its feet like a man,+
and a heart of a man was given to it.

Revelation 13:1,

And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea,
having ten horns and seven heads,
and upon his horns ten crowns,
and upon his heads sacrilegious name[s]

“but behind them stands concealed the ancient dragon—

Revelation 13:2,

And the beast which I saw was being like a leopard,
and its feet like [those] of a bear;
and its mouth like a lion's mouth.
And the dragon gave to it its power, and its throne, and great authority.

“Who can Himself be embodied in historical individuals—compare

Psalms of Solomon 2:25, speaking about a ruler in Egypt, who did not consider that he was only a human:

Do not delay, O God, to repay them on their heads,
to declare in dishonor the arrogance of the dragon.

“The apocalyptic writers affirm that Yahweh will destroy the dragon.”

Revelation 20:2,

He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent,
who is the Devil and Satan,
and bound him for a thousand years.

Job 40:25^{Heb} / 41:1^{Eng}

(continued...)

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Will you draw out Leviathan with a hook?
Or with a cord will you make its tongue sink?

“...By comparison with these ideas, the development into the apocalyptic conception that Yahweh has destined Leviathan, sometimes together with the legendary Behemoth, as food for the final age, sounds almost innocent...Thus He is clearly a Being Who threatens the earth and has therefore to be annihilated if prosperity and peace are eventually to prevail upon earth...

“We cannot exclude the possibility that the apocalyptic writer had to use a secret language in order to refer to the kingdoms which he really meant, because the political situation left him no other choice...

“But the apocalyptic writer, it should be noted, does not go beyond his prophecy of Yahweh’s victory in the final age over the monster in the deep, a victory which He gains in a duel with His powerful sword. Behind **26:20-21** we saw Yahweh’s judgment upon the nations; and it follows from the logic of mythical thinking that after the incarnation of evil the evil itself must be conquered, and that God has to destroy the last enemy, if ‘that day’ is really to bring the final turning point in history.” (Pp. 221-23)

Oswalt likewise comments on **27:1** that “Ever since the discovery of the Babylonian creation epic with its account of Marduk killing the sea monster Tiamat (see Pritchard, **ANET**, pp. 66-68), it has been clear that there was some reflection of a similar account in this and several other biblical references. The initial enthusiasm to make these a direct borrowing of Babylonian ideas could not be sustained, especially after the finds at Ugarit turned up an account of the defeat of Lotan, a sea monster, much nearer home. A similar story has appeared in Hittite literature (Pritchard, **ANET**, pp. 125-26), so it now seems clear that the myth of the struggle between a high God and a sea / chaos monster was widespread in the ancient Near East...

“That being so, why did they use this terminology at certain points?...Suffice it to say that they were not adopting a mythological world-view...What they were doing was appropriating well-known emotive language into which they could put new meaning... The language of myth could be bent to new purposes, as here, where Isaiah, in need of strong imagery to cap his vision of God’s victory over sin, oppression, and death, seizes on the Leviathan story and makes it say something much more profound than it had ever said before...

“This verse is saying the same thing then as **24:21-23**, although in different words. God is the sole Sovereign of the universe, and while evil and destruction now seem to threaten the principles of justice upon which His order is founded, they will not prevail. God will triumph and those who have kept faith in Him through dark days will triumph with Him. But the true monster which must be destroyed, the one before which

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God's people find themselves helpless, is not some primordial chaos; it is the monster of moral evil. That, too, God will destroy, and His people may await that day with joy." (Pp. 490-91)

Do you agree with Oswalt? Is Isaiah, in his prophetic message, taking up the language of Israel's Near-Eastern neighbors, and using it with reference to YHWH instead of the Near-Eastern Gods such as Baal and Ahura Mazda and Marduk? And is not this usage puzzling to the average reader of Isaiah's message?

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 1**: "*In that day shall Jehovah visit, with His sword, the hard, the great, the strong (sword), upon Leviathan the swift (or flying) serpent, and upon Leviathan the coiled (or crooked) serpent, and shall slay the dragon which (is) in the sea...*

"It is universally agreed that this is a prediction of the downfall of some great oppressive power, but whether that of a single nation or of several, has been much disputed...Even if three powers be intended, it is wholly impossible to identify them, as may be inferred from the endless variety of combinations, which has been suggested: Egypt, Assyria, and Babylonia; Egypt, Babylonia, and Tyre; Assyria, Babylonia and Rome; Babylonia, Media, Persia, etc. etc. Gill thinks the three meant are the devil, the beast, and the false prophet; Cocceius, the emperor, the pope, and the devil...

"What is common to all the hypotheses is, that the verse describes a power or powers hostile and oppressive to the people of God. The most probable opinion, therefore, is, that this was what the words were intended to convey...The leviathan and dragon of this verse are descriptive of a great oppressive power, with particular allusion to the Babylonian empire...

"Assuming this to be the general meaning of the verse, that of its mere details becomes either easy or comparatively unimportant." (P. 434)

Watts, who has an excursus entitled "Leviathan = Tyre" on page 248, comments on **chapter 27** that "After the delay of seventy years attention returns to Tyre, symbolized as Leviathan the Dragon whose day of judgment has arrived. This raises the hopes of Israel's exiles. Yahweh reminds them that He is watching the vineyard and that the people will be replanted. In the meantime, the land remains desolate for the people, who still do not understand. But Israel will be gathered from the lands of her exile to worship before the Lord in Zion." (P. 348)

We regard Watts' view as extremely far-fetched. We see no justification for his contention that Leviathan is a code-name for the ancient Phoenician City of Tyre.

But it is obvious that the prophetic message, with its obscure, puzzling nature (as affirmed in **Numbers 12:6-8** and **1 Corinthians 13:9-12**) is here taking up the language and ideas of Near-Eastern mythology, using it to proclaim YHWH's universal victory.

הַקִּשָּׁה וְהַגְּדוּלָה וְהַחֲזָקָה
עַל לְוִיָּתָן נַחֵשׁ בְּרֶחַח
וְעַל לְוִיָּתָן נַחֵשׁ עֲקֻלָּתוֹן
וְהִרְגֵּ אֶת־הַתַּנִּין אֲשֶׁר בַּיָּם:

In that day,² YHWH will visit (punishment) with His sword,³

²Watts comments on the phrase “In that day,” stating that it, “like the phrase in **Isaiah 25:9** and **26:1**, refers to the day at the end of the seventy years (**Isaiah 23:17**), and after the many days of **Isaiah 24:22** when Yahweh comes from His place (**Isaiah 26:8**)...”

“Leviathan is a symbol for Tyre, its counterpart...Yahweh will decide its fate as promised in **Isaiah 23:17**. But that decision, after the reprieve predicted in **Isaiah 23:15-16**, will be death for the monster that is in the sea...”

“The tension between the destruction announced here and the seeming continuance of trading activity announced in **Isaiah 23:17-18** is the very essence of its meaning. Tyre will no longer be ‘Leviathan, a twisting serpent.’ That existence of power and conniving intrigue will be over. She will no longer be a threat to her neighbors, especially Israel / Judah. She can return to the role she played in David’s time (compare **1 Kings 5**; **2 Chronicles 2:1-16**) that is announced in **Isaiah 23:18**.” (P. 349)

But no—the text depicts Leviathan, the “dragon that is in the sea” as being slain—destroyed—not as continuing in a more acceptable form. We say Leviathan, the dragon in the sea, is a mythical symbol for all the enemies of YHWH. But, like a great part of the prophetic message, it is not clear, or exact—but rather, obscure, puzzling in nature—especially to Christian interpreters in America prior to modern understanding of ancient Near-Eastern literature—leading them to all sorts of weird interpretations of Leviathan, etc. What do you think?

³Where **Codex Leningradensis** spells בְּחֶרְבוֹ, without the *dagesh* in the *beth*, a number of Hebrew manuscripts and editions of the **Hebrew Bible** spell בְּחֶרְבוֹ, both of which mean “with His sword.”

the hard one, and the great one, and the strong one,⁴
upon Leviathan⁵–Fleeing⁶ Serpent,
and upon Leviathan–Crooked⁷ Serpent.⁸

⁴The threefold description of YHWH's sword is--הַקֶּשֶׁה וְהַגְּדֹלָה וְהַחֲזָקָה, literally, “the hard / severe one, and the great one, and the strong one.”

Is this due to the fact that in this depiction of YHWH's victory, three opponents are named, Leviathan, a fleeing serpent, Leviathan a crooked serpent and the dragon / monster which (is) in the sea”? The Divine victory is depicted as a victory over a three-fold opponent, by means of a three-fold sword.

But the “sword” is one–YHWH's sword, and we suspect that the slain opponent is likewise one–known by three different descriptions in Near-Eastern mythology. What do you think?

⁵Alexander states that “The word *leviathan*, which, from its etymology, appears to mean *contorted*, *coiled*, is sometimes used to denote particular species (e.g. the crocodile), and sometimes as a generic term for huge aquatic animals, or the larger kinds of serpents, in which sense the corresponding term תַּנִּינִן, **tanniyn**, [serpent, dragon] is also used. They both appear to be employed in this [verse] to express the indefinite idea of a formidable monster, which is in fact the sense now commonly attached to the word dragon.” (P. 434)

For this matter of leviathan, the crocodile, see the classical passage, **Job 41:1-34**, with YHWH's depiction of the fearsome reptile.

⁶Alexander comments that “The only explanation of בָּרִיַח, **bariach** which is fully justified by Hebrew usage is that of *fugitive* or *fleeing*, which may either be a poetical equivalent to *fleet*, or descriptive of the monster as a *flying* serpent.” (P. 435)

1QIs^a has בּוֹרַח, **borach**, evidently a participle meaning “fleeing.” **Rahlf**s translates by the Greek participle φεύγοντα, “fleeing.” Our Hebrew text has the adjective, “fleeing.”

⁷Alexander states that the epithet עֲקַלְתוֹן, (**aqallathon** “means *tortuous*, either with respect to the motion of the serpent, or to its appearance when at rest.” (P. 434) **Brown-Driver-Briggs** defines it to mean “crooked.”

⁸Slotki holds that these two mentions of Leviathan “are symbols of Assyria and Babylon.” (P. 122)

Gray states that “The conception of Yahweh smiting with a sword a serpent that

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And He will kill the Dragon / Monster which is in the sea!^{9, 1}

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flees from Him, has its analogy and probably its origin in a Babylonian myth which is pictorially represented, for example, on a Babylonian seal of a serpent pursued and about to be smitten, presumably Tiamat [the fleeing serpent] pursued by Marduk [the Babylonian God].” (P. 452) See the document entitled “The Creation Epic,” or “Enuma Elish,” in Pritchard’s **Ancient Near Eastern Texts**, pp. 60-72.

⁹Slotki states that if the phrase, *the dragon that is in the sea*, is an allusion to Egypt, the “*the sea* means the Nile.” But he adds that “Some commentators apply it to Tyre on the Mediterranean Sea.” (P. 122) That is certainly the case with Watts.

Gray asks, “Does this verse refer to war in heaven or war on earth? Do the two Leviathans and the dragon belong solely to the host of heaven? Or do they symbolize three earthly kingdoms, or a single earthly kingdom, or indefinitely all earthly powers opposed to Yahweh and to Israel? If the reference is to earthly kingdoms, what were these kingdoms? [These questions demonstrate the ambiguity and puzzling nature of the prophetic message]...

“On all these points interpreters have differed, and continue to differ. The close correspondence of **24:21-23** and **26:20-27:1** strongly favors the view that this verse refers to that ‘war in heaven’ (**Revelation 12:7**) which must precede the birth of the new world as it preceded the birth of the present.” (P. 450)

But this is YHWH’s story, not Marduk’s; it is an Israelite story, not a Mesopotamian story! Gray has to quote a **New Testament** passage for his “war in heaven,” because it cannot be found in the **Hebrew Bible**. The **Hebrew Bible** sometimes demythologizes the Leviathans and dragons of Near-Eastern mythology, and historicizes them—turning them into enemy nations that YHWH defeats.

For example, in **Psalms 74:12-14**, God is depicted as working His deliverances / salvations in the midst of the earth—breaking the heads of the monsters on the waters, crushing the heads of Leviathan, and giving him as food to the desert beasts), with nothing said of a “war in heaven”!

Here in **Isaiah 27:1**, instead of pointing to the Divine victory over the monsters in the past, future verbs are used, telling the reader that those victories will continue into the future. And as Isaiah gives us his vision of the future, as we should expect, it is not clear—but filled with ambiguity and puzzle.

Motyer comments that “**Verse 1** describes the Lord’s victory in the supernatural realm [but where in the text is there mention of a ‘supernatural realm’ over against a ‘natural realm’? Isaiah makes no such distinctions, and holds that YHWH’s miraculous powers and victories are accomplished in the earth]. It is impossible to say at what point this might have originated in Isaiah’s ministry, and it may have been composed for its present place and function...

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“Many try to identify the three allusions to *Leviathan* with historical nations. Delitzsch thinks of Assyria, Babylon and Egypt respectively. Watts finds in all three a reference to Tyre. Johnson notes that ‘with the discovery of the mythological texts from Ugarit, there can be no doubt that the various descriptions...refer to one chaos monster.’ This fits with Isaiah’s inclusion of supernatural foes with the Lord’s victory in **chapters 24-27** and also with his use of myth in the interests of truth (compare **51:9-11**).” (P. 220)

Isaiah 51 holds that YHWH, as the great Mother of Israel’s rebirth, has destroyed the great monster in the past, but here in **Isaiah 27**, it is still something to be accomplished in the future.

But Isaiah, in **27:1**, instead of “demythologizing” the Near-Eastern myth, simply affirms that YHWH at some future time will destroy Leviathan and the other Monsters that Israel’s neighbors feared and worshiped. All the fearsome Monsters will be swept out of Israel’s closet, very similarly, we think, to what the **Book of Revelation** does concerning the monstrous enemies facing early Christianity—primarily Rome.

Motyer holds that here, “Leviathan stands for an immense power (like that of the sea) ranged against the Lord...*Monster* (לְנִינִי) [our ‘dragon’] can mean a created sea monster (**Genesis 1:21** [‘And God created the *tanninym*, the great ones’]), a serpent or crocodile (**Exodus 7:9** [Aaron’s rod becomes a *tannin*]; **Psalms 91:13** [‘upon lion and venomous serpent you will tread; you will trample a young lion and a *tannin*’]), or have a figurative use signifying overwhelming power (**Jeremiah 51:34** [‘He devoured us / me, he confused us / me—Nebuchadretsar, King of Babylon; he placed / made us / me an empty vessel; he swallowed us / me like the *tanniyn*, dragons; he filled his belly with my delights; he rinsed us / me!’])...

“The picture of the power of the air, the coiling serpent on the ground and the ‘dragon which is in the sea’ shows the whole creation infested with alien powers which will be sought and destroyed wherever they are.” (P. 222)

Motyer says nothing here concerning the role of the Mesopotamian creation myths, with the monster Tiamat, or the Canaanite myth with its monster Yam.

But where does Motyer find in **Isaiah’s** picture “the power of the air”? We think he has taken Paul’s language in **Ephesians 2:2** and read it into **Isaiah**, which is all too typical of some Christian exegesis of the **Hebrew Bible**. This may be the way Paul would interpret the **Book of Isaiah**—700 to 500 years later—but it is not what Isaiah says.

Ackerman states that “*Leviathan*, the primordial dragon of chaos waters that the Lord is said to have defeated as part of the process of creation...will be defeated again, and for good, when God destroys the old creation and replaces it with a new and

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perfected cosmos.” (P. 991)

But Ackerman is reading destruction of the old creation and replacement with a new and perfected cosmos into the text—which uses no such language.

Ortlund simply states that Leviathan is “an ancient symbol of evil in all its monstrous horror, attested in Ugaritic myths that describe a powerful, dragon-like Deity. The threefold designation—*the fleeing serpent, the twisting serpent, and the dragon that is in the sea* [**New International**—is matched by the Lord’s threefold description of the *hard and great and strong sword*. Although the image was supplied from an ancient myth, biblical revelation filled it with true meaning. Leviathan is but a created play-thing of God (**Psalm 104:26**) and already is defeated (**Psalm 74:12-14**)...Now Isaiah foresees God destroying it finally and forever.” (P. 1286)

Yes, Isaiah foresees in a dream-like vision, with its puzzling, obscurity, that warns against taking the language literally, or being dogmatic in its interpretation.

For other passages in the **Bible** mentioning sea monsters, dragons, etc., see our end-note 1.

For the biblical picture as a whole, we think, the battle of YHWH / God / Jesus Christ with the mythical monsters of Near-Eastern mythology has already been won in the distant past, is being won in the battles going on in the present, and will be finally won in the future. What do you think? Does such a view fit into your theology? If not, why not? Do you hold a view that evil and destruction are eternal, while goodness and hope are only temporary and finite, eventually to be destroyed?

¹⁰Oswalt entitles **27:2-13** “The Lord delivers Judah,” and entitles **verses 2-6** “The Lord’s vineyard.”

He comments that “The prophet closes this segment (**chapters 24-27**) with a collection of materials which both summarizes and illustrates God’s sovereignty with respect to Israel and to the nations. These are **verses 2-6**, the Lord’s vineyard; **verses 7-11**, destruction of the Lord’s enemies; **verses 12-13**, return from the nations. The connection among these elements is rather loose, the major relationship being that all three tie into the materials of **chapters 24-26**. So **verses 2-6** and **7-8** relate to the fears expressed in **chapter 26**. **Verses 9-11** relate to **chapter 24**; **25:10-12**; **26:5-6**. **Verses 12** and **13** reflect **25:1-9**. All three segments also share the same positive outlook. The result of God’s sovereignty will be redemption [We agree with this final sentence. While the vision is filled with ambiguity and puzzle, it is clear in its prediction of YHWH’s sovereignty and ultimate victory / redemption of His people!].

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“Whether consciously or unconsciously, **verses 2-6** stand over against the picture of the vineyard in **5:1-7**. There the vineyard had revealed a fundamentally perverse nature with the result that the farmer had abandoned it to the wild. Here, as there, the vineyard is Israel and the farmer is God. But this picture is on the other side of judgment and depicts a time when the only Divine wrath remaining is for those who would threaten Israel’s existence. God has not forsaken her utterly. His care for her has never ceased and now flows unimpeded. While the scene is probably eschatological [at the ‘end of time’] in fulfillment, it nonetheless expresses a fundamental truth for all times: God’s wrath never supersedes His care. Behind the wrath the care continues unabated. It requires only repentance and change to experience it again.” (Pp. 492-93)

Motyer entitles **verses 2-6** “The Lord’s vineyard people, destined to fill the world.” He notes that “This is the final song in the great cantata [composition for one or more voices, to be sung but not acted] of **chapters 24-27**.” (P. 222)

Ortlund comments that in these verses there is a description of how “in that day the people will dwell in a fruitful vineyard...The city of God is also a vineyard.” (P. 1287)

Gray states that “In these verses, as in most of this chapter, either the text is corrupt and unintelligible, or the thought of the writer is expressed obscurely and in very remarkable ways [Yes!—as stated in **Numbers 12:6-8**, the prophetic message is marked by obscurity / puzzle!]....

“But apparently we have here a kind of contrast to the song of the vineyard in **Isaiah 5:1-7**. There, Yahweh exercises all possible care, gets no return from it, and in anger hands over the vineyard to be wasted and trampled down. Here, Yahweh constantly tends His vineyard, and His hostility is reserved for thorns and briars, which seem to symbolize Israel’s enemies. These, He will wage war on, and burn with fire, unless they come to terms with Him. In any case the vine of Israel will grow marvelously and fill the world.” (P. 453)

Kaiser entitles **verses 2-6** “The Eschatological Song of the Vineyard.” He comments that “**27:2-6** is the first of a whole series of additions, in some of which the text is very badly preserved, while their content is not always clear [compare Gray’s comment above]....

“After an introduction which seems to be deficient and which places the song of the vineyard which follows in the future anticipated in **24:1-27:1**, Yahweh Himself begins to speak. **Verse 6** gives the effect of a postscript to the song...

“The song itself is meant to provide a contrast to the song of the vineyard in **Isaiah 5:1-7**, and indeed to be an abrogation [repeal, abolition] of it [We say no—the biblical materials combine the two views of continual Divine punishment with eventual

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Divine blessing]...

“Whereas Yahweh once threatened to expose the vineyard which disappointed His hopes to plunder and destruction (compare **Isaiah 5:5-6**), He now gives an assurance that He Himself will take over the task of guarding it. This protects it from all inroads from outside and all neglect from those inside. Whereas He once threatened that He would no longer allow any rain to fall on the vineyard (compare **Isaiah 5:6**) He will now water it regularly, and of course no more often than necessary, giving it sufficient dew and rain at the right time (compare **Isaiah 29:17, 23-25**)...

“For now the time of His anger against His people is finally over.” (Pp. 224-25)

Alexander comments on **verse 2** that “On the explanation of this verse depends that of a large part of the chapter. The two points upon which all turns, are the meaning of [the opening phrase, עֲנֵה לַיהוָה, (**annu-lah**, which we translate by ‘sing to / of her’)]...

The only supposition which will meet the difficulties, both of the syntax and the exegesis, is the one adopted by most of the older writers...that **lah** refers, not directly to [vineyard], but to Jerusalem or the daughter of Zion, i.e. to the...people of God considered as His spouse...As to the other word, tradition and authority are almost unanimous in giving it the sense of *sing*...

“Assuming that the primary meaning of the verb is to answer, and that the derivative strictly denotes responsive singing, [some commentators] have converted the whole context to the end of **verse 5**, into a dialogue between Jehovah and His vineyard.” (P. 435)

Alexander rejects this view, calling it “fantastic, artificial, complex, etc.” He states that “No one has been able to determine with precision where the song concludes,

some choosing one place for its termination, some another...There is nothing in the next three, four, or five verses to distinguish them as being any more a song than what precedes and follows [again we emphasize the obscurity and puzzling nature of the prophetic message]...and the supposition of a song is wholly arbitrary...It would seem sufficient to take עֲנֵה as a general exhortation to sing, without supposing that the words of the song actually follow...

“But in the last place, while the supposition of a song...embarrasses the exposition, the usual meaning of the verb עֲנָה, (**innah** is perfectly appropriate...to *afflict*, and especially to afflict in an humbling and degrading manner...

“On the usual hypothesis, the verse exhorts the people to sing to the vineyard...On the one now proposed it challenges her enemies to do their worst,

(continued...)

¹⁰(...continued)

declaring that God still protects her. This explanation of the verse agrees well with the distinct allusions to the punishment of Israel in **verses 4, 7, 8, 9**, which would be comparatively out of place in a song of triumph or congratulation. Against this explanation...of the whole verse, lies the undivided weight of tradition and authority...

“As the result of this investigation, we may now translate the verse as follows: *In that day, as a vineyard of wine, afflict her, or in that day afflict for her the vineyard of wine.*” (Pp. 435-37)

None of the translations we are using for comparison have followed Alexander’s proposal—all unite in translating “sing,” with the exception of **Rahifs**, which has a very different reading of **verses 2-5**:

- 2 τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ ἀμπελῶν
καλός ἐπιθύμημα
ἐξάρχειν κατ’ αὐτῆς
On that day, a vineyard,
a good one, and object of desire,
to start out concerning it.
- 3 ἐγὼ πόλις ἰσχυρά πόλις
πολιορκουμένη
μάτην ποτιῶ αὐτήν
ἀλώσεται γὰρ νυκτός
ἡμέρας δὲ πεσεῖται τὸ τεῖχος
I, a city, a strong city,
besieged—
in vain I will water it.
For it will be conquered (by) night;
and then (by) day the wall will fall.
- 4 οὐκ ἔστιν ἢ οὐκ ἐπελάβετο αὐτῆς
τίς με θήσει φυλάσσειν καλάμην ἐν ἀγρῷ
διὰ τὴν πολεμίαν ταύτην
ἠθέτηκα αὐτήν
τοίνυν διὰ τοῦτο ἐποίησεν κύριος ὁ θεὸς πάντα
ὅσα συνέταξεν κατακέκαυμαι
There is none that did not take hold of it!
Who will station Me to guard stubble in a field?
Because of this war-like hostility
I set her aside.
Therefore, because of this Lord, the God did everything,
whatever He ordered—I have been burned up.
- 5 βοήσονται οἱ ἐνοικοῦντες ἐν αὐτῇ
ποιήσωμεν εἰρήνην αὐτῷ

(continued...)

¹⁰(...continued)

ποιήσωμεν εἰρήνην

The ones dwelling in it will cry out,
Let us make peace with Him,
Let us make peace!

Oswalt notes that the Greek translation “is very different throughout the passage and the [Aramaic] Targum varies considerably in **verses 4-6**. P. Lohmann suggests that the Greek translator’s Hebrew text may have been so fragmentary that only a few words could be made out. Taking these, the translator wove them into the city motif so common in the previous chapters...Whether this suggestion is correct or not, it seems some such heroic expedient is necessary to explain the several verbal agreements with the Masoretic Text and yet the wide variance in meaning.” (P. 493)

Commenting on **verse 2**, Oswalt states that “From the outset, the correctness of the present text is in question [see the Greek translation above]. The abruptness of this verse causes many commentators to suggest that a word or phrase is lost, perhaps at least **חַמֶּדֶת**, **yo)mar**, ‘he will say.’ This may be the case, but it is not necessary in order to extract sense from the statement [this is typical of texts that are ambiguous and puzzling—the interpreter is seeking to ‘extract sense’ from the text!]

“Of considerably more moment is the discussion over **חַמֶּדֶת** (Note that **Biblica Hebraica Stuttgartensis** diverges from **Codex Leningradensis** here by reading **חַמֶּדֶת**, **chemedh** [‘delight / desire’] instead of **חַמֶּדֶת** [‘wine’]. Because of the similarity between the letters **ד** and **ת** in Hebrew and the suitability of either term, the variant was probably unintentional.)...

“Many manuscripts have **חַמֶּדֶת**, **chemedh** [‘delight / desire’], in agreement with the Targum...and **Amos 5:11**, also **Isaiah 32:12**. However, 1QIs^a supports the Masoretic Text and the sense accords well with **chapter 5**, where the vineyard’s failure to produce wine was its defect...

“Here, by contrast, this is a productive vineyard, a vineyard of wine...It is difficult to ascertain whether the following lines were intended to be the song...But in any case, the repetition of ‘song’ is worthy of note. Not only do the redeemed sing of God’s triumph over the ruthless and their songs (**24:9; 25:5; 26:1, 19**) but God also sings of His beloved.” (Pp. 493-94)

Watts comments that “A *fruitful vineyard* is a symbol for Israel and is a counterpart to the vineyard on a very fruitful hill of **Isaiah 5:1**. But there is a substantial difference. In **chapter 5** Israel was a people in its land. God’s watchful care applied to both. Here Israel is a people in exile (compare **verse 12**). God extols His watch-care

(continued...)

כֶּרֶם חֶמֶד עֲנוּ-לָהּ:

In that day,¹¹

a delightful / wine¹² vineyard--¹³

¹⁰(...continued)

over her, and His protection and peace are emphasized (**verses 3b-5**). He promises to plant and cultivate His vineyard but there is no reference to the land [can you plant and cultivate a vineyard without a land?]. A return to live in the land of Canaan is not included here...Rather, they will fill the world's surface (**verse 6**) [but would that not

include the land of Israel?]. Israel's destiny, still under God's watch-care, has changed." (P. 350)

¹¹Compare **verse 1** for this same phrase, "in that day." Slotki holds that it means "the day of Israel's deliverance." (P. 122)

We think the phrase certainly points to the future, to a "coming day," but with no specification on exactly when or how long is meant. It is another way the prophets of Israel point to the future, to "the good times coming." And here it includes Israel being planted and being fruitful, being watered and watched over by YHWH. In **verse 6** the prediction is that Jacob shall take root, Israel shall blossom and put forth shoots, and fill the whole world with its fruit. Yes, the good times are coming, even if in the present / time of writing the prophecy, Israel has been removed from the land and is in exile. But keep in mind that when the prophets foretell the future, they, like Paul (**1 Corinthians 13:7-12**, get their information from unclear visions, visions filled with enigma / puzzle, as they "see through a mirror darkly." Don't assume that you can get exact details from such visions!

Gray holds that "unless the words are corrupt, something has dropped out." (P. 454)

¹²Where our Hebrew text reads חֶמֶד, **chemedh**, "desire," "delight" (compare **Amos 5:11**), a large number of Hebrew manuscripts read חֶמֶר, **chemer**, "wine," which is only found elsewhere at **Deuteronomy 32:14**. 1QIs^a has חוֹמֶר, **chomer**, a word which we do not recognize. **Rahlfs** has καλός, **kalos**, "good (vineyard)." Both the Aramaic Targum and the Syriac translation have **chemedh**, "desire," "delight."

¹³Motyer comments that "The vineyard song in **verses 2-6** is complementary to **Isaiah 5:1-7**...The fruitful hill (**5:1**) is matched by the 'vineyard of delight' here. There are the same elements of total Divine commitment (**5:2; 27:3-4**), the judgmental renewal of protection and withholding of rain (**5:5-6**) contrasts with the watering and protectiveness of **27:3-4**, and the unfruitful Israel-Judah (**5:7**) contrasts with the Jacob-Israel filling the earth with fruit (**27:6**)...In the earlier passage the emphasis lay on what

(continued...)

¹³(...continued)

Israel-Judah made of the Lord's vineyard, but here it is on what the Lord will yet make of Jacob-Israel, His vineyard-people." (Pp. 220-21)

King James has "A vineyard of red wine"; **Tanakh** has "Vineyard of delight"; others have "a pleasant," or "a fruitful," or "a splendid" vineyard.

Motyer suggests another translation, "a vineyard of foaming or sparkling wine." (P. 222)

See **Isaiah 5:1-7**:

- 1 I will sing now to my Beloved,
a song of my Beloved to His vineyard:
There was a vineyard belong to my Beloved,
on a horn / hill / peak, a son of fatness / very fertile.
- 2 And He dug about it, and He de-stoned it / cleared it of stones;
and He planted it (with) a choice vine.
And He built a tower in its midst,
and also He hewed out a wine-vat in it.
And He waited for (it) to produce grapes,
and it produced worthless grapes!
- 3 And now, inhabitant of Jerusalem, and man / person of Judah,
judge now / please between Me and My vineyard.
- 4 What more (is there) to do for My vineyard
and I did not do in / for it?
Why / for what reason did I wait (hopefully for it) to produce grapes,
and it produced worthless grapes?
- 5 And now I will make known to you, please,
what I am doing / about to do to My vineyard:
to take away its hedge,
and it will be for burning;
to break through its wall,
and it will be for trampling!
- 6 And I will set / make it a destruction / waste / end;
it will not be pruned,
and it will not be hoed.
And thorn(s) and thorn-bush(es) will grow up,
And I will command over the clouds,
for rain not to be rained upon it.
- 7 Because YHWH of Armies vineyard--
House of Israel, and man / person of Judah.
He planted His delight,
and He waited (hopefully) for *mishpot* / justice;
and look--*mishpeh* / bloodshed;
(He waited) for *tsedaqah* / righteousness,

(continued...)

sing (plural imperative) to / of her!¹⁴

¹³(...continued)

and *look-tseaqah* / an outcry / cry of distress!

There can be little doubt as to the meaning of this initial song of YHWH's vineyard. YHWH wants justice, not bloodshed; He wants righteousness, not the cry of distress that arises from people who have been treated unfairly, unjustly! That's the

kind of "fruit" that YHWH wants His people to produce—nothing less! Israel's / Judah's worship without righteousness and justice is worthless!

The noun צְדָקָה, "righteousness," occurs some 29 times in the **Book of Isaiah**: at 5:7, 23; 9:6; 28:17; 32:16, 17, 17; 33:15; 45:8, 23, 24; 46:13, 18; 51:6, 8; 54:17, 17; 56:1, 1; 57:12; 58:2; 59:9, 14, 16, 17; 61:10, 11; 63:1 and 64:5.

The noun מִשְׁפָּט, "justice," occurs some 38 times in the **Book of Isaiah**: at 1:17, 21, 27; 3:14; 4:4; 5:7, 16; 9:6; 10:2; 16:5; 26:8, 9; 28:6, 6, 17, 26; 30:18; 32:1, 16; 33:5; 40:27; 41:1; 42:1, 4; 49:4; 50:9; 51:4; 53:8; 54:17; 56:1; 58:2, 2; 59:8, 9, 11, 14 and 61:8.

Any statement concerning the overall meaning of the **Book of Isaiah** must include this Divine demand for righteousness and justice in society! Modern proclaimers of the biblical teaching must be advocates for righteousness and justice in the societies where they proclaim. In the twentieth century, we cannot help but think of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. and their unflinching fight for righteousness and justice. Our world constantly stands in need of such self-sacrificing leaders!

¹⁴In **Isaiah 5:1-7** we have heard a song sung by YHWH about His vineyard. Now the command is given to sing again to that vineyard—and the renewed song is the exact opposite of that first song. See the following footnotes for specific differences.

Sing about her! Sing about God's people becoming the embodiment of justice and righteousness in every society on earth! Just to imagine justice and righteousness being embodied and exemplified and struggled for, even died for, by lovers of God has an enchanting melody and powerful tune, with a dynamic ethic. Can you sing such a song? Can you make it your own, the song of your life? Yes, let's sing the song of Isaiah!

Translations of **verse 2** vary:

King James, "In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine."

Tanakh, "In that day, They shall sing of it: "Vineyard of Delight."

(continued...)

27:3¹⁵ אֲנִי יְהוָה נֹצְרָה

לְרִנְעִים אֲשַׁקְנָה

¹⁴(...continued)

New Revised Standard, “On that day: A pleasant vineyard, sing about it!”

New International, “In that day-- “Sing about a fruitful vineyard:”

New Jerusalem, “That day, sing of the splendid vineyard!”

Rahlf's, τῆ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκεῖνη ἀμπελῶν καλὸς ἐπιθύμημα ἐξάρχειν κατ’ αὐτῆς, “In that day, a good vineyard—an object of desire, to begin a hymn concerning it.”

Watts notes that in the phrase לָהּ, “to her,” “the antecedent must be כְּרֶמֶת, **kherem**, ‘vineyard’ which is usually masculine. However, in **Leviticus 25:3** it is feminine as it is here.” (P. 347)

¹⁵Alexander translates / comments on **verse 3**: “*I Jehovah (am) keeping her; every moment I will water her.* That is, in spite of the afflictions which befall her I will still preserve her from destruction. The antecedent of the pronouns is the same as in **verse 2**, that is, the...nation considered as a vineyard.” (P. 437)

Oswalt comments on **verse 3** that “With the subject first [which does not normally occur in Hebrew], *I, the Lord, am its keeper* emphasizes Who Israel’s keeper is...In contrast to **chapter 5**, where the rain and the dew no longer fall on the vineyard, here God waters it moment by moment. The need and the supply are perfectly matched. Furthermore, instead of abandoning Israel to her enemies, God will be her watchman day and night.” (P. 494) Compare:

Psalm 121:4-5,

- 4 Look—He will not slumber and will not sleep,
(the) One keeping Israel!
5 YHWH (is) your (singular) Keeper;
YHWH (is) your Shade over / upon your right hand!

Isaiah 5:2,

And He (YHWH) dug about it, and He cleared it of stones;
and He planted it (with) a choice vine.
And He built a tower in its midst,
and also He hewed out a wine-vat in it.
And He waited for (it) to produce grapes,
and it produced worthless grapes!

Matthew 21:33, Jesus’ parable of the vineyard, evidently based on **Isaiah 5**.

פֶּן יִפְקֹד עָלֶיהָ

לִילָה וַיּוֹם אֶצְרָנָה:

I, YHWH, am watching / guarding it;¹⁶

moment by moment / at every moment, I will water it;¹⁷

so that (no one) will visit (punishment) upon it.¹⁸

¹⁶While the conclusion of the song of the vineyard in **5:1-7** is destruction of the vineyard, here with the renewal of the song, YHWH is depicted as watching over / guarding His vineyard, and as a result, the vineyard Israel fills the whole world with fruit (**27:6**).

Again we warn, be careful about taking the prophetic message, especially its predictions of the future, literally / exactly, as if the prophet had a clear vision of the future and its details. Is the hope of Israel to become the supplier of grapes and their wine to all the world? Such can be concluded from this vision if taken literally.

¹⁷Instead of commanding the clouds to withhold rain as in **5:1-7**, the renewed song depicts YHWH as watering His vineyard moment by moment / continually.

Alexander states that “לְרִגְעִים, **lirgha(iym)** literally means *at moments* or *as to moments* [רִגְעָה, **regha**(means ‘moment’] but its sense is determined by the analogous לְבִקְרִיּוֹם [labbeqariym, literally ‘to / for the mornings,’ ‘every morning.’]” (P. 437)

¹⁸Both **Rahlf**s and the Latin Vulgate reflect a Hebrew text with the passive, that is, instead of our Hebrew text’s יִפְקֹד, **yiphqodh**, “he will visit (punishment),” a Hebrew text with יִפְקָד, **yippaqedh**, “it will be visited (with punishment).”

Slotki’s **American Jewish Translation** of this line is “Lest Mine anger visit it.” But Slotki states that “There is nothing in the text corresponding to *Mine anger*. The Hebrew is literally ‘lest he (unspecified subject) visit against it.’ [Other translations] have ‘lest any hurt it.’” (P. 123)

Gray says that “This line may be rendered, *lest its leaves*, shriveling and dropping from lack of water (compare **Jeremiah 17:8**), *be missing*, or *lest visitation be made upon it*...Very probably the text is corrupt.” (P. 454)

We take the text to mean that instead of YHWH Himself visiting punishment upon His vineyard as in **5:1-7**, the renewed song depicts YHWH preventing punishment from coming upon it.

(continued...)

Night and day I will watch / guard it!¹⁹

27:4²⁰ חֲמָה אֵין לִי

מִי־יִתְנֶנִּי שְׂמִיר שֵׁית בְּמִלְחָמָה

אֶפְשָׁעָה בָּהּ

אֶצִּיתְנָה יָחַד:

Heat / rage²¹—I have none.²²

¹⁸(...continued)

Motyer comments that “This verse speaks of a total Divine work...carried on without intermission, *continually!*” (P. 222) Yes—this is the meaning of “moment by moment,” and “morning by morning.”

¹⁹Not only moment by moment, but night and day He will guard it—24 hours a day, 7 days a week!

²⁰Alexander states that “Of all the senses put upon this difficult verse, there are only two which can be looked upon as naturally probable. The first may be paraphrased as follows: ‘It is not because I am cruel or revengeful that I thus afflict My people, but because she is a vineyard overrun with thorns or briars, on account of which I must pass through her and consume her (i.e. burn them out of her)’...

“The other is this: ‘I am no longer angry with My people; O that their enemies (as thorns and briars) would array themselves against Me, that I might rush upon them and consume them.’” (Pp. 437-38) We think the latter choice is best.

H. Wolf states that **verses 4-5** are “A picture of Israel’s lukewarmness toward the Lord—not ‘briars and thorns’ (**verse 4**) like the other nations, but not fully trusting in the Lord either.” (P. 1053) But the text says nothing concerning “lukewarmness” or “not fully trusting in the Lord.” These verses do not contain a depiction of Israel’s lukewarmness toward YHWH, but rather, their lack of thorns and thistles for YHWH to fight against on Israel’s behalf!

²¹Where our Hebrew text has חֲמָה, **chemah**, “heat,” “rage,” Watts notes that **Rahlfs** has τεῖχος, “wall,” as does the Syriac translation (p. 347). We do not find the word “wall” in **Rahlfs’** translation of **Isaiah 27:4**. If this is in fact the case, it means that the Hebrew text being translated had חוֹמָה, **chomah**, “wall,” normally spelled חוֹמָה.

(continued...)

²¹(...continued)

Watts comments that “Earlier [sections of the **Book of Isaiah**] have provided ample descriptions of Yahweh’s wrath toward Israel in judgment for her sins. But by this time His attitude toward Israel will have ‘turned the corner’: I have none [that is, no more wrath].” (P. 350)

²²Whereas in the song of the vineyard in **5:1-7**, YHWH’s anger is poured out on the vineyard, destroying it, now in this renewed song YHWH says all of His anger is gone, לִי אֵין חַמָּה, literally, “Heat / rage, there is none for Me,” or “none belonging to Me.”

With this statement of no more Divine wrath, we are reminded of the message of good news in **chapters 40-55 of Isaiah!** See especially **Isaiah 40:1-2**,

- 1 Comfort! Comfort My people,
says your (plural) God!
- 2 Speak to Jerusalem’s heart,
and cry out to her,,
that her warfare is complete,
that her iniquity / guilt was accepted / forgiven,
that she received from YHWH’s hand double (punishment)
for all her sins!

Motyer comments that this is literally “anger there is not to Me.” “Meaning ‘I have no anger at all’...It contrasts sharply with **5:5-6** and renews the peace motif of **26:3, 12**, except that here the peace is in the heart of God.” (P. 222)

Gray comments that “Now that judgment has been executed, I have no wrath against any one, but (**verse 4b-d**), if occasion should arise, I would take the field again.” (P. 455)

Oswalt comments that the phrase “*I have no wrath* (literally, ‘wrath there is none to Me’) expresses in prospect the reality which will be explained more fully in **chapters 40ff**. God’s wrath is propitiated and He is able to look at His people with nothing but Fatherly affection. In that day the energy which had once been poured out upon the worthless vineyard will be turned to protecting the vineyard from its enemies. This is the good news of the gospel: God is not angry any more. He has found a way to satisfy His justice.” (P. 494) See:

Romans 3:21-26,

- 21 But now apart from the Law
the righteousness of God has been manifested,
being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,
- 22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ

(continued...)

²²(...continued)

for all those who believe;
for there is no distinction;
23 for all have sinned
and fall short of the glory of God--
24 being justified as a gift by His grace
through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;
25 whom God displayed publicly
as a propitiation in His blood
through faith.
This was to demonstrate His righteousness,
because in the forbearance of God
He passed over the sins previously committed;
26 for the demonstration, *I say,*
of His righteousness at the present time,
that He might be just
and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. **(English Standard Version)**

Romans 5:8-11,

8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us,
in that while we were yet sinners,
Christ died for us.
9 Much more then,
having now been justified by His blood,
we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.
10 For if while we were enemies,
we were reconciled to God
through the death of His Son,
much more, having been reconciled,
we shall be saved by His life.
11 And not only this,
but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
through whom we have now received the reconciliation. **(English Standard Version)**

These statements in **Romans** reflect Paul's understanding of God's actions in Jesus Christ. But the statements in **Isaiah 27** come centuries before the coming of

Jesus Christ, and proclaim the same good news of God's forgiveness and acceptance, long before. How do you explain this?

We say God did not have to hunt for and find a way to "satisfy His justice." In the **Book of Isaiah**, He is depicted as a God Who freely and fully forgives and accepts His sinful people when they turn to Him in repentance. He doesn't have to "find a way" to

(continued...)

Would that I had thorn(s) of thorn-bushes²³ for the war!²⁴

²²(...continued)

accomplish that—He has always been such a God of forgiveness and grace to sinners!

That's what **Exodus 32-34** proclaims; it's what **Isaiah** and **Ezekiel** boldly proclaim—a full and free forgiveness beyond our human imaginations, even for the worst sinners in history! Yes, YHWH is a God Who comes in judgment upon sin and sinners—but that's not by any means the whole story. He is also the God Who freely and fully forgives sinners. That's His nature. He doesn't have to “find a way” to do it! He just does it!

And if Paul, and his later interpreters such as Athanasius of Alexandria, seek to find philosophical explanations and justifications for God's grace, let us remember Paul's confession in **Romans 11:33**,

Oh the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways!

We think Paul means, “I have done all in my power to search out and explain God's ways—but don't even begin to imagine that I have found all the answers! In truth, His ways are unsearchable and inscrutable (enigmatic, mysterious, beyond human ability to fully understand and explain)! So, quote me as one searching for the answers, but don't quote me as if I had the final answers!

What do you think? Do you think Watts' “God's attitude turned the corner” is adequate? We think it is trivial and misleading in speaking of God and His mercy.

²³Where our Hebrew text reads שִׁיִּת, “thorn-bushes,” 1QIs^a and a large number of Hebrew manuscripts read וְשִׁיִּת, “and thorn-bushes.”

For this language, compare **Isaiah 5:6**, where YHWH states what He will do with His non-productive vineyard:

And I will make it an end / destruction;
It will not be pruned, and it will not be hoed.
And thorn(s) and thorn-bush(es) will come up.
And over the clouds I will give command,
not to cause rain to rain upon it.

Here in **27:4**, instead of YHWH's sending thorns and thorn-bushes in the place of the productive vines, YHWH is depicted as wishing that there were thorns and thorn-bushes in His wine-vineyard for Him to fight against / eradicate!

(continued...)

I will step / march against it / with it,
I will set it on fire all together!²⁵

²³(...continued)

Watts states that “Briers and thorns are the symbols of the void in the land left by Israel’s evacuation.” (P. 350) We say, No! They are here depicted as only being thought of by YHWH, Who wishes that they were present in His vineyard so He could fight against and eradicate them!

Oswalt comments that “Again the contrast with **chapter 5** is pointed. There the wall is thrown down and the thorns and briers invited in. Here the Lord wishes they were present so He could defend His vineyard from their encroachment.” (P. 494)

²⁴In the song of the vineyard in **5:1-7**, YHWH turns His vineyard into a devastated waste, where thorns and thorn-bushes grow up. But now in this renewed song, YHWH’s vineyard is so clear of weeds, that He, the Divine Warrior, expresses a wish that there were some that He could fight against!

Slotki, however calls **verse 4** “An obscure verse. Perhaps it means that though the vineyard is unsatisfactory, symbolizing Israel’s backsliding, God can show no fury against it. Would, He exclaims, that He could muster a momentary but flaming rage and make an end of it in one overwhelming blow.” (P. 123)

Whereas we constantly note obscurity and puzzling elements in the text, we do not agree with Slotki that **verse 4** is “obscure.” What do you think?

²⁵Motyer comments that “Such is the Lord’s zeal for His vineyard that He longs for a chance to prove how much He cares: just let a weed appear!” (P. 222)

Translations of **verse 4** vary, especially the Greek:

King James, “Fury is not in me: who would set the briers *and* thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together.”

Tanakh, “There is no anger in Me: If one offers Me thorns and thistles, I will march to battle against him, And set all of them on fire.”

New Revised Standard, “I have no wrath. If it gives me thorns and briers, I will march to battle against it. I will burn it up.”

New International, “I am not angry. If only there were briers and thorns confronting me! I would march against them in battle; I would set them all on fire.”

New Jerusalem, “I do not have a wall. Who can reduce me to brambles and thorn-bushes? -I shall make war and trample on it and at the same time burn it.”

Rahlf, οὐκ ἔστιν ἢ οὐκ ἐπελάβετο αὐτῆς τίς με θήσει φυλάσσειν καλάμην ἐν ἀγρῷ διὰ τὴν πολεμίαν ταύτην ἠθέτηκα αὐτήν τοίνυν διὰ τοῦτο ἐποίησεν κύριος ὁ θεὸς πάντα ὅσα συνέταξεν κατακέκαυμαι, “There is not one who

(continued...)

²⁵(...continued)

(feminine singular) did not take hold of it. Who will place me to guard stubble / straw in a field? Because of / through this war-like hostility I have set it (feminine singular). Therefore because of this Lord the God made all things, whatever He ordered. I have been burned up!

(And we wonder, What Hebrew text is being translated here?)

Kaiser comments that “**Verse 4b** faces the reader with a riddle, and no certain solution has yet been found [Yes, the dreams / visions of the prophets are filled with enigma, just as **Numbers 12:6-8** states! But we think this is hardly true in **4b**]...

“The question [is] whether the weeds which Yahweh may possibly find in the vineyard of Israel and which He will then burn...refer to enemies within or without. The language of battle and the making of peace...seems to suggest the enemies from outside. On the other hand, within the framework of the eschatological drama underlying **26:20-27:1** it is no longer possible to speak of such external enemies...

“These observations suggest that the reference is to enemies within who really belong to the congregation of Yahweh. It is not impossible that the prophet-poet, who was certainly writing at a late period, was thinking of the Samaritans and believed that in the context of the hope of salvation for the whole of Israel they would be spared only if they returned to Jerusalem...

“Because nothing can endure which will separate Israel from its God in [the] time of salvation, Israel can therefore rely on the promise that it will be firmly rooted, that is, that it will be no longer driven by force out of its own country, and will blossom and put forth shoots and fill the world with its fruit.” (Pp. 225-26)

²⁶Alexander translates **verse 5**: “*Or let him lay hold of my strength and make peace with Me; peace let him make with Me.*”

He comments that “The verbs are properly indefinite (let one take hold, etc.), but referring to the enemy described in the preceding verse as thorns and briars.” (P. 438)

Watts comments that “Yahweh is saying, Let one seek My *protection, make peace with me*. Yahweh understands that Israel, as a rebellious people, has in fact been at war with Him. He is offering them a peace treaty.” (P. 350)

What do you think? Do you agree with Alexander or with Watts? Do the masculine pronouns refer to the enemy—the thorns and briars—or to Israel, YHWH’s people? Or is the text in fact ambiguous, not revealing to whom the masculine pronouns are referring? We choose the latter.

יַעֲשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם לִי

שְׁלוֹם יַעֲשֶׂה-לִי:

Or let him / it take strong hold of My protection / means of safety;²⁷

let him / it make peace with Me--

peace let him / it make with Me!²⁸

²⁷Slotki's translation has "let him take hold of My strength," and he comments that this means "God's supreme power and authority." But he suggests, "Another possible translation is: 'Or let him take hold of My stronghold,' seek safety in turning to God for protection." (P. 123)

Alexander states that **מְעוֹז**, **ma(oz)** commonly denotes a strong place or fortress, and is here understood by most interpreters to signify a refuge or asylum, with allusion to the practice of laying hold upon the altar...The general meaning is the same in either case, that is that the alternative presented to the enemy is that of destruction or submission." (P. 438)

²⁸Slotki comments on **verse 5** that "If Israel, represented by the vineyard, desires to survive and live in safety, let him immediately surrender to the sovereignty of God. Only by wholehearted obedience will he secure his safety and peace." (P. 123)

Motyer comments that "The invitation to come to Me for refuge / 'take hold of My stronghold' is to the hypothetical 'weed,' the opponent of the vineyard, hence indicating that vineyard membership is open to all co-equally. The picture is reminiscent of the invitation to Moab to find shelter in Zion...What is on offer is peace with God--it is real peace." (Pp. 222-23)

What do you think? Is this invitation to peace with YHWH being made to Israel, or to Israel's opponents? Or is it being made to both?

Gray likewise holds that "one of the offenders symbolically called 'thorns and briars' in **verse 4**, if he does not wish to share the fiery fate of his fellows," is invited to lay hold of YHWH's refuge, meaning "let him seek My protection." (P. 455)

Oswalt comments that "God is not committed to a relentless destruction of His enemies. He is more than willing to be reconciled to them. In fact, He will supply the refuge from His Own just wrath." (P. 495)

The repetition of the invitation makes it emphatic.

See **Isaiah 16:3-5**, where Isaiah tells the people of Judah to care for the refugees from Moab, repeating His commands for emphasis:

(continued...)

²⁸(...continued)

- 3 Give (masculine plural / feminine singular imperative) counsel!
 Make (masculine plural imperative) a judge / umpire!
 Place (feminine singular imperative) your shadow like the night!
 In the midst of mid-day,
 hide carefully (feminine singular imperative) those banished!
 One fleeing you shall not reveal (feminine singular imperative)!
- 4 They shall live temporarily among you, My banished ones (from) Moab;
 become (feminine singular imperative) a shelter for them from before
 a destroyer!
 When the oppressor ceased,
 violence / devastation finished,
 they were finished (synonym)—one trampling—from the land,
- 5 and a throne will be established in the steadfast-love;
 and he / one will sit upon it in true-faithfulness,
 in David's tent,
 one judging, and seeking justice
 and swift (to) right relationship.

²⁹Alexander translates **verse 6**: “(In) coming (days) shall Jacob take root, Israel shall bud and blossom, and they shall fill the face of the earth with fruit.” (P. 439)

Slotki states that **verse 6** depicts “Israel’s prosperity in the future when he will acknowledge the true God and loyally follow the path of morality and religion.” (P. 123)

Motyer notes that in **verse 6**, “The implications of **verses 3-4a** and **4b-5** are now developed. The Divinely nurtured vine fills the earth so that the whole world becomes the Lord’s vineyard. That this was always the Lord’s intention for His people but was previously frustrated by their sin and its just punishment is shown in **Psalms 80**. But now the Lord is at peace with His people and invites every erstwhile [in the past / at a former time] enemy into peace.” (P. 223)

See our commentary on **Psalms 80**. Having read the **Psalms**, what do you think? Does **Psalms 80** stand half-way between the vineyard-song of **Isaiah 5:1-7** and the renewed vineyard-song of **Isaiah 27:2-5**? Does **Isaiah 27:6** predict the fulfillment of the prayer of **Psalms 80**? We think it does.

Ortlund states that here in **27:6** “God’s people become a worldwide garden of Eden.” (P. 1287)

Contrast **Isaiah 26:18a, b**:

We were pregnant;

(continued...)

יִשְׂרָאֵל יִעֲקֹב
 יִצְיִן וּפְרַח יִשְׂרָאֵל
 וּמְלֵאוּ פְּנֵי-תֵבֶל תְּנוּבָה:

(In) the ones (days?) coming—³⁰

²⁹(...continued)

we writhed like we gave birth (to) wind;
 salvations / deliverances we did not make (for the) land...

We take **27:6** to be stating that the statement in **26:18** has been reversed. What do you think?

³⁰This opening line of **verse 6** is given varying translations. Where our Hebrew text has **הַבָּאִים יִשְׂרָאֵל יִעֲקֹב**, literally, “The coming ones, Jacob will put down roots,” **King James** has “He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root”; **Tanakh** has “*In days to come* Jacob shall strike root,” and our other English translations are similar. **Rahlfs** has οἱ ἐρχόμενοι τέκνα Ἰακωβ, “The ones coming (are) children of Jacob.”

Motyer has *In the days to come*, and comments that the Hebrew phrase **הַבָּאִים**, literally “The coming ones,” “is a unique expression, possibly an ellipsis [an intentional omission] for **הַיָּמִים הַבָּאִים** [‘the days, the coming ones’] ([in] the coming days’...). It may be exclamatory, ‘They are coming!’” (P. 223)

Watts notes that the phrase “the coming ones” “has given the commentators and translators trouble...The word is a short form for ‘the coming days,’ and is used adverbially as an accusative of time.” (P. 347) Perhaps...

We take the phrase to be referring to “the good times coming.” But however we understand this phrase, we think it is typical of the Hebrew spokespersons / prophets, as they continually “stand on tip-toe,” looking into the future through dreams and visions, probing, imagining what that future will look like, and when it will come--assured that while the future will hold judgment, there is also a wonderful, hope-filled future for

the forgiven people of YHWH! See **chapters 40-55** for a powerful affirmation of such a hope.

Oswalt comments on **verse 6** that “Since God will be Israel’s Keeper in the last day [but not only in the last day!], supplying her needs and neutralizing her enemies, she will spread out to cover the whole earth.” (P. 495) Compare:

(continued...)

³⁰(...continued)

Hosea 14:5-7^{Heb} / 4-6^{Eng},

- 5/4 I will heal their apostasies;
I will love them freely;
because My anger has turned from him!
- 6.5 I will be like the dew to Israel;
he will flourish like the lily;
and he shall strike (root) like the (cedars of Mount) Lebanon!
- 7/6 His shoots will go out,
and his splendor will be like the olive-tree,
and his fragrance like the (cedars of Mount) Lebanon!

³¹Where our Hebrew text reads the hiphil verb **יִשְׁרֹשׁ**, “cause roots to go down,” 1QIs^a spells **יִשְׁרִישׁ**, a more normal hiphil spelling, but with no difference in meaning.

Compare elsewhere in **Isaiah** where the word “root” is found:

11:1, prediction of the coming of a **נֶצֶר מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל**, “branch from his (Jesse’s) roots..”

11:10, in the coming good times, the **יְשִׁיעַ יִשְׂרָאֵל**, “root of Jesse,” will be inquired of by the nations, and his resting-place will be glorious.

37:31,

And the escaped remnant of Judah’s house, that is left remaining,
will again (send) root(s) downwards.
And will make fruit upwards.

53:2b, the servant of YHWH grew up before Him **כְּשֹׁרֶשׁ מֵאֶרֶץ צְיָה**, “like the root from dry land / earth.”

Contrast **Isaiah 26:18**,

We were pregnant; we writhed like we gave birth (to) wind;
salvations / deliverances we did not make (for the) land / earth;
and (the) world’s inhabitants will not fall.

Watts comments on the phrase, “Jacob will take root,” that “Earlier chapters have spoken of being uprooted [what earlier chapters? We do not find the word ‘uproot’ in **Isaiah**], a figure of displacement and exile, but also a figure that implies a

(continued...)

Israel will blossom and put forth bud(s);
and they will fill (the) world's³² face(s) (with) produce / fruit!³³

³¹(...continued)

wilting and dying plant. The figure here is of being transplanted and beginning to prosper in the new ground.” (P. 350)

We find in **Isaiah** the statements that Judah's root will be like rottenness (but not dug out of the ground), **5:24**; but still a branch from Jesse's roots will bear fruit, **11:1**, and the “root of Jesse” will stand as a signal for the peoples, **11:10**. Here in **27:6** the prediction is made that Jacob will take root, and Israel will blossom, perhaps implying that Jacob has been uprooted, but that is not made explicit. **37:31** states that the remnant of the house of Judah will again take root downward and bear fruit upward, implying that Judah had previously been uprooted—but the text does not make that explicit either.

We think Watts is overstating his point—but there is no doubt that the prediction of exile is present in those earlier chapters.

³²Alexander notes that תְּבֵלָה, **thebhel** “does not mean the land of Israel, but the world, the whole expression being strongly metaphorical.” (P. 439)

³³Gray comments on **verse 6** that “As in the other song of Yahweh's vineyard, the vineyard is at the end of the poem openly identified with Yahweh's people, *Israel*, *Jacob*, who are, with a slight modification of the figure, now depicted as a gigantic vine, deep-rooted, spreading over even vaster tracts...”

Psalm 80:9-12^{Heb} / **8-11**^{Eng},

9/8 A vine from Egypt You led out;
You drove out nations, and You planted it.
You cleared away before her, and You planted its roots,
and it filled (the) earth / land.
10/9 They covered mountains—its shade,
and its branches—God's cedars.
11/10 It sent forth its branches as far as (the) sea,
and to (the) river / Euphrates, its shoots.

Gray continues: “Filling the whole world with its produce, i.e., the Jews will cover the earth or be a blessing in its midst.” (P. 455) Compare:

Isaiah 19:24,

In that day, Israel will be a third to Egypt and to Assyria,

(continued...)

³³(...continued)

a blessing in the earth's midst!

Motyer comments that "The names *Jacob* and *Israel* would most directly apply to the northern kingdom and could suggest that the verse originated as an oracle of hope related to the time of the fall of Samaria and the deportation of the northern people...In the present context, of course, the names have their original and time-honored reference to the whole people of God as tracing their birth to Jacob-Israel." (P. 223)
Compare:

Isaiah 28:1-6,

- 1 Ah! (The) crown of majesty of Ephraim's drunken ones,
and (the) withering blossom of its beauty's honor
which (is) upon (the) head of a valley of rich fatness,
of those struck down by wine!
- 2 Look—the Lord has a strong and mighty one,
like a down-pour of hail, a storm of destruction,
like a down-pour of water(s), like the great ones, overflowing,
he cast down to the earth with a hand!
- 3 With both feet they will trample
the crown of majesty of Ephraim's drunken ones!
- 4 And it will happen—(the) withering blossom of its beauty's honor
which (is) upon (the) head of (the) valley of rich fatness,
like a first-ripe fig before summer,
which the one looking will see--
while it is still in his hand, he will swallow it!
- 5 In that day, YHWH of Armies will be
for a crown of honor and for a diadem of beauty
to His people's remnant;
- 6 and for a spirit of justice,
for the one sitting over the justice(-system),
and for strength of those turning back battle at (the) gate!

Isaiah 29:22-23,

- 22 Therefore in this way YHWH spoke to Jacob's household,
Who redeemed Abraham,
Now Jacob will not be ashamed,
and now his faces / appearance will not grow pale.
- 23 Because when he sees his children,
(the) work of My hands in his midst,
they will set-apart My name;
and they make (the) Set-apart One of Jacob set-apart / special,
and they will reverence / stand in awe of Israel's God!

(continued...)

³³(...continued)

Motyer comments that “The total vine system (*root, bud, blossom and fruit*) is wholesome and effective in every part (compare **Isaiah 5:4**.)” (P. 223)

Ortlund states that this filling the whole world with fruit is “a different image from ‘fill the face of the world with cities’ in **Isaiah 14:21**. (P. 1287) Of course! The goal of the world-city Babylon is to fill all the world with its clone-cities. But the goal of YHWH’s city is to fill all the world with fruit!

³⁴Ackerman calls **verses 7-12** “an obscure oracle that meditates on the hardships the Israelites have endured.” She then states that in **verses 7-8**, “Although the Israelites have suffered on account of their sins, it is only their enemies whom God has utterly destroyed.” (P. 991)

Slotki states that **verses 7-11** depict how “Israel’s punishment, unlike that to be suffered by his enemies, was meted out in moderation; and that fact promises better days when Israel would relinquish idolatry and return to God in humble repentance.” (Pp. 123-24)

Gray entitles **verses 7-11** “The limited punishment, and the conditions of the complete expiation, of Israel.” He comments that “The connection of these verses with what precedes and with what follows is loose, and they probably formed no original part either of the apocalypse, or still less of the song (**verses 2-6**.)” (P. 457)

Motyer entitles **verses 7-11** “The Lord’s dealings with His people,” and states that the question is “But how will the people of the Lord come into the Eden-restored of **verses 2-6**? The answer comes in this central section of the poem...

“The Lord has never been as harsh with Israel as He has been with its foes (**verse 7**); scattering (‘by shooing away and sending her off’) rather than destruction has been its portion (**verse 8**). This same Divine forbearance will yet be shown in a work of atonement to which Israel will respond by rejecting all false religion (**verse 9**), but typically of this kingly section of **Isaiah (chapters 1-37)**, the thought of atonement is not pursued (**verses 10-11**). The explanation (**verse 10** begins with ‘For’) of the transformation of Israel’s fortunes is found in the overthrow of the city.” (P. 223)

H. Wolf says that **verses 7-11** describe “What the Lord is going to do with Israel in the judgments that are about to overtake her in Isaiah’s day.” (P. 1053) Wolf is referring to the Babylonian captivity of Jerusalem, following the capture and destruction of Jerusalem and its temple.

Oswalt entitles these verses “Cleansing versus destruction.”

He comments that “This segment is difficult both textually and interpretatively.

(continued...)

³⁴(...continued)

The often unaccountable changes in tense, person, and gender all contribute to the difficulty, as do the vocabulary and intricate phrasings [we say, what did you expect in a prophetic message that is based on dreams and visions filled with riddle / enigma?]...

“Delitzsch [identifying the city of **verses 10-11** as Jerusalem] is able to produce a very unified interpretation: God will, through a carefully controlled judgment, bring Israel to the point where they can be restored to their land. However, the focus of the chapter is upon the defeat of Israel’s enemies, so this has caused many to look for the ‘enemy within’–Samaria...It is difficult to arrive at a single subject for the passage...

“A third alternative takes the city here to be the same as in **24:10-12; 25:2-3; 26:5**, that is, the symbol of world might arrayed against God. This view has the advantage of being consistent with the entire section and it also maintains the thrust of **chapter 27** in depicting God’s victory over Israel’s enemies. It does mean that **verse 11b** must be applied to the world at large...

“If this interpretation is correct, the flow of thought is as follows: Israel *may* take root (**verse 6**) because the blow which fell upon her was not final, whereas that which will fall upon her enemies will be. The chastisement of Jacob sought purification and so was tempered. That of her enemies will be without compassion.” Compare:

Jeremiah 10:24-25,

24 Correct me, O YHWH,
but in justice;
not in Your anger,
lest You bring me to nothing!

25 Pour out Your heat / wrath upon the nations
that did not know You;
and upon clans that did not call on Your name!
Because they devoured Jacob,
and they will devour him,
and they will finish him off!
And they have made his dwelling-place desolate!

“The result will be that these nations will no longer be able to hold captive a purified Israel...On balance this third alternative seems most likely, but the possibility that Jerusalem is intended cannot be ruled out.” (Pp. 496-97)

Kaiser entitles **verses 7-9** “A Difficult Text.”

He comments that “A reading of **Isaiah 27:7-9** leaves an expression of obscurity and jerkiness. One can read these verses again and again without knowing exactly to whom they are referring and how they fit into their context.” (Pp. 226-27)

(continued...)

אִם־כָּהָרַג הִרְגִּיו הִרְגָּ:

Has He struck him, who struck him, like his striking?³⁵

³⁴(...continued)

Again (see footnote 25) we are reminded of the statement attributed to YHWH as being made to Aaron and his sister Miriam, concerning the enigmatic nature of dreams and visions given to Israel's prophets. Many of the statements made by the prophets are obscure and jerky—anything but clear and smooth. We are in full accord with Kaiser's comment here.

Kaiser comments on **verse 7** that it “poses the rhetorical question, expecting a negative answer, whether Yahweh has been as strict with Israel...as with its tormentors...

“Looking back, Israel realizes that Yahweh has treated His people more favorably than their enemies, in spite of everything that they have suffered since the loss of their freedom in 722 and 587 B.C.E.” (P. 227)

Alexander translates **verse 7**: “*Like the smiting of his smiter did he smite him, or like the slaying of his slain was he slain?*”

He comments that “Having declared in the preceding verse that Israel should hereafter flourish, he now adds that even in the meantime he should suffer vastly less than his oppressors. Negation, as in many other cases, is expressed by interrogation.” (P. 439)

Watts states that this question is the first of three sceptical questions raised in **verses 7, 8 and 9**. The questions “are not addressed to God Himself, but to the speaker of **verse 6**. They want to know whether their adversaries have been dealt a hard retribution similar to their own, or whether they have suffered the brutalities which Israel has suffered.” (P. 350)

But Watts himself states that the second question “is addressed to Yahweh.” (**ibid.**) This is not careful commentary! And it is to be observed that while Watts' translation makes all three of these verses questions, none of the translations we are using has **verses 8 and 9** as questions—but rather, are translated as affirmative statements. This again demonstrates the nature of the prophetic message, as filled with puzzle and enigma, with lack of clarity.

³⁵Where our Hebrew text reads הִכָּהוּ, “he struck him,” our Greek translation has πληγήσεται, “he will be struck,” reflecting a Hebrew text with הִכָּהוּ, “he was struck and.”

(continued...)

Or been slaughtered like (the) slaughter of his slaughtered?³⁶

³⁵(...continued)

The 3rd person masculine pronouns in this verse are ambiguous, and it is uncertain who the “he” and the “him” are referring to. **New International** clears this up, translating the first “he” by “the Lord.” Our other English translations leave the matter ambiguous, as does our Hebrew text and our Greek translation.

King James, “Hath he smitten him, as he smote those that smote him? *or* is he slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by him?”

Tanakh, “Was he beaten as his beater has been? Did he suffer such slaughter as his slayers?”

New Revised Standard, “Has he struck them down as he struck down those who struck them? Or have they been killed as their killers were killed?”

New International, “Has *the LORD* struck her as he struck down those who struck her? Has she been killed as those were killed who killed her?”

New Jerusalem, “Has he struck him as he was struck by those who struck him? Has he murdered him as he was murdered by those who murdered him?”

Motyer comments that in **verse 7** “The Hebrew is rhythmic and beautiful but at the expense of clarity. The first question is (literally) ‘Like the smiting of the one who smote him did he smite him?’, [but Motyer clears this up by using the **New International’s** translation] *i.e.* did the Lord smite Israel to the same extent as He smote its conquerors? For example, was Israel ever shattered as the Lord shattered Egypt at the Red Sea?” (Pp. 223-24)

We think Motyer is probably correct, but the original text remains ambiguous, and readers must make the application for themselves.

Ortlund says that **verse 7** raises the question, “Has God ever dealt with His people as harshly as He has dealt with their persecutors?” (P. 1287)

If you answer this question in the light of the **Book of Lamentations**, the answer is Yes! But if you answer in the light of **Jeremiah 29:1-12**, the answer may be No.

³⁶Where our Hebrew text reads הַרְגָיו, “his slaughtered ones,” 1QIs^a reads הוֹרְגָיו, “one slaughtering him.” Watts notes that “This is seen as a better text by virtually all [modern commentators].” (P. 347)

In the second line of **verse 7**, Motyer holds that “the purport of the second question is the same, (literally) ‘or like the slaughter of his slaughtered ones was he slaughtered?’, *i.e.* has Israel ever suffered casualties such as the Lord inflicted on those whom He overthrew, *e.g.* the Assyrian slaughter of **Isaiah 37:36**? Always there was a

(continued...)

³⁶(...continued)

Divine restraint.” (P. 224) Compare:

Jeremiah 4:27,

Because in this way YHWH spoke:

All the land will be a devastation / waste;
and / but I will not make a complete devastation / annihilation.

Jeremiah 5:10,

Go up through its walls, and destroy,
and a complete devastation / annihilation, you shall not make.
Take away its branches,
because they do not belong to YHWH!

Jeremiah 5:18, YHWH is sending a foreign power to devastate Judah,

And even in those days,
it is a saying of YHWH,
I will not make you people (into) a complete devastation / annihilation.

In both lines of **Isaiah 27:7**, the same root word נָכַח is repeated three times.

³⁷In **verse 7**, the suffixes and participles have been all male; here in **verse 8**, the suffixes are all feminine, the majority of which are referring to Israel / Jacob. What do you think? Is the nation to be considered feminine, or male? These verses answer, Both ways—and modern commentators on Isaiah do the same, some referring to Israel as “she” or “her” and some as “he” or “him.”

Alexander translates **verse 8**: “*In measure, by sending her away, Thou dost contend with her. He removes (her) by His hard wind in the day of the east wind.*”

He comments that “The negation implied in the preceding verse is here expressed more distinctly. The Prophet now proceeds to show that Israel was not dealt with like His enemies, by first describing what [Israel] suffered, then what the [enemies suffered]. Israel was punished moderately, and for a time, by being removed out of His place, as if by a transient storm or blast of wind...The feminine suffixes must be referred

to the...nation as a wife, which agrees well with the verb שָׁלַח, **shalach**, ‘to send away,’ used in the law to denote repudiation or divorce.” (P. 439)

Watts translates **verse 8** as a skeptical question: “By driving her away, by

(continued...)

הַגָּה בְּרוּיָחוֹ הַקָּשָׁה

בְּיוֹם קָדַיִם:

By **sa(se)ah**,³⁸ by sending her forth / (into) exile³⁹ You / you will contend with her;

³⁷(...continued)

sending her (away), do you contend with her? Or has he removed her by his fierce wind in a day of east winds?" None of the translations we are consulting translate this verse as a question; and in fact there is no "he-interrogative" in the Hebrew text, indicating a question.

Watts comments that "The question is addressed to Yahweh. It asks whether driving her away, i.e., the Exile, was in fact a form of judicial process. The speaker is skeptical. He thinks it is more likely that God has simply lost patience and let His wrath overflow like a fierce wind. The implication is that justice and a reasoned process had nothing to do with it." (P. 350) But in fact, is **verse 8** interrogative?

³⁸The Hebrew phrase **בְּסֵאֵהָ**, **bessa)sse)ah**, is found only here in the **Hebrew Bible**, and its meaning can only be guessed at. Slotki's translation has "In full measure," and he comments that this means "Just as much as Israel's sins deserved; but no more." (P. 124)

Motyer comments that "Cognate languages...support the translation, 'to cry sasa,' 'to scare off by shouting' (hence the translation suggested... 'by shooing away')... Delitzsch relates the foundational form of **סֵאֵהָ** to **סֵאֵהָ** ('a measure,' a third of an ephah), making it equivalent to 'by measure' or 'in due measure.'" (P. 224)

Alexander states that "Of the numberless senses put upon **בְּסֵאֵהָ**, **bessa)sse)ah**, none is so good in itself, or so well suited to the context as the one handed down by tradition, which explains it as a reduplicated form of **סֵאֵהָ**, strictly denoting a particular dry measure, but here used to express the general idea of measure, i.e. moderation." (P. 439)

Ortlund, accepting **English Standard's** translation "Measure by measure," comments that "God carefully measured His disciplines, even exile." (P. 1287) A footnote in **English Standard** suggests "Or, *By driving her away*; the meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain."

Oswalt states that the phrase "*By exact measure* occurs only here and is a subject of debate. (With the exception of **Rahlfs**, all the versions have some form of 'measure.' In this light, the usual explanation of **בְּסֵאֵהָ**, **bessa)sse)ah** is that it is a contraction of...'by measure, measure'..]

(continued...)

³⁸(...continued)

“**Rahifs** has ‘fighting and reproaching He will send them forth.’ Given the general looseness of **Rahifs** in difficult passages in this section, one is not justified in following it against the other versions...

“If this rendering is correct [‘by exact measure’], then the sense is that God has carefully measured out the judgment of the Exile so that it will not destroy the people but bring them to purification. The punishment is precisely fitted to the crime.” (Pp. 497-98)

Translations of **verse 8** vary:

King James, “In measure, when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it: he stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind.”

Tanakh, “Assailing them with fury unchained, His pitiless blast bore them off On a day of gale.”

New Revised Standard, “By expulsion, by exile you struggled against them; with his fierce blast he removed them in the day of the east wind.”

New International, “By warfare and exile you contend with her-- with his fierce blast he drives her out, as on a day the east wind blows.”

New Jerusalem, “By expelling, by excluding him, you have executed a sentence, he has blown him away with a breath as rough as the east wind.”

Rahifs, μαχόμενος καὶ ὀνειδίζων ἐξαποστελεῖ αὐτούς οὐ σὺ ἦσθα ὁ μελετῶν τῷ πνεύματι τῷ σκληρῷ ἀνελεῖν αὐτοὺς πνεύματι θυμοῦ, “Fighting and reproaching, He will send them out. You were not / were You not the One taking care for the harsh spirit to put them to death in a spirit of wrath. / ?

These differences in translation, plus the differences in interpretation, once again demonstrate the puzzling, enigmatic nature of the prophetic message.

³⁹Slotki says that this “sending away” is “an allusion to the captivity of Northern Israel after the conquest of Samaria by the Assyrians.” (P. 124)

Motyer translates by “Exile / by sending her off,” and comments that “this is not a reference to the great exiles (the northern kingdom to Assyria, the southern to Babylon [should the reference be to these, it would go against Motyer’s dating of **chapters 24-27**]) but to all occasions when enemies invaded and took captives. On every such occasion Divine wrath could justly have exacted the full penalty but forbearance intervened, and even when the great exiles came they did so under the promise of return!” (P. 224)

H. Wolf thinks that the sending forth or exile meant is “probably the Babylonian captivity.” (P. 1053)

Oswalt comments that “The sudden appearance of the feminine [‘her’] is

(continued...)

He removed⁴⁰ by His wind, the hard / severe one,
on a day of an east wind.⁴¹

³⁹(...continued)

somewhat troublesome since masculine suffixes appear in the previous verse and since Israel and Jacob are masculine...A suggestion which demands less reconstruction of the text is based on the recognition that **שָׁלַח**, **shalach**, ‘send away,’ sometimes has to do with divorce (**Deuteronomy 22:19 [24:1-4]**; **Isaiah 50:1**; etc.). That being so, it seems possible that the changed image demanded the changed gender.” (P. 498)

⁴⁰The verb **הִגִּיד** means “He removed.” Motyer comments that “With *he drives / ‘he expelled’* Isaiah is still looking back at earlier Divine discipline. The verb **הִגִּיד** is used in **2 Samuel 20:13** of shifting a corpse off the road and in **Proverbs 25:4** of refining. Here, ‘shifted and sifted’ would suit the verb and the context.” (P. 224)

⁴¹Slotki holds that by “east wind,” “the reference is to Assyria which lay to the east of Palestine.” (P. 114) Compare **Hosea 13:15**,

Because he is between brothers;
he will be fruitful / will cause to bear fruit,
an east wind will come,
YHWH’s wind from a wilderness arising--
and his fountain will be ashamed
and his spring will be dried up.
It shall plunder (the) treasury of all its delightful articles!

Alexander comments that “The east wind is mentioned as the most tempestuous in Palestine. The day of the east wind is supposed by some to denote the season of the year when it prevails; but it is rather used to intimate the temporary nature of the chastisement, as if he had said, one day when the east wind chanced to blow.” (P. 440)

Gray comments on the last two lines of **verse 8**, that they “seem to describe a very severe fate...That a sirocco as blowing from the east is symbolical of the eastern peoples, Assyrians and Babylonians...is not very probable.” (P. 458) But why not? We think that such a metaphor is perfectly in line with Isaiah’s use of symbolical language.

Motyer comments that “The chastisement was like a *fierce blast* [this is **New International’s** translation of **בְּרוּחוֹ הַקָּשֶׁה**, which is literally ‘by His wind, the hard / severe one’]...It was ‘as on a day of east wind,’ sharp but not endless.” (P. 224) See:

Jeremiah 4:11a,

(continued...)

⁴¹(...continued)

At that time it will be said to this people,
and to Jerusalem,
A glowing wind from (the) heights in the desert,
(on the) way to (the) daughter of my people!

Ezekiel 19:12a,

And she (YHWH's vine) was pulled up in a fury,
to the earth she was cast.
And the east wind dried up her fruit;
they were torn off, and they dried up.

Gray notes that "The east wind of Palestine, blowing from the wilderness, is hot and suffocating, and destructive of vegetation...It may also be very violent...and carry all before it." (P. 458)

Oswalt comments that "Despite the promise that God's contention with His people would be of a more measured sort than that meted out upon her destroyers, there is no denying her punishment would be severe. Like the searing wind roaring out of the east, her fate would come upon her and sweep her away." (P. 498)

⁴²Alexander translates / comments on **verse 9**: "*Therefore (because His chastisement was temporary and remedial in design) by this (affliction) shall Jacob's iniquity be expiated (i.e. purged away), and this is all (its) fruit (or intended effect) to take away his sin (as will appear) in his placing all the stones of the (idolatrous) altar like limestones dashed in pieces (so that) groves and solar images (or images of Ashtoreth and Baal) shall arise no more...*

"The contrast between Israel and Babylon is still continued. Having said that the affliction of the former was but moderate and temporary, he now adds that it was meant to produce a most beneficent effect, to wit, the purgation of the people from the foul stain of idolatry." (P. 440)

Ackerman states concerning **verse 9** that "The Israelites will be forgiven for their sins when they abandon inappropriate ritual behaviors, including the worshiping of *sacred poles*, representing the Goddess Asherah (Who was considered by some ancient Israelites to be the Consort of the Lord), see

Isaiah 1:29,

Because they will be ashamed of their terebinths / lofty trees whom you
desired,

(continued...)

⁴²(...continued)

and you will show shame (synonym) from / of the gardens which you chose!

Isaiah 17:8, following YHWH's judgment,

He will not gaze at / regard the altars,
work of his hands,
and that which his fingers made
he will not see,
and the Asherim and the incense-altars.

Isaiah 17:10-11,

- 10 Because you (feminine singular) forgot
(the) God of your salvation,
and (the) Rock of your place of safety
you did not remember!
Therefore you will plant pleasant plants
and a vine-branch of a foreigner—you will plant it.
- 11 On a day of your planting,
you will fence (it around);
and in the morning of your planting,
you will cause (it) to grow;
a heap of harvest on (the) day it was sick,
and an incurable pain.
(Translations of **verse 11** vary)

Isaiah 57:5, Sons of the sorceress are mocking YHWH--

the ones inflaming themselves with the terebinths,
beneath every luxuriant tree,
sacrificing the children in the wadis,
beneath clefts of the rocks.

Isaiah 65:3, a rebellious people is

the people provoking Me to anger
before My face constantly,
sacrificing in the gardens
and burning sacrifices (incense?) upon the bricks.)

Ackerman continues: "The burning of *incense* [occurred] on small cuboid [more or less cubic in shape] altars. Since incense offerings are normally approved for Israelite worship, it is unclear why they are now condemned and the altars to be destroyed; perhaps because the altars in question were located at the proscribed

(continued...)

⁴²(...continued)

[forbidden by law] high-place sanctuaries.” (P. 991)

We think it is obvious why such worship is being condemned—it is the worship of Canaanite Deities, in the Canaanite sexually-oriented fashion with the sacrifice of children!

Watts, as he has done in **verses 7 and 8**, translates **verse 9** as the last of three “skeptical questions”:

1. Therefore, by this will the guilt of Jacob be expiated?
2. And (is) this all the fruit of removing this sin?
3. When he made all the stones of an altar (to be) crushed like stones of chalk, will Asherim and incense altars no longer stand upright?

He comments, “The question asks whether this will, in fact, remove the accumulated guilt of Israel’s sins. Is it possible that all of this, i.e., the century and more of constant foreign harassment and invasion from the time of Uzziah through that of Manasseh, is due to God’s removal of the sins of Israel? In answer the witnesses point to the stark evidence left by the desolation. Altars crushed at least means that idolatry has ceased.” (P. 350)

But again we ask, Is there any real evidence in the Hebrew text that this is a question / three questions? We see none, and think this is simply a bizarre reading of the text by Watts. Following his methodology, any affirmation in the Hebrew text can be turned into a question.

Kaiser comments on **verse 9** that it “is certainly to be understood as a prophecy...

“The asherim are the standing cult objects associated with the altars. Compare **Judges 6:25-27**,

- 25 And it happened on that night,
and YHWH spoke to him:
Take a young steer of the cattle which belongs to your father,
and the second steer, seven years (old);
and you shall throw down the altar of Baal which belongs to your father,
and the Asherah which is beside / upon it you shall cut down.
- 26 And you shall build an altar for the YHWH your God,
upon (the) top of this place of refuge in the battle-line;

and you shall take the second steer,

(continued...)

וְזֶה כָּל-פְּרֵי הַסֵּר חַטָּאתוֹ
בְּשׁוּמְרוֹ | כָּל-אֲבֵי מִזְבֵּחַ כְּאֲבֵי-גֵר מִנְפָצוֹת
לְאֲיִקְמוֹ אֲשֵׁרִים וְחַמָּנִים:

Therefore by this⁴³ Jacob's iniquity will be covered / atoned (for);⁴⁴

⁴²(...continued)

and you shall offer it up,
an offering-up on the wood of the Asherah
which you will cut down.

- 27 And Gideon took ten men from his servants,
and he did just as YHWH spoke to him.
And it happened, as he was afraid of his father's household,
from acting by day,
and he acted by night.

"The asherim are the standing cult objects associated with the altar...probably wooden pillars standing on the altars...and were probably regarded originally as manifestations of the Deity of the same name." (P. 228)

⁴³Slotki states that the first word in **verse 9**, לִכֵּן, **lakhen**, which he translates by "therefore," "refers back to **verse 7**. Since Israel [/ Jacob] is punished in moderation and the full anger of God is withheld, there is hope for [Israel] in repentance and return to God." (P. 124)

Motyer likewise comments that the phrase "by this" "looks back to the substantial point just made: the Lord has ever acted toward His people with restraint, not according to their deservings." (P. 224)

Ortlund also states that "Restraint has been God's pattern in the past; by the same loving restraint He will bring His people to idol-free purity before Him." (P. 1287)

We say, Tell that to the author of the **Book of Lamentations!** See **2:20-21; 4:6**, etc. Tell it to Job! What will you say?

⁴⁴H. Wolf comments that "Israel (Jacob) will have to atone for her guilt through the coming judgment." (P. 1053)

(continued...)

⁴⁴(...continued)

Is there only one way for Israel to find atonement, that is, through the animal sacrifices Israel is commanded to make on the “Day of Atonement / Coverings”? Can suffering punishment accomplish the same thing? Or, as this passage apparently goes on to say, does Israel also achieve atonement / coverings through repentance—evidenced by the destruction of the objects used in fertility worship? Or, was atonement accomplished for Judah / Jerusalem by means of her Babylonian captivity (see **Isaiah 40:1-2**, quoted in footnote 22)? Is YHWH only capable of granting forgiveness in one way, or is He free to act however He pleases? What do you think?

Oswalt comments that “This **verse [9]** tells why Israel’s punishment was not on the same order as that of her enemies. Hers was for the purpose of discipline and purification.” (P. 498) See:

Isaiah 54: 6-8,

- 6 Because like a forsaken woman and pained of spirit,
 YHWH called you,
 and (like) a wife (married in) youth that will be rejected,
 said your God.
- 7 For a small moment I forsook you;
 and with great compassions I will gather you together!
- 8 In a flood of wrath I hid My face from you (for) a moment;
 but with long-lasting steadfast-love I had compassion on you!
 said your Next of Kin / Redeemer, YHWH!

Oswalt continues: “Though it would be wrong to build a whole theology of atonement upon this one verse, there are some interesting pointers here. First, there is a sense in which repentance and works of righteousness cover over past sin. When the idol altars are smashed, the former works are no longer remembered against us.” (P. 498—see his continuing remarks, where he concludes that Christ has suffered for our sins, and we must repent, and in the two together our iniquity is covered.)

And we ask, What is your doctrine of “atonement”? Is it that atonement belongs wholly to Christ, and that human works have nothing to do with it? Or do you agree with this text and with Oswalt that repentance and works of righteousness are also involved in genuine atonement? Will you answer the question by simply quoting a proof-text, like **Ephesians 2:8-9**?

- 8 For by grace you have been saved
 through faith.
 And this is not your own doing;
 it is the gift of God,
9 not a result of works,
 so that no one may boast.

(continued...)

and this—all fruit (of) removing his missing-of-the-mark / sin:⁴⁵
by his placing all stones of an altar like stones of chalk, having been pulverized--⁴⁶

⁴⁴(...continued)

Is Paul denying what **Isaiah 27:9** states? And what about **Jacob [“James”] 2:14-26**, which includes the affirmation,

So also faith by itself,
it it does not have works,
is dead. (2:17)

⁴⁵Translations of this line vary:

King James, “and this *is* all the fruit to take away his sin”;

Tanakh, “This is the only price For removing his guilt: (That he make all the altar-stones Like shattered blocks of chalk...);

New Revised Standard, “and this will be the full fruit of the removal of his sin: (when he makes all the stones of the altars like chalkstones...); **New International** and **New Jerusalem**, closely similar;

Rahfs, καὶ τοῦτό ἐστιν ἡ εὐλογία αὐτοῦ ὅταν ἀφέλωμαι αὐτοῦ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν.

“And this is the blessing of his, when I take away the sin of his (when they make all the stones of the altars broken pieces like fine dust...”

Oswalt comments that “the fruit must be both the cause and result of the sin’s removal. On the one hand, smashing the idols is necessary if forgiveness is to be received; on the other hand, the announcement of forgiveness supplies the motivation to do the smashing...As Gray says, he is glad that such a significant doctrine is not dependent upon this one obscure verse, but given the appearance of that truth in other parts of Scripture, it does not appear to be misinterpretation to apply it here.” (P. 499)

What do you think? Would you call this verse “obscure”? Or is it only obscure to those who believe in atonement by faith alone, apart from works?

⁴⁶See: **Exodus 34:13**,

Because you people shall tear down their altars of sacrifice,
and their pillars you shall shatter;
and his Asherah you shall cut off!

Exodus 32:19-20, where it is said concerning Moses:

19 And it happened just as he drew near to the camp,
and he saw the (golden) calf and dances.
And Moses’ anger grew hot,
and he threw from his hands the tablets (of stone with the Ten
Commandments written on them),

(continued...)

⁴⁶(...continued)

and he shattered them at the base of the mountain.
20 And he took the (golden) calf which they made,
and he burned (it) with the fire;
and he ground (it) until it was pulverized / dust;
and he scattered (it) upon (the) surface of the waters;
and he caused Israel's children to drink.
(What Moses did to the stone-tablets and to the golden calf is what Israel / Judah
will have to do with its items of fertility worship if they want to atone for their sins!)

⁴⁷Translations of **27:9** vary:

King James, "By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this *is* all the fruit to take away his sin; when he maketh all the stones of the altar as chalkstones that are beaten in sunder, the groves and images shall not stand up."

Tanakh, "Assuredly, by this alone Shall Jacob's sin be purged away; This is the only price For removing his guilt: That he make all the altar-stones Like shattered blocks of chalk--With no sacred post left standing, Nor any incense altar."

New Revised Standard, "Therefore by this the guilt of Jacob will be expiated [guilt extinguished], and this will be the full fruit of the removal of his sin: when he makes all the stones of the altars like chalk-stones crushed to pieces, no sacred poles or incense altars will remain standing."

New International, "By this, then, will Jacob's guilt be atoned for, and this will be the full fruitage of the removal of his sin: When he makes all the altar stones to be like chalk stones crushed to pieces, no Asherah poles or incense altars will be left standing."

New Jerusalem, "For that is how Jacob's guilt will be forgiven, such will be the result of renouncing his sin, when all the altar-stones have been smashed to pieces like lumps of chalk, when the sacred poles and incense-altars stand no longer."

Rahfs, "For this reason, the lawlessness of Jacob will be taken away. And this is his blessing when I shall take away the sin of his, when they shall place / make all the stones of high places having been cut up like fine dust, and their trees will not remain, and their idols having been cut down like a distant forest."

What do you think this passage teaches concerning atonement / forgiveness? Does it teach that repentance and change of religious practice results in atonement / forgiveness, with not a mention of Divine action or the sacrifices of the Day of Atonement?

How will you combine the teaching of this passage with that of **Isaiah 52:13-53:12**, concerning the servant of YHWH who bears Israel's missings-of-the-mark / sins and makes atonement for them? And how will you combine both of these passages with the good news proclaimed in **Isaiah 40:2**, that the sins of the exiles in Babylon

(continued...)

⁴⁷(...continued)

have been forgiven and fully paid for, long before the mention of the suffering servant and the coming of Jesus Christ?

Motyer comments that “The ‘full fruit’ of atonement is borne in sole loyalty to the Lord, evidenced by the destruction of all that belongs to false Gods...[The text] is certainly capable of meaning that when full atonement has been made, the worship of the Lord Himself will no longer require sacrifice, so that the very altar of the Lord will be as totally removed as if its stones became (literally) ‘like pulverized limestone.’” (P. 224)

Is Motyer being true to the text at this point when he holds that the destruction of false Gods is the “fruit of atonement” rather than its cause? We think not. Do you think it is a fair interpretation of the passage to say that no longer will YHWH be worshiped at His altar of sacrifice? Again, we think not. Surely the altars of sacrifice to be destroyed are those of the Canaanite Gods!

⁴⁸Slotki notes that **verses 10-11** depict “why Jerusalem is deserted and forsaken.” (P. 124)

Gray states that **verses 10-11** contain a “description of a once strong and fortified city that is now desolate, a spot where cattle feed...and women come in search of firewood—a vivid trait peculiar to this passage. The reason of this fate was that the inhabitants were without understanding and, therefore, obtained neither favor nor mercy from its Maker. What city is intended is altogether uncertain; some think it is the capital of the world-empire oppressing the Jews; others, that it is Jerusalem; others, Samaria, the home of the people without understanding.” (P. 459)

Motyer comments on these verses that “Whatever the origin of this oracle and the primary identity of the city, it now refers to the world city which has been the theme of **chapters 24-27**...In spite, therefore, of people’s best endeavor to make themselves secure (*fortified*) all is lost...

“The *settlement* is so utterly *abandoned* by humankind that calves graze there (**verse 2**; compare **5:17**). This picture of grazing suggests that of leaving branches stripped bare (literally, ‘they finish off’) and this in turn becomes the picture of the *women* gathering dry wood for their fires.” (P. 224)

Ortlund states that these verses describe how “The city of this world falls into desolation, useful for only for animals and firewood, for the Creator will show them no favor.” (P. 1287)

Ackerman states that “The *forsaken city* is presumably Jerusalem, which God has made desolate because the people have failed to discern what God requires of them.” (P. 991) See:

(continued...)

⁴⁸(...continued)

Lamentations 1:1,

How the city (of Jerusalem) full of people sat (in) isolation!
She (who was) great among the nations, became like a widow!
A princess among the provinces became the source of slave labor!

Slotki and H. Wolf, like Ackerman, hold that the unassailable or fortified city is Jerusalem (p. 124 / p. 1053), but the text does not so state. What city do you think is being described? Would you say this is another mark of the “obscurity” or “puzzling nature” of the prophetic message?

Oswalt comments on **verses 10** and **11** that “If it is correct to take the city here as the symbol of Judah’s oppressors...then the thought continues the idea of redemption. When Israel’s idols are broken down, then God’s hand will be revealed against her enemies...”

“For the **Old Testament** writers, the true mark of human stupidity is idolatry, which is the result of our attempt to usurp the place of God...Since the idol makers have falsified the identity of the One Who made them, He cannot show them His grace [but is it wise to say what God can and cannot do? We think not! This is the mistake that Job’s three friends made!]. But to the extent that the Israelites retained an awareness of God’s sole Creatorship and Lordship of the world (**Isaiah 26:13**), there is a spark of understanding that God’s grace will be able to blow into a flame.” (P. 499) See:

Ezra 9:6-15,

6 And I said, My God, I was ashamed, and humiliated,
to raise, my God, my face to You!
Because our iniquities were great—
to above (the) head;
and our wrong-doing was great—
to the heavens!

7 From (the) days of our fathers,
we (have been) in great wrong-doing until this day!
And in the guilts of ours, we were given--
our kings, our priests—
into (the) hand / power of the kings of the lands!
With the sword, with the captivity,
and with the plundering and with shame of faces,
like this day!

8 And now, like a brief moment
came favor from YHWH our God—
to leave remaining for us an escaped remnant,
and to give to us a (secure) peg
in His set-apart place,

(continued...)

⁴⁸(...continued)

- to enlighten our eyes, our God,
and to give us a little preservation of life / sustenance
in our slavery.
- 9 Because we are slaves;
but in our slavery,
our God did not forsake us;
and He extended to us steadfast-love before Persia's kings,
to give to us preservation of life / sustenance
to raise up our God's house / temple,
and to cause waste places to stand,
and to give to us a wall (of protection)
in Judah and in Jerusalem!
- 10 And now, what will we say, our God, after this?
Because we forsook Your commandments--
- 11 which You commanded
by (the) hand of Your servants the prophets, saying,
The land which you (plural) are entering to possess,
it is a land of menstrual impurity--
with menstrual impurity of peoples of the lands,
with their abominations
which filled it from mouth to mouth with their uncleanness!
- 12 And now, your daughters you (plural) shall not give to their sons;
and their daughters you shall not take for your sons!
And you shall not seek their peace and their good to long-lasting time!
In order that you may be strong,
and may eat (the) good of the land.
And you shall possess (it) for your children until long-lasting time!
- 13 And after all that came upon us
by our evil deeds and by our great wrong-doing--
because You, our God, withheld downwards from our iniquities,
and You gave to us an escaped remnant like this.
- 14 Shall we return to break Your commandments
and to make our daughters' husbands
among peoples of this abomination?
Will You not be angry with us,
until finishing (us) to not be a remnant
and an escaped group?
- 15 YHWH, God of Israel, You (are) righteous;
because You spared us, an escaped remnant,
like (we are) today.
Look at us before You in our wrong-doing--
because there is no standing before You over this!

But we ask, Is this an example of grace blowing upon the people, causing a great flame of faith to be kindled? We think it is an example of rigid orthodoxy being

(continued...)

⁴⁸(...continued)

blown on by Jewish leaders like Ezra and Nehemiah, and becoming a flame of separatist legalism, refusing to accept the Divine mandate of love for and mission to others, something that was in fact the beginning of Pharisaism, and the rejection of all who refused to become proselytes to Judaism, as well as the condemnation of all Jews who refused to seek to fulfill the 613 commandments of the Mosaic Torah in a legalistic manner! What do you think?

Kaiser entitles **27:10-11** “An Impregnable City.”

He comments that “Some regard the verses as giving a reason for asking why Yahweh still has not had pity upon the destroyed city of Jerusalem, and why the great promises of **chapters 24-26** have not been fulfilled after so long a time. Others believe that this is a prophecy of the future fate of Samaria, while others again regard the verses as an addition made after the destruction of Samaria in 296 B.C.E. Finally, it is not surprising that many commentators, reminded by **verse 10a** of **25:2**, see the destroyed city as the world capital of **25:1-3; 26:1-3**...

“All this shows why one of the most cautious commentators on the **Book of Isaiah** stated that what city is intended is altogether uncertain [he is referring to Gray]. In fact almost every argument in favor of identification with any one city can be countered by an argument in favor of another...

“The description of the city as solitary is reminiscent of **Lamentations 1:1**,

How the city of many people sat alone / in isolation!
She became like a widow—
(once) great among the nations!
Princess among the provinces,
she became (destined) for the forced labor!...

[But, Kaiser concludes,] “The condition for the salvation of all Israel is the previous destruction of the world capital, to which the attention is drawn once again... The fact remains, however, that the prophet or theologian of history responsible for this addition worked too carelessly for us to arrive at any certain conclusion.” (Pp. 230-31)

What do you think? Is the biblical text the result of careless composition? Or is its obscurity and puzzling nature due to the nature of the prophetic message? We choose the latter.

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 10**: “*For a fenced (or fortified) city shall be desolate, a dwelling broken up and forsaken like the wilderness. There shall the calf feed, and there shall it lie and consume her branches.* Here begins the other part of the comparison. While Israel is chastised in measure and with the happiest effect, his oppressors are given up to final desolation. This explanation of the verse, as

(continued...)

נֹזֶה מִשְׁלַח

וְנִעְזַב כְּמִדְבָּר

שֵׁם יִרְעֶה עֵגֶל

וְשֵׁם יִרְבֵּץ

וְכֻלָּה סַעֲפִיָּה:

Because an unassailable city, solitary--

a dwelling (whose inhabitants were) sent forth / away,
(and which is) forsaken like the wilderness;⁴⁹

⁴⁸(...continued)

referring to Babylon [but Babylon is not mentioned in the text!], is strongly recommended by the fact, that the comparison otherwise remains unfinished, only one side of it having been presented...

“Apart from this consideration, there are certainly strong reasons for supposing the city meant to be Jerusalem itself...The figure of a vineyard seems to be still present to the writer’s mind, at the close of this verse and throughout the next...The desolation here described is not so total as that threatened against Babylon in **Isaiah 13:19-22**, where, instead of saying it shall be a pasture, it is said expressly that it shall not even be frequented by flocks or herds.” (P. 441)

Watts comments on **verse 10** that “Ruins testify to a commercial and militaristic civilization that has now become quietly pastoral.” (P. 350) Watts’ view is that this is the City of Tyre—but we think that is far-fetched. Where is Tyre mentioned in the text of **Isaiah 27**? Tyre is mentioned by name seven times in **Isaiah 23**, but nowhere else in the **Book of Isaiah**!

And again we ask, what city do you think is being talked about? And is not the fact that these differing interpretations point to the puzzling / enigmatic nature of the prophetic message?

⁴⁹Compare **Isaiah 6:11b-12**, where Isaiah is answered concerning how long his unsuccessful ministry must continue:

11b And He said, Until the time when cities crashed to ruins
from there not being inhabitants,
and houses from there not being a human-being,
and the ground shall be laid waste, a devastation.

(continued...)

there a calf pastures / feeds,⁵⁰
and there it will lie down
and will finish (eating) its branches.⁵¹

27:11⁵² בִּיבֹשׁ קְצִירָהּ תִּשְׁבְּרָנָהּ

⁴⁹(...continued)

12 And YHWH sends far away the human-being,
and great / many are the forsaken (places)
in the land's / earth's midst!

⁵⁰Slotki comments that this means "In places which had formerly been inhabited but were now deserted." (P. 124)

⁵¹For these statements concerning calves grazing, compare:

Isaiah 7:23-25,

23 And it will happen in that day,
every place where there would be a thousand vine(s)
in / for a thousand silver pieces,
it will be for the thorns and for the thorn-bushes.
24 With the arrows and with the bow he will come there,
because thorn(s) and thorn-bush(es) will be (in) all the land / earth.
25 and all the mountains which they hoed with the hoe,
you will not come there (for) fear of thorn(s) and thorn-bush(es);
and it will be for sending forth an ox, and for trampling of sheep.

⁵²Alexander translates / comments on **verse 11**: "*In the withering of its boughs (or when its boughs are withered) they shall be broken off, women coming and burning them; because it is not a people of understanding, therefore its Creator shall not pity it, and its Maker shall not have mercy on it...*"

"The destruction of Babylon is still described, but under the figure of a tree whose branches are withered and cast into the fire...The feminine pronouns in the first clause must refer to עִיר [city] or בָּבֶל [Babylon] understood; the masculine pronouns of the last clause refer of course to [people]." (Pp. 441-42)

Watts, who thinks this chapter is talking about Tyre, states that "This happened because Israel was not a discerning people. The [Book of Isaiah] has been making this point from 1:2-3 on. It has used the figures of blindness and deafness. The questions show that the condition lingers on. God did not show the favor that He has now announced for His people because of that lack of discernment. But now He has come to announce that He will take personal responsibility for His vineyard." (P. 351)

(continued...)

נָשִׁים בָּאוֹת מֵאִירוֹת אוֹתָהּ
כִּי לֹא עִם-בִּינוֹת הוּא
עַל-כֵּן לֹא-יִרְחַמְנֵנוּ עֲשֵׂהוּ
וַיִּצְרוּ לֹא יִחַנְּנוּ:

When its branches dry up, they will be broken;

women⁵³ coming, setting it on fire.⁵⁴

Because it is not a people of understandings.

Therefore, its Maker will not have compassion on it;

and its Former / Potter will not show mercy to it.⁵⁵

⁵²(...continued)

But what this verse says is that because of the lack of discernment in this city being described, YHWH will not have compassion on them, or show them favor. Is that the way YHWH takes personal responsibility for His vineyard? As we read and contemplate Watts' commentary on **chapter 27**, we are puzzled, wondering how he can draw many of the conclusions that he does in this chapter. And as we see for an answer, we are again reminded of **Numbers 12:6-8** and **1 Corinthians 13:7-12**, which hold that the prophetic message will be puzzling / enigmatic, not clear.

⁵³Alexander states that "Women are mentioned, not in allusion to the weakness of the instruments by which Babylon was to be destroyed, but because the gathering of firewood in the East is the work of women and children." (P. 441)

⁵⁴Slotki notes that "The picture of a deserted city is continued. In the street grass and wild bushes grow, and the poor women use them for fuel." (P. 124)

Alexander states that **מֵאִירוֹת**, **me)iyroth** [hiphil feminine plural participle of **אִיר**, 'be or become light,' then 'light a fire'] is not simply *setting on fire*, but *making a fire of, or burning up.*" (Pp. 441-42)

⁵⁵Motyer comments that "Their lack of understanding (**verse 11c**) led to forfeiture of the *compassion* and *favor* of their Creator..."

First, Isaiah exposes their inner heart, their *understanding* (literally) 'this is not a people of true discernment..."

Secondly, he exposes the heart of God, Who has no *compassion*. The relation of Creator to creature is like that of mother to child, but the Divine love has been

(continued...)

⁵⁵(...continued)

alienated by people's determination to trust their own discernment [what do you think? Is this the heart of God—no compassion? Compare **Exodus 34:6-7** and **Isaiah 49:15**,

- 14 And Zion said, YHWH forsook me!,
and my Lord forgot me!
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!...

Thirdly, the tragic consequence is that they have put themselves even beyond the reach of *favor*...the out-reaching of unmerited, saving grace to sinners... *Their Creator* is (literally) 'He Who molded them,' 'their Potter' (as **Genesis 2:7**), and the picture conveyed is of the personal, pains-taking care of the Creator, the very pressure of His hands." (P. 225)

And we ask, Can God's creatures / children get beyond the reach of His grace?
We say, No way!

Ackerman comments on the last half of **verse 11** that "Because the verbs 'to make' and 'to form' are used elsewhere to describe God's activity *in utero* ['in the womb'], compare:

Job 31:15,

Job asks, "Did not the One making me in the womb make him?
And One formed / fashioned us in the womb (synonym)?"

Jeremiah 1:5,

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you;
and before you went forth from (the) womb I set you apart,
a spokesperson / prophet to the nations, I gave you!),

Ackerman continues: "And because the verb 'to have compassion' (רַחֵם) is related to 'womb' (רֶחֶם), maternal imagery apparently is used to describe God here. Such imagery is found occasionally elsewhere..." See:

Deuteronomy 32:18,

Rock gave you (singular) birth—you forgot!
And you forgot (synonym) Supreme God (*EI*)

(continued...)

⁵⁵(...continued)

your One through labor pains birthing you!...

Job 38:29, YHWH asks Job,

From (the) womb of Whom went forth the frost / ice;
and frost of (the) heavens, Who gave it birth?

“but is more frequent in **Isaiah 40-55** and the related **chapters 24-27; 56-66...**

Isaiah 42:14, YHWH shouts out,

I kept silence from a long-lasting time;
I will keep silence, I will restrain Myself;
like a woman giving birth I will groan, I will pant;
and I will pant (synonym) together!

Isaiah 66:13,

Like a man / person upon whom his mother has compassion,
in this way I, I will have compassion upon you people!
And in Jerusalem you people shall be shown compassion!” (P. 992)

⁵⁶Slotki comments on **verses 12-13** that “There will be a day when the exiles from the most distant lands will return to Jerusalem, and they will pay homage to God on His holy mountain.” (P. 125)

Gray entitles **verses 12-13** “Conclusion of the Apocalypse [**chapters 24-27**].”

He comments that “These verses give us the...conclusion of the Apocalypse. The reproach of the Jews will cease (**25:8**), those who reproached them will be punished (**26:20-21**), the Jews themselves will be gathered to Jerusalem (**27:12-13**) and to the glory of Yahweh’s reign there (**24:23**).” (P. 460)

Motyer entitles **verses 12-13** “The Lord’s harvested people,” and comments that “The sequence ends, as it started, with two ‘In that day’ oracles. The first (**verse 12**) is, like **verses 2-6**, an oracle of sowing and reaping. The second (**verse 13**) contrasts the *great trumpet*, which gathers the Lord’s people, with the *great sword* of **verse 1**, which destroys His foes. Both are oracles of specifically Divine harvesting. In **verse 12** the Lord is pictured patiently gathering His harvest home one by one, and **verse 13** recalls the institution of the fiftieth or Jubilee year (**Leviticus 25:8-10**)...a year in which there had been no human preparations for harvest, a year of dependence on what God would supply.” (P. 225)

(continued...)

⁵⁶(...continued)

Oswalt entitles these verses "Restoration," and comments that "These verses provide a fitting climax to **chapters 24-27** with their emphasis on God's sovereignty over the nations and His intention to restore His people from the nations...

"But this raises the immediate question: *Can* He deliver them from the nations? **Chapters 13-27** answer that question with a resounding affirmative. They do so first in a particularizing way, showing that all nations, including Israel, are under God's judgment (**chapters 13-23**). Then **chapters 24-27** make the same point in a more generalized way, asserting that God is the main Actor in the drama of human history. These things being so, God can deliver His people, and the promise is reaffirmed in these two closing verses." (Pp. 400-500).

Ackerman comments that "As wheat is threshed to yield edible grain, God will thresh the nations, especially Assyria and Egypt, in order to gather up the scattered righteous of Israel and return them to Jerusalem." (P. 992)

Kaiser entitles **verses 12-13** "Two Sayings for the Israel of the Final Age."

He comments that "In view of the obscurity of **27:7-11**, it is easy to see why it has been suggested that **verses 12-13** are part of the original material of the apocalypse and follow **27:1**. While this is not impossible, it remains uncertain...

"**Verse 12** adds a distinctive feature to the portrait of the age of salvation...By portraying Yahweh as threshing out the reaped ears of corn...within the boundaries of the original kingdom of David from the Euphrates to the Brook of Egypt...he is actually referring, as the continuation shows, to the separation of Israelites and gentiles. The Israelites will be carefully picked out...We are not told what happens to the the gentiles. Within the metaphor the Israelites are likened to the chaff and straw which is either blown away by the wind...or thrown into the fire...

"We may rightly conclude from the verse that at the time it was composed there were both many gentiles in Palestine and many Jews in Syria. The meaning is of course that the land within the boundaries of the kingdom of David will be returned to Israel, for its sole use.

"There is a certain logic in the addition of **verse 13**...The day in which the great ram's horn...is blown is of course the day of Yahweh...As the horn became the sign of the onset of the last day which was to transform the destiny of the world and of mankind, other expectations from the complex of ideas belonging to this day came to be associated with its sounding...

"Whereas in **24:23** the elders stood before God, in **27:13** it will be the whole people of God drawn together from the whole world." (Pp. 231-33)

(continued...)

יִחַבֵּט יְהוָה מִשְׁבֵּלַת הַנְּהַר

עַד-נַחַל מִצְרַיִם

וְאַתֶּם תִּלְקְטוּ לְאֶחָד אֶחָד בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

And it will happen on that day--

YHWH will beat out / thresh,⁵⁷

⁵⁶(...continued)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 12**: “*And it shall be in that day, that Jehovah shall beat off (or gather in His fruit) from the channel of the river to the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one (or one to another) O ye children of Israel...*”

“To the downfall of Babylon he now adds, as in **chapter 11:1**, its most important consequence, that is, the restoration of the Jews.” (P. 442)

Oswalt comments on **verse 12** that “God promises that there will be a great harvest at the end of time [where is this phrase, ‘the end of time’ found in this text? It is not!] and that each one of His righteous ones will be gathered in. The term used is not the normal one for ‘thresh’...but is חֲבַט, **chabhat**, ‘to beat off.’ When used of grain, it seems to speak of using a flail on small amounts of material (**Judges 6:11**, Gideon in the wine press; **Ruth 2:17**, Ruth with the barley she had gleaned). The term seems to fit better with harvesting of olives, where sticks are used to shake the ripe *olives* from the trees...”

“The sequence of beating first, then gathering also suggests olives. In any case, the picture of God gathering each of the scattered ones individually is a very tender one.” (P. 500) Compare **Isaiah 49:14-16**,

- 14 And Zion said, YHWH forsook me!,
and my Lord forgot me!
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!

⁵⁷Slotki comments that “The collection of the scattered exiles is compared with the careful collection of scattered fruit, olives for instance, after it had been beaten off the tree.” (P. 125)

(continued...)

from a flowing stream⁵⁸ of the River / Euphrates,
as far as (the) River of Egypt.⁵⁹

⁵⁷(...continued)

Alexander states that **חָבַט**, **chabat** is to beat fruit (and particularly olives) from the tree (p. 442); and as Gray notes on p. 461 it is also used for beating out grains of corn with a stick. See Alexander's notes on **Isaiah 17:6**, and:

Judges 6:11, Gideon was beating wheat in the wine-press, to hide it from before Midian;

Ruth 2:17 and she (Ruth) beat out (the barley) which she gathered / gleaned.

Deuteronomy 24:20, when you beat your olive-tree.

H. Wolf comments that this threshing symbolizes "Judgment on the nations into which Israel has been dispersed...The threshing will separate Israelites from Gentiles." (P. 1053)

Watts comments that "God's nurture of His vineyard, to mix the metaphor, includes threshing and gathering, harvesting like grain, in the dispersion of the Israelites. The election through Abraham of those who seek Him and yearn for Him is still valid and will be rewarded." (P. 351)

⁵⁸The phrase **מִן־שִׁבְלֵת**, **mishshibboleth**, has the prefixed **מִן**, **min**, "from," with the *nun* dropped, but indicated by the *dagesh forte* ("doubling dot") in the *shin*. The noun **שִׁבְלֵת**, **shibboleth**, means "flowing stream," or "ear of grain," but here, as a part of the Euphrates, has the first meaning.

⁵⁹Slotki comments that by "the River" is meant "the Euphrates on the northeast of Palestine, referring to the exiles in Assyria...[By] "the Brook of Egypt" is meant "the Wadi el-Arish on the southwest, referring to the exiles in Egypt. The *River* and the *Brook* form the farthest limits of the boundaries of the Land of Israel. Others regard the *Brook of Egypt* as the Nile." (P. 125)

Motyer comments that "*The flowing Euphrates / 'the streams of the River' to the Wadi of Egypt* were the traditional boundaries of the promised land (**Genesis 15:18; Exodus 23:31; compare Joshua 1:4; Psalm 72:8**) and represent, therefore, the gathering by the Lord of every true member of His people, 'the sons of Israel.'" (P. 225)

See also **1 Kings 5:1^{Heb} / 4:21^{Eng}**, and **8:65**, where the extent of Solomon's kingdom is described in similar terms.

(continued...)

And you people will be gathered up / gleaned,⁶⁰ one by one,⁶¹
children of Israel!

27:13⁶² וְהָיָה | בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא

⁵⁹(...continued)

Alexander observes that “The simple meaning of the whole expression is, *from Assyria to Egypt*. (P. 442)

Rahlfs translates **verse 12** by:

καὶ ἔσται ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ
συμφράξει κύριος ἀπὸ τῆς διώρυγος τοῦ ποταμοῦ ἕως Ἡρινκοροῦρων
ὑμεῖς δὲ συναγάγετε τοὺς υἱοὺς Ἰσραὴλ κατὰ ἓνα ἓνα
And it will be in that day,
Lord will pack closely together, from the canal / channel of the River as far
as Hrinokorouron;
but then you (plural), gather the sons of Israel one by one!

Watts notes that “a city by this name [Hrinokorouron] existed at that time where El Arish is today.” (P. 348)

⁶⁰Motyer notes that “Gathered up (תִּלְקָטוּ) [2nd person plural, ‘you people will be gathered up’]) is used of gleaning (**17:5**) and is the original metaphor of **24:13**.” (P. 225)

Ortlund likewise comments that “God will gather in His chosen people, with His hand on each individual. The agricultural metaphor matches the ‘vineyard’ in **Isaiah 27:2-6**.” (P. 1287)

⁶¹Slotki notes that “one by one” means “not a single exile will be forgotten.” (P. 125)

Alexander comments that the phrase לְאֶחָד לְאֶחָד, (le)achadh)echadh, literally “to / for one, one,” “which cannot mean the sudden streaming in of a great multitude, but must denote the thorough and complete ingathering of what might otherwise be lost or left behind. The precise sense of the Hebrew phrase is not well expressed by the English *one by one*, which seems to represent the process as a gradual one. It rather denotes *one to one*., i.e. in our idiom, *one to another*, all together, or without exception.” (P. 442)

⁶²Slotki states that **verse 13** is “An interpretation and amplification of the preceding verse. Even those that were exiled in the distant parts of Assyria, or dispersed in the remotest corners of Egypt, will be brought back.” (P. 125)

(continued...)

יִתְקַעַּ בְּשׁוֹפָר גָּדוֹל
 וּבָאוּ הָאֲבָדִים בְּאֶרֶץ אַשּׁוּר
 וְהִנְדִּיחוּ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם
 וְהִשְׁתַּחוּוּ לַיהוָה
 בְּהַר הַקֹּדֶשׁ בִּירוּשָׁלַם׃

And it will happen on that day–

it will be sounded / blown on a great ram's horn,⁶³

⁶²(...continued)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 13**: “*And it shall be (or come to pass) in that day, (that) a great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come that were lost (or wandering) in the land of Assyria, and those cast out (or exiled) in the land of Egypt, and shall bow down to Jehovah, in the holy mountain, in Jerusalem...*”

“The same event is here described as [in **verse 12**], but with a change of figure. What is there represented as a gathering of olives by beating the tree, is now represented as a gathering of men by the blast of a trumpet, which here takes the place of a signal-pole or flag in **chapter 11:12**...

“Assyria and Egypt may be either put for foreign countries generally, or with particular allusion to the actual emigration and dispersion of the Jews in these two regions. Assyria may here be used as a comprehensive term, in order to include both the Assyrian and Babylonian deportations. For although the ten tribes never were restored, individual members of them found their way back with the Jews from Babylon...

‘The emigration of the people, especially after Nebuchadnezzar’s conquests, was of course not confined to their actual deportation by the enemy, nor was the restoration merely that of such as had been thus carried captive, but of all who, in consequence of that catastrophe or any other, had been transferred to foreign parts by exile, flight, or voluntary expatriation. The application of this verse to a future restoration of the Jews can neither be established nor disproved.’ (Pp. 442-43)

⁶³Slotki comments that *horn*, in “Hebrew, שׁוֹפָר, **shophar**, [is the] ram’s horn. The blowing of the shophar is a signal for assembly and return to God.” (P. 125)

Ortlund comments that this “great trumpet” matches the “great sword” of **verse 1**.” (P. 1287)

(continued...)

⁶³(...continued)

For this matter of “the great trumpet,” compare:

Leviticus 25:9-10, In the forty-ninth year,

- 9 And you (singular) shall cause to pass over / through (the country)
a trumpet blast in the seventh month;
on (the) tenth of the month, on (the) day of the coverings / atonement
you shall cause to pass over / through (the country)
a trumpet in all your (plural) land.
- 10 And you (plural) shall set-apart the fiftieth year;
and you shall proclaim liberty / flowing freely in the earth / land
to all inhabiting it.
It shall be a ram’s horn for you people;
and each man shall return to his possession / landed property;
and each man—
they shall return to his / its clan.

Zechariah 9:14, YHWH appears over His people, sounding the trumpet, leading them
into battle;

Matthew 24:31, the “Son of the person” will appear,

and He will send forth the messengers / angels of His with a great trumpet,
and they will gather the chosen people of His out of the four winds,
from (the) corners of (the) heavens,
as far as [the] ends of them.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52,

- 51 Look—I tell you a mystery:
We will not all have fallen asleep,
but then we will all be changed,
- 52 in a moment, in (the) winking of an eye,
at the last trumpet;
for it will be blown,
and the dead will be raised incorruptible,
and we will be changed!

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17,

- 15 For this I am saying to you people by (the) Lord’s word,
that we, the living,
the ones remaining until the coming of the Lord,
will not come before / precede those having died;

(continued...)

and those perishing⁶⁴ in Assyria-land will come,
and those banished in Egypt-land,⁶⁵

⁶³(...continued)

- 16 because the Lord Himself with a shouted command,
with a voice of an arch-angel / chief-messenger,
and with God's trumpet,
will descend / come down from heaven,
and the dead ones in Christ will rise first;
- 17 then we the living, the ones remaining,
together with them will be seized / carried off in clouds
for a meeting with the Lord in (the) air;
and in this way we will be always with (the) Lord.
(Remember, Paul says that his prophecy is "seen through a mirror darkly," "in an
enigma," and is not to be taken as if it were a clear and exact vision—**1
Corinthians 13:9-12.**)

⁶⁴Slotki notes that a better translation is "that were wandering," as in
Deuteronomy 26:5." (P. 125) It is a confession made by a worshiper in Israel:

And you shall answer, and you shall say before YHWH your God,
A perishing / wandering Aramean / Syrian (was) my father.
And he went down to Egypt,
and he was a temporary resident there,
consisting of a few men;
and he grew there into a great nation,
mighty and great.

Watts comments that "This act [**chapters 23-27**] has had a great deal to say
about Yahweh's acts in regard to the dead in the land. The reference here is to those
for whom existence in exile, cut off from contact and relation to the worship of God in
Israel, is like a living death. Life for them is unthinkable without a sense of the
presence of Yahweh and an opportunity to worship Him. This was the spiritual 'hell' of
exile." (P. 351)

Compare **Psalm 137** (which says nothing concerning Babylon's being "hell," but
only says the Jews couldn't sing their songs of joy there; instead the psalm prays for the
dashing of Babylon's children against the rocks!).

⁶⁵Motyer comments that "The reference to *in Assyria* and *in Egypt* is to people
living within Gentile boundaries, a different picture from **verse 12**. This is the
ingathering of the people of the world to Jerusalem." (P. 225) See:

Isaiah 11:11-12

(continued...)

⁶⁵(...continued)

- 11 And it will happen on / in that day,
my Lord will again a second time (reach out) His hand
to gather a remnant of His people which will be left remaining
from Assyria and from Egypt,
and from Pathros and from Ethiopia / Cush,
and from Elam and from Shinar
and from Chamath and from (the) islands of the sea.
- 12 And He will lift up / raise a signal for the nations;
and He will gather (synonym) (the) dispersed ones of Israel,
and (the) scattered ones of Judah
He will gather (synonym) from the earth's / land's four corners.

Isaiah 19:18-25,

- 18 In that day there will be five cities in Egypt-land
speaking Canaan's tongue,
and swearing to the YHWH of Armies.
The City of Destruction it will be called to one (of them).
- 19 In that day there will be an altar to the YHWH
in (the) midst of Egypt-land,
and a pillar next to its border, to the YHWH.
- 20 And it will be for a sign and for a witness
to the YHWH of Armies in Egypt-land;
because they will cry out to YHWH from before oppressors;
and He will send to them a deliverer / savior;
and one contending, and he will deliver (synonym) them.
- 21 And YHWH will be known to Egypt / Egyptians;
and Egyptians will know YHWH in that day;
and they will serve sacrifice(s) and offering(s);
and they will make a vow to the YHWH,
and they will keep it.
- 22 And YHWH will strike Egypt / Egyptians,
striking and healing;
and they will return to / as far as YHWH;
and He will be supplicated by them,
and He will heal them.
- 23 On that day there will be a highway
from Egypt to Assyria,
and Assyria will come into Egypt,
and Egypt into Assyria;
and Egyptians will serve Assyria.
- 24 In that day, Israel will be a third one to Egypt and to Assyria—
a blessing in the earth's / land's midst,
- 25 which YHWH of Armies will bless, saying
Blessed (is) My people Egypt,

(continued...)

and they will bow down in worship⁶⁶ to the YHWH
on the set-apart mountain and in Jerusalem!⁶⁷

⁶⁵(...continued)
and work / product of My hands, Assyria,
and My inheritance, Israel!

Isaiah is convinced that YHWH has a wonderful future in store, not only for the people of Israel, but also for the former oppressors of Israel, both Egypt and Assyria!

Watts comments that “These two areas [Assyria and Egypt] continued to be the major concentrations of Israelites and Jews in the dispersion, although a heavy addition in southern Mesopotamia in 598 and 587 B.C.E. would shift the emphasis on Babylon...

“The purpose and the goal of the gathering may come as a surprise or disappointment to many. There is no reference to the reestablishment of the people in Canaan (as in **Joshua**). Nor are they promised the reestablishment of the kingdom even under a son of David. Instead they are promised the opportunity to make pilgrimage to Jerusalem, to *bow down to Yahweh*...

“This should be no surprise to the reader of the [**Book of Isaiah**]. From **2:1-4** on, the future has been promised to a demilitarized *holy mountain in Jerusalem*. It will be the place of Yahweh’s dwelling and the peoples can come there to worship Him and learn of His **torah**. Yahweh here promises exiled Israel that privilege. The people who have the hope of seeing Yahweh in His glory in His holy mountain need not consider themselves ‘dead’ or ‘perishing.’ To be able to be in His presence is life of the highest order.” (P. 351)

⁶⁶The verb here is **וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ**, **wehishtachawu**, a “hishtaphel” form, 3rd person common plural, prefixed with the waw-conversive / consecutive, from the root **חָוָה**, **chawah**, “to bow down (in worship).”

⁶⁷Gray comments that “As the homeless children of Jacob were once brought out of the alien land of Egypt into their own home-land, so will the Jews, now again away from home, in the alien lands of Egypt and Assyria, return home to Jerusalem.” (P. 463) But is this passage a promise of return from exile, to be citizens of Jerusalem, or only a promise of pilgrimage to Jerusalem from their homes in exile?

Motyer states that “From the ends of the earth, and even from the supreme oppressors themselves (Egypt the first, Assyria the contemporary), there will be those whom the atonement trumpet [where does Motyer get ‘the atonement trumpet’? We assume he means “the day of atonement trumpet”] calls to Zion. The gathered Gentiles [non-Jews] *will worship the Lord on the holy mountain in Jerusalem*. They will be united to the Lord in worship, full participants in the holy community and welcomed in Jerusalem as members of the strong city itself (compare **Ephesians 3:6** [the non-Jews

(continued...)

1. Passages in the Bible that Mention Leviathan, Dragons, Sea Monsters, etc.

Isaiah 27:1

⁶⁷(...continued)
are fellow-heirs with the Jews in Christ].” (P. 226)

But we wonder—Does the text mention the non-Jews coming from the ends of the earth, or only the scattered Jews?

Watts explains **chapter 27** as follows: “The scene picks up the beginning theme of the act—the destruction of Tyre [but where is Tyre mentioned apart from **chapter 23**, where it is mentioned seven times? The fact is it is not mentioned anywhere else in **chapters 24-27**, or in the remainder of the **Book of Isaiah!**—affirms it, and then deals with the consequences for Israel. God affirms His care and protection for Israel, now in exile. But His words are met with skeptical questions...

“The lessons of the devastation of Israel have not yet been learned. Yet the scene closes with the affirmation that God will make it possible for exiled Israelites to overcome the disabilities of distance and separation and thus be among the worshipers on His holy mountain in Jerusalem.. The reference to the exiles as ‘perishing’ picks up the theme of ‘death’ earlier in the act. It assures the exiles of meaningful ‘life’ through faithful continuation of their relationship to Yahweh, Who offers the hope of worship in Jerusalem.”

In that day, YHWH will visit (punishment) with His sword,
the hard one, and the great one, and the strong one,
upon Leviathan–Fleeing Serpent,
and upon Leviathan–Crooked Serpent.
And He will kill the Dragon / Monster which is in the sea!

Isaiah 51:9-11,

- 9 Awake! Awake!, clothe Yourself with strength, arm of YHWH!
Awake as (in) days (of) former times, generations of long-lasting times!
Are You not She, the One hewing in pieces (feminine participle) Rahab,
the One piercing (feminine participle) (the) Dragon?
10 Are You not She, the One making Yam / (the) sea dry (feminine participle),
(the) waters of a great Ocean?,
the One Who placed / made (feminine verb) Yam's / (the) sea's depths
a way to pass / cross over (for) redeemed ones / next-of-kin ones?
11 And YHWH's ransomed ones will return,
and they will enter Zion with a ringing-cry,
and long-lasting joy upon their head(s),
rejoicing and joy they shall reach / attain;
grief and sighing fled!

Ezekiel 29:3,

Speak! And you shall say, In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:
Look at Me, against you, Pharaoh, King of Egypt--
The dragon, the great one, the one lying in (the) midst of his rivers,
who said, My river / Nile is mine, and I made it!
(This is a radical demythologization of the Near-Eastern myth, identifying "The
great Dragon" with Pharaoh, King of Egypt!)

Ezekiel 32:2-6,

- 2 Son of a human-being / man, lift up an elegy / dirge
upon / against Pharaoh, King of Egypt! An you shall say to him,
you were likened to a lion of nations,
and you (were) like the Dragon / Monster in the waters.
And you burst forth in your rivers,
and you stirred up waters with your feet,
and you fouled their rivers.
3 In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:
And I will cast out My net over you,
in the assembly of many peoples,
and they will raise you up with My drag-net (synonym)!
4 And I will leave / forsake you in the land / earth,
upon the face / surface of the field I will hurl you;
and I will cause to settle upon you every bird of the heavens.
And I will cause to be filled from / with you, wild animal(s) of all the land /
earth!

- 5 And I will place your flesh upon the mountains,
and I will fill the valleys (with) your tall stature.
6 And I will give drink (to the) land / earth (from) your outflow
from your blood, to the mountains.
And channels will be filled from you!

Nehemiah 2:13, Nehemiah tells how he went out from Jerusalem by the Valley Gate to the “Dragon Spring.” (We assume that the Valley Gate opened into the Kidron Valley, and that the “Dragon Spring” is the Gihon Spring which watered the “king’s gardens” in the Kidron Valley, and which was re-routed by Hezekiah underneath the rock hill to flow into the “Pool of Siloam” on the western side of the hill. Why it is called the “Dragon Spring” is a matter of speculation. Later Talmudic Jews held that the Spring Gihon was the “center” of the land of Israel, and it may be that it was considered the site of YHWH’s victory over the dragon in creation.)

Job 3:8,

They will curse it (the day of Job’s birth), those cursing (synonym) a day,
those ready to rouse Leviathan.”
(This depiction is that of a sleeping monster who can be awakened by human effort.)

Job 7:12, Job responds to Eliphaz, asking

Am I a sea with a dragon, that you place upon / over me a prison / guard?”
(That is, Job resents the way his so-called “friends” are treating him, as if he were, in terms of Near-Eastern mythology, a sea-dragon / monster who needs to be treated as an enemy.)

Job 40:25^{Heb} / 41:1^{Eng}, where YHWH asks Job,

Will you draw out Leviathan with a hook?
Or with a cord will you make his tongue sink?
(Obviously Leviathan here is an animal that can only be caught with great difficulty—perhaps the crocodile.)

Psalms 74:12-14,

- 12 And God (is) my King from ancient-time,
working salvations / deliverances in the earth’s midst.
13 You divided Yam / sea with Your strength;
You crushed Dragons’ heads upon the waters.
14 You crushed (synonym) Leviathan’s heads,
You gave him (as) food to a people, to wild animals!
(Here again, God’s victory over the Dragons and the many-headed Leviathan is depicted as an already accomplished act in the past!)

Psalm 104:26,

There (in the sea)—boats / ships travel;
Leviathan, this one You formed, to play in it.
(This is a true “demythologization” of the Near-Eastern myth. Leviathan is nothing more than one of YHWH’s creatures which YHWH formed to play in the sea!)

Revelation 12:1-17, the entire chapter is highly symbolic, depicting a universal pregnant woman and her opponent, a great universal red dragon—the ancient serpent, the devil, the satan—who attempts to kill the woman and her offspring. That is, the red dragon is a symbol for all evil.

Revelation 12:7-9,

7 And there was war in the heaven,
the Michael and the messengers / angels of his, fighting with the dragon.
And the dragon fought, and his messengers / angels,
and they were not able (to win),
neither was a place found for them anymore in the heaven.
8 And the dragon was thrown, the great one, the serpent, the ancient one,
the one being called Accuser / Devil and the Satan,
the one deceiving the whole inhabited earth was thrown into the earth,
and his messengers / angels were thrown with him.
9 And the dragon, the great one, was thrown, the serpent, the ancient one,
the one being called devil / accuser and the satan / adversary,
the one deceiving the whole inhabited earth, thrown into the earth,
and his messengers / angels with him were thrown.
And I heard a great voice in the heaven saying,
Now the salvation / deliverance and the might
and the kingdom of the God of ours has come,
and the authority of His Anointed One / Christ,
because the one bringing charges against them before the God of ours
day and night was thrown (down)!

Revelation 13:1-11, this chapter like the preceding chapter, is highly symbolic, depicting two great universal beasts that arise from the sea, on the edge of which the dragon is standing. The second of the two beasts looks like a lamb, but speaks like a dragon, causing humanity to worship the first beast. John, in **Revelation**, has taken up the ancient Near-Eastern mythology with its monstrous beasts, and applied it to the on-going battle between the Church and the Roman Empire.

Revelation 16:13,

And I saw, out of the mouth of the dragon,
and out of the mouth of the beast,
and out of the mouth of the false-prophet,

three spirits, unclean ones, like frogs.

Revelation 20:2, where John sees a messenger / angel descending from heaven with the key to the abyss and great chains in his hands,

And he took strong hold of the dragon, the serpent, the ancient one,
who is devil / accuser and the satan / adversary,
and he bound him (for) a thousand years.