

Isaiah Chapter 30, Hebrew Text with Translation and Footnotes

Say No! to Dependence on Egypt--

YHWH Will Deliver You from Assyria!

Wait in Quiet Confidence for YHWH--Who Is Waiting for You!

An Enigmatic Wondrous Future Is Coming For You,

and Divine Destruction for Assyria¹

¹**Chapter 30** has one end-note: “Occurrences of the noun נְשָׁמָה, **neshamah** in the Hebrew Bible.

Slotki states that **chapter 30** is “A bold and explicit denunciation of the political intrigues of the pro-Egyptian party, an exposure of the futility of Egyptian power and an announcement of the supernatural destruction of the Assyrian invader.” (P. 139)

Alexander states that “This chapter contains an exposure of the sin and folly of ancient Israel in seeking foreign aid against their enemies, to the neglect of God, their rightful Sovereign and their only strong Protector. The costume of the prophecy is borrowed from the circumstances and events of Isaiah’s own times. Thus Egypt is mentioned in the first part of the chapter as the chosen ally of the people, and Assyria in the last part as the dreaded enemy...

“There is no need, however, of restricting what is said to that period exclusively. The presumption, as in all such cases, is, that the description was designed to be more general, although it may contain allusions to particular emergencies. Reliance upon human aid, involving a distrust of the Divine promises, was a crying sin of the ancient church [meaning Israel], not at one time only, but throughout her history...

“[The chapter] was clearly intended to reprove the sin of seeking foreign aid without Divine permission; but there is nothing in the terms of the reproof confining it to any single case of the offense...

“This chapter may be divided into three parts. In the first, the prophet shows the sin and folly of relying upon Egypt, no doubt for protection against Assyria, as these were the two great powers between which Israel was continually oscillating, almost constantly at war with one and in alliance with the other (**verses 1-7**)...

“In the last part, he describes the Assyrian power as broken by an immediate Divine interposition, precluding the necessity of any human aid (**verses 27-33**)...

“In the larger intervening part, he shows the connection of this distrust in God and reliance on the creature with the general character and spiritual state of the people, as unwilling to receive instruction, as dishonest and oppressive, making severe

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judgments necessary, as a prelude to the glorious change which God would eventually bring to pass (**verses 8-26**)." (Pp. 471-72)

Motyer entitles **chapter 30** "Human faithlessness and the faithfulness of God."

He comments that "Isaiah now turns from principles to applications, as the references to Egypt and Assyria show (**verses 2 and 31**). This fourth 'woe' takes up the theme of the first (**28:1-29**) and applies it to the alliance with Egypt (**verses 1-7**) and the assault of Assyria (**verses 27-33**). The principle enunciated in **chapter 28** is that there is only one foundation (**28:16**). Outside the promises of the Lord there no salvation, only destruction." (P. 244) But remember the universal promise of **Isaiah 25:6-8!**

Oswalt entitles **30:1-31:9** "Woe to those who trust in Egypt," and entitles **30:1-18** "Woe to the rebellious children."

He comments that "**Chapters 30-31** move from the more general denunciation of **chapters 29-30** to specific ones aimed at the alliance with Egypt...The segment follows much the same pattern of development already seen: denunciation followed by promise...

"In **30:1-18** Isaiah explores at considerable length the foolishness of the decision to depend on Egypt for help in view of Egypt's character (**verses 1-7**) and God's word (**verses 2, 8, 15**)...

"Since they refuse to wait upon the Lord, the Lord must wait upon them, until the time when their follies have left them helpless and they must turn to Him as a last resort (**verse 18**)...

"In **30:1-7** Isaiah heaps his scorn upon the idea of Egypt offering Judah any substantive help...

"There is some disagreement over the precise time-reference of the events here described. [Some] take the passage to refer to the revolt against Sargon in 714-711 B.C.E...[However] it seems best to date this account, with the majority of commentators, to 701 B.C.E., either shortly before or shortly after the Egyptian army's advance to Eltekeh and Sennacherib's defeat of it there.

"By this time Judah was *in extremis* [in an extremely difficult situation]. Whatever hopes Hezekiah may have had for the success of his revolt, and it was evidently carefully planned, as the Siloam tunnel indicates, those hopes were now dashed. All his allies had either capitulated or been defeated, his outer fortresses were now defeated, and the end was clearly at hand. If any human help was to be found, Egypt

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was the only possibility...**Verses 2, 4, and 6** may indicate that envoys were already on their way to Egypt.” (Pp. 544-45)

Watts entitles **chapter 30** “Disaster from Self-Help in Rebellion.” He comments that “The scene builds upon the real struggle between God and the Judean leaders, who are determined to follow their own plans. The first episode, ‘Woe, Rebellious Children’ (**30:1-18**), draws a contrast between what God is doing and the policies of Judah’s leaders, while the second and third episodes portray religious teachers and prophets teaching a blind, euphoric hope which ignores the real rebellion of their leaders...

“Episode B, ‘Hope from the Teachers’ (**30:19-26**), calmly repeats the doctrine of hope in God. The teachers, blind to the real issues on which the fate of the nation hung, went on teaching ‘peace, peace, where there was no peace’ (**Jeremiah 6:14; 8:11**)...

“Episode C, ‘A Cultic Theophany’ (**30:27-33**) presents the religious exercise of cultic prophecy. Judah’s leaders cultivated the shallow hope that Yahweh would appear in a miraculous way to effect their salvation without their having to be concerned about the policies of the nation.” (P. 390) What a negative view of **Isaiah 30!**

Kaiser entitles **verses 1-5** “Refuge with Pharaoh.” He comments that these verses “take the form of a proclamation of woe followed by a reason for it. The reason for the woes uttered in the first two verses is given in the three verses that follow...

“When the great emperor Sennacherib began to close upon Jerusalem and the fortresses of Judah—if not before—Hezekiah sent an embassy to Pharaoh Shabako with a request for military assistance. Perhaps the diplomatic mission to Egypt which underlies this passage took place as early as the time when the news was abroad of the approach of the emperor and of his subjection not only of the cities of Phoenicia and some of the Philistine cities, but also Ammon, Moab, and Edom...

“In addition to what we learn from Sennacherib himself, it is probable that not only the Philistine cities of Ashdod and Ekron but also Hezekiah urgently begged Pharaoh to intervene. But the Egyptian army that actually set out was defeated at Eltekeh. This seems to have sealed the fate of the allies...

“One can imagine how closely the course of events was followed by all the people of Jerusalem, and that in view of the royal embassy which had left for Egypt, there was also an interest in public circles in Jerusalem in a prophetic oracle concerning the whole matter. Isaiah left no doubt that he condemned the official hopes, which may have been shared by wider circles, of Egyptian help. On the one hand the actual decision to send the embassy had been taken without consulting the prophet of Yahweh and therefore without an oracle from Yahweh having been sought (compare

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30:1² תְּהִי בְנֵי־סוֹרְרִים

נְאֻם־יְהוָה

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Isaiah 31:1b)...

“Secondly, in Isaiah’s view the history of the previous decades seems to have shown clearly what could be expected from Egyptian help. The last king of the northern kingdom of Israel, Hoshea, had relied upon the Egyptians for help during his rising against Shalmaneser V in 724 B.C.E. and had brought disaster upon his country...

“The revolt of the Philistine cities, which seems to have lasted from 713-711 B.C.E., and in which Ashdod tried at least to involve Hezekiah, failed quite miserably; not only did Shabako refuse to send the reinforcing army but actually handed over to Sargon the ‘Ionian’ [Greek] who was at that time the ruler of Ashdod...

“One must concede that Isaiah had a gift of cool political observation, as well as an equally firm belief in the zeal with which Yahweh watched over the obedience of His people and avenged every offense against his Deity.” (Pp. 282-84)

²Motyer entitles **30:1-5** “The embassy to Egypt.”

Slotki entitles **verses 1-2** “Rebellious children.” They are “the members of the pro-Egyptian party.” (P. 139)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 1**: “*Woe to the disobedient children, saith Jehovah, (so disobedient as) to form (or execute) a plan and not from Me, and to weave a web, but not (of) My Spirit, for the sake of adding sin to sin.*”

The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has τέκνα ἀποστάται, “children, deserters / rebels.” Watts comments that “The complaint about rebellious children picks up a theme begun in **Isaiah 1:2**. The following sections define the nature of the rebellion.” (P. 395)

Oswalt comments on **verse 1** that “For Isaiah this decision [to send envoys to Egypt] could only stem from the basic rebelliousness of his people...God’s word concerning alliances with Egypt was very clear: they were forbidden (**Exodus 13:17** [No]; **Deuteronomy 17:16**).” (P. 544)

We say, Isaiah himself, as YHWH’s messenger / mouth, had forbidden such alliances, and it was not based on quoting a verse like **Deuteronomy 17:16**, even though that verse does forbid what Israel is attempting to do here.

לַעֲשׂוֹת עֵצָה וְלֹא מִנִּי

וְלִנְסֹךְ מִסִּכָּה וְלֹא רוּחִי

לְמַעַן סְפוֹת חַטָּאת עַל-חַטָּאת:

Alas, stubborn / rebellious sons / children!³

—a saying⁴ of YHWH--⁵

³Kaiser comments that “The mere fact that the Jews in their responsible ruling circles had behaved towards Yahweh as rebellious sons would have been sufficient to condemn their plans...

“The relationship between father and son, assumed here, as in **1:2-3** between Yahweh and Israel does not refer to any kind of consubstantiality between God and man...but to unconditional authority and power over His son, obedience without question (compare **Deuteronomy 32:5-6** and **Malachi 1:6; 2:10.**” (Pp. 284-85)

Kaiser is referring to the Christian doctrine of “consubstantiality,” with regards to Jesus Christ as being “consubstantial” with the Father, a philosophical-theological teaching which created division in the early Christian Church, in which the “monophysites” (largely in Syria, Israel and Egypt) denied the “trinitarian” position concerning the Divine nature of Jesus. His point is that here in **Isaiah 30** (and elsewhere in the **Hebrew Bible**), the Israelites are called the “sons” of God, just as the later Christian called Jesus the “son of God,” without any thought of their being “consubstantial” with the Father.

⁴Where our Hebrew text spells נְאֻם, **ne)um**, “utterance / declaration / revelation,” 1QIsa has נְאֻמ, **no)m**, which we take to be a simple mistake on the part of the copyist at Qumran.

⁵The phrase here, נְאֻם-יְהוָה, **ne)um-YHWH**, “a saying / utterance / declaration / revelation of YHWH,” identifies the saying as coming from YHWH, and is a claim to Divine communication coming through the prophet. This phrase occurs some 267 times in the **Hebrew Bible**, identifying specific statements as coming from YHWH.

However, this is only a tiny fraction of the thousands of statements made in the literary prophets, and it is not a universal claim, i.e., that everything written or spoken by the prophets has come from YHWH. See footnote 164, with its quotation of **Jeremiah 23**, where Jeremiah rebukes prophets using the similar phrase “burden / oracle of YHWH,” claiming falsely that their messages came from YHWH. Ministers today need to be very careful when they claim that their message is “the word of God.”

to do / make⁶ counsel / advice,⁷ and not from Me!⁸

And to pour out a drink-offering / weave a web,⁹ and not (by) My Spirit!¹⁰

⁶Oswalt observes that the verbs in **verse 1** “are infinitives which are used to describe the nature of the rebellion.” (P. 542)

⁷The Hebrew phrase is לַעֲשׂוֹת עֵצָה, la(asoht (etsah, “to do / make counsel / advice.” Translations vary from “take counsel” to “making plans,” to “carry out a plan / plans,” to “who make plans,” to ἐποιήσατε βουλήν, “you (plural) made a plan.” These rebellious / disobedient Jews are making their plan(s) without seeking YHWH’s guidance.

Watts comments that the **Book of Isaiah** “has consistently avowed that Yahweh has a strategy, a plan, for Israel. The political leaders have one, too. But the strategies differ.” (P. 395)

Do you agree? And if so, what is YHWH’s plan for Israel? Would you agree that the Divine plan for Israel is most clearly depicted in **Isaiah 53** (Israel as the “suffering servant”) and **Isaiah 58** (with its depiction of true “fasting” / “righteousness”? Are not those chapters an anticipation of the life and ministry of Jesus, certainly fulfilled and embodied in Jesus? Do you think they ought to be integral to America’s national “plan”?

⁸Kaiser states that “The delegation sent to Egypt by Hezekiah seems to have had the purpose of concluding a formal defensive and offensive agreement with Shabako... In a few intense words Isaiah states that the plan has not come from Yahweh...

“When the prophet, speaking in the person of Yahweh Himself, affirms that this has heaped sin upon sin, he is presumably thinking of the treaty made by Ahaz with Tiglathpileser during the war with Syria and Ephraim (compare **chapters 7-8**) and the participation by Hezekiah in one form or another in the Philistine revolt led by Ashdod (compare **Isaiah 20:1ff.**)” (P. 285)

⁹Slotki’s translation [**American-Jewish Translation of the Scriptures**] has for this phrase “And that form projects.” He states that the Hebrew is literally “weave a web,” and adds that “A less acceptable alternative is ‘pour out a drink-offering’ to ratify a treaty.” (P. 139)

Alexander translates by “to weave a web,” and comments that “The phrase לִנְסוֹק מַסְכָּה, linsok massekhah has been variously explained. The Syriac Peshito makes it mean ‘to pour out libations,’ probably with reference to some ancient mode of ratifying covenants, and the [Greek / **Rahfs**] accordingly translates it ἐποιήσατε... συνθήκας, ‘you made compacts / agreements’. Cocceius applies it to the ‘casting of molten images’...De Dieu to the molding of designs or plots...J. D. Michaelis makes the

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phrase mean to ‘weave a web,’ which agrees well with the context, and is favored by the similar use of the same verb and noun in **Isaiah 25:7**.” (P. 472)

If we take the words to mean “weave a web,” what does that mean? Does it mean forming an intricate web of political and military relationships with Egypt? Motyer says it means weaving “the web of diplomatic intrigue leading to an alliance.” (P. 245)

All of these differing understandings create a great difficulty for the student of the **Hebrew Bible**. The reason for them is the fact that the Hebrew root נָסַךְ, **nasak**, is ambiguous. The **Hebrew-English Dictionary of Brown-Driver-Briggs** lists the following words, all coming from this basic root:

- I. נָסַךְ, **nasak**, verb, pour out (i.e., either a libation / drink offering, or cast, forge metal)
 - נֶסֶךְ, **nesek**, masculine noun, drink-offering
 - נָסִיךְ, **nasiyk**, 1. libation; 2. molten image
 - I. מַסְכָּה, **massekhhah**, feminine noun 1. molten metal, or image; 2. libation, drink-offering
- II. נָסַךְ, **nasak**, verb, weave
 - II. מַסְכָּה, **massekhhah**, feminine noun woven stuff, web, especially as covering
 - מִסְכֶּת, **masseketh**, feminine noun, web of unfinished stuff, on loom
- III. נָסַךְ, **nasak**, verb, set, install
 - נָסִיךְ, **nasiyk**, masculine noun, prince (one installed).

With all of these meanings hovering around the root נָסַךְ, **nasak**, it is no wonder that differing translations are given to this phrase! And this is the nature of the Hebrew text, here in **Isaiah 30:1**. The desire to have a clear, unambiguous translation / interpretation will be disappointed, as we have to recognize the deep ambiguity that there is in this text. The prophetic message, rooted in visions and dreams, is filled with puzzling enigmas, such as this—and we should have expected such, having learned from **Numbers 12:6-8** and **1 Corinthians 13:7-12!**

However, there can be little doubt as to the overall meaning—which is that YHWH wants His people to look for, and be dependent upon His Divine guidance, doing all in their power to guide their lives by the Divine will, rather than depending solely upon human resources.

¹⁰Slotki states that this means “Not in agreement with the Divine spirit which directed the warnings against the alliance uttered by Isaiah.” (P. 139)

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Or, perhaps the meaning is that it is not YHWH's Spirit that is leading them in what they are doing—they are acting on their own, heedless to YHWH's Spirit, certainly heedless to Isaiah's Spirit-filled message!

¹¹The verb here, סִפּוֹת, **sephoth**, is the qal infinitive construct of the root verb יָסַף, **yasaph**, "to add." The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) is προσθεῖναι, "to add to."

¹²Slotki's translation has "add sin to sin," and he comments that "The sin of trusting in Pharaoh [is added] to that of mistrust in God; or the sin of the treaty with Egypt [is added] to the secrecy with which it was negotiated." (P. 139)

Alexander holds that the phrase simply means "multiplying or accumulating guilt." (P. 472)

Motyer states that "The first sin of acting without Divine prompting, compounded by the second sin of seeking a covering other than the Spirit, is described as deliberate intention to sin." (P. 245) But Motyer's "deliberate intention to sin" is not found in the text, and we wonder what he means by "covering"—does he mean a protective covering, that is, the armed might of Egypt? Where does the text say anything about the Spirit being a "covering"?

Oswalt states that the phrase "*so that sin is added to sin*" may be understood in at least two ways. First, it may mean that to the sin of bringing Assyria into the land of Canaan through Ahaz's alliance with her, they now add the sin of allying themselves with Egypt to get Assyria out! But it is also possible that it is the sin of concealment being added to the sin of alliance. In any case, it is true that something about the human condition leads us not to confess sin but to compound it with more." (P. 545)

¹³Alexander translates / comments on **verse 2**: "*Those walking to go down to Egypt, and My mouth they have not consulted (literally asked), to take refuge in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt...*"

"*To ask the mouth*", or '*at the mouth*,' of the Lord, is a phrase used elsewhere in the sense of seeking a Divine decision or response." (P. 472)

We agree, and think that this means consulting with YHWH's prophet or spokesperson.

Watts comments on **verse 2** that "The leaders plan an alliance with Egypt. In Ashurbanipal's late reign and in those of his successors, Assyria had become less aggressive. But Psamtik I, Pharaoh of Egypt, increased in power and ambition. Jerusalem's leaders were determined to play the game of power politics, pitting one superpower against the one they thought would be its successor." (P. 395)

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וּפִי לֹא שָׁאַלְנִי
 לְעֵזֹז בְּמַעֲזוֹ פְּרָעָה
 וּלְחַסוֹת בְּצַל מִצְרַיִם:

The ones walking / going¹⁴ to descend (to) Egypt--
 and My mouth--they did not ask--¹⁵

¹³(...continued)

Perhaps...but the text makes no mention of Ahurbanipal or of Psalmtik, and does not make the historical background explicit as Watts constantly attempts to do.

¹⁴The Hebrew phrase **לְרַדְתָּ לְהֵלֵכִים**, literally “the ones walking to the going down,” is given varying translations, from “That walk to go down,” to “Who set out to go down,” to “who go down,” to “who leave,” to the Greek translation’s οἱ πορευόμενοι καταβήναι, “the ones going / proceeding to go down.” Watts has “those hurrying to descend,” but we see no indication of “hurrying” in the text.

¹⁵What do you think this line means, “and My mouth they did not ask”? We think that “My mouth” is intended to mean the prophet Isaiah, whose ministry was centered in speaking the Divine message which he received from YHWH—that is, he looked upon himself as a spokesman for YHWH—he acted as “YHWH’s mouth,” he did everything in his power to speak for YHWH. And the charge here is that those who have gone down to Egypt to make a treaty have not asked Isaiah whether or not such a mission was the Divine will. Compare **Joshua 9:14**, where it is said that the Israelites, in their entering into a covenant with the people of Gibeon: **וְאֶת־פִּי יְהוָה לֹא שָׁאַלְנִי**, “and YHWH’s mouth they did not ask.”

Kaiser comments that this line “shows that on the occasion of all acts by the ruler of the state [of Israel] an oracle was required to be sought from Yahweh, and that this was in fact largely done (compare **Isaiah 32:2-5; 2 Kings 21:12-14; Jeremiah 37:17-19; 38:14-16**). This practice was in force more or less everywhere in antiquity, and is certainly not peculiar to Israel...”

“The term used here [**שָׁאַל**, **sha)al**, ‘ask’]...is an ancient technical term for seeking an oracle from Yahweh, e.g. in the holy war (compare **Joshua 9:14; Judges 1:1; 20:18, 23, 26; 1 Samuel 13:51; 23:9-11**). An utterance by a prophet now seems to have replaced the oracle by lot which was the usual practice before the setting up of the monarchy.” (P. 285)

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to take refuge¹⁶ in Pharaoh's place of refuge;¹⁷

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Where our Hebrew text of **Isaiah 30:2** has וּפִי לֹא שָׁאַל־נִי, “and My mouth they did not ask,” the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has: ἐμὲ δὲ οὐκ ἐπηρώτησαν, “but then Me they did not ask / question.” Motyer translates the phrase by “without consulting Me.” (P. 245).

What about you? How do you formulate your plans in life? Do you ask / question God for direction? How do you do this? Do you pray, and then wait to hear a response from God, deep in your heart? Do you ask someone you respect as one who faithfully speaks for God, your minister, or someone else? Do you allow God's Spirit to guide you? How do you do that?

Or do you let chance direct your steps?

Do you have the conviction that your own convictions and ideas are superior to God's?

Socrates went to the oracle at Delphi to hear the mouth / voice of God; Jewish leaders consulted Moses with his *torah* / teaching, or the High Priest with his urim and thummim, or prophets like Isaiah.

We Christians think Jesus is the “word of God,” that his life and ministry are an embodiment of Divine truth--but Jesus wrote no books, and we are dependent for his teaching on the memories and writings of his followers, none of whom claimed infallibility.

I myself believe that in studying books like **Isaiah**, and letting the prophet Isaiah's teaching settle into my heart and mind, I can hear the same “word of God” that I see embodied in Jesus as he is depicted in the **Gospels**. What about you?

¹⁶The Hebrew phrase “to take refuge,” לָעוֹז, **la(oz**, can also be spelled לְעוֹז, **la(uz**. This is only a matter of Masoretic spelling; in an unpointed text, there would be no difference.

¹⁷Where our Hebrew text has לָעוֹז בְּמַעוֹז פְּרָעָה, “to take refuge in Pharaoh's place of refuge, the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has βοηθηθηῖναι ὑπὸ Φαραῶ, “to be helped by Pharaoh.”

and to seek refuge¹⁸ in Egypt's shadow.¹⁹

¹⁸Here the phrase for taking or seek refuge is לְחַסוֹת, **lachesoth**, a synonym of the preceding לְעֹז, **la(oz)**.

¹⁹For the phrase בְּצֵל, **betsel**, “in (the) shadow (of), see the following passages:

Psalm 17:8, where the psalmist says to El / YHWH,

Guard / keep me, like a pupil, daughter of an eye!
In (the) shadow of Your wings, You will hide me,

Psalm 36:8, where the psalmist exclaims to YHWH God;

How precious (is) Your steadfast-love, O God!
And children of humanity will find refuge in (the) shadow of Your wings!

Psalm 91:1,

One dwelling in (the) hiding place of (the) Most High,
in (the) shadow of Shaddai he will lodge / spend the night.

Isaiah 49:2, where YHWH's servant says YHWH has hidden him in the shadow of His hand.

In the light of these references to people hiding in the shadow of YHWH or His “wings,” it seems obvious that Isaiah, here in **30:2** and **3** is reproving his people for seeking refuge in the shadow of Egypt instead of in YHWH's shadow. But Egypt is no God!

Again we note how similar Isaiah's language is to that of the **Psalter!**

Oswalt states that “*refuge* and *shelter* are words which have a particular poignancy because of their frequent appearance in the **Psalms** with reference to God. Thus the nature of Judah's rebellion is further underlined. It is not merely the making of a defensive alliance with a neighboring country which is so odious. It is the repudiation of a personal relationship of dependence upon and affection for their God.” (P. 546)

And we ask, How can an honest believer in God know whether or not their country should enter into alliances / relationships with foreign nations? Does the Divine word call for non-alliance / non-relationship with all others? Or does it call believers to become the willing servants of their fellow human-beings, including those in foreign nations, showing the world the true nature of “steadfast-love” and “righteousness”? And is the Divine mission of proclaiming good news to all the nations quite different from entering into political and military alliances with them? Are true believers called by God

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30:3²⁰ וְהָיָה לָכֶם מֵעוֹז פְּרֵעָה לְבִשְׁת

וְהַחֲסוֹת בְּצֵל-מִצְרַיִם לְכָל־מָה:

And Pharaoh's place of refuge will be for you (plural)²¹ for shame;
and the seeking refuge in Egypt's shadow for reproach!²²

¹⁹(...continued)

to be pacifists / isolationists, or simply messengers of good news, devoting their lives and their resources to that universal task?

²⁰Slotki comments that **verse 3** depicts “The consequences of disobedience to the word of God.” (P. 140)

Alexander translates **verse 3**: “*And the strength of Egypt shall be to you for shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt for confusion.*” (P. 472)

²¹Alexander comments that the phrase לְ הָיָה, **hayah le**, [literally “he was to or he became to”] “may here be taken in its frequent sense of becoming or being converted into.” (P. 472)

²²Watts comments on **verses 3-4** that “This prediction [i.e., that Egypt would afford protection from Assyria] is seen as false. In solid fact, it was a misjudgment. Egypt's power in Palestine was short-lived. Babylon, not Egypt, was destined to succeed Assyria.” (P. 395)

Oswalt comments on **verse 3** that “Egypt cannot afford the protection Judah seeks. Her time as a world power was long past. Shabako, the pharaoh at this time, was a Nubian, not an Egyptian.” (P. 546)

“Nubia is a region along the Nile river located in what is today northern Sudan and southern Egypt. It was the seat of one of the earliest civilizations of ancient Africa, with a history that can be traced from at least 2000 B.C.E. onward (through Nubian monuments and artifacts, as well as written records from Egypt and Rome), and was home to one of the African empires.” (**Wikipedia**, 5/4/2017)

Oswalt continues: “Isaiah says, to lean upon the staff of Egypt is to be publicly disgraced, for that staff will collapse under you (compare **Isaiah 36:6**, the words of an Assyrian!). So they have rejected trust in God Who would not have failed them and instead have committed themselves to Pharaoh, who most assuredly will.” (P. 546)

Kaiser comments on **verse 3** that “Isaiah shows that trust in God and clear, sober political thought are not irreconcilable, and that the person who takes God into account in good and ill can assess reality.” (P. 286)

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30:4²³ כִּי־הָיוּ בְצֵעַן שָׂרָיו

וּמְלָאכָיו חָנָס יִגְיעוּ:

Because its / his²⁴ princes were in Tsoan;

²²(...continued)

What do you think? If you were living in the time of Isaiah, would you have followed the advice of the prophet, and refused to follow the advice of the leaders of Judah?

What about today? Do you let the teaching of Jesus Christ cause you to disobey the voice of your government? Would you be a conscientious objecter if you thought America was fighting an unjust war? Would you refuse to let your child be vaccinated if it violated your religious convictions?

²³Slotki comments on **verses 4-5** that “Pharaoh may well send his princes and ambassadors to Zoan or to Hanes to offer a friendly welcome to the Judean envoys under way, but his promised help will result in utter disappointment and shame.” (P. 140)

From **Wikipedia**, we quote: “Zoan (Hebrew: Tso`an) was, according to the **Hebrew Bible**, a city of Egypt in the eastern Nile delta. **Numbers 13:22** says that it was built seven years after Hebron was built. **Psalm 78:12, 43** identifies the “field of Zoan” as where Moses performed miracles before Pharaoh to persuade him to release Israel from his service. The city is also mentioned in **Isaiah 19:11, 13; 30:4** [here] and **Ezekiel 30:14**. The Greek **Septuagint** in all of these verses uses the Greek name Tanis; both Tanis and Tso'an are ultimately derived from the Egyptian name for Tanis, Djanet or Djan (Modern Arabic Tzan). This city was not actually built until about 1075 B.C.E., however references to Zoan existing previously as early as the time of Abraham are taken to mean the old Hyksos capital at Avaris and the nearby Ramesside capital of Pi-Ramesses, about 25 kilometers [15 and a half miles] from the site of Tanis. The mentions in **Isaiah** and **Ezekiel** certainly correspond with the later Tanis.” (4/23/2017)

Alexander translates **verse 4**: “*For his chiefs are in Zoan, and his ambassadors arrive at Hanes.*” He comments that the Greek translation has apparently read the Hebrew phrase חָנָס יִגְיעוּ, **chanes yaggiy(u)**, literally “Hanes they arrive (at),” אָנָם יִגְיעוּ, **chinnam yiyga(u)**, “they shall labor in vain.” Alexander notes that this reading is found in a few [Hebrew] manuscripts.” He also notes that “The [Aramaic] Targum changes Hanes into Tahpanhes.” (P. 472)

²⁴Slotki observes that the the 3rd person masculine singular pronominal suffix in the plural noun שָׂרָיו, **sarayw**, “his / its princes,” probably means Pharaoh’s. But, he

(continued...)

and its / his messengers reached / arrived at Hanes.²⁵

30:5²⁶ כָּל (הַבְּאִישׁ) [הַבִּישׁ] עַל-עַם לֹא-יִזְעִילוּ לְמוֹ

לֹא לְעֵזֶר וְלֹא לְהוֹעִיל

כִּי לְבִשְׁת׃ וְגַם לְחִרְפָּה:

Everyone²⁷ was put to shame²⁸ over a people (who) did not profit them–

²⁴(...continued)

states, “according to other commentators [it refers to] those of the King of Israel.” (P. 140)

Motyer thinks it could be referring to Hezekiah’s envoys, “but the reference is more likely to the Pharaoh.” (P. 246)

Oswalt states that “It is not made plain...whose princes and messengers are intended, the Pharaoh’s or Judah’s. In either case, the verse seems to be saying that the failure of Egyptian support will come in spite of what might be seen as an indication to the contrary.” (P. 546)

The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) omits the two pronouns in the Hebrew of this verse.

²⁵Slotki comments that Hanes is “Heracleopolis Magna, to the south of Memphis on one of the Nile islands. The two cities [Tsoan and Hanes] were on the southern frontier of Lower Egypt.” (P. 140)

Motyer states that this “points to the union of Egypt under the strong Ethiopian dynasty. Shabako (716-702 B.C.E.) had all Egypt under his control by 715. Isaiah’s point is that though to the outward eye Egypt may now appear strong there will be no result except disappointment.” (P. 246)

²⁶Alexander translates / comments on **verse 5**: “*All are ashamed of a people who cannot profit them (a people) not for help and not for profit, but for shame, and also for disgrace...The Hebrew construction is, they are not a profit or a help, for (on the contrary) they are a disgrace and a reproach.*” (P. 473)

²⁷Slotki holds that this is referring to “the Judean envoys or the people they represent.” (P. 140)

²⁸The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” הַבְּאִישׁ, **hibh**)iysh, “cause to stink”; and second, the qere, “to be read,” הַבִּישׁ, **hobhiysh**,

(continued...)

(they were) not for help, and not for profit;²⁹
but for shame and for reproach.³⁰

30:6³¹ מִשָּׂא בְּהִמּוֹת נֹגֵב

²⁸(...continued)

“cause to be ashamed.” The Greek translation (**Rahfs**) reflects neither the *kethibh* nor the *qere*. Watts translates by “everyone will be made odious.” (P. 391)

²⁹Watts notes that this last phrase, “and not for profit,” is omitted by the Greek translation. But this is not the case. **Rahfs** has οὐτε εἰς ὠφέλειαν, “neither for profit.”

³⁰Slotki states that the people described as being no help or profit is the Egyptians. (P. 140)

Oswalt comments on **verse 5**: “At any rate, says Isaiah, Egypt will not be able to do Judah good; she will only plunge her to deeper disgrace.” (P. 546)

Watts states that “Reliance on Egyptian suzerainty by princes in Egypt as well as by leaders in Jerusalem was *useless, no help*, destined to be *a shame*, and *a disgrace*.” (P. 395)

³¹Slotki comments on **verses 6-7** that “The Judean envoys to Egypt had to traverse the Negeb, the desert to the south of Judah, a *land of trouble and anguish*. They carried with them rich gifts from the king of Judah to the Egyptian court whose help the prophet declares to be vain and empty.” (P. 140)

Motyer entitles these two verses “The oracle concerning the animals of the Negev.” He comments that “The command in **verse 8** to write it on a tablet may refer to this oracle. What a striking piece of publicity it would make, beautifully crafted, sharp, compulsive!...

“**Verses 1-5** emphasize the Egyptian policy as the product of human planning (**verse 1**), taking advantage of what they think to be Egyptian strength (**verse 4**), and **verses 6-7** emphasize human costly effort. But neither by sacrifice nor wisdom can people achieve their own security.” (P. 246)

The author of **Ecclesiastes 9:13-15** would disagree with Motyer’s last sentence. How do you explain this? Does Ecclesiastes have in mind an humble servant of YHWH, who acts on the basis of Divine counsel, rather than on proud human wisdom?

Oswalt states concerning these two verses that “The pronouncement concerning the animals of the Negeb closes this segment in a graphic and concrete way...

“The language is rather extravagant, but it makes its point well. A caravan loaded with treasures struggles through the wild terrain infested with lions and snakes,

(continued...)

³¹(...continued)

all to buy the help of an old dragon [Rahab, i.e. Egypt] who is in fact helpless. All the cost in effort and wealth will come to nothing, says the prophet...

“Some scholars comment that the coastal road through the Negeb cannot have been so severe, and that this is an indication that Sennacherib had already cut that road, forcing the envoys to cross the harsh Sinai Peninsula, retracing the road over which their forefathers had come...While this explanation may be true, it is also true that this is poetic language and overliteralism is to be avoided...The author may be using these figures of lions and snakes merely to talk about the great danger and risk involved in these overtures to Egypt.” (P. 547)

Kaiser entitles **verses 6-7** “Vain Hopes.”

He comments that “We find for the first and last time in this section a title like those in **chapters 13-23**. Its similarity to the headings in **chapters 21** and **22**, which take up a keyword from the text that follows, is obvious. But in the form in which we possess it the heading we have here is not a keyword taken from the text, but an original phrase which quite rightly states that it also mentions all kinds of animals of the Negeb, the land of the south...

“**Verse 7b** at once raises the question of who is actually speaking, Yahweh, the prophet Isaiah, or someone else convinced of the importance and truth of his diagnosis, and perhaps even composing in writing. But since a human reflection as such cannot claim a place in a book of prophecy, and no statement can claim to be accepted by faith if someone other than Yahweh is assumed to be speaking, then Yahweh has to be presumed to be the Speaker [what kind of reasoning is this? Are we to conclude that every word spoken in every book of prophecy is spoken by YHWH? Why then are some statements followed by ‘a saying of YHWH,’ and others are not? And what about the conflicting theological teachings found in the books of prophecy? Can both sides of the theological conflict be assumed to be YHWH arguing with Himself? Here the ultra liberal scholar Kaiser sounds just like the most ardent fundamentalist!].” (P. 288)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 6**: “*The burden of the beasts of the south, in a land of suffering and distress, whence (are) the adder and the fiery flying serpent; they are carrying (or about to carry) on the shoulder of young asses their wealth, and on the hump of camels their treasures, to a people (or for the sake of a people) who cannot profit...*”

“The prophet sees the ambassadors of Israel carrying costly presents through the waste howling wilderness, for the purpose of securing the Egyptian alliance...The [Greek translation / **Rahlfs**] translates **מַסָּא**, **massa**) by ἡ ὄρασις, ‘the vision,’ and converts the first clause into a title or inscription...

(continued...)

בְּאֶרֶץ צָרָה וְצוּקָה
 לְבִיא וְלִישׁ
 מִהֶם אֶפְעָה וְשָׂרָף מְעוֹפֵף
 יִשְׂאוּ עַל-כַּתְּף עִירִים חִילָהֶם
 וְעַל-דְּבִשָׁת גַּמְלִים אֲוִצְרָתָם
 עַל-עַם לֹא יוֹעִילוּ:

³¹(...continued)

“It is surely an unreasonable supposition, that the prophet could not put the word **מַשָּׂא** (**massa**) at the beginning of a sentence without converting it into a title. The most natural construction of the first clause is to take it as an exclamation (*O the burden of the beasts! What a burden to the beasts!*) The beasts meant are not the lions and the vipers of the next clause...but the asses and the camels of the one following, called *beasts of the south* because traveling in that direction. The land meant is not Egypt...nor the land of Israel...but the interjacent desert described by Moses in similiar terms.” (P. 474) See:

Deuteronomy 1:19a,

And we pulled out from Chorebh, and we went (through) all the wilderness—the great and the fearful one, the one which you people saw—(on the) road of the Amorites...

Deuteronomy 8:15a, where YHWH is depicted as:

the One leading you in the great and fearful wilderness—
 fiery snake(s) and scorpion(s)
 and thirsty ground, where there is no water...

Motyer comments on **verse 6** that “While the politicians in Jerusalem were doubtless wondering, ‘How will our ambassadors fare?’, Isaiah suggests ironically, ‘Never mind them, what about the pack animals?, as though their welfare was the only important thing in a whole human waste of time.” (P. 246)

Watts states that “A derisive burden or prophecy of judgment pictures the poor animals of burden, camels or donkeys, which make up Egypt’s caravans in the south of Palestine. They are made to travel through the terrors of wild animals in the land of trouble and anguish. The *Negeb* was wilderness and part desert, a wild and rugged terrain.” (Pp. 395-96)

Utterance / oracle (for the) beasts of (the) Negebh / South:³²

In a land of distress³³ and pressure,³⁴
lioness and lion—³⁵
from (among) them³⁶ viper³⁷ and flying fiery serpent—³⁸

³²Slotki comments that by the “beasts of the south” is meant “the young asses and camels mentioned later which had to pass through the Negeb on their way to Egypt.” (P. 140)

Rahfs has ἡ ὄρασις τῶν τετραπόδων τῶν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ, “The vision of the four-footed (creatures), the ones in the desert.”

³³1QIs^a adds another word between distress and pressure—the word צִיָּה, **tsiyyah**, “dryness, drought.”

³⁴Alexander comments that the phrase אֶרֶץ צָרָה וְצוּקָה, which he translates by “*land of suffering and distress*,” “cannot mean a *land of oppression*, in allusion either to the bondage of the Hebrews or to that of the natives...nor a land compressed and narrow in shape...but must denote a land of suffering, danger, and privation, such as the great Arabian desert is to travelers.” (P. 474)

³⁵Alexander comments that “two designations of the lion are here used; but how they mutually differ is disputed...Luther makes the distinction one of sex (lions and lionesses), which is now [mid 19th century] regarded as the true distinction.” (P. 474)

Modern translations vary, from “lion and roaring king-beast” (**Tanakh**) to “lioness and roaring lion” (**New Revised Standard** and **New Jerusalem**) to “lions and lionesses” (**New International**).

³⁶Alexander holds that the phrase מֵהֶם, **mehem** means “whence.” He adds that “Those who make אֶרֶץ, **erets**, ‘land’ to mean Egypt explain מֵהֶם, **mehem** as referring rather to the people than the country...The general meaning of the phrase, as all agree, is *whence*.” (P. 474)

Watts holds that the meaning of the phrase is “from them,” but states that “The meaning is not clear, which has led to numerous attempts at emendations.” (P. 393)

One of those attempts is to change מֵהֶם, **mehem** to נוֹהֵם, **nohem**, “growling,” and Watts thinks this is the best solution. (P. 393) We think the best solution is to translated by “from among them.” But the phrase is somewhat puzzling.

³⁷Alexander states that the Hebrew noun אֶפֶּה, **eph(eh)**, may be translated

(continued...)

³⁷(...continued)

adder, viper, asp, or by any other term denoting a venomous and deadly serpent.” (Pp. 474-75)

³⁸What is the **מְעוֹפֵף שָׂרָף**, **saraph m(opheph**? For this first noun there are a number of related words:

שָׂרַף, **saraph** is the verb, “to burn.”

שָׂרָף, **saraph**, occurring here, is a noun for “serpent,” usually a venomous one, possibly from the burning effect of its venom.

שָׂרָף, with the same spelling, in the plural **שָׂרָפִים**, **seraphim**, according to **Brown-Driver-Briggs**, beings originally mythically conceived with serpents’ bodies (serpent-deities, compare **Isaiah 14:29, 30:6**); compare also Egyptian guardian-griffins, called Šerref; in the **Hebrew Bible** majestic beings with six wings, and human hands and voices, attendant upon YHWH--**Isaiah 6:2, 6**.

שָׂרָף, a proper masculine name of a Judean.

שָׂרְפָה, a feminine noun meaning “burning.”

מִשְׂרָפָה, **מִשְׂרָפָה**, a feminine noun also meaning a burning; only occurring in the plural construct, **מִשְׂרָפוֹת**, **masrephoth**, “burnings.”

Alexander comments that “The lions and vipers of this verse are not symbolical descriptions of the Egyptians...but a poetical description of the desert.” (P. 475)

Kaiser states that “We recall that the desert which lay between Egypt and Palestine was thought of as inhabited by real and fantastic beasts which were a danger to man (compare **Deuteronomy 14-15**), and that **Psalms 87:4**...certainly permits the identification of Rahab with Egypt. Thus the heading, which connects this oracle with a journey through the Negeb...refers to a journey to Egypt which has not been approved by Yahweh, and will not obtain the help which is sought from Egypt...”

“[The passage] does not refer to a journey along the coast road, but through the Arabah and then across the Sinai Peninsular [a piece of land that juts out from a larger land mass and is mostly surrounded by water] to Egypt...On the boundary of the world they really knew, by a secret route threatened by unknown dangers, envoys travel heavily laden to Egypt to get help for their own country...”

“If our view of the route taken by the embassy is correct it gives us some additional historical information; when the *Via Maris*, the coast road, was already closed and the Assyrians had interrupted normal communications between Egypt and Judea, Hezekiah chose the less usual and more dangerous alternative route across the Sinai Peninsular. Perhaps we may assume from this that the battle of Eltekeh had already

(continued...)

they carry³⁹ on the shoulder of male donkeys their wealth,
 and upon (the) hump of camels their treasures,⁴⁰
 to⁴¹ a people they will not profit.⁴²

30:7⁴³ וּמְצָרִים הֵבִיל וְרִיק יַעֲזֹרוּ
 לְכֵן קָרָאתִי לְזֹאת
 רַהֵב הֵם שִׁבְתָּ:

³⁸(...continued)

been fought and lost, and the first and only attempt on the part of Egypt to bring relief which is known to us from the sources had already failed, when Hezekiah tried again, summoning all the revenues at his disposal, to persuade Pharaoh Shabako to intervene on his behalf.” (Pp. 288-89)

³⁹Where our Hebrew text has the plural **יָשְׂאוּ**, **yis)u**, “they carried,” 1QIs^a has the singular **יָשָׂא**, **yisa)**, “he / it carried.”

⁴⁰Kaiser states that “‘Their riches’ and ‘their treasures’ are perhaps not their own valuables, but simply those they are carrying with them, in which case they will not be refugees, but an official embassy.” (P. 289)

⁴¹Here the proposition is **עַל**, **(al**, normally “over” or “above.” Watts says that it means “on behalf of” (p. 393), but we suspect that it is being used to mean “to,” i.e., the same thing as **אֶל**, **(el**, as Hebrew prepositions are becoming more and more interchangeable.

⁴²Kaiser comments that “The formal category is that of a prophecy of warning... Once one accepts that it is Yahweh Himself Who is speaking [through the prophet Isaiah or his counterpart], it is clearly a reproach, which combines with the warning in **verse 7b** to form a prophecy of warning with a reason. When Yahweh says that people are carrying their property to other people who cannot help them, while He is their true and only real Helper, the reproach is implicit in the words.” (P. 288)

Kaiser adds, “It is not stated that the ambassadors were sent from a people and a king whose God and Protector was the Holy One of Israel (compare **31:1b**) but this is implicit in the background. The judgment is short and annihilating; Egypt will not rise up, as the terrifying dragon once did with its helpers in the past, but will remain seated and inactive...The prospects of renewed and more effective help from Egypt are groundless, and all efforts and expenditure are in vain.” (P. 290)

⁴³Alexander translates **verse 7**: “*And Egypt (or the Egyptians) in vain and to no purpose shall they help. Therefore I cry concerning this, their strength is to sit still.*”

And Egypt⁴⁴–(with) vapor / breath and emptiness they will help.⁴⁵

Therefore I called to this (nation),

Rahab / Arrogant One⁴⁶ (are) they⁴⁷–cessation / sitting.⁴⁸

⁴⁴Motyer comments that **verse 7** “begins (literally) ‘And Egypt’ and the force is exclamatory: Egypt! futile and empty is their help!”

⁴⁵Oswalt translates this first line of **verse 7** by “As for Egypt, their help is completely empty,” what he calls “rough and abrupt Hebrew.” “But,” he says, “evidently this is exactly the impact the author wishes to make...Somehow, he must help his people to drop their age-old sense of inferiority before Egypt’s opulent [ostentatiously wealthy] culture and realize that whatever she might have been she is now impotent.” (Pp. 547-48)

⁴⁶Alexander comments that “Since **רהב**, **rahabh** occurs elsewhere as a name of Egypt, most of the modern [mid-19th century] writers take **קראתי**, **qara)thiy**, ‘I called,’ in the sense of naming, [‘I named’] which is fully justified by usage, and understand the clause as contrasting the pretensions of Egypt with its actual performances; the two antagonist ideas being those of arrogance, or insolence and quiescence, or inaction.” (P. 475)

Motyer states that “**Psalm 87:4** shows that *Rahab* had some currency as a by-name for Egypt....Egypt ever the trouble-maker, full of promises but in the event the Do-Nothing.” (P. 247)

Watts comments that “Rahab was the name of the mythical monster that ruled chaos (compare **Psalm 89:11**^{Heb} / **10**^{Eng} ,

You, You crushed Rahab, like a pierced / dead body;
with Your arm’s strength, You scattered Your enemies.)

Egypt is called Rahab in **Psalm 87:4**, where she stands beside Babylon.

I will remember / mention Rahab / Egypt and Babylon to / as those knowing Me;
look–Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia / Cush--
these were born there!

(Meaning, born in Zion! C. John Collins entitles **verses 4-6** “Zion, the Mother City of All Manner of People.” He comments that this second section of the **Psalm** is “startling: one expects a reference to *those who know Me*, but the list is composed of Gentile nations: Rahab (a nickname for Egypt, compare **Isaiah 30:7**.” **ESV Study Bible**, p. 1047)

But here Egypt is called by the monster’s name only to be doomed to inactivity.
Yahweh’s word makes her a harmless monster, a dragon who breathes fire and roars,

(continued...)

⁴⁶(...continued)

but is in fact innocuous. **Psalm 89:11**^{Heb} / **10**^{Eng} tells of Yahweh's victory over Rahab at creation. She is His opponent now in appearance only." (P. 396)

⁴⁷Alexander states that "the construction [of the sentence] is perplexed by the use, first of the feminine singular (זֹאת, 'this'), and then of the masculine plural (הֵם, 'they,' 'these'), both in reference to one subject. The common solution is that the former has respect to the country, and the latter to the people." (P. 475)

⁴⁸For this last phrase of **verse 7**, שָׁבֵתָם, **hem shabheth**, Slotki has "(Arrogancy) that sitteth still." He comments that this is "alluding to Egypt's false pretense to be able to render help." By "sitteth still" is meant "doing nothing while its dupes are destroyed one by one." (P. 141)

Watts comments that this phrase "seems to be the plural pronoun 'they' and a pausal form of a seldom used noun 'a sitting still'...The phrase is strange and has naturally led to many attempts at emendation...The best possibility in context would be for שָׁבֵתָם to be from [the verb 'to rest' and mean] 'resting' or an infinitive construct from יָשַׁב 'sitting down.'" (P. 393)

Oswalt comments that "*Rahab who sits still* presents a striking dissonance in ideas. On the one hand, Rahab is the sea monster of popular legend. She is the ancient chaotic Matter against Whom the Gods struggled for survival, only subduing her by dint of the last bit of effort. The Hebrews used that legend [see "The Creation Epic" in Pritchard's **Ancient Near Eastern Texts**, pp. 60-72, with its depiction of Marduk's killing Tiamat, another name for the Monster of Chaos] as literary allusion when they spoke of God overcoming Egypt to set them free [see Oswalt's article, 'The Myth of the Dragon and Old Testament Faith' in **Evangelical Quarterly** 49, 1977, pp. 163-72]...

"So is that who Egypt is? Some ancient Rahab with all the destructive powers of chaos at her command? Hardly. She is more like a fat old grandmother sitting sleepily in the sun. Why go to all that effort to buy her help?" (P. 548)

Translations of the phrase vary, from "Their strength *is* to sit still" (**King James**) to "They are a threat that has ceased" (**Tanakh**) to "Rahab who sits still" (**New Revised Standard**) to "Rahab the Do-Nothing" (**New International**) to "Rahab-the-collapsed" (**New Jerusalem**).

⁴⁹Oswalt entitles **30:8-18** "You would not."

He comments that "In these verses the prophet turns from talking about the reliance upon Egypt (**verses 1-7**) to the attitudes which prompted that alliance.

(continued...)

⁴⁹(...continued)

Fundamentally it is a refusal to trust God (**verse 15**), which is in fact what [**chapters 7-39**] are about. And having decided that Egypt is to be trusted more than God, they do not wish to hear anything which would call their choice into question...

“But Isaiah says that if they will not hear the truth from his lips, then they will hear it from history. They can construct a false model of reality for only a limited time. Then reality will smash their model. They have refused to wait for the Lord’s help and have rushed off to help themselves. So the Lord must wait for them, as He did for Jacob, until circumstances will have reduced them to helplessness. But the good news is that He waits to be gracious (**verse 18**)...

“It seems so strange that only after we break ourselves on the results of our pride that we are able to see Him where He has been all along, offering His grace to us. But the truth remains—if we will not wait for Him, then He will wait until our circumstances force us to turn to Him.” (P. 550)

Motyer entitles **verses 8-17** “Coming events: the refusal of the word, the way of death.”

He comments that in this section “Isaiah is commanded to make a written record (**verse 8**), and the command is backed up by two parallel explanations (**verses 9-14** and **verses 15-17**).” (P. 247)

Kaiser entitles **verses 8-17** “The Great Alternative.”

He comments that “The question which faces the commentator is whether in this passage we really hear the voice of Isaiah, looking back with great revulsion at the end of his activity in the year 701 B.C.E., gathering his sayings together and publishing them with this postscript, or whether what we have is a piece of prophetic theology which was looking back upon the year 587 B.C.E. and interpreting it as a fulfilment of the words of Isaiah?” (P. 293)

And we wonder, did the ancient prophets, near the close of their lives, gather their sayings together and “publish them”? Isn’t that language completely anachronistic for the 8th century B.C.E.? We can imagine Isaiah gathering together his sayings, and putting them all together on one long scroll, but “publishing them”? We can imagine Isaiah’s disciples copying those sayings, or that long scroll, and making them available to others—but there were no copying machines, no publishing houses, no printing presses. What do you think?

Watts comments on **verses 8-9**: “Yahweh calls for His accusation against the people to be written down for a later day. In a sense, this is exactly what the [**Book of Isaiah**] does. It bears witness to Israel’s and Jerusalem’s unwillingness to heed Yahweh’s instruction.” (P. 396)

(continued...)

⁴⁹(...continued)

Slotki comments on **verse 8** that “The prophet is directed to record the Divine message so that it may serve as a testimony for the future. The record probably contained the numerous warnings against the Egyptian alliance.” (P. 141)

Alexander translates **verse 8**: “*And now go, write it with them on a tablet and inscribe it in a book, and let it be for a future day, for ever, to eternity.*”

“This, like the similar precaution in **Isaiah 8:1**, was intended to verify the fact of the prediction after the event [that is, after the prediction was fulfilled, the tablet / writing, dated long before the event, could be used to prove the event had been foretold]...

יְתִיתָם, **ittam**, ‘with / to them’ seems to include the ideas of before them and among them [but **אִתָּם** means either ‘with’ or is the sign of the direct object, and we see no indication of ‘before’]...

“Most interpreters suppose two distinct inscriptions to be here required, one on a solid tablet for public exhibition, and the other on parchment or the like for preservation. But Gesenius more naturally understands the word **לִיְתָם**, **luach**, ‘tablet’ and **סֵפֶר**, **sepher**, ‘writing,’ ‘scroll’ as equivalents.” (P. 475)

Oswalt notes that “The meaning of **יְתִיתָם**, **ittam**, ‘with them,’ perhaps is ‘in their presence.’ So this generation is a witness to the witness against them.” (P. 548)

Motyer states that “Tablet and scroll suggest, respectively, a public and a private record (compare **Isaiah 8:1, 16**). It is possible that what Isaiah recorded in this way is the material in **verses 9-17**...Alternatively, **verses 6-7** may have been the public placard and Isaiah recorded privately all his ministry touching the Egyptian alliance (**chapters 28-37**)...Isaiah realized that his ministry was significant beyond his own times and that its immediate relevance did not exhaust its meaning.” (P. 247)

Kaiser states that “The Hebrew word **חֻקָּה**, **chuqqah** [the verb is qal imperative masculine singular, with the 3rd person feminine singular suffix, ‘inscribe it!'], translated as ‘inscribe,’ merely means the engraving, incising, scratching or carving of an inscription into hard material such as stone and metal. And the word **סֵפֶר**, **sepher**, translated as ‘book,’ can also mean an inscription.” (Pp. 293-94)

We think the translation of **סֵפֶר** by “book” is anachronistic, and that there was no such thing as our modern “book” in the time of Isaiah (or for that matter, in the time of Jesus). There were tablets and scrolls, sometimes very long scrolls, with numerous

(continued...)

וְעַל-סֵפֶר חֻקָּה
וּתְהִי לְיוֹם אֶחָד
לְעַד עַד-עוֹלָם:

Now come—write it upon a tablet with / to⁵⁰ them,
and upon a scroll inscribe it.⁵¹

⁴⁹(...continued)

pieces of papyrus / paper or animal hides sewn together—but not until the 3rd and 4th centuries C.E. did the “codex” or our modern “book” come into being. The codex, or “book” was no longer a continuous roll, but a collection of sheets attached at the back. It became possible to access a precise point in the text directly. The codex is equally easy to rest on a table, which permits the reader to take notes while he or she is reading. But such “books” did not exist in the time of Isaiah.

⁵⁰The Hebrew word **אֵת** has two meanings. The first is that it serves as the sign of the direct object; the second is that it serves as a preposition, meaning “with.” Here, it can be either, but we take it in the first sense, meaning “to them,” i.e., “write the tablet to them.”

⁵¹Slotki explains the combination of “tablet” and “book”: “The former may have contained the headings or a summary, the latter the full message.” (P. 141)

Oswalt comments that “The exact contents of what Isaiah was to write is a matter for debate. Some...conclude that only the name Rahab from **verse 7** was intended, it being chiseled in stone in a public place. [Others] believe the major parts of the diatribe [a forceful and bitter verbal attack] against Egypt in **chapters 28-32** were to be written, probably in a scroll...

“The purpose of the writing is of great importance to the interpretation. The written material was to stand as an eternal witness about days to come. Thus, as indicated by **Isaiah 8:16**,

Bind up a testimony;
seal *torah* / teaching among my students.

Its chief value was not for the present deafened, hardened generation, but for generations yet to be born. They would see the record of God’s promises, both of disaster and blessing, see how those were realized, and believe. This interpretation argues that a rather complete record would be needed so that future readers could understand the meaning of the witness...

(continued...)

And it will be for a later day,
for the until, until long-lasting time!⁵²

⁵¹(...continued)

“These references (here as well as **6:9-13** and **8:16**) perhaps give a basis for answering the question, ‘Why would a prophet of the 8th century address people living in the 6th?’ He was not writing for his own generation, he was writing for the future so that the follies of his own time would not be fatal for the nation.” (P. 551)

What do you think? Do you agree with Oswalt?

⁵²Our Hebrew text has עַד-עוֹלָם לְעַד, literally “for / to the until, until long-lasting-time.” Oswalt changes the pointing from לְעַד to לְעֵד, “for the witness.” The Aramaic Targum translates the same way. Watts notes that “Since a second עַד follows, it makes no sense...The Latin Vulgate (*in testimonium*, ‘in witness’; [some Greek manuscripts]...’for a witness.’ They all suggest reading לְעֵד, “for the witness.” (P. 393)

Translations of the last two lines in **verse 8** vary:

King James, “that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever:...”

Tanakh, “That it may be with them for future days, A witness forever.”

New Revised Standard, “so that it may be for the time to come as a witness forever.”

New International, “that for the days to come it may be an everlasting witness.”

New Jerusalem, “so that it may serve for time to come for ever and for ever.”

Rahlfs, ὅτι ἔσται εἰς ἡμέρας καιρῶν ταῦτα καὶ ἕως εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, “because it will be for days of these times / seasons, and until in the ages.”

Alexander observes that “Some of the ancient versions exchange עַד for עֵד (a testimony for ever), which is adopted by several interpreters on the authority of **Deuteronomy 31:19, 21, 26**, where the same combination occurs.” (P. 475)

19 And now, you people write for yourselves this song,
and you (singular) teach it to Israel’s children;
place it in their mouth,
so that this song will be for Me
for a witness [לְעֵד] against Israel’s children.

21 And it will happen, when many evils and distresses find him,
this song will answer before him for a witness [לְעֵד]
that will not be forgotten by / from his descendant(s) mouth.
Because I knew his inclination,

(continued...)

30:9⁵³ כִּי עַם מְרִי הוּא

בְּנֵי כְּחָשִׁים

בְּנֵי לֹא-אָבוּ שְׂמוּעַ תּוֹרַת יְהוָה:

Because it is a rebellious people,
lying children,⁵⁴

⁵²(...continued)

which he is making today,
before I will bring him into the land which I swore.

26 Take this scroll of the *torah* / teaching,
and place it beside (the) chest of YHWH your God's covenant;
and it will be there for a witness [לְעֵרָה] against you!

⁵³Motyer entitles **verses 9-14** "The first explanation." He states that "These verses are a general statement of refusal of God's word (**verses 9-10d**), its replacement by a humanly contrived acceptable message (**verses 10e-11b**) and the rejection of the Lord as the Holy One (**verse 11cd**)." (P. 248)

Slotki comments on **verses 9-11** that they give "the reason why a written record is necessary." (P. 141)

Oswalt states that the reason was "the people refused to hear what the prophet was saying to them." (P. 551)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 9**: "*For a people of rebellion (a rebellious people) is it, lying (or denying) children, children (who) are not willing to learn the law of Jehovah.*"

Motyer states concerning **verse 9** that "Hearing is unacceptable to them, no matter what the Lord might say." (P. 248)

⁵⁴Oswalt states that "*false sons* carries with it implications which are difficult to convey in the translation. The versions are unanimous in translating 'lying.' While this is a technically correct translation of כְּחָשִׁים, **kechashiym**, ['liars'], it is not so much that the sons tell lies as that they *are* lies. They are untrue to what a son should be, which is respectful and obedient. So it could also be said that they are 'disappointing sons'...

"Joseph Jensen points out the many allusions to the wisdom teachings here (**The Use of Torah by Isaiah**, pp. 113-20). The reference to sons (**Proverbs 2:1**, etc.)

(continued...)

children not willing to hear YHWH's teaching;⁵⁵

30:10⁵⁶ אֲשֶׁר אָמְרוּ לְרֵאִים לֹא תִרְאוּ

⁵⁴(...continued)

is one of those allusions.” (Pp. 551-52)

⁵⁵Slotki comments that the things said about Israel in this verse have to do with their being “disappointing children,” “children of God who failed to fulfil His (God’s) expectations of them.” (P. 141)

Oswalt comments that “*this is a rebellious people* is a remarkable statement in the context of the ancient Near East. Every other people caused its victories and its triumphs to be recorded. If we know anything untoward about a people, it has had to be pieced together from other sources, certainly not from their own national literature.” (P. 551)

Yes! In a truly amazing way, Israel’s national literature depicts the nation’s, and its leaders’, and its people’s faults and failures in unrelenting detail—in a way that has no comparison that we know of in the literature of the ancient Near East!

Kaiser entitles **verses 9-11** “The rejection of the prophet’s message.”

He comments that “Anyone who denies that the seer has seen his visions and reproduces their content is attacking the seer not only as a person, but above all as the instrument of God...

“In the past the people have not really been interested in what Yahweh had wanted to reveal to them, but preferred to listen to what pleased and flattered them...As a result they tempted the prophets to deny the commission given to them by Yahweh in favor of human wishes, and to depart from the path which Yahweh had shown them...

“The people of Judah had always [watch out for the ‘all-fallacy’!] made it clear that they did not want to hear or know anything about the God Who is above the whole world, Whose power is nevertheless at work throughout the world and Who destroys impure and unholy [people] when He encounters them, the Holy One of Israel.” (P. 295)

⁵⁶Watts comments on **verses 10-11**: “They tried to still the voices of the prophets so that the will of God could not be presented. Even in Jesus’ day he could [be depicted as saying]: ‘O Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets’ (**Matthew 23:27**).” (P. 396)

Alexander translates **verse 10**: “*Who say to the seers, Ye shall not see, and to the viewers, ye shall not view for us right things; speak unto us smooth things, view deceits.*”

(continued...)

וְלַחֲזִים לֹא תַחֲזוּ-לָנוּ נִכְחֹת
 דְּבַר-וּלְנוּ חִלְקֹת
 חֲזוּ מִהַתְּלוֹת:

who said to the seers,⁵⁷ Do not see!⁵⁸

⁵⁶(...continued)

He comments that “There is great difficulty in translating this verse literally, as the two Hebrew verbs, meaning *to see*, have no equivalents in English, which of themselves suggest the idea of prophetic revelation...In [Alexander’s translation], *view* is introduced merely as a synonym of *see*, both being here used to express supernatural or prophetic vision...The safest, because the most exact construction is Luther’s, which adheres to the strict sense of the future (*ye shall not see*). This is of course not given as the actual language of the people, but as the tendency and spirit of their acts.” (P. 476)

Oswalt agrees, stating that “It is generally agreed that the words quoted here are not the actual words of the people, but as in **Isaiah 29:15**, they represent their true feelings...The universal experience of the biblical prophets [the ‘true’ ones] was to speak words which were full of demand for renunciation and commitment and to be rejected for their harshness, while others [the ‘false’ ones] were all too willing to receive privilege and honor for saying what people wanted to hear.” (P. 552)

⁵⁷The phrase לְרֹאִים, **laro)iyim**, “to the seers,” is the only place in the **Hebrew Bible** where the plural noun רֹאִים, **ro)iyim**, with or without the definite article occurs. The singular רֹאֶה, **ro)eh**, “seer,” occurs in some eleven passages in the **Hebrew Bible**, always with the definite article, הַרֹאֶה, **haro)eh**, “the seer.” The meaning of this noun can be clearly established by study of its occurrences in **1 Samuel 9:9-11** and **9:18-19**:

- 9 Formerly in Israel, the man / person going to seek God spoke in this way:
 Come, and we will go to the seer.
 Because to the prophet today
 it was called / said formerly the seer.
- 10 And Saul said to his young man, Your word is good.
 Come, we will go!
 And they went to the city where a man of the God was.
- 11 They were going up by an ascent of the city,
 and they found / met young women going forth to draw water.
 And they said to them, Is the seer in this (city)?

(continued...)

And to the visionaries,⁵⁹ Do not give visions of upright things⁶⁰ for us!⁶¹

⁵⁷(...continued)

- 18 And Saul came near to Samuel in (the) midst of the gate,
and he said, Tell me, please,
Where (is) this house of the seer?
19 And Samuel answered Saul, and he said,
I (am) the seer.
Come up before me to the hill,
and you will eat with me today.
And I will send you forth in the morning—
and all that (is) in your heart I will tell to you.

⁵⁸That is, Don't do the work YHWH has called you to do! See this same prohibition being given to the visionaries in the next line.

⁵⁹Here, instead of “seers” (see footnote 22), the phrase is **וְלַחֲזִיִּים**, **welachoziyim**, “and to the seers,” the singular of which is **חֲזִיָּה**, **chozeh**, “seer,” a synonym for **רֹאֶה**, **ro)eh**, “seer.”

For its usage in the **Hebrew Bible**, see **Isaiah 47:13; Ezekiel 12:27; 13:9, 17; 22:28**. Also see the article on this word in **Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament IV**, pp. 280-90, by A. Jepsen.

Jepsen insists that the root **חָזָה**, **chazah**, is “an Aramaic loan-word...the usual word for ‘see’ in the various dialects of Aramaic. It has a wide range of meanings, referring both to the natural vision of the eyes and to supernatural visions of various kinds...[The root] **רֹאֶה**, **ra)ah** occupies an analogous position; it, too, is used for vision in general as well as for unusual experiences, as, for instance, at the beginning of Isaiah’s vision...If Hebrew could use **רֹאֶה**, **ra)ah** for all kinds of sight and vision, the word **חָזָה**, **chazah** appearing alongside it must be considered an Aramaic loan-word. The question is then: what led to the introduction of this loan-word and with what meaning was it used?” (Pp. 280-82)

Jepsen’s answer to this question is summed up by the statement that **חָזָה**, **chazah** was “a technical term for a *Nabi*’s [prophet’s] revelation.” (P. 283)

Following a review of all the passages where this root word occurs in the **Hebrew Bible**, Jepsen sums up by stating that “While the Hebrew **רֹאֶה**, **ra)ah** has a wide range of meanings, beginning with the natural sight of the eyes, the usage of **חָזָה**, **chazah**, a borrowing from the Aramaic, is sharply restricted. Its primary meaning is a

(continued...)

Speak smooth things⁶² to us--

⁵⁹(...continued)

form of revelation...consisting in nocturnal perception of a Divine voice during a deep sleep. This type of revelation was adopted by the *nabis* [prophets] of Israel and was looked upon well into the late period as a characteristic of the prophets, with the result that even the words of the literary prophets were traced back to an instance of חָזָה, **chazah**...The verb was also used in the sense of perceiving God and His works...

“It is more important to note that חָזָה, **chazah**, etc. refers to a special type of Divine revelation, probably during the night but distinct from a dream. In any case, it is assumed that the God of Israel makes use of this method to reveal His word...Above all, the word of God was revealed to the *nabis* [prophets] through חֲזוֹן, **chazon** [‘vision’]...

“But חָזָה, **chazah** also shares in the crisis of the *nabis* [prophets]. When their function becomes involved in specific political developments, they are exposed to the danger that they will claim a חֲזוֹן, **chazon** [‘vision’] in support of a Divine word in line with the hopes of the populace and thus declare ‘the imagination of their own heart,’ i.e., a ‘lie.’

“But this very criticism of the *nabis* [prophets] in the period from Isaiah to Ezekiel makes it clear that חָזָה, **chazah** and its derivatives should actually be reserved for a genuine encounter with God and His word: speak, Lord, for Your servant hears.” (P. 290)

Yes, but while it is true that there was criticism of the “visionaries / seers”—it is also the case that the opening line of Isaiah’s work is חֲזוֹן יִשְׁעִיהוּ בֶן-אֲמוּץ, חָזָה אֲשֶׁר, “Vision of Isaiah, son of Amots, which he envisioned / saw” (Isaiah 1:1a). And so, if the literary prophets are oftentimes critical of the “seers,” they are being critical of one of their own, for not being true to his / her calling!

⁶⁰The feminine plural adjective נְכוֹחוֹת, **nekhochoth** means “upright things,” “true things,” the opposite of חֲלָאוֹת, **chalaqoth**, “smooth things,” “flattering things.” That is, Don’t tells us your visions about having to live uprightly and by truth—instead, speak to us things that will flatter us, things we can easily understand and live by.

⁶¹Again (see footnote 58) the visionaries are being asked to quit doing what they were called by YHWH to do!

envision deceptions!⁶³

⁶²Alexander comments that “*smooth things or words* is a common figurative term for flatteries. Luther’s expressive version is *preach soft to us.*” (P. 476)

⁶³The Greek translation of **verse 10** reverses the order of the Hebrew text: οἱ λέγοντες τοῖς προφήταις μὴ ἀναγγέλλετε ἡμῖν καὶ τοῖς τὰ ὄραματα ὀρώσιν μὴ λαλεῖτε ἡμῖν ἀλλὰ ἡμῖν λαλεῖτε καὶ ἀναγγέλλετε ἡμῖν ἑτέραν πλάνησιν, “the ones saying to the prophets, Do not declare to us; and to the ones that see the visions, Do not speak to us! But rather speak to us and declare to us another going astray!”

Where our Hebrew text has as the last word in **verse 10** מַהַתְּלוֹת, **mahathalloth**, “deceptions,” 1QIs^a has מַתְּלוֹת, **mathloth**, a word found nowhere else in the **Hebrew Bible**, probably a scribal mistake.

Slotki comments that the things mentioned in **verse 10** are “Isaiah’s description of the kind of messages which the people wanted from him.” (P. 141)

Motyer likewise states concerning **verses 10-11** that “Most of this they would not, of course, have said in the words here attributed to them. People do not openly request to be told what is wrong and illusory. Isaiah is putting their attitudes into words, verbalizing the implications of their actions and reactions...They did not want a supernatural message (**verse 10ab**), nor a message of moral demand (**verse 10cd**), but a ministry that left the surface of life unruffled (pleasant / ‘smooth’), a ministry of trifles...They did not want holiness, in a life that follows ‘the way...the path’ (**verse 11ab**); and certainly not the holiness of God Himself (**verse 11cd**)...They did not ask that preaching should cease but only that it be innocuous, void of moral imperatives and without the backing of the ultimate moral absolute of the nature of God.” (P. 248)

Oswalt comments that “Having made up their minds as to the course of action they intended to take, the people were no longer interested in hearing counsel which did not confirm their decision...But Isaiah insists that what they are actually trying to get him to do is to lead them astray. When they tell him to alter his message, they are asking him to confirm them and to take them farther away from the Holy One...

Their eyes were blind to the vision which Isaiah had seen and had spent his life trying to convey...And since they could not see it, they wished Isaiah would stop seeing (**verse 10**) too, so that he could speak of smooth, affirming things and not of a God Whose splendor demanded impossible things of them. Just as had been predicted at his call, Isaiah’s message had had the effect of blinding and deafening his people because they refused to hear or see what contradicted their wishes (**Isaiah 6:9-10**).” (Pp. 552-53)

סִוְרוּ מִנִּי־דֶרֶךְ 30:11⁶⁴

הִטּוּ מִנִּי־אֶרֶחַ

הַשְׁבִּיתוּ מִפְּנֵינוּ

אֶת־קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Turn aside⁶⁵ from⁶⁶ (the) way!

Incline from (the) path!

Cause to cease / remove from our faces

(the) Set-apart One of Israel!⁶⁷

לָכֵן כֹּה אָמַר קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל 30:12⁶⁸

⁶⁴Alexander translates **verse 11**: “Depart from the way, swerve from the path, cause to cease from before us the Holy One of Israel.”

He comments that “Cause to cease from before us, i.e. remove from our sight. It was a common opinion with the older writers [before mid 19th century], that this clause alludes to Isaiah’s frequent repetition of the name Holy One of Israel, and contains a request that they might hear it no more. But the modern interpreters appear to be agreed that the allusion is not to the name but to the Person.” (P. 476)

⁶⁵Where our Hebrew text has the qal imperative masculine plural סִוְרוּ, “turn aside!”, 1QIs^a has the qal imperfect, 2nd person masculine plural תִּסְוְרוּ, “you will turn aside.”

⁶⁶The preposition here, מִנִּי, **minney**, is an unusual spelling for the normal מִן, **min**, “from.” Oswalt notes that it “is apparently an unusual poetic form of מִן, usually **minni**.” (P. 548) Sometimes students of Hebrew mistakenly translate this by “from me.”

⁶⁷Slotki comments on **verse 11** that it means “stop preaching to us words which are unpalatable...We do not want to hear communications which you bring to us in the name of *the Holy One of Israel*.” (Pp. 141-42)

⁶⁸Slotki comments on **verses 12-14** that they contain “God’s retort in a series of metaphors picturing the complete ruin of the State.” (P. 142)

Oswalt states that Isaiah, “instead of subsiding...asserts his prophecy with all the force of imagery at his command.” (P. 553)

(continued...)

יֵעַן מֵאִסְכֶּם בְּדַבַּר הַזֶּה
וּתְבַטְחוּ בְעֵשֶׂק וְנָלוֹז
וּתְשַׁעְנוּ עֲלֵי־וֹ:

Therefore in this way Set-apart One of Israel spoke:⁶⁹

On account of your (plural) rejecting this word,⁷⁰
and you trusted in oppression and crookedness / craftiness,⁷¹

⁶⁸(...continued)

Kaiser entitles **verses 12-14** “The consequences of the rejection of the message.”

He comments that in **verse 12** “Yahweh Himself speaks, accusing and passing judgment upon His people...’This word’...seems to refer to the instruction of Yahweh mentioned in **verse 9**. But in substance, it seems, like **verse 15**, to sum up the whole message of the pre-exilic prophets.” (P. 295)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 12**: “*Therefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because of your rejecting (or despising) this word, and (because) ye have trusted in oppression and perverseness, and have relied thereon ...The word here mentioned is no doubt the law of verse 9, both being common epithets of revelation generally, and of particular Divine communications.*” (Pp. 476-77)

⁶⁹The phrase “in this way Set-apart One of Israel spoke” is omitted by some Greek manuscripts.

⁷⁰Slotki comments that by “this word” is meant “the warnings against alliance with Egypt.” (P. 142)

Oswalt says it is “the ‘instruction’ of the Lord (through Isaiah) that was rejected in **verses 9, 10, and 11.**” (P. 553)

⁷¹Where our Hebrew text has וְנָלוֹז, **wenaloz**, “and crookedness / craftiness / perversity,” 1QIs^a has וּתְעַלְלוּ , **weta(aloz**, “and you (singular) will rejoice.”

Slotki comments that some take “oppression” to mean “the exactions from the people to finance the pro-Egyptian policy,” and that “perverseness” (our “crookedness / craftiness”) is literally “that which is turned aside.” (P. 142)

Oswalt states that “*oppression and crookedness* are somewhat ambiguous in their reference. On the surface they would seem to refer to social injustice. But that

(continued...)

and you leaned upon it--⁷²

30:13⁷³ לִכְן יִהְיֶה לָכֶם הָעֵוֹן הַזֶּה

כִּפְרִיץ נִפֹּל נִבְעָה בַחֹמָה נִשְׁגָּבָה

⁷¹(...continued)

meaning seems out of place in this passage, which addresses political misdealing...If the Masoretic Text is correct, the intent may be to condemn the style of leadership that has resulted in these bad decisions, one which has relied upon the politics of coercion and deception.” (P. 553)

⁷²The last three lines of **verse 12** are given varying translations:

King James, “Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon:”

Tanakh, “Because you have rejected this word, And have put your trust and reliance In that which is fraudulent and tortuous –“

New Revised Standard, “Because you reject this word, and put your trust in oppression and deceit, and rely on them;”

New International, “Because you have rejected this message, relied on oppression and depended on deceit,”

New Jerusalem, “Since you have rejected this word and put your trust in fraud and disloyalty and rely on these,”

Rahlf's, ὅτι ἠπειθήσατε τοῖς λόγοις τούτοις καὶ ἠλπίσατε ἐπὶ ψεύδει καὶ ὅτι ἐγόγγυσας καὶ πεποιθῶς ἐγένου ἐπὶ τῷ λόγῳ τούτῳ, “Because you (plural) disobeyed these words; and you hoped in / upon a lie; and because you grumbled / murmured, and your became persuaded in this word.”

⁷³Motyer says **verses 13-14** contain two illustrations. “First, a wall collapsing under its own weight and secondly, a pot smashed by external force.” (P. 248)

Watts states that in these two verses “The judgment curse is pronounced in a metaphor of a high masonry wall which has begun to bulge in the middle. This guilt will be like that wall. When it collapses, as collapse it must, it will leave behind nothing large enough to be useful.” (P. 396)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 13**: “*Therefore shall this iniquity be to you like a breach falling (or ready to fall) swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking may come suddenly, at (any) instant...*”

“The image is that of a wall which is rent or cracked, and, as Gill says, *bellies out and bulges....*That the figures were intended to express the idea of sudden destruction, there is and can be no diversity of judgment...The idea of a gradual yet sudden catastrophe...is admirably suited to the context...The idea of a downfall springing from internal causes is more appropriate in this connection, than that of mere external violence, however overwhelming.” (P. 477)

אֲשֶׁר־פִּתְּאֵם לִפְתָּע יִבּוֹא שְׁבֵרָה:

Therefore this iniquity / guilt will be yours (plural):⁷⁴

like a falling breach, swollen in a high wall;

which, its breach will come suddenly, quickly.⁷⁵

30:14⁷⁶ וּשְׁבֵרָה כְּשֵׁבֶר נֹבֵל יוֹצְרִים

⁷⁴Oswalt states that “The refusal to be instructed by God brings a person into estrangement from Him, and that estrangement...must be corrected at once if disaster is not to occur.” (P. 554)

⁷⁵Slotki states that the Hebrew for **verse 13** is literally “as a rent on the point of falling bulges in a high wall”; “as a crack widens until the wall collapses.” (P. 142)

Motyer states that “Like a high wall, cracked and bulging is (literally) ‘like a crack running down, bulging out, in a high wall.’” (P. 249)

Oswalt notes that “The idea of a break in a wall falling...is difficult for some to visualize. So Skinner suggests a crack which starts at the top of the wall and descends ...However, this may be overly literalistic. The idea of a bulge falling is not difficult, and ‘bulge’ and ‘break’ seem to be treated synonymously here. Thus the sense is that a bulge appears high on the wall, eventually breaks open, and the ‘break’—the broken portion of the bulge—falls to the ground.” (P. 549)

He adds that “the interval from the first cracks until the actual collapse may be a long time, but when the collapse comes it is terribly sudden and irreversible. So it will be with this refusal to rely on God. Years may pass, but one day the Assyrians will stand at the door with all Judah in ruins behind them.” (P. 554)

⁷⁶Alexander translates / comments on **verse 14**: “*And it (the wall) is broken like the breaking of a potter’s vessel (any utensil of earthenware), broken unsparingly (or without mercy), so that there is not found in its fracture (or among its fragments) a shard to take up fire from a hearth, and to skim (or dip up) water from a pool.*”

“When the wall collapses it will be shattered as suddenly and completely as a jug dropped on a rock. One minute the jug was whole and the next minute it is only pieces ...The only prevention for such sudden destruction is to listen to the word of God and to gaze upon the Holy One, no matter how that conflicts with our preconceived notions for our security.” (P. 554)

Oswalt, thanks to Dahood, reminds us of **Proverbs 25:22**, where it is said that if you give food and drink to your hungry, thirsty enemy, you will “heap coals of fire upon his head.” Perhaps the broken piece of pottery would serve for scooping up the hot coals out of the fireplace!

כְּתוֹת לֹא יִחַמְל
וְלֹא־יִמְצָא בְּמִכְתָּתוֹ חֶרֶשׁ לְחַתּוֹת אֵשׁ מִיְקוֹד
וְלִחְשׁוֹף מִיָּם מִגִּבָּא:

And its breach like (the) breaking of a pitcher of potters--
crushed—it will not be spared.

And there will not be found among its fragments a sherd to take up fire from a fire-place,
and to strip off / dip water from a pool / cistern.⁷⁷

30:15⁷⁸ כִּי כֹה־אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל

⁷⁷Slotki comments on **verse 14** that it means “Like the breaking of a potter’s jar smashed without remorse.” Instead of our “fragments,” he has “pieces,” and states that “Not one of them is sufficiently large to be used for any purpose.” (P. 142)

Oswalt notes that the Hebrew noun **גִּבָּא**, (**gebe**), said to mean “cistern,” or “reservoir,” has “aroused interest because a sherd would be useless for getting water from a cistern, which was typically rather deep and somewhat bell-shaped.” (P. 549)

See on the Internet “Ancient Cisterns—Background Bible Study.” Oswalt is right, if a public cistern is meant; but many Israelites families had their own private cisterns as well as immersion pool beneath their homes, which were much smaller and accessible.

⁷⁸Oswalt states that in **verses 15-18** “Isaiah speaks again of God’s message, the Judean’s insistence upon their own devices, the disaster which will come of that, and the necessity which all this places upon God to wait until they are in a position to receive before He can be gracious to them. Until we are ready to exercise trust, until we are ready to wait for Him, He must wait for us.” (P. 554)

Motyer entitles **verses 15-17** “The second explanation.” He comments that “The initial ‘For’ of **verse 15** introduces a second and parallel explanation of Judah’s sin. Now we hear the specific message that was rejected (**verse 15**) and learn of inescapable judgment falling from outside (**verses 16-17d**). Two illustrations of total disaster complete the description (**verse 17e-g**.” (P 249)

Kaiser entitles **verses 15-17** “The decision against Yahweh.”

He comments that here “we learn at last [have we not heard this before?] what are the concrete alternatives, the way recommended to the people by the prophets and the way they have chosen instead. The ceremonious title given to God indicates the seriousness of the words which follow, once again spoken in the person of Yahweh...

(continued...)

בְּשׁוּבָה וְנִחַת תּוֹשֵׁעוֹן
 בְּהַשְׁקֵט וּבְבִטְחָה תִּהְיֶה גְבוּרַתְכֶם
 וְלֹא אֲבִיתֶם:

Because⁷⁹ in this way my Lord YHWH,⁸⁰ Set-apart One of Israel, spoke:

⁷⁸(...continued)

“Whether a statement is truly the word of God cannot be decided by the nature of the psychological process in which it comes into being in a person’s mind, but by whether or not it corresponds with the will of God.” (P. 296)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 15**: “For thus saith the Lord Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, in returning (or conversion) and rest shall ye be saved, in remaining quiet and in confidence shall be your strength; and ye would not (or were not willing)...

“Sherd is an old English word, now seldom used, meaning a broken piece of pottery or earthenware, and found more frequently in the compound form of potsherd ...Ewald supposes a particular allusion to the breaking of a poor man’s earthen pitcher, an idea which had been suggested long before by Gill: as poor people are wont to do, to take fire from the hearth, and water out of a well in a piece of broken pitcher.” (Pp. 477-78)

Motyer comments on **verse 15** that “Isaiah’s recipe for national security had remained unchanged since the days of Ahaz (**Isaiah 7:4, 10-12**; compare **28:12**)...

“First, there should be repentance / ‘returning,’ the active pathway of coming back to the Lord...

“Then there is the quietness, the absence of frenzy and restless anxiety that evidences a true trust...

“There is a realism about this way of life. It brings strength...strength for life’s battles and challenges. His people were in a military situation but the prophet did not recommend armaments, only the armament of faith. As G. A. Smith says, ‘Not alliance but reliance.’” (P. 249)

⁷⁹Where our Hebrew text begins **verse 15** with כִּי, **kiy**, “Because...” the Greek translation has no corresponding word.

⁸⁰Where our Hebrew text has the phrase “my Lord YHWH,” the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has simply “my Lord.” The reason for this is that the Greek translators

(continued...)

In returning⁸¹ and rest / quietness you (plural) will be saved / delivered;
in being quiet and in trust⁸² will be your strength.⁸³
And you were not willing.⁸⁴

⁸⁰(...continued)

uniformly refused to use YHWH, changing it to “my Lord”—and this would have caused the translation to be “my Lord my Lord.”

⁸¹Slotki’s translation has “in sitting still,” but he notes that “Others render: ‘in returning,’ from the policy of alliance with Egypt against Assyria.” (P. 142)

Watts notes that “The usual translation sees **שׁוּבָה**, **shubhah** as a noun from **שׁוּב**, **shubh** [to return], ‘returning’...As such it may mean returning from war or from a war-like diplomacy...Wildberger translates ‘conversion.’ Irwin...follows 1QIs^a **שׁיבָה**, ‘sitting,’ from **יָשַׁב**, **yashabh** [‘to sit’].” (P. 394)

⁸²Slotki’s translation of **בְּהַשְׁקֵת וּבְבִטְחָה**, **behashqet ubhbeitchah** is “in quietness and in confidence,” and he notes that this means “in quiet confidence in God.” (P. 142)

For this last word, **וּבְבִטְחָה**, **ubhebhitchah**, “and in trust,” 4Qpls^c has **וּבְטַח**, **ubhetach**, “and security.” For an English translation of this Isaiah pesher scroll from Qumran, see **The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated**, by Florentino Garcia Martinez, pp. 185-91. A number of passages from **Isaiah** are quoted, but little real commentary / pesher is given.

⁸³Oswalt comments that “In returning and rest is God’s prescription for their situation...This is the same message which Moses had given to the Hebrew people (**Exodus 4:13**) and Isaiah had given to Ahaz (**Isaiah 7:3-9**).” (P. 555)

“Why will judgment come with suddenness? Because the Hebrew people have preferred flying off on horses to resting in God’s care. The Holy One had extended His arms to them with a gentle word of strength (**Isaiah 28:12**), but they refused.” (P. 554)

⁸⁴Where our Hebrew has **וְלֹא אָבִיתֶם**, “and you (plural) were not willing,” the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has **καὶ οὐκ ἠβούλεσθε ἀκούειν**, “and you did not wish to hear.” Watts comments that “The point here is not ‘hearing’ but ‘turning.’” (P. 394)

Watts comments on **verse 15** that “The judgment is supported by a repetition of God’s word and plan. He had called for retreat and quiet patience, for heroic restraint and waiting. But the activists in the palace could not wait. They saw in the crumbling

(continued...)

וַתֹּאמְרוּ לֹא-כִי עַל-סוּסִים נָנוּסִים 30:16⁸⁵

עַל-כֵּן תִּנּוּסוּן

וְעַל-קַל נִרְכָּב

עַל-כֵּן יִקְלוּ רַדְפֵיכֶם:

And you said, No—because upon horse(s) we will flee / fly against(?)!⁸⁶

For this reason you will flee,⁸⁷

and (you said), Upon a swift (horse) we will ride;⁸⁸

⁸⁴(...continued)

decadence of Assyria's imperial power an unparalleled opportunity, especially since Egypt was prepared to encourage them...

“But their plans were shortsighted, fixed on the immediate goal of relative autonomy for a brief generation (Josiah's reign, 640-609 B.C.E.). That slight glory would be bought with the price of Jerusalem's complete destruction by the Babylonians in 598 and 587 B.C.E.” (Pp. 397-97)

⁸⁵Alexander translates **verse 16**: “*And ye said, No, for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee; and upon the swift will we ride; therefore shall your pursuers be swift...*The Hebrew verb נָנוּס, **nus**, in every other case [occurrence] means to flee, and the hope here ascribed to the people is not simply that of going swiftly, but of escaping from the dangers threatened. In קַל, **qal**, [light, swift, fleet] and קָלַל, **qalal**, [be slight, swift, trifling], the primary sense of lightness is very often merged into that of rapid motion.” (P. 478)

⁸⁶Slotki comments “we will flee upon horses’ against the invaders.” (P. 143) Surely this is a mistake. You do not “flee” against invaders! You “counter-attack” against invaders! We assume that the Hebrew verb נָנוּס, **nus**, must also mean something like “fly against,” as **Brown-Driver-Briggs** notes concerning this text.

⁸⁷Here again the verb נָנוּס, **nus**, occurs; this time with the meaning “flee,” and as Slotki notes, it means flee “away from the enemy, run away from the field of battle in defeat.” (P. 143) Here the verb has the opposite meaning from its usage in the preceding line.

⁸⁸Watts notes that “This may mean in horse-drawn carts or chariots.” (P. 394)

(continued...)

for this reason your pursuers will be swift(er)!⁸⁹

⁸⁸(...continued)

We say, it means they will escape by the fastest means of transportation available.

⁸⁹Motyer comments on **verse 16** that “Their refusal of the way of faith committed them to militarism, and they would experience the truth of **Matthew 26:52b**,

For all those who take up a sword,
by a sword will perish.

Isaiah makes use of the two sides of **נָס**, **nus**, ‘to move swiftly’ (*we will flee*) and ‘to flee in the face of the enemy’ (*you will flee!*).” (P. 249)

We find no place in the **Hebrew Bible** where **נָס**, **nus**, means anything other than “flee,” unless it is this passage, **Isaiah 30:16**. See the article on this Hebrew root

by Reindl in **Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament IX**, pp. 286-93. Reindl holds that **Isaiah 30:16** “is a special case.” (P. 290)

Watts comments on **verse 16**: “The activists refused Yahweh’s call to patience and acquiescence. So they tried to flee (presumably to Egypt). But their pursuers were faster.” (P. 397)

Oswalt comments that the response of the Jewish people to God’s offer “would be incredible if it were not of such a common sort. God offers Himself and they choose horses (compare also **Isaiah 31:1**)! Horses no longer had the revolutionary military significance which they had had when first introduced during the Middle Bronze Age, but they were still the ‘glamour’ weapons of the armies. Cavalry and chariotry had the same appeal as armor and air forces do today...

“It was for these kinds of reasons that the Israelites were forbidden to use horses in their battles, a prohibition Solomon first broke (**Deuteronomy 17:16** [no mention of Solomon]; **Joshua 11:6, 9** [the Canaanites in northern Israel had horses and chariots]; **2 Samuel 8:4** [Hadadezer, king of Zobah had horses and chariots in his battle with David]; **1 Kings 10:28-29** [Solomon had 1400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen]; **2 Kings 18:24** [Rabshakeh tells Hezekiah’s officials that he knows they are depending on horses and chariots from Egypt]). On the strength of a horse, compare **Job 39:19-25**; **Psalms 147:10**. On trusting in horses see **Psalms 20:8^{Heb} / 7^{Eng}; 33:17**.” (P. 555)

And what shall we believers in the God of Israel, Who spoke through His prophet Isaiah, say concerning America’s trust in its armed might, in its superior weapons on the land, on the sea, and in the air? Is this the same old idolatry being warned against here in **Isaiah**?

(continued...)

אלֶּךָ אֶחָד מִפְּנֵי גְעֵרַת אֶחָד 30:17⁹⁰

מִפְּנֵי גְעֵרַת חַמֻּשָּׁה תִּנְסוּ

עַד אִם־נֹתְרֹתֶם

כְּתֵרֵן עַל־רֹאשׁ הַהָר

וְכִנֹּס עַל־הַגְּבֻעָה:

⁸⁹(...continued)

Of course, Israel had its warrior-king David, who is renowned for his songs expressing his faith in YHWH, and his son Solomon who long before the time of Isaiah advocated arming Israel with horses and chariots. The question is, can America invest so much of its wealth in armed might, resulting in our having the strongest military on earth, and still claim “in God we trust,” and honestly live by that trust? Are we living by trust in God, or by trust in military power?

⁹⁰Alexander translates / comments on **verse 17**: “*One thousand from before the rebuke (or menace) of one, from before the rebuke of five shall ye flee, until ye are left like a mast (or pole) on the top of the mountain, and like the signal of the hill.*” (P. 478)

Compare: **Leviticus 26:8**,

And five of you shall chase a hundred;
and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand;
and your enemies shall fall before you to the sword.

Deuteronomy 32:30,

How one would pursue a thousand!
And two would run after ten thousand!

If not, that their Rock sold them--
And YHWH delivered them up (to an enemy)!

Motyer states that “The promise of **Leviticus 26:8** is reversed and the threat of **Deuteronomy 32:30** realized.” (P. 249)

Watts comments that “After all their bravado, they broke and ran before the first show of authority appeared. Thus they became a hollow and lonely symbol without meaning or following.” (P. 397)

One thousand from before a rebuke of one,⁹¹
 from before a rebuke of five you (plural) shall flee,⁹²
 until you are left remaining
 like the mast / beacon upon the mountain top,
 and like the signal upon the hill.⁹³

30:18⁹⁴ וְלֵכֶן יִחַפֶּה יְהוָה לְחַנְּנֵכֶם

⁹¹Slotki notes that “The verb [‘flee’] is not in the Hebrew and is implied.” (P. 143) It is, however, found in the next line.

⁹²Oswalt notes that “The Hebrew here seems very awkward, so that it is hard to avoid the conclusion that something is amiss. Translators who accept the Masoretic Text almost universally supply words in parentheses to get good sense. So Mauchline ‘at the challenge of five (a people as great as) you will flee,’ or Delitzsch ‘or at the challenge of five (at most),’ etc. 1QIs^a drops the second ‘challenge’ whereas [the Greek translation / **Rahifs**] changes ‘you will flee’ to ‘a myriad will flee.’ In each case it appears the translator is struggling with a difficult text rather than giving a witness to another original reading.” (Pp. 549-50)

⁹³Slotki states that this is “a picture of isolation and loneliness. The word for ‘beacon’ [or ‘mast’], תֹּרֵן, **toren**, probably means ‘a flag-staff.’ In **Isaiah 33:23** and **Ezekiel 27:5** it denotes ‘a mast’ of a ship.” (P. 143) The word נֵס, **nes**, means “standard,” or “ensign,” or “signal,” or “sign.”

Motyer states that the similes are “doubled for completeness...The picture is of the end of the nation, the disappearance of the people (compare **Isaiah 6:11-12**).” (P. 249)

Oswalt states that “Without taking poetic speech too literally, one is tempted to see in the mention of the pole / mast on the hilltop a reference to the fact that Jerusalem would survive the coming onslaught, although alone. If that is correct, it certainly was not understood to be a great cause for rejoicing. Isaiah was speaking of humiliation and destruction, so that only scraps would remain.” (P. 556)

⁹⁴Motyer entitles **verses 18-26** “Coming events: the waiting God, the sure glory.”

He comments that “With **verse 18** the emphasis falls on the faithfulness of God, ultimately (**verses 18-26**) and imminently (**verses 27-33**). He is such that His purposes cannot be frustrated by human faithlessness. In **verses 18-26** we are allowed to look beyond a waiting period to the moment when Messianic glory will dawn on a new creation.” (P. 249)

(continued...)

⁹⁴(...continued)

But neither the adjective “Messianic” nor the phrase “new creation” are found in the text.

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 18**: “*And therefore will Jehovah wait to have mercy upon you, and therefore will He rise up (or be exalted) to pity you, for a God of judgment is Jehovah; blessed are all that wait for Him...*”

“On the whole, the simplest and most probable conclusion seems to be that לַכֵּן, **lakhen**, has its usual meaning [‘therefore’], but refers, as in many other cases, to a remoter antecedent than the words immediately before it. As if the prophet paused at this point and reviewing his denunciations said, Since this is so, since you must perish if now dealt with strictly, God will allow you space for repentance, He will wait to be gracious, He will exalt Himself by showing mercy...One point is universally admitted, namely, that somewhere in this verse is the transition from the tone of threatening to that of promise.” (Pp. 479-80)

Slotki comments on **verse 18** that it is interpreted by some “as a threat, concluding the section and referring back to **verse 17**: ‘therefore will the Lord wait before He will be gracious,’ i.e. He will postpone His graciousness until your sins have been duly expiated (and similarly the following clause). By others it is regarded as the beginning of a new section in which God’s graciousness and mercy are promised, the translation being: ‘and so will the Lord expectantly wait to show you His graciousness, and so will He arise to show you compassion.’” (P. 143)

Oswalt takes the last view: “Because Judah will not wait on the Lord (**26:8**) but insists on rushing off on horses, the Lord must wait to show His grace until they are in a position to receive it. So to the repeated cry of ‘How long, O Lord?’ his answer is, ‘Whenever you are ready.’” (P. 557)

Motyer comments that “A logic of God is at work. Judge and punish He must, but forsake His purposes He will not! Since judgment must intervene, ‘therefore’ He (literally) ‘will wait in order to be gracious...Therefore He will rise to show you compassion.’ His grace is His sovereign determination to bless the undeserving (e.g. **Genesis 6:8** [the story of Divine destruction of the earth in a universal flood, but God’s saving Noah and his family—who are depicted as deserving their salvation. The flood story is not a one of ‘blessing the undeserving!]; His compassion is the overflowing of His passionate love for His people (**Isaiah 14:1**).” (P. 250)

This is a good example of how commentators sometimes refer to other passages to support their interpretation of a passage—but the other passages, when examined, do not in fact do so! The story of Noah and the flood is anything but a depiction of “blessing the undeserving”! Rather, it is a depiction of “destruction of the undeserving”!

Kaiser entitles **verse 18** “Blessed be those who Wait on Yahweh.”

(continued...)

וְלִכֵּן יִרְוֶם לְרַחֲמֶכֶם
כִּי־אֱלֹהֵי מִשְׁפָּט יְהוָה
אֲשֶׁר־יִכְלֶה־חֹזְכֵי לֹו:

And therefore YHWH waits to show favor to you;
and therefore He will be high / exalted to show compassion to you.
Because YHWH (is) a God of justice—⁹⁵

⁹⁴(...continued)

He comments that “The preacher of consolation who speaks here regarded the condition for God’s help laid down in **verse 15** as fulfilled within his community. As a God of justice (compare **Isaiah 28:17**) He responds to the longing expectation of which He is the object (compare **Isaiah 8:17**) with His salvation, and it is matched by the way He waits Himself for the moment in which He can come to His people in grace and mercy (compare **Psalms 77:10; 123:3; 102:14** and **103:13** [none of which say anything about God’s waiting for the moment]).” (Pp. 297-98)

⁹⁵Oswalt states that ‘*the Lord is a God of justice* may be understood in two ways, both of them possessing some validity...

“First, Young suggests that God’s grace must wait because He is a just God and His justice must be experienced before His grace can be [do you agree? Cannot God be a God of justice and a God of grace at the same time?].”

“Second, Calvin suggests the meaning to be moderation and order [is that the meaning of ‘justice’?]. There is hope because God does not simply go into a rage and destroy whole peoples...”

“The latter view seems to be supported by the structure of the verse, which has ‘blessed are all who wait for Him’ following on the statement of His justice. Because He can be appealed to, because He will hear the cries of those who endure persecution and hardship for His Name’s sake, therefore they are and will be a happy people.

“In some ways this verse sums up the message of the **book**...The key to life is found in letting Him be God and in training ourselves to complete dependence upon Him until we discover that He can supply our needs a hundred times better than we can.” (P. 557)

What does that mean, “Letting Him be God”? Doesn’t that imply that we are in charge of God? We don’t “let Him be God.” He is God—a God of justice and a God of steadfast-love and grace. We say, We can depend on God for the long run, to do what is just, and what is loving and compassionate, because that is Who He is! He is not a

(continued...)

blessed (are) all those waiting for Him!⁹⁶

30:19⁹⁷ כִּי־עַם בְּצִיּוֹן יֵשֵׁב

⁹⁵(...continued)

tyrant God, Who cares nothing for justice. No, He is a God of justice, but more than that He is a loving Father, Who cares deeply for all His children, and Whose justice is always tempered by His steadfast-love and compassion.

⁹⁶Watts comments on **verse 18**: “So now, Yahweh’s mercy for them must wait on justice...Yahweh is forced to a violent course of action because Israel refused the quiet course which He had planned...The final line is a sigh over what might have been: Blessed are all who wait for Him! Israel under Josiah had not been willing to do this.” (P. 397)

What a view of YHWH Isaiah presents in **verse 18**! YHWH is “waiting” (to show mercy and compassion); and His people are “waiting” (for that mercy and compassion to come). But YHWH is a God of justice, and there are manifold necessities for His judgment in the present time, due to human sinfulness.

But His people can be assured that eventually, beyond the necessary judgments of history, His mercy and compassion will come—they will be the ultimate end and goal of history, certainly worth waiting for! We are reminded of **Isaiah 25:6-8** with its view of YHWH’s plan for ultimate universal (“all peoples,” “all nations”) salvation, with death swallowed up forever, and all tears wiped away forever. We pray, O YHWH, let that day come!

Watts explains the section **Isaiah 30:1-18**: “This episode in **verses 15 and 18** contains two of the clearest expressions of the [**Book of Isaiah’s**] message: Yahweh has been calling upon Israel / Judah since the days of Uzziah to accept a passive role in international politics in order to assume a new part as God’s spiritual representative, His servant, to the world. This role will be defined in later chapters [we think especially in terms of **Isaiah 53** and **58!**]. He called for a willingness on the nation’s part to turn inward to its faith and to rest on God’s grace and promises. It would require quietness in the midst of turmoil and trust that God would control the great forces that were devastating the region. That would be a heroism of a very different sort. The final blessing of this episode (**verse 18**) is dedicated to such who wait...

“The [**Book of Isaiah’s**] presentation of a people who live in hope, waiting for Yahweh, often surprised by Yahweh, comes to a poignant focus in this passage...The emphasis in the [**Book of Isaiah**] lies on those who were willing in faith to listen to God and to leave the fulfillment of His vision to Him. Israel and Jerusalem were not willing... In doing this, they confirmed their ‘rebellion’ against God which is documented in this episode.” (P. 397)

⁹⁷Oswalt entitles **verses 19-33** “Judah’s blessing, Assyria’s destruction.” He entitles **verses 19-26** “Judah’s blessing.”

(continued...)

⁹⁷(...continued)

He comments that “In **verses 19-33** the author relates again the certainty of God’s salvation. Although Judah’s failure to trust Him would indeed result in destruction, that destruction would be followed by redemption and a corresponding destruction of Judah’s enemies. As is characteristic of the **book**, these predictions of salvation are couched in highly figurative language. When the prophet considered the wonder and the extent of what God planned to do for His people, ordinary language broke down...

The segment is divided into two parts, **verses 19-26** and **verses 27-33**. The first of these relates the train of effects in Judah which will result from God’s judgment and grace. The second depicts a festival of praise at which the participants watch their Champion destroy their enemies on their behalf [but are they to believe that their Champion Who showed them grace following their destruction will not show grace following the destruction of their enemies?].” (Pp. 558-59)

Slotki comments on **verses 19-26** that they contain a “promise of a bright future, when even Nature will be transformed for the benefit of the faithful survivors who will renounce and reject all forms of idolatry, devoting themselves entirely to the study and practice of the word of the Lord.” (P. 143)

Oswalt comments on **verses 19-26** that “this segment relates the effects which will stem from the manifestation of God’s grace in the midst of judgment. First, the Judeans will perceive Him (**verses 19-21**); second, they will abandon the idolatry with which they had attempted to supply their own needs (**verse 22**); third, God will then supply the very things which the idols professed to supply but could not (**verses 23-26**)...

“It is a judgment which shatters the false values and makes one attentive. It is a grace which motivates the broken to believe and obey. Neither is ultimately effective without the other.” (Pp 558-59)

Watts entitles **verses 19-26** “Hope from the Teachers.”

He comments that “The setting of the episode is a place where teachers are to be found, perhaps a corner of the temple court or a schoolroom. It does not deal with the issues of the previous episode, nor are the teachers aware of the matters which dominated the confrontation between Yahweh and the political leaders.

“This little homily [sermon; religious discourse that is intended primarily for spiritual edification] on assurance and hope is presented in a style not unlike the teaching of the Wise or the admonitions of the Deuteronomist...The entire mood and tone are mild and calm.” (Pp. 399-400)

Kaiser entitles **verses 19-26** “The Great Transformation.”

(continued...)

בִּירוּשָׁלַם בְּכוֹ לֹא־תִבְכֶּה

חֲנּוּן יִחַנְדֶּךָ

לְקוֹל זַעֲקֶךָ

כַּשְׁמַעְתּוֹ עֲנֶךָ:

⁹⁷(...continued)

He comments that ‘The close connection between the content of this passage and that of **29:17-24** is obvious.’ (P. 301)

Alexander translates **verse 19**: “*For the people in Zion shall dwell in Jerusalem; thou shalt weep no more; He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; as He hears it He will answer thee.*”

He comments that there is an ambiguity in the Hebrew, “which may either mean that the people who are now in Zion shall dwell in Jerusalem, or that the people shall dwell in Zion, in Jerusalem. This last is the most natural construction...

“Others regard the whole clause as a vocative [addressing a person or persons], or in other words as a description of the object of address. *For O people in Zion, dwelling in Jerusalem, thou shalt weep no more.*” (P. 480)

What a promise that is—an end to weeping. And we remember **Isaiah 25:6-8** where that same promise is made, not to Israel by itself, but to “all peoples—all nations”!

Remember, Divine destruction is not the final end of YHWH's plan. The One Who judges and destroys is the One Who loves steadfastly, the God of steadfast love and compassion and forgiveness! His fire is a purging, cleansing fire! Compare **Ezekiel 16:53-55**, where the world's worst prostitutes, Sodom, Samaria and Jerusalem, though having been destroyed by God's wrath, all have their fortunes restored. In spite of Divine destruction by fire and brimstone, there is Divine restoration! YHWH is a God Who is greater than death, Who holds the grave and the world of the dead in His hand—and it is His plan to destroy death and all its signs forever, for all peoples and nations!

Oswalt comments, “What was empty will become full; what was barren will become fruitful. The reason for weeping will be taken away!” (P. 559) Thanks be to God!

Because a people will dwell in Zion;⁹⁸

in Jerusalem,⁹⁹ you (singular) will certainly not weep / bewail;¹⁰⁰
being compassionate, He will certainly show favor to you (singular),¹⁰¹

⁹⁸The verb in this first line of **verse 19** is qal imperfect / future, **יִשְׁבּוּ**, **yeshebh**, “will dwell.” This is the way **King James** translates it, and **English Standard**; but our other English translations have “dwellers / inhabitants / who live / people living” (as if it is a plural present participle). **Rahfs** has a future verb: *διότι λαὸς ἅγιος ἐν Σιων οἰκήσει*, “Because a set-apart people in Zion will dwell.” We take the passage to be a promise of future blessing, not a statement of a present reality.

⁹⁹Slotki comments that “The surviving faithful are addressed.” (P. 144)

¹⁰⁰We wonder if this is the same wiping away of all tears as is mentioned in **Isaiah 25:6-8**. What do you think? It is for certain that dwellers in Jerusalem throughout the centuries have known a great deal of weeping and mourning, as death has stalked the streets of Jerusalem, both in later biblical times, after the time of Isaiah, in its terrifying destruction by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and throughout post-biblical times, especially in its destruction by the Roman armies of Vespasian and Titus. No, Isaiah’s promise has not been fulfilled in history—believers have to await YHWH’s future—that ultimate future depicted in **Isaiah 25:6-8!**

And if it this is true, does “a people” mean the same as “all people / all nations” in that passage? Or is this Divine promise limited to only the Jewish survivors in Jerusalem? Isaiah’s words lead us to ask such questions—but he doesn’t answer our questions.

We say, if we are to believe Isaiah’s promise, it must be understood in terms of the heavenly Jerusalem, the Zion of the future—beyond death, beyond earth’s continuing trials and ordeals and suffering and judgments—in the light of **Isaiah 25:6-9**. What do you say?

¹⁰¹The phrase **יִחַנֵּךְ יְיָ**, **chanon yachneka** combines the qal infinitive absolute with the qal imperfect, a way of emphasizing the certainty of YHWH’s showing favor to the people of Zion / Jerusalem. Yes, YHWH’s people will be subject to Divine judgment / discipline; but the absolute certainty is that Divine favor will prevail in the long run!

We say that is not only true of the people of Jerusalem, but also of all humanity, God’s creatures / children.

See **Genesis 43:29** for this same imperfect verb with the same 2nd person suffix. 1QIs^a has the more usual spelling **יִחַנֵּךְ**, **yechoneka**.

(continued...)

¹⁰¹(...continued)

Oswalt comments that “*He will surely be gracious* speaks of a time when the sin which had separated them from God will be atoned for and no longer able to divide them from Him.” (P. 559) He refers to:

Isaiah 59:1-2,

- 1 Look–YHWH’s hand was not short,
 so as not to save / deliver;
 and His ear was not heavy,
 so as not to listen / hear!
- 2 But rather, your (plural) iniquities
 were dividing between you and your God!
 And your sins hid faces from you,
 keeping (Him) from hearing!

Ezekiel 36:33-38,

- 33 In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:
 In (the) day of My cleansing you from all your iniquities–
 and I will save / deliver the cities,
 and the desolate places will be rebuilt.
- 34 And the land that was made desolate will be worked / cultivated,
 instead of when it was a desolation in the eyes of all passing through.
- 35 And they will say,
 The land–this one, that was desolated,
 became like a garden of delight!
 And the wasted and the desolated,
 and the thrown down cities–
 made inaccessible / fortified shall be inhabited!
- 36 And the nations that are left remaining,
 surrounding you, shall know
 that I, YHWH, rebuilt the thrown down;
 I re-planted the desolated!
 I YHWH, I said (it),
 and I will do (it)!
- 37 In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:
 I will again be sought for / by Israel’s House,
 to do for them--
 I will multiply them like the flock of humanity!
- 38 Like a flock of set-apart people,
 like a flock of Jerusalem at her appointed places / times;
 so shall the cities, the ones wasted,
 (be) filled (with) a flock of human(s);
 and they shall know that I (am) YHWH!

(continued...)

to your out-cry's voice--¹⁰²
when He hears,¹⁰³ He answered you!¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹(...continued)

And we wonder why Oswalt didn't also refer to **Isaiah 40:2**,

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!

Oswalt goes on to say that "This reconciliation was achieved in prospect in the return [from Babylonian captivity], but in its fullness only in Jesus." (P. 560)

But **Isaiah 40:2** is not talking about something that will only be achieved in Jesus—it has happened by YHWH's steadfast-love and grace—YHWH is depicted as announcing Israel's warfare to be complete, her iniquity / guilt to have been accepted / forgiven, that she has received from YHWH's hand double punishment for all her sins, some 700 years before the coming of Jesus! Can there be a fuller, more complete statement of acceptance and forgiveness than is made in **Isaiah 40:2**?

Jesus certainly embodied that Divine grace and acceptance and forgiveness, but it was not something that began with Jesus. YHWH God has always been a God of steadfast-love and forgiveness!

¹⁰²Motyer describes this as "immediate Divine attention to welfare in answer to prayer." (P. 250)

But this is not ordinary "prayer." It is זַעֲקָה, **za(aqeka**, "your cry / cry out / call," the kind of cry that comes from people in great need; or as **Brown-Driver-Briggs** puts it, an "utterance of horror, anxiety, alarm, distress, sorrow, etc."

Do a word-search on your biblical software, looking up all the occurrences of the noun זַעֲקָה, **ze(aqah**.

¹⁰³Where our Hebrew text has כְּשִׁמְעָתוֹ, **kesham(atho**, literally, "as / when His hearing," 1QIs^a has כְּשִׁמּוֹעָתוֹ, **keshamo(atho**, a slightly different spelling.

¹⁰⁴There is a strange combination of tenses here: כְּשִׁמְעָתוֹ עֲנָךְ, "as / when His hearing, He answered you"—as if YHWH hears at the time of your outcry, but has

(continued...)

30:20¹⁰⁵ וְנָתַן לָכֶם אֲדֹנָי

לֶחֶם צָר

וּמִים לַחֵץ

וְלֹא־יִכְנַף עוֹד מוֹרֵיךְ

וְהָיוּ עֵינֶיךָ רֹאוֹת אֶת־מוֹרֵיךְ:

And my Lord will give to you people

¹⁰⁴(...continued)

already answered your cry before you cried! No wonder that Motyer calls this an “immediate” answer to prayer (p. 250)!

What do you make of this statement? In the death of my wife Sarah, she (and I) had cried out to God for healing time and again for some five years as she suffered from congestive heart failure, and her condition grew steadily worse. In her humble, child-like, genuine faith, she questioned why her and my prayers were not answered. Does Isaiah’s statement here mean that those prayers had been answered, as soon as heard, or before? How can that be? Our prayers were not answered—at least in the way we thought they would be.

Can it be that God has provided for His people’s healing in His presence, in that “heavenly Zion,” where already the banquet has begun, with death being swallowed up, and tears being wiped away forever? Was the day of Sarah’s brain-bleed and death, the day of her entry into paradise (remembering the words attributed to Jesus, spoken to the dying thief on a cross beside his, **Luke 23:43**), her entry into eternal healing, that had already been prepared and was awaiting her?

I believe it is so—but “we walk by faith, not by sight.”

¹⁰⁵Alexander translates **verse 20**: “*And the Lord will give you bread of affliction and water of oppression, and no more shall thy teachers hide themselves, and thine eyes shall see thy teachers.*” (P. 480)

He comments that “The [Latin] Vulgate renders מוֹרֵיךְ, **moreyka**, ‘your teachers’ as a singular (*doctorem tuum*)...Thus understood, the word must of course be applied to God Himself, as the great Teacher of His people...

“The great majority of writers adhere, not only to the sense of *teacher*, but to the plural import of the form, and understand the word as a designation or description of the prophets.” (P. 481)

bread of distress
and water of oppression;¹⁰⁶
and your teachers / Teacher will no longer be thrust into a corner¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶Slotki comments that “The same phrase occurs in **1 Kings 22:27** to describe a prison diet. Here it may represent the reduced standard of the people’s living during the siege from which they will be delivered.” (P. 144)

Watts states that “The bad times are seen to have been like a prison sentence from God.” (P. 400)

Motyer comments that “In bread of adversity and water of affliction the nouns are in apposition [side by side]—‘bread, that is adversity,’ ‘water, that is, affliction.’ This contrasts with the abundant food of **verses 23-24**. The period of affliction will be a time of Divine Self-concealment (**Isaiah 8:17** [where YHWH is depicted as hiding His face from the household of Jacob, i.e., Israel), but it will be followed by a time of direct relationship.” (P. 250)

Watts comments that “Like **Psalms 107**, this verse recalls the trials of Israel in the wilderness when hunger and thirst were major problems. God sent manna to eat...and water from the rock...The verse acknowledges the distress that has been the people’s lot.” (P. 400)

Yes, says Isaiah, your outcry was heard, and it had already been answered. But still there will be a time of suffering—adversity and affliction—but also a time in which the voice of teachers / Teacher will be heard. Sarah experienced adversity and affliction during those years of heart-failure. But as she constantly worshiped and prayed, and read her **Bible**, she heard the voice of the great teachers of Israel, and of the followers of Jesus, speaking to her in her time of trial / testing.

¹⁰⁷When everything is going well, it is easy to thrust our religious teachers into a corner, to quit paying attention to them, to let other concerns take center-stage in our lives. But when we are faced with oppression and distress / adversity and affliction, we are humbled, and get those teachers out of their secluded, forgotten corner, so that we can hear their words of correction, and hope, and guidance.

Such was the case with ancient Israel, and such is the case with us, still today. As we face the deterioration of our physical health, and see our loved ones dying, our eyes and ears become open and listening to the voice of our Teacher / teachers. We long to hear their voices / voice. Even the deniers of God, in the face of the death of their loved ones, attend the funerals, and listen to the words of comfort and hope, as their hearts are broken and their eyes filled with tears, as they long for a word of hope in the midst of the darkness.

(continued...)

and your eyes (will be) seeing your teachers / Teacher,¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷(...continued)

Watts translates the niph'al verb **יִכְנֶנֶף**, **yikkaneph** by “hide Himself,” instead of the more normal translation “be hidden.” Holladay agrees with this translation.

Watts states that this verse “recognizes periods when God’s guiding, instructing presence has not been sensed. It promises that this will no longer be true...”

“Yahweh is called ‘A God Who hides Himself’ (**Isaiah 45:15**), and psalmists plead for Him not to hide His face from them (**Psalms 27:9; 102:3^{Heb} / 2^{Eng}; 143:7. Psalm 44:25^{Heb} / 24^{Eng}** asks why He hides His face from His people. Job acutely experienced God’s absence and silence. The **Old Testament** understands that God’s presence is not simply a fact of existence, presumed to be universal and constant. It is a gracious and deliberate gift offered by God which is to be welcomed and recognized as such.

“In Judaism from Ezra on, the *Torah* functioned to teach the people. But in the [**Book of Isaiah**] this is done by the instructing, guiding presence of Yahweh with His people.” (Pp. 400-01)

We think that while Job questioned and sharply complained against YHWH’s treatment, it wasn’t at all a matter of YHWH’s “absence.” Rather, it was a matter of YHWH’s testing Job in the light of the satan’s claim that Job was only serving YHWH because of YHWH’s blessings. And while we agree with part of what Watts says, we insist that for the **Hebrew Bible**, even when YHWH is silent, He is also present, upholding and sustaining the universe(s)—and His *Torah* is constant—that is, He is always teaching His people, sometimes through His silence.

What do you think? Has God taught you through your experiences? What is it you have learned? I myself have learned through much grief that it is not good for a man to be alone; and in answer to my prayer, God has given me a wonderful new wife, in my 86th year—Edith Roberts, from Enid, Oklahoma—and has showered her and me with blessings far beyond our deserving. How good is God!

¹⁰⁸Slotki’s translation has the singular: “Yet shall not thy Teacher hide Himself any more, But thine eyes shall see thy Teacher.” He comments that the teacher is “God Who instructs Israel through His *torah* and prophets. Less probable is the rendering ‘teachers,’ the prophets...Thy Teacher is metaphorical for God’s manifestation in His act of deliverance.” (P. 144)

Slotki says the plural “teachers” is less probable than the singular “teacher.” However, **Brown-Driver-Briggs** along with B. Davidson’s **The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon** both hold that the noun **מוֹרְיָךְ**, **moreyka** is a masculine plural construct noun, with the second person singular pronominal suffix. **Holladay** evidently

(continued...)

¹⁰⁸(...continued)

holds that the noun can be seen as either singular or plural. Motyer states that “The translation *teachers* is permissible, but the context requires the singular.

Motyer is probably referring to the fact that the verb יִכְנֶנֶךָ, **yikkaneph**, is a niph'al 3rd person singular verb, meaning literally “be cornered,” and which calls for a singular subject.

Watts translates “your Guide,” and translates יִכְנֶנֶךָ by “hide himself” (P. 399), which would be more likely a translation if the verb was hithpael.

Translations vary, from “yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers” (**King James**) to “Then your Guide will no more be ignored, but your eyes will watch your Guide” (**Tanakh**) to “yet your Teacher will not hide himself any more, but your eyes shall see your Teacher” (**New Revised Standard**) to “your teachers will be hidden no more; with your own eyes you will see them” (**New International**), to “he who is your teacher will hide no longer, and you will see your teacher with your own eyes” (**New Jerusalem**; there is no ‘he who is’ in the Hebrew text).

The Greek translation is quite different: καὶ οὐκέτι μὴ ἐγγίσωσίν σοι οἱ πλανῶντές σε ὅτι οἱ ὀφθαλμοί σου ὄψονται τοὺς πλανῶντάς σε, “and no longer will they draw near to you, the ones leading you astray, because your eyes will see the ones leading you astray.” This translation has a negative view of who it was who was teaching, but agrees that they are in the plural, not the singular.

Kaiser states that “**Verse 20b** gives us a clear indication of the circles in which this description of salvation originated. As with the **Book of Daniel** (compare **Daniel 11:23** and **12:3**) they consisted of men who because of their eschatological knowledge had the position of teachers in their community, but found no audience for their message outside the group of those devout believers who regarded themselves as the ‘meek and poor (compare **Isaiah 29:19**). By contrast with **29:17ff.**, the situation seems to have become so acute that they had to seek safety from persecutions. This description of salvation may therefore belong in the period of religious persecutions under Antiochus IV Epiphanes.” (P. 301)

¹⁰⁹Alexander translates **verse 21**: “*And thine ears shall hear a word from behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right and when ye turn to the left.*”

He comments that the Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) “makes this the voice of seducers (τῶν ὀπίσω σε πλανησάντων [‘the ones behind you leading astray’]; but it is evidently that of a faithful guide and monitor [we would use the plural here]; according

(continued...)

לֵאמֹר זֶה הַדֶּרֶךְ לְכֹוּ בּוֹ
כִּי תֵאֱמִינּוּ
וְכִי תִשְׁמָעוּ לּוֹ:

And your ears will hear a word from behind you,¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹(...continued)

to the Rabbins, the *Bath Kol* or mysterious echo which conducts and warns the righteous...

“The meaning of the call is, This is the way which you have left, come back to it... as if [the voice] had said, This warning will be necessary, for you will certainly depart at times from the path of safety.” (Pp. 481-82)

¹¹⁰Slotki comments that “They will be so anxious to hear the word of God from whatever direction it may come, that they will listen attentively even to the voice that might come from behind them. Another explanation is, God will be behind them as a father walks behind his children to watch over them.” (P. 144)

Oswalt comments that “a word behind you conveys both the nearness of the Teacher [or ‘teachers’] and the sensitivity of the pupil. Instead of the stubborn animal which has to be dragged or beaten into going in the proper direction, here is a person whose teacher is just at his shoulder and little more than a word of guidance from time to time is necessary for him to stay on the right path. This is the ideal of the Spirit-filled life, where the contact between us and Him is so intimate that only a whisper is sufficient to move us in His way...The opposite of this ideal is seen in **Isaiah 28:11** and **30:11**, where stubbornness ultimately leads to a denial that God’s way is right, with horrifying results.” (P.560)

Watts comments that “God’s words are like those a shepherd speaks *from behind*, keeping His flock on the path.” (P. 401)

What do you think this text means? Permit me to give a word of personal response to it.

As a senior in high school, and member of the boxing team of Albuquerque (New Mexico) High School, I lost my bearings religiously, and began to look forward to fighting in the ring and in the streets. Along with that came heavy drinking, and going to Mexican fiestas in northern New Mexico. One night, long past mid-night, as we traveled home from Espanola, New Mexico, in a brand new Buick Roadmaster, and I and another team member lay in the back seat, passed out, I was suddenly awakened by the terrifying jolt and sound of our car crashing into a car parked on the side of the highway. The four other passengers in the car were all seriously injured, and were

(continued...)

¹¹⁰(...continued)

carried away by ambulances. I had no idea of their condition, but feared that they had been killed.

A Mexican sheriff told me to stay at the scene, and build a marker out of stones, where the wreck had occurred. And there I was, throughout the rest of that long and lonely night. As I built that marker, I heard a voice speaking to me, clearly, saying, "This is not the way—don't walk in it!" I looked all around to find out who was speaking, but found no one. Again and again the voice spoke to me, mysteriously, but powerfully, in words I have never forgotten.

When I got back to Albuquerque, I announced to the boxing coach that I was quitting boxing. Within a few days I had gotten rid of all my boxing equipment, and all my other sporting equipment—including fishing gear and guns. I went before my church, and told the congregation that I had decided to go to Christian College, and become a minister. But I never told anyone about that voice. The boxing trainer took me to a psychiatrist, to see what was wrong with me.

My wealthy Jewish neighbor and long-time family friend, Edward Schmidter (I have forgotten how to spell his last name), threw a dinner in my honor, and at the dinner made a speech, in which he told me in the presence of my parents, that I was making a foolish mistake—that there is no such thing as heaven or hell, or those things that the churches believe. I interrupted him by asking, Why then do you close your business on Friday afternoons, and observe the Sabbath, going to the synagogue, refusing to open your business on Saturdays? His response was, There's more than one reason for going to synagogue—I go to synagogue for business reasons!

He went on to say that it was my duty to give up this crazy religious idea, and take over my father's thriving wood and coal business—and I saw my father nodding in agreement. I told him and those at the dinner that my mind was made up, period. Later that year, Mr. Schmidter's son took over my father's business—and I left for Christian College, never telling anyone about the voice that had spoken to me.

Three years later, as I sat in the Florida Christian College library in Temple Terrace, near Tampa, Florida, with Sarah at my side, I read this **30th chapter of Isaiah**, along with Sarah. As I read this **21st verse**, and it began to sink in, I began crying. I confided in Sarah about the voice I had heard. I concluded that it had been God's voice calling me into His service.

What do you think? Was it some form of mental illness—maybe the result of too many boxing concussions, too much drinking? One thing is for sure, that voice has had controlling influence over my life from that night until the present, 68 years later.

Do you believe in such mysterious voices? Have you ever heard such a voice? If you hear one, will you dismiss it as fantasy? Are you open to such a voice? Or have you trained yourself to reject any such thing?

(continued...)

saying: This (is) the way, walk in it!¹¹¹

If you go to the right,¹¹²

and if you go to the left.¹¹³

30:22¹¹⁴ וְטִמְאַתֶּם אֶת־צְפוּי־פְסִילֵי־כֶסֶפֶךָ

וְאֶת־אֲפֻדַת־מִסְכַּת־זָהָבְךָ

תִּזְרַם כְּמֹו־דָוָה

צֵא תֹאמַר לָוִי:

¹¹⁰(...continued)

Motyer evidently thinks that such a voice will only be heard in the far-distant future, in the “time of salvation” or “perfect day.” He states that in that time, “the period of rejecting the word of the Lord will also be a thing of the past (**verses 9-11**). Furthermore, Divine care will be such that deviation right or left will be at once corrected. In that perfect day, the Lord’s people are still potential sinners but they come under a Divine ministry of preservation in righteousness.” (P. 250)

What do you think? Is the Divine voice speaking to human beings not true in the time of Isaiah, or in the present time, but only “in that perfect day”?

¹¹¹Slotki comments that this “saying” is “by the mouth of the prophets.” (P. 144)

¹¹²The Hebrew verb here is תִּאֲמִינּוּ, **tha)amiynu**, hiphil imperfect 2nd person plural, “you (plural) shall go to the right.” But a problem arises—the root for “going to the right” is יָמַן, **ymn**, not אָמַן. Alexander states that תִּאֲמִינּוּ, **tha)amiynu** “may be either an inaccurate orthography for תִּימִינּוּ, **thayamiynu**, or derived from a synonymous root אָמַן.

¹¹³What do you think this “going to the left” and “going to the right” means? We take it means that the mysterious voice will guide you in the upright, straight forward way, and that any deviation, whether to the left or to the right will be avoided. Do you agree?

¹¹⁴Alexander translates / comments on **verse 22**: “*And He shall defile (i.e. treat as unclean) the covering of thy idols of silver and the case of thy image of gold, thou shalt scatter them (or abhor them) as an abominable thing. Away! Shalt thou say to it.*”

Slotki states that the overall meaning of **verse 22** is that “All traces of idolatry will be removed from their midst.” (P. 144)

And you (plural) will defile the idols plated with your silver;
and the ephod¹¹⁵ woven (with) your gold;
you will scatter them like a menstrual rag.
Get out!¹¹⁶ you will say to it.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵Alexander states that פְּסִיל, **pasiyl** and מַסְכָּה, **massekhhah** strictly denote graven and molten images respectively, but are constantly employed as poetical equivalents.” (P. 482)

¹¹⁶We are taking the Hebrew נָצַח, **tse)** to be the qal imperative, “go forth!” or “get out!” Watts thinks it is parallel to דָּוָה, **dawah**, “a menstrual rag,” or “contaminated thing.” צֹאֵה, **tso)ah** means “excrement,” or “filth,” as does צֹא, **tso)**. Watts notes that “excrement” “fits the text and the context.” Compare the Greek translation: ὡς κόπρον ὡσεὶς αὐτά, “like dung / manure you will throw them out.”

¹¹⁷Translations of **verse 22** vary:

King James, “Ye shall defile also the covering of thy graven images of silver, and the ornament of thy molten images of gold: thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence.”

Tanakh, “And you will treat as unclean the silver overlay of your images and the golden plating of your idols. You will cast them away like a menstruous woman. “Out!” you will call to them.”

New Revised Standard, “Then you will defile your silver-covered idols and your gold-plated images. You will scatter them like filthy rags; you will say to them, “Away with you!”

New International, “Then you will desecrate your idols overlaid with silver and your images covered with gold; you will throw them away like a menstrual cloth and say to them, “Away with you!”

New Jerusalem, “ You will hold unclean the silverplating of your idols and the goldplating of your images. You will throw them away like the polluted things they are, shouting after them, ‘Good riddance!’”

Rahlfs, καὶ ἐξαρῆς τὰ εἰδῶλα τὰ περιηργυρωμένα καὶ τὰ περιεχρυσωμένα λεπτὰ ποιήσεις καὶ λικμήσεις ὡς ὕδωρ ἀποκαθημένης καὶ ὡς κόπρον ὡσεὶς αὐτά, “and you (singular) will remove the idols—the silver-plated ones and the gold-plated ones—you will make (them) small, and you will crush / scatter (them) like water of a woman sitting apart, and like excrement you will push / shove them (away)!”

(continued...)

¹¹⁷(...continued)

Watts notes that the Greek translator has read כִּמְיָ, **kemey**, “like waters of” instead of our Hebrew text’s כִּמּוֹ, **kemo**, “just like.” P. 399)

Motyer comments on **verse 22** that “There will be a change of attitude (care replaced by disrespect), of feeling (devotion replaced by revulsion) and of commitment (choice replaced by rejection.” (Pp. 250-51)

Watts states concerning this verse that “The anticipated presence of the Guide makes urgent the need to rid the place of idols...The true presence of God among His people removes the need for artificial symbols.” (P. 401)

¹¹⁸Oswalt comments on **verses 23-26** that “Most commentators assume a significant break between these verses and the previous ones. But this is surely not the case. The idols were worshiped precisely because it was believed that they could supply abundance in all ways, but especially in agriculture...

“But the prophets, especially the pre-exilic ones, pointed out that abundance came from God and to look to an idol for what God provided was, in fact, to deprive oneself of abundance...The same point is being made here. It is only after the Israelites cease their dependence upon idols—their own devices—that they will experience what they had tried to get from the idols...

“Thus, the language here speaks of the effects in nature that redemption [the getting rid of idols] will bring, but it speaks of more than that, as the supernaturally heightened figures indicate. Springs do not break out on mountaintops, nor could any living thing endure a sun seven times brighter than at present. Thus Isaiah makes it plain he is speaking of something more than mere physical blessing. He is speaking of a time when all that is good about human life will be made incredibly better.” (Pp. 561-62)

We say, Yes! Extremely, unbelievably good times are coming!

Slotki comments on **verses 23-25** that they depict how “agricultural and pastoral prosperity will ensue.” (P. 144)

Motyer comments on **verses 23-24** that “The bounty of the coming great day is not a descent into a materialistic bonanza but is to be understood in the context of the doctrine of creation. The entrance of sin imposed restraint on the productive forces of the earth, consequent upon the Divine curse (**Genesis 3:17-19**). The outpouring of creation’s bounty speaks, therefore, of the end of sin and the curse and of the return of Eden...Abundant food contrasts with the afflictive bread of the matching **verse 20**.” (P. 251)

(continued...)

וְלֶחֶם תְּבוּאֹת הָאֲדָמָה

וְהָיָה דָשֵׁן וְשִׁמְן

יִרְעֶה מִקְנֶיךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא כֹּר נֶרְחָב:

And He will give rain (for) your seed,¹¹⁹ which you will plant the ground;
and bread, product of the ground,¹²⁰
and it will be fat and robust.

Your cattle will graze in that day, (in) a large pasture.¹²¹

¹¹⁸(...continued)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 23**: “*And He shall give the rain of thy seed (i.e. the rain necessary to its growth), with which thou shalt sow the ground, and bread, the produce of the ground, and it shall be fat and rich; thy cattle shall feed that day in an enlarged pasture...*”

“Michaelis supposes the resumption of tillage in the last years of Hezekiah to be here predicted. Henderson explains it as a promise of increased fertility after the return from exile. All these applications appear too exclusive. The text contains a promise of increased prosperity after a season of privation, and was often verified.” (P. 482)

¹¹⁹Slotki states that this means “the ‘early’ rain which falls in October at the time of sowing.” (P. 144)

Watts comments that “Palestinian agriculture is totally dependent on *rain* [but we insist that it is also dependent upon Israel’s abundant dew]. Yahweh claims to be able to give and to withhold rain (**Amos 5:7; Isaiah 5:6; 2 Kings 8:1; Deuteronomy 11:13; 28:12**).” (P. 401)

¹²⁰Slotki comments that by “bread” is meant “the ears of corn from which bread is obtained.” (P. 145)

¹²¹Alexander states “that the noun כֹּר, **kar**, which usually has the sense of ‘lamb,’ is [never used in the sense of *pasture*, according to Hengstenberg]...But the latter meaning seems to be absolutely necessary here, and is accordingly assumed by all interpreters.” (P. 482)

Here Alexander commits the “all fallacy,” but both **Brown-Driver-Briggs** and **Holladay** define the noun as meaning “lamb-pasturage” or simply “pasture.”

30:24¹²² וְהָאֵלֶּפִים וְהָעִירִים עֲבָדֵי הָאֲדָמָה

בְּלִיל חֲמִיץ יֹאכְלוּ

אֲשֶׁר-זָרָה בְּרַחַת וּבַמְזֵרָה:

And the oxen and the male donkeys, workers of the ground,
will eat seasoned (mixed with salt) fodder,¹²³
which is winnowed with the shovel and with the pitchfork.¹²⁴

¹²²Alexander translates / comments on **verse 24**: “And the oxen and the asses working the ground shall eat salted provender which has been winnowed (literally, which one winnows) with the sieve and fan. The meaning evidently is that the domesticated animals shall fare as well as men in other times.” (P. 482)

Oswalt comments that “The work animals are singled out as special beneficiaries of God’s blessing. Grain will be so abundant after the harvest that even the oxen and the donkeys will eat mixtures...of the food grains (those which are winnowed), seasoned...with salt. Not only does this diet testify to abundance, but it also testifies to owners whose hearts have been enough softened by God’s care of them as to be concerned for their animals.” (P. 562)

The text itself says nothing concerning what the diet testifies to.

¹²³Slotki’s translation has “shall eat savoury provender,” and he comments that “the literal meaning of the Hebrew word for provender [‘animal fodder’] is ‘mixture’ (בְּלִיל, **beliyl** [which **Brown-Driver-Briggs** defines as ‘mixed fodder’], having consisted of a mixture of beans, barley, oats and vetches. The Hebrew for savoury (חֲמִיץ, **chamiyts**) usually means ‘acid’ and is rendered by some commentators as ‘salted,’ grains of salt being added to the mixture. Such a saline fodder is regarded as a dainty in food for cattle.” (P. 145)

Alexander likewise states that “בְּלִיל חֲמִיץ, **beliyl chamiyts** properly means *fermented mixture*. The first word is commonly supposed to denote here a mixture of different kinds of grain, and the other a seasoning of salt or acid herbs, peculiarly grateful to the stomachs of cattle.” (P. 482)

¹²⁴Slotki’s translation has “with the shovel and with the fan.” This is also the translation given in **King James** and **Tanakh**, and it seems strange to think of winnowing with a “fan.” But look at the article “Winnowing Fans–India” on the Internet, with pictures of such fans, which are much like a weaved shovel, but light in weight, making them much easier for women to use in winnowing grain, getting rid of all the particles of straw and chaff.

(continued...)

¹²⁴(...continued)

Brown-Driver-Briggs states that the noun מִזְרֵה, **mizreh**, means “pitchfork, with six prongs.”

Kaiser comments on **verses 23-25a** that “As a consequence of this new obedience the land will come to enjoy a fruitfulness like that of paradise...”

“In an agrarian society it is necessary for a prosperous life that the animals too have plenty to eat and are so able to provide wool and meat in abundance, or work as draught animals or beasts of burden...”

“The teacher who gives us this verse seems to have been so much of an expert, as Lutheran country pastors once were, that he could name the best mixed fodder, with sorrel added...”

“The author of this sentence has remembered that complete fruitfulness independent of the rainy seasons can only be achieved with adequate artificial irrigation, and has therefore added the idea that upon every mountain and hill...there will not only be water channels...but also water.” (Pp. 302-03)

¹²⁵Alexander translates / comments on **verse 25**: “*And there shall be, on every high mountain, and on every elevated hill, channels, streams of waters, in the day of great slaughter, in the falling of towers (or when towers fall)...*”

“The simple meaning seems to be that water shall flow where it never flowed before, a common figure in the prophets for a great change, and especially a change for the better...[While interpreters have attempted to apply the description to various historical situations], the diversity and arbitrary nature of these explanations show that there are no sufficient data in the text itself for any such specific and exclusive application. All that can certainly be gathered from the words is, that a period of war and carnage should be followed by one of abundance and prosperity.” (P. 483)

Motyer comments that “Contrasting with the water of tears (**verse 19**), here is a rearranging even of the face of the earth, whereby the formerly arid hilltops will be lavishly watered.” (P. 251)

Oswalt states that **verse 25** “has two themes: the supply of water and the collapse of the towers...When the towers of Judah’s pride are smashed...she may expect a new era of unbelievable fruitfulness [but are ‘the towers’ symbols of Judah’s pride? What ‘towers’ do you think are meant?].”

“Little Judah, crushed under a whole succession of empires culminating in Rome, became the seedbed from which biblical faith was to grow to encompass the world...The dramatic and miraculous nature of God’s salvation is depicted by springs

(continued...)

וְעַל כָּל-גְּבֵעָה נִשְׂאָה

פְּלִגִּים יְבֵלֵי-מַיִם

בְּיוֹם הַרְג רֵב בְּנִפְל מִגְדָּלִים:

And there will be upon every high mountain,
and upon every lifted-up hill,
streams—channels of water,¹²⁶
on a day of great slaughter, as towers fall.¹²⁷

וְהָיָה אֹרֶחַ-הַלְבָּנָה כְּאֹרֶחַ הַחַמָּה 30:26¹²⁸

¹²⁵(...continued)

and watercourses on the very tops of the hills, the places least likely to be well watered.” (Pp. 562-63)

Such is Oswalt’s interpretation—but the text says nothing about Judah becoming the seedbed from which was to grow a worldwide biblical faith. And we think the *negebh*—the southernmost part of Judah--would be the place in Judah least likely to be well watered. What do you think?

¹²⁶Slotki comments that “Even on the Judean mountains and hills, which might be expected to be dry and barren, there will flow streams and watercourses that will fructify them as well as the plains and valleys.” (P. 145)

¹²⁷Slotki states that the “great slaughter” is referring to the slaughter of the enemies of God, and that the “towers” is a metaphor for the great and mighty. (P. 145)

Watts states that “*Great slaughter and towers...falling* set the scene in a time of war when destruction is commonplace and expected.” (P. 401)

Kaiser comments that “If anyone should ask when all this is to happen, the answer is, on the day of the great slaughter...in which Yahweh will rise up against all pride and loftiness and will therefore also bring down the towers of the fortresses of this earth...

“But in order that devout readers should not be afraid of this day, there is a concluding reminder that it will bring the fulfilment of the longings of all the centuries. For it is the day in which Yahweh will bind up the wound which was made, as it were, by the surrender of Jerusalem, its king and its temple in 587 B.C.E...and the day in which He will heal the blows received at that time.” (Pp. 303-04)

¹²⁸Alexander translates **verse 26**: “And the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the

(continued...)

¹²⁸(...continued)

day of Jehovah's binding up the breach of His people, and the stroke of His wound He will heal."

He comments that "Instead of the usual words for sun and moon, we have here two poetical expressions, one denoting *heat* and the other *white*...

"Maimonides supposes an allusion to the seven days of the dedication of Solomon's temple. The [Aramaic] Targum, still more strangely, multiplies the seven twice into itself and reads, three hundred and forty-three days...

"It is plain that the prophet's language is designed, not merely to express great joy, but to describe a change in the face of nature, as an emblem of some great revolution in the state of society." (Pp. 484-85)

Slotki states that **verse 26** gives "a representation in metaphorical language of the abundant happiness and prosperity in store for the people." But he adds that "Others understand the text literally as a miraculous increase in the radiance of the heavenly luminaries." (P. 145)

We think a seven-fold increase in the sun's rays would result in the burning up of planet earth. As Watts states, "Moderns would be appalled at the thought of a seven-fold increase in the sun's heat and light." (P. 401)

And we insist that here, as Isaiah begins to describe his vision of the future awaiting the people of YHWH, his language contains puzzling riddles that defy literal, exact understanding—just as we should expect in the light of **Numbers 12:6-8** and **1 Corinthians 13:7-12**.

Oswalt states concerning **verse 26** that "There are two themes associated here: light and healing...Instead of the darkness of despair, uncertainty, and sin, and the misery of the pains resulting from running from God in the darkness, there will be perfect clarity and the tender ministry of the Father bandaging our wounds and bruises [this language, 'the tender ministry of the Father bandaging our wounds and bruises' is not found in the text]." See **Isaiah 60:19-22**,

- 19 The sun will no longer be for you for light by day;
 and for brightness, the moon will not shine for you.
 And YHWH will be for you for long-lasting light,
 and your God for your beauty!
- 20 Your sun will not set any more,
 and your moon will not be gathered.
 Because YHWH will be for you for long-lasting light
 and (the) days of your mourning will be completed.
- 21 And your people, all of them, (will be) righteous;
 for long-lasting time they will inherit earth / land—

(continued...)

וְאֹרֶן הַחֲמָה יְהִי שְׁבַע־תַּיִם
כְּאֹרֶן שְׁבַע־תַּיִם הַיָּמִים
בְּיוֹם חֲבַשׁ יְהוָה אֶת־שִׁבְרֵ עַמּוֹ
וּמַחֲץ מַכָּתוֹ יִרְפָּא:

And (the) light of the moon will be like (the) light of the hot sun;
and (the) light of the hot sun will be seven times (brighter),
like (the) light of seven of the days—¹²⁹
on a day (when) YHWH binds up His people’s brokenness,
and (the) severe wound of His striking, He will heal!¹³⁰

¹²⁸(...continued)

a sprout of My planting, a work of My hands,
to make itself beautiful.
22 The least one will become to the thousand(s);
and the little / insignificant one to a mighty nation.
I (am) YHWH;
in its time, I will hasten it!

¹²⁹Slotki’s translation has “the seven days,” and he comments that this is referring to the seven days “of the week, all their light being concentrated in that of one day.” (P.145)

¹³⁰Where our Hebrew text has וּמַחֲץ מַכָּתוֹ יִרְפָּא, “and a severe wound of His striking He will heal,” **Rahlfs** has καὶ τὴν ὀδύνην τῆς πληγῆς σου ἰάσεται, “and the pain of your wound He will heal” (with no mention that it was YHWH Who caused the wound).

Motyer comments that “The contrasting day brings healing for the people whom both their own sin and His righteous judgment have wounded.” (P. 251)

Watts states that “Yahweh’s healing work will be applied to the people’s wounds, even to those which His punishment had caused. The idea that God punishes but also heals is found in **Deuteronomy 32:29; Job 5:18** and **Hosea 6:1.**” (P. 401)

Watts explains **verses 19-26**, stating that “The implied hearers within the [**Book of Isaiah**] are despondent pilgrims in Jerusalem. With heightened political tensions, the threat of war, and prophetic teachings that Yahweh has sent the wars against them, they tended to despair of Yahweh’s help and goodness.

(continued...)

¹³⁰(...continued)

“The passage is a classic example of an assuring homily in the wisdom / Deuteronomic style. The gracious, healing, guiding nature of God is certain and dominant...Past afflictions and trials should not cloud the hope that God will again appear to guide His people (**verse 20**). God’s presence is a gentle reminder of ‘the way’ whenever they are tempted to stray (**verse 21**) and is a strong admonition against idolatry (**verse 22**)...

“The basic understanding of Yahweh’s role in bringing rain to Palestine is dominant here, as it is in **Deuteronomy**. The blessing of rain will be abundant enough to provide streams on the mountaintops (**verse 25a**).

“Only **verse 25b** gives a hint that the episode is set in a time of turmoil and war. This stressful factor is otherwise ignored. But the distress and wounds are recognized in **verse 20a** and in **verse 26b**. In both instances Yahweh’s responsibility for the people’s hurt is recognized. Yet the positive message of God’s grace, His providential guidance, the gift of rain, and the healing of His people’s hurt dominate all else. One strong demand is clear: Get rid of the idols!” (Pp. 401-02)

¹³¹Slotki comments on **verses 27-33** that they depict “The sudden appearance of God in His might and glory,” and “the dramatic annihilation of the Assyrian host and Judah’s festal rejoicing and songs of thanksgiving.” (P. 146)

Oswalt comments on these verses that “The writer now follows the promise of Judah’s redemption with the promise of Assyria’s destruction...

‘It is not the Egyptians who would deliver God’s people, but God Himself. This was the message Isaiah sought to impress upon the Judeans, but with little apparent success. They were too enamored of their own means of self-defense to hear a message which invited them to stand still and see God at work on their behalf. Yet this is the message of the **Bible** from **Exodus** to **Chronicles** [obvious over-statement!]:

Exodus 14:13-14,

And Moses said to the people, Don’t be afraid!
 Take your stand, and see YHWH’s salvation,
 which He will create for you people today;
 because you saw Egypt today;
 you will not again see them for a long lasting time!

2 Chronicles 20:17,

It is not for you people to fight in this—
 station yourselves, stand,
 and see YHWH’s deliverance / salvation with you!

(continued...)

¹³¹(...continued)

O Judah and Jerusalem,
you shall not be afraid and not be dismayed!
Tomorrow go forth before them—
and YHWH (will be) with you!

“The flesh says with Frederick the Great, ‘God is on the side of the strongest battallions,’ but the Spirit says, ‘Stand still and see your salvation.’” (P. 564)

But Oswalt has greatly overstated the facts. There are numerous passages from **Exodus** to **2 Chronicles** which advocate Israel’s going forth to battle—the exact opposite of standing still! And the passages commanding Israel to “stand still” are few and far between—hardly “the message of the **Bible** from **Exodus** to **Chronicles**”!

Motyer entitles **verses 27-33** “Contemporary events: Assyria no threat.”

He states that “This second movement in the section on the faithfulness of the Lord turns from eschatology to imminent history...Though Judah’s dallying with Egypt (**30:1-7**) is deeply offensive to the Lord and useless in respect of the Assyrian threat, yet Jerusalem will not fall to Assyria. Rather, the Assyrian king, thundering towards Zion, is in fact climbing his own funeral pyre!...

“Anthropomorphisms [the attributing of human characteristics and purposes to inanimate objects, animals, plants, or other natural phenomena, or to God] abound. In the first stanza, the Lord’s *Name, anger, lips, tongue* and *spirit*...are mentioned; in the second, His *voice, arm* and *anger*; and in the third, His *voice* and *breath*...

“The opening stanza makes the fullest use of the sort of anthropomorphic language which marks the whole poem. Its intention is to show the Lord wholly involved in action and reaction in world history and the inevitability of a final moral settlement because of what He is and can do.” (Pp. 251-52)

Watts summarizes **verses 27-33** by stating that “This episode parodies [makes a humorous imitation of] cultic ceremonies of Yahweh’s coming in the Zion festival. **Verses 27-28** portray the coming of the Name of Yahweh from afar, burning with anger against the nations. They employ six anthropomorphic terms: Name of Yahweh coming from a distance; His anger burning; His liver raging; His lips full of indignation; His tongue devouring like fire; His breath like a stream, a signal to the nations, a bridle for the peoples.

“**Verses 29-33b** turn to the people’s response and to the historical consequences that are promised. Yahweh’s coming will occasion a song like festival songs of old when Israel climbed toward Jerusalem to worship Yahweh, ‘the Rock of Israel,’ and witnessed the drama of Yahweh acting in the storm (**verse 30**) and the cultic punishment He meted out, portrayed in **verse 32** by musical accompaniment.

(continued...)

¹³¹(...continued)

“But the real joy of the worshipping people is occasioned by the historical events which mirror the festival drama. Assyria will fall (**verse 31**) and her king will be buried (**verse 33ab**). **Verse 33c** returns to the theme of Theophany. Yahweh’s anger lights the funeral pyre [a pile or heap of wood or other combustible material, especially such a pile for burning a dead body as part of a funeral rite, as in India today] of the Assyrian king.” (P. 404)

Kaiser entitles **verses 27-33** “Yahweh’s Feast.”

He holds that “This description of salvation is not by Isaiah himself.” (P. 306)

He entitles **verses 27-28** “The Judge of the nations comes!”

He comments that “As we already know from **Isaiah 17:12ff**, and **29:1ff**., Yahweh’s help is closest when the distress is greatest. In a miraculous way He intervenes to reverse the fate of His Own city of God...

“Just as in texts handed down from ancient times Yahweh came in the storm from His mountain of God, either from Sinai or from the mountainous country of Seir (compare **Judges 5:4**; **Deuteronomy 33:2** and also **Isaiah 2:12**), His ‘name,’ which now takes His place, will come down from afar, from the mountain of God or from heaven in a mighty thunderstorm, with sheet lightning which could be seen as His burning anger, forked lightning as His tongues, and thunder which could be heard as His voice cursing His enemies...compared with a raging torrent which suddenly rises up to the neck of the traveler...Here the poet seems to have in mind the powerful cloudbursts which in those latitudes can suddenly transform a dry stream bed into a raging torrent...

“We must imagine the powerful rushing waters carrying the assembled nations away from Jerusalem and therefore following a course which leads them directly to their ruin. From the poetic point of view the transition from the description of the ‘name’ which approaches in the storm to a metaphor which presents Him as a servant on a farm or in an army who places a bridle and halter on a rebellious horse, donkey or mule, in order to subdue it to his will...is an abrupt one. When Yahweh treats the nations in this way, He is not guiding them along His straight path, but deceitfully into their certain ruin.” (Pp. 306-07)

What do you make of this depiction of YHWH? Do you agree with Kaiser?

Oswalt comments on **verses 27-28** that “In language reminiscent of other Theophanies of judgment (**Psalms 18:8-16**^{Heb} / **7-15**^{Eng}; **50:3**; **Nahum 1:3-8**; **Habakkuk 3:3-15**), God is depicted as coming from a great distance on the wings of a storm.” (P. 564)

(continued...)

בְּעַר אָפוֹ וְכִבֵּד מִשְׁאֵה
 שִׁפְתָיו מִלֵּאֵי זַעַם
 וּלְשׁוֹנוֹ כְּאֵשׁ אֹכֵלֶת:

Look–YHWH's name,¹³² coming from afar,¹³³

His anger (is) burning, and heaviness (of) lifting-up(?)¹³⁴

¹³¹(...continued)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 27**: “Behold, the name of Jehovah cometh from afar, burning His anger, and heavy the ascent (of smoke); His lips are full of wrath, and His tongue as a devouring fire...”

“The words are to be strictly understood as traits in the prophetic picture of this terrible epiphany.” (Pp. 484-85)

Watts states that “Apparently the Name here is like the ‘Glory’ in **Ezekiel 1:28**... intended to represent Yahweh Himself.” (P. 405)

¹³²Slotki holds that “name of the Lord” is here “synonymous with God’s power and glory.” (P. 146)

Oswalt states that “*the name of the Lord* is especially indicative of God’s revealed character, both as sovereign and as redeemer.” (P. 565)

But we wonder why he picks out “sovereign” and “redeemer.” We are reminded of how some commentators say what the name YHWH means in a similar fashion. We say the name of the Lord stands for the Lord Himself, not for some specific elements of the Divine character.

¹³³Slotki states that the phrase “from afar” means “from His heavenly habitation, from His mysterious abode. Traditionally ‘from afar’ means from times of old, in accordance with the promise He made long ago.” (P. 146)

Oswalt states that “God may be far away, but...He can break in upon us at any moment.” (P. 566)

Watts observes that “A Theophany usually tells where Yahweh is coming from: Seir / Edom...Teman / Mountains of Paran...Sinai...the Heavens...Zion...from the north ...The phrase *from a distance* is unique. Common to all of these is the recognition that Yahweh is not bound to any place. He comes when and where He chooses.” (P. 405)

¹³⁴The difficult last phrase of this line, **וְכִבֵּד מִשְׁאֵה**, literally, “and heaviness / mass of lifting-up,” is given varying translations, from “and the burden *thereof* is heavy,”

(continued...)

His lips were filled (with) fury,
and His tongue like a devouring fire!¹³⁵

30:28¹³⁶ וְרוּחֹוֹ כַּנַּחַל שׁוֹטֵף עַרְצָאוּר

יַחֲצֵה לַהֲנַפֵּה גוֹיִם בְּנַפְת שׁוֹא

וְרָסַן מִתְעָה עַל לַחֲיֵי עַמּוּיִם:

And His Spirit¹³⁷ like an overflowing wadi¹³⁸ will divide¹³⁹ up to (the) neck--

¹³⁴(...continued)

to “With a heavy burden,” to “and in thick rising smoke,” to “and dense clouds of smoke,” to “heavy his threat,” τρ μετὰ δόξης τὸ λόγιον “with glory the saying.”

Oswalt translates by “the burden heavy,” and comments that “Most modern translations take it to refer to a dense cloud of smoke accompanying the fire of His anger...The alternative is to take it...as referring to the heavy burden of punishment which God will impose upon the Assyrians.” (P. 566)

We think it best to simply acknowledge that we do not know what the phrase means, and remember the nature of the prophetic message, especially when predicting the future, as filled with puzzling enigmas.

¹³⁵Oswalt comments that “The **Old Testament** writers considered that the decree of the God Who speaks was ultimately the Power which held all things together and which could plunge all things into dissolution.” (P. 566)

¹³⁶Alexander translates / comments on **verse 28**: “And His breath (or spirit), like an overflowing stream, shall divide as far as the neck, to sift the nations in the sieve of falsehood, and a misleading bridle on the jaws of the people...The common explanation of the whole verse is a threatening against Jehovah’s enemies.” (P. 485)

Slotki states that **verse 28** contains “three metaphors of stream, sieve and bridle symbolizing the overwhelming catastrophe.” (P. 146)

But the exact meaning of the various phrases is puzzling, not clear or certain!

¹³⁷The noun רוּחַ, **ruach**, is translated by some as “anger,” by others as “breath,” but Alexander holds that “there is no sufficient reason for excluding an allusion to the Holy Spirit as a personal agent.” (P. 485)

Again we say, puzzling, enigmatic language!

¹³⁸Oswalt comments that “an overflowing torrent speaks of the wadis, or gulches,
(continued...)

to sift nations in a sieve of emptiness—¹⁴⁰
and a halter / bridle that leads astray upon (the) jaws of peoples.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸(...continued)

which are normally dry but can be brimming in a matter of minutes as a result of a cloudburst in the hills. So God's judgment will be as sudden and as complete." (P. 566) Compare **Nahum 1:8**,

And with an overflowing flood he will make an end of her (Nineveh's) place;
and His enemies He will pursue (into) darkness.

¹³⁹The Hebrew verb **יִחַדֵּם**, **yechetseh** according to Alexander "means strictly to divide into halves...The water, rising to the neck, divides the body into two unequal parts. The metaphor itself, as in **Isaiah 8:8**, denotes extreme danger." (P. 485)

Oswalt states that "it divides at the neck is a curious phrase, and Kissane suggests that 'divides' is a corruption of 'reaches'...Another suggestion is that the waters divide a man in half...Another possibility is that the waters divide or go around at the neck. In any case, the life-threatening effect of turbulent waters neck-deep is clear." (P. 566) And again we say, puzzling, enigmatic language!

¹⁴⁰What do you think "sifting nations in a sieve of emptiness" means? Does it imply that the Divine judgment is a purifying process, in which the nations are being cleansed of their empty schemes, and only those among the nations who are committed to justice and righteousness will be preserved?

Slotki holds that the sifting process will continue "until none is left" (p. 146). But is this the goal of winnowing / sifting—to destroy the whole crop? We think not.

Alexander refers to Gill's paraphrase, "They were to be sifted, not with a good and profitable sieve, which retains the corn and shakes out the chaff, or so as to have some taken out and spared, but with a sieve that lets all through, and so be brought to nothing." (P. 485) Puzzling, enigmatic? Yes!

¹⁴¹These last two lines of **verse 28** are given varying translations:

King James, "to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity: and *there shall be* a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing *them* to err."

Tanakh, "To set a misguiding yoke upon nations And a misleading bridle upon the jaws of peoples";

New Revised Standard, "to sift the nations with the sieve of destruction, and to place on the jaws of the peoples a bridle that leads them astray."

New International, "He shakes the nations in the sieve of destruction; he places in the jaws of the peoples a bit that leads them astray."

New Jerusalem, "to sift the nations with the sieve of destruction, to harness the peoples in a bridle, that will lead them astray."

(continued...)

¹⁴¹(...continued)

Rahfs, καὶ διαιρεθήσεται τοῦ ἔθνη ταράξει ἐπὶ πλανήσει ματαιία καὶ διώξεται αὐτοὺς πλάνησις καὶ λήμψεται αὐτοὺς κατὰ πρόσωπον αὐτῶν, “and [the Divine breath or spirit will] be divided to confuse nations in vain error, and error will pursue them and lay hold of them face-to-face.” (NETS)

What do you think a halter / bridle that leads astray means? Does it mean that YHWH puts His Spirit in the hearts of the nations, leading them astray from their intended purposes, to fulfill His purpose instead? Slotki states that it means “diverting the enemy from his purpose and so frustrating his designs.” (P. 146)

Alexander states that “the last clause is paraphrased by Luther as denoting that Jehovah would drive the nations hither and thither...Most interpreters prefer the more specific sense of leading astray, or in the wrong direction, with particular allusion...to the fact that Sennacherib was misled by a false report respecting Tirhakah, the king of Ethiopia.” (P. 485)

Oswalt states that “each figure leads to destruction: the flood to drowning, the sieve to dividing the good grain from the useless chaff, the bridle which leads an unbreakable horse to its death.” (P. 567) But the text does mention an ‘unbreakable horse,’ nor the bridle as leading to death.

Watts comments that “The object of God’s anger is the nations / peoples.” (P. 405) Yes, but this can easily be overemphasized. In **Isaiah 25:6-9** the nations / peoples are said to share in YHWH’s banquet of fat meat and best of wines, at which death will be swallowed up and all tears wiped away forever!

Similarly, oftentimes Israel is depicted as being the object of YHWH’s wrath and judgment of destruction—but that is not the end—following the visitation in judgment, YHWH assures Israel’s of His love and forgiveness.

What do you think? Do you understand Isaiah’s language here as clear and precise, or rather, as filled with puzzling enigma?

¹⁴²Motyer entitles **verses 29-30** “The song and the shout: Judah’s festivity and the Lord’s rage.”

Kaiser entitles these two verses “The rejoicing at Yahweh’s intervention.”

He comments that “Before the poet returns from his metaphorical description of the Divine purpose to the description of God attacking in the storm, he addresses his hearers or readers to assure them that this coming of Yahweh will be a joyful event for them, and that they themselves will not be punished by the judgment of their God...

(continued...)

¹⁴²(...continued)

When Yahweh attacks the besiegers, what happens in the besieged city will be like the night preceding a festival, when the pilgrims go up to the temple to the sounding of flutes, and songs...

“There is no doubt that the apocalyptic author thinks of the destruction of the enemy as directly caused by God acting in the storm. Just as during Deborah’s battle the Kishon had risen furiously as a result of a storm and at least cut off the enemy’s path (compare **Judges 5:20-21**), and as in the battle at Gibeon hail had killed the Amorites (compare **Joshua 10:11** and **Isaiah 28:21**), so Yahweh would destroy the enemy gathered before the gates of Jerusalem by a gigantic storm. The supernatural aspect of the conception lies in the fact that the storm is to affect only the enemy, but not the people of Jerusalem.

“‘Assyria,’ the world power hostile to God which was embodied in the Seleucid kingdom [‘A Hellenistic state ruled by the Seleucid dynasty, which existed from 312 to 63 B.C.E.; founded by Seleucus I Nicator following the division of the Macedonian empire vastly expanded by Alexander the Great. Seleucus received Babylonia and, from there, expanded his dominions to include much of Alexander’s near eastern territories. At the height of its power, it included central Anatolia, Persia, the Levant, Mesopotamia, and what is now Kuwait, Afghanistan, and parts of Pakistan and Turkmenistan’ (**Wikipedia**, 5/11/2017)], and the world of the nations which has gathered together to attack Jerusalem, will be so terrified by the very voice of God in the thunder that it will be unable to think of resisting or attacking. If the nations are unable to influence God by the noise they make while He attacks, there can be no doubt that they will have to give way to His voice, however dangerous and powerful they may seem.” (Pp. 307-09)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 29**: “*The song (or singing) shall be to you (i.e. your song shall be) like the night of the consecration of a feast, and joy of heart (i.e. your joy shall be) like (that of) one marching with the pipe (or flute) to go into the mountain of Jehovah, to the Rock of Israel...*

“The night may be particularly mentioned in the first clause, either because all the Mosaic festivals began in the evening, or with special allusion to the Passover, which is described in the law (**Exodus 12:42**) as *a night to be much observed unto the Lord, as that night of the Lord to be observed by all the children of Israel in their generations...*

“This verse gives an interesting glimpse of ancient usage as to the visitation of the temple at the greater yearly festivals.” (Pp. 485-86)

Slotki states that **verse 29** depicts “Israel’s joy at the fall of the Assyrian invader.” (P. 146)

(continued...)

וְשִׂמְחַת לִבְבְּךָ כְּהוֹלֵךְ בְּחַלְלִיל
 לְבוֹא בְּהַר-יְהוָה
 אֶל-צוּר יִשְׂרָאֵל:

The song will be for you people like a night for setting-apart a pilgrimage-festival,¹⁴³
 and rejoicing of heart, like the walking with the flute,
 to enter into YHWH's mount,¹⁴⁴
 to Israel's Rock.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴²(...continued)

Oswalt comments that “the result of God’s raging against the enemies outside will be rejoicing inside...The biblical feasts were preeminently times of rejoicing over God’s acts of deliverance in history...

“The line of thinking is: you have abandoned God’s ways because you thought He could not help; that abandonment will bring destruction upon you; but despite His bringing the Assyrians upon you, God has not abandoned you, and the proof of His power and His love is that you will one day be able to rejoice in His work on your behalf.” (P. 567)

Watts observes that “The Theophany is set in a *festival*. It is to be understood as the festal drama of Zion’s New Year. Its purpose is clear from the name used for God: **The Rock of Israel**. It stressed assurance that Yahweh will defend and care for His people.” (P. 405)

But not a word is said in the text about “the festal drama of Zion’s New Year,” and it is not at all clear that there was such a festival in ancient Israel.

¹⁴³Slotki holds that this is referring to “the feast of Passover when hymns and psalms are sung in commemoration of the deliverance from Egypt.” (P. 146) But is there any mention of “Passover” in the text?

¹⁴⁴Slotki comments that this is describing “a pilgrim procession to the temple accompanied with music.” (P. 146)

¹⁴⁵Alexander comments that “The Rock of Israel is not mount Zion or Moriah, but Jehovah Himself, to Whose presence they resorted, as appears from **2 Samuel 23:3**,

[Israel’s God spoke to me,
 Israel’s Rock said:
 One ruling over humanity—a righteous / rightly-related one,
 (is) one ruling (by) fear / reverence of God!]” (P. 486)

וְהִשְׁמִיעַ יְהוָה אֶת־הוֹד קוֹלוֹ 30:30¹⁴⁶

וְנִחַת זְרוּעוֹ יְרֵאָה

בְּזַעַף אֵף וְלֶהַב אֵשׁ אוֹכֵלָה

נֶפֶץ נוֹרָם וְאֶבֶן בְּרָד:

And YHWH will cause to be heard His voice's splendor / majesty,¹⁴⁷

and He will cause to be seen His arm's descent,¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶Alexander translates / comments on **verse 30**: “*And Jehovah shall cause to be heard the majesty of His voice, and the descent of His arm shall He cause to be seen, with indignation of anger and a flame of devouring fire, scattering, and rain, and hailstones (literally stone of hail)...*”

“The image presented is that of a Theophany, in which storm and tempest are only accompanying circumstances.” (P. 486)

¹⁴⁷Slotki comments that this perhaps means “thunder.” (P. 146)
We say, Yes, perhaps...so it is with puzzling, enigmatic language!

¹⁴⁸Watts comments on **verse 30** that “The Theophany turns to the picture of the storm revealing God’s voice and act: ‘His *arm descending*’ for deliverance. The storm God with raised arm is a familiar motif in Ancient Near Eastern art...Storm imagery is frequently used in the **Psalms (18:13; 46:3; 68:3, 7-9; 77:18).**” (P. 405)

See James B. Pritchard’s **The Ancient Near East in Pictures**, #'s 481, 484, 486, 490, 494, 496, 501, 531 and 532.

In his book, **The Storm-God in the Ancient Near East**, Alberto Green demonstrates how “The Storm-God was a Deity common to every culture in the ancient Near East. In this comprehensive study of the literature, iconography (seals, monuments), and myths related to the Storm-god in its various guises, Green attempts a new synthesis of the available data. He finds that the Storm-God was the force primarily responsible for three areas of human concern:

- (1) religious power, because he was the ever-dominant environmental force upon which peoples depended for their lives;
- (2) centralized political power; and
- (3) continuously evolving sociocultural processes, which typically were projected through the Storm-God's attendants.

(continued...)

with storming anger, and a flame of devouring fire--

a driving storm and rain-storm and hail-stone(s).¹⁴⁹

30:31¹⁵⁰ כִּי־מִקּוֹל יְהוָה יִתַּת אֲשׁוּר

בַּשָּׁבֶט יִכֶּה:

¹⁴⁸(...continued)

Green traces these motifs through the Mesopotamian, Anatolian, Syrian, and Levantine regions; he argues that, in the end, Yahweh of the **Bible** can be identified as a storm-God, though certain unique characteristics came to be associated with Him: He was the Creator of all that is created and the self-existing God who needs no other." (From the dust-jacket of Green's book)

¹⁴⁹Slotki comments that "As often in the **Bible**, God manifests Himself in a storm." (P. 147)

¹⁵⁰Motyer entitles **verses 31-33** "Divine action: the overthrow of Asshur and its king."

He comments that "**Verse 31** begins (literally) 'For by the voice of the Lord Assyria will be shattered.' The concluding stanza explains and applies the poem to the immediate situation." (P. 253)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 31**: "*For at the voice of Jehovah shall Assyria (or the Assyrian) be broken, with the rod shall He smite...*

"There are two constructions of the last clause, one continuing Assyria as the subject of the verb, the other referring it to Jehovah...Even if Assyria be the subject of the clause, it is clear that the prophet speaks of her oppressions as being, in whole or in part, still future to his own perceptions...

"But by far the most natural construction of the clause is that which supplies nothing and adheres to the strict sense of the future, by connecting [He will strike] not with [Assyria], but with YHWH, both of which are mentioned in the other clause...

"The express mention of Assyria in this verse, though it does not prove it to have been from the beginning the specific subject of the prophecy, does show that it was a conspicuous object in Isaiah's view, as an example both of danger and deliverance, and that at this point he concentrates his prophetic vision on this object as a signal illustration of the general truths he has been announcing." (Pp. 486-87)

Slotki comments on **verse 31** that "Assyria is now named as the enemy upon whom will fall the judgment hitherto described." (P. 147)

Because from YHWH's voice, Assyria will be dismayed--¹⁵¹

with the rod, He will strike!¹⁵²

30:32¹⁵³ וְהָיָה כָּל מַעֲבַר מִטָּה מוֹסְרָה

¹⁵¹Watts comments that “The name Assyria gives political focus to the Theophany. It anticipates the break-up of the empire...The very passage that acknowledges Assyria to be Yahweh’s agent had announced that He would, in time, also determine Assyria’s fate (**Isaiah 10:12**). In this episode that day has come.” (P. 405)

But is that in fact the case? We think the passage predicts the coming of that day, not claiming that the day has come.

¹⁵²We are reminded of how earlier in **Isaiah**, Assyria itself has been described as “the rod of His [YHWH’s] anger” (**Isaiah 10:5**). Now Assyria will be struck by the rod of YHWH’s anger, probably referring to Babylon which defeated Assyria in 626 B.C.E.

Oswalt comments that “Isaiah is saying in every way possible that humanity’s only hope is in abandoning every other hope, including our own abilities, and casting ourselves upon God alone. Assyria had claimed to hold the scepter of the world, but God held that scepter and would shortly strike down the imposter—first outside Jerusalem’s gates and then more completely a hundred years later at the hands of the Medo-Babylonian alliance.” (Pp. 567-68)

¹⁵³Kaiser entitles **verses 32-33** “The final destruction of the enemy.”

He comments that “When Yahweh then strikes with the rod of His Own lightning, every blow will tell, and there will be no escape for ‘Assyria.’ But in the city they will begin to play the drums and the lyre, probably not to begin the song and dance of victory in praise of Yahweh...but in order to consecrate the enemy like a sacrifice for slaughter...

“There would be prepared in the valley of Hinnom, in the deep valley to the west and south of the city, the Topheth, the place of burning...

“Now those who have been struck by Yahweh’s lightnings will be burnt up there in an immense pit, filled with straw and wood...and it is Yahweh Who will add the final stroke by lighting the funeral pyre with His breath, which is now fiery, and with His lightnings like a burning stream of brimstone...

“One may marvel at the courageous faith which, in what seems to us an almost childish way, looks forward to the end of the powerful enemy before the gates of Jerusalem. But the content of these expectations shows how deep a gulf there must have been between Judaism and Hellenism for this apocalyptic thinker, since he desired nothing but death and destruction for the Hellenistic power [the Selucids, the Greek rulers of Syria and Israel after the death of Alexander the Great]...

(continued...)

אֲשֶׁר יִנְיַח יְהוָה עָלָיו
 בְּתַפִּים וּבְכַנָּרוֹת
 וּבְמִלְחָמוֹת תְּנוּפָה
 נִלְחָם- (בָּהּ) [בָּם]:

And every appointed¹⁵⁴ passing of a staff,¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³(...continued)

“That differences of faith divide men and nations is unfortunately something that does not just belong to the past but also to the present. The assurance of Christian faith should be demonstrated in seeking only the good of those who have a different faith. Anyone who does not only have this in mind, but actually seeks to live it out, will recall **John 8:7** [where Jesus is depicted as saying, ‘Let the person who is without sin throw the first stone at her [the adulteress brought to Jesus for judgment!].’]” (Pp. 309-10)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 32**: “*And every passage of the rod of doom, which Jehovah will lay (or cause to rest) upon him, shall be with tabrets and harps, and with fights of shaking it is fought therein...*”

“[The question raised in this verse is] whether the rod mentioned in the first clause is the rod which the Assyrian wielded, or the rod which smote himself. On the former supposition, the sense would seem to be, that in every place through which the rod of the oppressor had before passed, there should now be heard the sound of joyful music...the sense would seem to be that every passage of Jehovah’s rod (i.e. every stroke which passes from it to the object) will be hailed by those whom the Assyrian had oppressed, with joy and exultation.” (P. 487)

Oswalt comments on **verse 32** that “Although certain elements of this verse are matters of considerable controversy, the general sense is quite clear. God’s acts of judgment will be cause for an outpouring of joy.” (P. 568)

Watts observes that “The **verse [32]** announces the identity of Yahweh, celebrated in Jerusalem’s worship, with God Who controls the giants of history.” (P. 405)

¹⁵⁴Alexander states that “It is now very generally agreed that מוֹסְדָה, **musadhah** [our ‘appointed’] denotes the Divine determination or decree, and that the

(continued...)

which YHWH will cause to rest upon him,
with tambourines and with stringed instruments¹⁵⁶
and with battles (of a) swinging (arm),¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴(...continued)

whole phrase means the rod appointed by Him, or to put it in a form at once exact and poetical, the rod of *destiny* or *doom*." (P. 487)

¹⁵⁵Oswalt's translation has "the appointed staff," which he says is literally "the founded staff." He suggest two explanations: The first [which he adopts] is that "The staff is one whose purpose and destiny have been decreed [by a] Divine decree...So Isaiah emphasizes again that despite Assyria's pomp and power, she is in God's hands and the instrument of her destruction is already appointed. The alternative...changes *daleth* for *resh* [d for r], letters which are easily confused in the Hebrew block script. The result is...'His chastisement' (as in **Proverbs 22:15**)."

¹⁵⁶Alexander's translation has "tabrets ['small drums with one head of soft calfskin used to accompany a pipe or fife played by the same person'] and harps," and he comments that these "are not named as the ordinary military music...nor as the sacred music which on particular occasions was connected with the march of armies (**2 Chronicles 20:21-22**). Nor is the meaning that Jehovah would overcome the enemy as if in sport or like a merry-making...which is inconsistent with the words that follow,

battles of shaking, i.e. agitating or tumultuous battles, or as some explain the words, convulsive, struggling conflicts...

"The true sense seems to be, that every stroke would be attended with rejoicing on the part of the spectators, and especially of those who had been subject to oppression...The general sense is plain, to with, that God would violently overthrow Assyria." (Pp. 487-88)

¹⁵⁷Slotki's translation has "battles of wielding" and he suggests "the wielding of weapons," but says alternatives are "battles of shaking" and "battles of brandishing." (P. 147)

Oswalt states that "*with warrings waving, He makes war* is very obscure. As it stands it perhaps refers to a warrior wading into battle and brandishing his sword or his staff overhead. However, this is by no means obvious and several alternatives have been proposed. Especially significant to many of these is the observation that תנופה, 'waving,' occurs largely in cultic settings. This observation has led to the suggestion that Assyria will be treated as an offering and that the words translated 'warrings' and 'he makes war' are either written or interpreted wrongly. No scholarly consensus has emerged, however, so it seems best to stay with the Masoretic Text." (P. 568)

He fought against them.¹⁵⁸

30:33¹⁵⁹ כִּי־עָרֹךְ מֵאֲתָמוּל תִּפְתָּהּ

¹⁵⁸Translations of **verse 32** vary:

King James, “And *in* every place where the grounded staff shall pass, which the LORD shall lay upon him, *it* shall be with tabrets and harps: and in battles of shaking will he fight with it.”

Tanakh, “And each time the appointed staff passes by, The LORD will bring down *His* arm upon him And will do battle with him as he waves it.”

New Revised Standard, “And every stroke of the staff of punishment that the LORD lays upon him will be to the sound of timbrels and lyres; battling with brandished arm he will fight with him.”

New International, “Every stroke the LORD lays on them with his punishing club will be to the music of timbrels and harps, as he fights them in battle with the blows of his arm.”

New Jerusalem, “each time he goes by, will fall the punishing rod that Yahweh will lay on him, to the sound of tambourines and harps, in the battles which he will wage against him with uplifted hand.”

Rahlfs, καὶ ἔσται αὐτῷ κυκλόθεν ὅθεν ἦν αὐτῷ ἡ ἐλπίς τῆς βοηθείας ἐφ’ ἧ αὐτὸς ἐπεποίθει αὐτοὶ μετὰ αὐλῶν καὶ κιθάρας πολεμήσουσιν αὐτὸν ἐκ μεταβολῆς, “And it will be to him all around, from which the hope of help was his, upon which he himself was persuaded—they with flutes and harps will war (with) him—out of a change (in attitude / alliance).”

¹⁵⁹Alexander translates / comments on **verse 33**: “*For arranged since yesterday is Tophet; even it for the king is prepared; he has deepened, he has widened (it); its pile fire and wood in plenty; the breath of Jehovah, like a stream of brimstone, kindles it.* It is universally agreed that the destruction of the Assyrian king is here described as a burning of his body at a stake, or on a funeral-pile...

“But whether the king mentioned is an individual or an ideal representative of all, and whether this is a mere figurative representation of his temporal destruction or a premonition of his doom hereafter, are disputed questions...

“Tophet is well known to have been the name of a place in the valley of Hinnom where children were sacrificed to Moloch, and on that account afterwards defiled by the deposit of the filth of the city, to consume which, constant fires were maintained. Hence, by a natural association, Tophet, as well as the more general name, Valley of Hinnom, was applied by the later Jews to the place of future torment...

“The question whether it is here used to describe the place of future torments, or as a mere poetical description of the temporal destruction of the king of Assyria, is the less important, as the language must in either case be figurative, and can teach us nothing therefore as to the real circumstances either of the first or second death...

(continued...)

¹⁵⁹(...continued)

“We need not hesitate to understand the passage as at least including a denunciation of eternal misery, although the general idea which the figures were intended to express is that of sudden, terrible destruction.” (P. 488)

Alexander, like many others, longs to find in the **Bible** the teaching of an eternal “Hell,” and states that **Isaiah 30:33** can be understood in this way—even though its intention is only to express a “sudden, terrible destruction.”

In fact, the word “Hell” is not found in either the **Hebrew Bible** or the **Greek New Testament**—only in translations. And the main word used is the Hebrew phrase גַּי בְּנֵי־הַנֶּחֱם, **gey bheney-hinnom**, “Valley of Sons of Hinnom,” which was shortened and transliterated into Greek as γέεννα, *Gehenna*. The Aramaic Targum has גַּי־הַנֶּחֱם.

In that Valley, a ravine south of Jerusalem, according to later Jewish popular belief, God’s final judgment was to take place. And the **Synoptic Gospel** writers of **Matthew** especially, **Mark** and **Luke**, depicted Jesus as accepting this popular belief, using γέεννα, *Gehenna* for the place of punishment in the next life, which in much later translations was rendered “Hell,” with no mention of its geographical location in the tiny Valley just to the south of the ancient City of David. See: **Matthew 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47** and **Luke 12:5**. The only other place in the **Greek New Testament** where the word appears is **Jacob [“James”] 3:6**, where it is said that fires of γέεννα, *Gehenna* set on fire the tongue that is not controlled.

Oswalt states that **verse 33** “can either support, or mitigate against, the idea that **verse 32** refers to a sacrifice...[But] it is not so much a sacrifice being pictured as it is a warrior’s funeral pyre burning in the Hinnom Valley below [just to the south of] Jerusalem. The assumption that a sacrifice is in view rests upon the observation that human victims were burned to death in worship of the God Moloch [/ Molech] in this valley (**2 Kings 23:10; Jeremiah 19:6**). On this basis, some would emend ‘for the king’ (לְמַלְךְ, **lammelek**) to ‘for the Molech’ (לְמוֹלֵךְ, **lammolek**), but there is no textual evidence for such an emendation [it would not be an emendation of the consonantal text—just of the Masoretic pointing]...”

“Nothing in the text calls for the sacrificial understanding. Rather, the author says that Assyria’s funeral pyre, like the Lord’s rod, has stood ready from ancient days [No—all the text says is that it was prepared beforehand, perhaps meaning no more than ‘yesterday’! See footnote 161]. All it wants is the Lord’s breath to kindle it into flame (compare **Isaiah 31:9**)...”

“So again Isaiah is counseling his people that they need not go to Egypt out of fear of Assyria. What they should do is to move even closer to the only One in the universe who truly holds Assyria’s destiny in His hand.” (Pp. 569-70)

מִדְרָתָהּ אֵשׁ וְעֵצִים הַרְבֵּה

נִשְׁמַת יְהוָה כְּנַחַל גְּפִלִית בְּעֶרְהָ בָּהּ:

Because a Topheth / burning-place¹⁶⁰ is prepared from earlier time;¹⁶¹

also it has been made ready for the king,¹⁶² made deep, made wide;

¹⁶⁰Slotki's translation has "a hearth." He comments that this means "a place for burning. The Hebrew תִּפְתָּהּ, **tophteh** has evidently to be connected with תִּפְתָּ, Topheth, the place where human sacrifices were burnt to Moloch (**2 Kings 23:10; Jeremiah 7:31**). Here the 'sacrifice' will be the king of Assyria whose destruction is predicted." (P. 147)

Brown-Driver-Briggs states, "תִּפְתָּ, a proper noun, the name of a location in the valley of בֶּן־הַנֶּחֱם, 'Son of Hinnom' to the east of Jerusalem. The etymology is doubtful, and some think it is related to the Aramaic שִׁפְתָּ, = *fire-place*. See the following passages where it occurs with the definite article: **2 Kings 23:10** (+ 5 other times); passages where it occurs without the definite article: **Jeremiah 7:32, 19:11, 19:12**. It was a place of sacrificing children **Jeremiah 7:31-32; 19:6** (compare **verse 5, 2 Kings 23:10**."

¹⁶¹Alexander states that the Hebrew phrase מֵאֵתְמוּל, **me)ethmol**, "from yesterday," "from recently," "from formerly," "has been variously explained to mean 'long ago,' and 'just now,' or 'a little while ago.'" (P. 488)

Motyer says that it means "what is about to happen has long been determined upon." (P. 253) But it may only mean "a little while ago," or "yesterday."

¹⁶²Motyer comments that "Little did the Assyrians know that their imperial progress to Zion...was their funeral procession with the pyre long since laid!" (P. 253)

Watts comments that "The reference to the king's funeral is parallel to **chapter 14**. The context suggests that תִּפְתָּ, **tophteh**, 'funeral-pyre' is related to a ceremony for the dead. Cremation was not usual in Palestine nor, as far as is known, in Mesopotamia, although it is documented for military funerals in Greece and is the usual means of dealing with bodies as far east as India...

"When the **Old Testament** speaks of burning bodies it is taken as a sign of vengeance or degradation (compare **1 Samuel 31:12; Amos 6:10; Leviticus 20:14; 21:9; Joshua 7:25**...) The motif of fire is continued in Yahweh's fiery breath that ignites the funeral pyre. That is reminiscent of fire from heaven devouring Elijah's altar on Carmel (**1 Kings 18:38**)." (P. 406)

its pile¹⁶³ of fire-wood and numerous trees—

YHWH's breath¹⁶⁴,¹ like a wadi of brimstone / sulphur burning in it!

¹⁶³Alexander states that “מְדוּרָתָהּ, **medhurathah** [‘its pile / pyre’] means the whole circumference and area of the place of burning.” (P. 489)

The noun מְדוּרָה, **medhurah** occurs only twice in the **Hebrew Bible**, here (**Isaiah 30:33**) and **Ezekiel 24:9**, where it refers to a pile of wood used to burn beneath a pot filled with meat to be boiled—symbolical for the City of Jerusalem which is about to be destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.

Watts explains **Isaiah 30:27-33**, stating that “Themes from cultic drama and Theophany have been blended to shape a powerful episode...Within the [**Book of Isaiah**], it shows religious attempts to counter the [earlier] message. Like the prophets of salvation who opposed Jeremiah, the teachers and the Theophanic prophets salve the worries of the people, preventing them from facing up to the hard political decisions. This is how religious assurance can in fact be ‘an opiate for the people.’” (P. 406)

Shades of Karl Marx! We say, the positive messages that are intertwined with the messages of judgment are not intended to put the people to sleep, but rather, to call them to brave endurance in confronting the necessary struggles that confront them.

What do you say?

¹⁶⁴The Hebrew phrase, נְשִׁמַת יְהוָה, **nishmath YHWH**, “breath of YHWH,” occurs only here in the **Hebrew Bible**. Here in **Isaiah 30:33** it depicts the *breath* of YHWH as a hot wind kindling a flame. See our end-note 1 for all the occurrences of the noun נְשִׁמָה, **neshamah** in the **Hebrew Bible**.

1. Occurrences of the noun נְשָׁמָה, neshamah in the Hebrew Bible.

In the following passages it is used of the Divine breath:

Isaiah 30:33,

כִּי־עָרוֹךְ מֵאֵתְמוֹל תִּפְתָּהּ
גַּם־[הוּא] לְמִלְךְ הוֹכֵן הָעֵמִיק הָרֶחֶב
מִדְרָתָהּ אֵשׁ וְעֵצִים הֶרְבֵּה
נְשָׁמַת יְהוָה
כִּנְחָל גִּפְרִית בְּעֵרָה בָּהּ:

Because a Topheth / burning-place is prepared from earlier time;
also it has been made ready for the king, made deep, made wide;
its pile of fire-wood and numerous trees—
YHWH's breath,
like a wadi of brimstone / sulphur burning in it!

2 Samuel 22:16,

וַיִּרְאוּ אִפְקֵי יָם
וַיִּגְלוּ מוֹסְדוֹת תֵּבֵל
בְּגַעַרְתָּ יְהוָה
מִנְשָׁמַת רוּחַ אִפְוִ:

And channels of a sea were seen;
foundations of a world are uncovered / revealed,
at YHWH's rebuke,
from a breath of Spirit of His nostril!

Psalms 18:16,

וַיִּרְאוּ אִפְקֵי מַיִם
וַיִּגְלוּ מוֹסְדוֹת תֵּבֵל
מִנְעַרְתְּךָ יְהוָה
מִנְשָׁמַת רוּחַ אִפְךָ:

And they were seen, channels of water,
and they were uncovered, foundations of (the) inhabited earth--
from Your rebuke, O YHWH,
from a breath of Spirit of His nostril!

Job 4:9, where Eliphaz states:

מִנְשַׁמַּת אֱלֹהִים יֵאָבְדוּ
וּמִרוּחַ אַפּוֹ יִכָּלְוּ:

(At a blast) from Eloah's breath--they [wicked people] will perish;
and (at a blast) from His Spirit's / wind's anger--they will be finished.

Job 32:8, where Elihu states:

אֲכֵן רוּחַ־הַיָּיָא בְּאָנוּשׁ
וּנְשַׁמַּת שְׂדֵי תְבִינָם:

Surely, a spirit / Spirit--it (is) in a (weak) man;
and Shaddai's breath causes them to understand.

Job 33:4, where Elihu again states:

רוּחַ־אֵל עָשָׂתָנִי
וּנְשַׁמַּת שְׂדֵי תַחֲיֵנִי:

El's Spirit made me;
and Shaddai's breath gives me life.

The noun is also used of the breath of human beings:

1 Kings 17:17,

וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה
חָלָה בֶן־הָאִשָּׁה בְּעֵלְת הַבַּיִת
וַיְהִי חָלּוֹ חֲזָק מְאֹד
עַד אֲשֶׁר לֹא־נֹתְרָה־בּוֹ נְשָׁמָה:

And it happened after these things,
the woman, the mistress of the house's son got sick;
and his sickness was exceeding strong / bad,
to the point that breath was not remaining in him.

Isaiah 42:5,

כֹּה־אָמַר הָאֵל׃ יְהוָה
בּוֹרֵא הַשָּׁמַיִם וְנוֹטִיהֶם
רֹקַע הָאָרֶץ וְצֹאצְאֶיהָ
נָתַן נְשָׁמָה לָעָם עֲלֵיהָ

וְרוּחַ לְהִלְכִים בָּהֶם:

In this way the El / Supreme God YHWH spoke--
One creating the heavens and stretching them out,
One stamping out the earth and its offspring / produce,
One giving breath to the people upon it,
and Spirit / spirit to the ones walking in it.

Job 27:3, where Job swears he will not speak falsehood:

כִּי-כָל-עוֹד

נִשְׁמָתִי בִּי

וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים בְּאַפִּי:

Because everything still,
my breath in me,
and Eloah's breath in my nostrils,

Daniel 10:17,

וְהִיךְ יוֹכֵל עֶבֶד אֲדֹנָי זֶה

לְדַבֵּר עִם-אֲדֹנָי זֶה

וְאֲנִי מֵעַתָּה לֹא-יִעַמְד-בִּי כֹחַ

וְנִשְׁמָה לֹא נִשְׁאַרָה-בִּי:

And how will this, my Lord's servant be able
To speak with this, my Lord?
And I, from now (on), strength will not stand in me,
and breath is not remaining in me!

The noun is also used of the breath of life as breathed into human beings by God:

Genesis 2:7,

וַיִּצְרֶה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם

עֹפָר מִן-הָאָדָמָה

וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפִּיו נְשִׁמַת חַיִּים

וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה:

And YHWH God formed the human,
dust from the ground.
And he breathed into his nostrils a breath of life / living ones.
And the human was / became a living innermost-being!

Genesis 7:22,

כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁמַת־רוּחַ חַיִּים בְּאַפָּיו
מִכָּל־אֲשֶׁר בַּחֲרֻבָּה

מָתוּ:

All in whom there was breath-spirit / Spirit of life / living ones in its nostrils,
from all who were on dry ground,
they died!

Job 34:14, where Elihu says of El (the Supreme God),

אִם־יִשִּׁים־אֱלֹהֵי לְבוֹ
רוּחוֹ וְנִשְׁמָתוֹ אֱלֹהֵי יֶאֱסֹף:

If He sets His heart to it,
gathers His Spirit and His breath to Himself,
[El would destroy the whole earth.]

Isaiah 2:22,

חֲדְלוּ לָכֶם מִן־הָאָדָם
אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁמָה בְּאַפּוֹ
כִּי־בַמָּה נֶחְשַׁב הוּא:

Cease for yourselves from (thinking too highly of) the human-being,
whose breath (is) in his nose!
Because with what (is) he thought (to be)?

The noun is also used with the meaning “every breathing thing”:

Deuteronomy 20:16,

רַק מְעָרֵי הָעַמִּים הָאֵלֶּה
אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נֹתֵן לְךָ נַחֲלָה
לֹא תַחֲיֶה כָּל־נִשְׁמָה:

Only, from (the) cities of these peoples,
which YHWH your God is giving to you (as a) possession,
You (singular) shall not preserve alive any breath / anyone that breathes!

Joshua 11:11,

וַיִּכּוּ אֶת־כָּל־הַנְּפֹשׁ אֲשֶׁר־בָּהּ

לְפִי־חֶרֶב הַחֲרֹם
לֹא נֹתַר כָּל־נִשְׁמָה
וְאֶת־חֲצוֹר שָׂרַף בְּאֵשׁ:

And they struck / killed every innermost-being that was in it,
devoting to destruction at (the) sword's mouth.
There was not left remaining any (one with) breath.
And Hatsor he burned with the fire.

Joshua 11:14,

וְכָל שְׁלָל הָעָרִים הָאֵלֶּה
וְהַבְּהֵמָה בְּזוּזוֹ לָהֶם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
רַק אֶת־כָּל־הָאָדָם הִכּוּ לְפִי־חֶרֶב
עַד־הַשְּׁמָדָם אוֹתָם
לֹא הִשְׁאִירוּ כָּל־נִשְׁמָה:

And all (the) spoils of these cities,
and the cattle, they children of Israel plundered for themselves.
Only every human they struck / killed at the sword's mouth,
until they exterminated them, them!
They did not leave remaining anyone (with) breath!

1 Kings 15:29,

וַיְהִי כַמְלֹכוֹ
הִכָּה אֶת־כָּל־בֵּית יִרְבְּעָם
לֹא־הִשְׁאִיר כָּל־נִשְׁמָה לִירְבְּעָם
עַד־הַשְּׁמָדוֹ
כַּדְּבַר יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר
בְּיַד־עַבְדּוֹ אַחִיָּה הַשִּׁילֹנִי:

And it happened as he reigned,
he struck all (in) Jerogoaam's household.
There was not left anyone breathing (belonging) to Jeroboam,
until he exterminated it,
according to YHWH's word which He spoke
by His servant's hand, Ahijah the Shilonite.

Joshua 10:40,

וַיִּכָּה יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֶת-כָּל-הָאָרֶץ
הַהָר וְהַנָּגֶב וְהַשְּׁפֵלָה
וְהָאֲשֻׁדּוֹת וְאֵת כָּל-מְלֻכֵיהֶם
לֹא הִשְׁאִיר שְׂרִיד
וְאֵת כָּל-הַנְּשָׁמָה הַחַרְוִים
כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

And Joshua struck / killed all the land / country--
the mountain-land, and the south-land, and the lowland,
and the mountain-slopes, and all their kings.
He did not leave remaining a remnant.
And everyone (with) the breath he devoted to destruction,
just as YHWH, God of Israel, commanded!

Psalm 150:6,

כָּל הַנְּשָׁמָה תְהַלֵּל יְהוָה
הַלְלוּ-יְהוָה:

All / Everyone (with) the breath, praise Yah!
Praise, you people, Yah!

Isaiah 57:16,

כִּי לֹא לְעוֹלָם אֲרִיב
וְלֹא לְנֶצַח אֶקְצוֹף
כִּי-רוּחַ מִלְּפָנַי יַעֲטוֹף
וְנִשְׁמוֹת אֲנִי עֹשִׂיתִי:

Because not to long-lasting time will I contend;
and I will not be angry to perpetuity!
Because (the human) spirit would be feeble from before Me,
and breaths I, I made.

The noun is also used with the meaning “the spirit of man”:

Proverbs 20:27,

נֵר יְהוָה נִשְׁמַת אָדָם
חֹפֵשׂ כָּל-חֲדָרֵי-בֶטֶן:

Lamp of YHWH—breath of a human-being,
searching-out all chambers of (the) belly.

Job 26:4, where Job challenges Bildad:

אֶת־מִי הִגַּדְתָּ מַלְיָן
וְנִשְׁמַת־מִי יֵצֵאָה מִמֶּךָ:

To whom did you declare words?

And whose breath went out from you?

Job 37:10, where Elihu says of El (the Supreme God):

מִנְשַׁמַּת־אֵל יִתֵּן־קֶרֶחַ
וְרִחַב מַיִם בְּמוֹצָק:

*From El's breath, He gives frost;

and breadth of waters (are) frozen.

