

## Isaiah Chapter 31, Hebrew Text with Translation and Footnotes

### No, Don't Go Down to Egypt for Uncertain Human Help–

### Turn Back!

### Look Up to YHWH for His Unfailing Deliverance!<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Motyer entitles **31:1-32:20** “Deliverance and renewal.”

He comments that “In **29:1-8** the principle was enunciated that the Lord never leaves the last word to the destroyer, even if to the human eye His intervention comes at the eleventh hour. **31:1-5** applies this to the Assyrian crisis as the Lord comes down on Mount Zion for its deliverance. **29:9-15** indicated that there is also a need for a Divine transforming work bringing a change of heart and that this too the Lord will do. This work of transformation is the topic of **31:6-32:20**: the King (**32:1**) and the Spirit (**32:15**) bringing in new people and a new society of righteousness, peace and security.” (Pp. 253-54)

Watts entitles **31:1-32:20** “Disaster from False Faith in Egypt.”

He comments that “The scene centers on the criticism of those whose policy calls for dependence upon Egypt to gain independence from Assyria...The first episode...‘Woe to Those Depending on Egypt!’ (**31:1-9**), is a dialogue about political leaders who prefer human dependence on alliances to dependence on an alliance with God. The second episode, ‘Suppose a King’ (**32:1-8**), is a lesson in civic righteousness from the teachers. In the third episode, ‘Palace Forsaken–Spirit Poured Out’ (**32:9-20**), a dialogue takes place between a speaker and a group of women that contrasts their prosperity with the devastation to come in ‘less than a year.’” (P. 406)

Slotki states that **chapter 31** contains “Further denunciation of the pro-Egyptian policy, and the contrast between the futility of human power and the effectiveness of Divine protection. To secure God’s help repentance and return to His ways are essential; and the Assyrian army will be destroyed through supernatural intervention of the Holy One of Israel.” (P. 148)

Alexander sums up **chapter 31** by saying “Reliance upon Egypt is distrust of God, Who will avenge Himself by destroying both the helper and the helped (**verses 1-3**). His determination and ability to save those who confide in His protection are expressed by two comparisons (**verses 4-5**). The people are therefore invited to return to Him, from every false dependence, human or idolatrous, as they will be constrained to do with shame, when they shall witness the destruction of their enemies by the resistless fire of His wrath (**verses 6-9**).” (P. 489)

Oswalt entitles **31:1-9** “Woe to those who reject God’s help.”

He comments that “**Chapter 31** duplicates, in shorter form, the structure and content of **chapter 30**. It begins by exposing the folly of dependence upon Egypt

(continued...)

<sup>1</sup>(...continued)

(**verses 1-3**). Not only will Egypt not be able to help, but going to her necessarily involves rejection of God. Thus Judah has not merely chosen a poorer option; she has, in fact, rejected the true in order to choose the false (compare **30:1-18**).

“The second emphasis (as in **30:19-33**) is that the Lord will fight for Jerusalem and will destroy Assyria (**verses 4-9**)...Negatively, he abolishes the false hope, and positively, he depicts the grace of God in such a way as to attract the people to God.

“It is especially the exclusion of dependence upon God which makes the Egyptian alliance so despicable to Isaiah. As Calvin sagely observes, a believer may use many intermediate means to benefit or defend himself or herself that do not conflict with a prior dependence upon God. But some means, by their very nature, involve abandonment of trust in Him.” (P. 570)

Kaiser entitles **31:1-3** “Help from Egypt?”

He comments that “The formal category of this prophecy of woe is best described as a prophecy of warning with a reason, in which **verse 1** forms the reproach and **verses 2** and **3** the prophecy of warning. It shares with **30:1ff.** its intensity of expression...

“It displays clear connections with the rest of the Isaianic material. Thus we can scarcely be wrong in attributing **31:1-3** to the prophet Isaiah, dating it in the year 701... The fact that in **verse 2a** Isaiah was able to point to misfortunes which had already come about and were in accordance with his previous preaching...leads to the conclusion...that in the meantime the army of the Assyrian emperor Sennacherib had penetrated at least as far as the Philistine plain...

“Assuming that Isaiah is the author, the prophecy must be dated before **30:6-7**. It is possible that this oracle was placed at the conclusion of the prophet’s sayings from the year 701 only because it summed up once again in a telling form the objections Isaiah made in the name of his God to the pro-Egyptian policy of the kingdom of Judah.” (Pp. 311-12)

<sup>2</sup>Slotki states that **verses 1-3** are “an oracle against the Northern Kingdom which also foolishly trusted in Egyptian power.” (P. 148)

Oswalt entitles **verses 1-3** “Helpless Egypt.”

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 1**: “*Woe to those going down to Egypt for help, and on horses they lean (or rely) and trust in cavalry, because it is numerous, and in horsemen, because they are very strong, and they look not to the Holy One of Israel, and Jehovah they seek not.*”

(continued...)

# עַל-סוּסִים יִשְׁעֵנוּ וַיִּבְטְחוּ עַל-רֶכֶב

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<sup>2</sup>(...continued)

He comments that “The abundance of horses in Egypt is attested, not only in other parts of Scripture, but by profane writers [i.e., Homer and Diodorus]...The horses of Solomon are expressly said to have been brought out of Egypt. This kind of military force was more highly valued, in comparison with infantry, by the ancients than the moderns, and especially by those who, like the Hebrews, were almost entirely deprived of it themselves. Hence their reliance upon foreign aid is frequently identified with confidence in horses, and contrasted with simple trust in God.” (P. 489)

Oswalt comments on **verse 1** that “The emphasis upon horses here suggests the likely reason why Egypt’s help seemed especially desirable. Ever since the introduction of the horse into the Near East in the Middle Bronze Age (about 1800 B.C.E.), warfare in that part of the world had been revolutionized, first through chariotry, and by this time through the beginnings of cavalry. The horse’s speed, stamina, and maneuverability gave an army a mobility and a shock effect many times its numerical size...

“But [Isaiah teaches] the destiny of a country does not rest upon either horses or missiles, and when any people feel that special weapons can relieve them of dependence upon God, they are on the road to destruction. This is not to say that weapons and faith in God are mutually exclusive in a fallen world, but it is to say that commitment to God’s ways, with whatever that may mean for weapons in a given situation, is primary.” (Pp. 570-71)

Kaiser comments on **verse 1** that “The fault that Isaiah found in this policy, which had sought from the Ethiopian pharaoh Shabako a corps of cavalry and a contingent of chariots for a more effective defense against the Assyrian danger, is shown by the choice of verbs in **verse 1a** which effectively prepares the way for the antithesis in **verse 1b**. It was of course normal to speak of going down to Egypt, in view of the route from the mountains of Judah to the Nile...

“But has a human being the right to rely upon his own plans and the cavalry of his allies and seek support from them, instead of from Yahweh?...

“When a devout person is in distress he confesses by his prayer of petition that he trusts Yahweh...May a nation trust in chariots and carts, in the heavy weapons of his allies...instead of trusting in Yahweh’s help?...

“Must not Jerusalem look for help in the first place to its God...Who is far above the world and yet has protected Israel, the God Who is the Holy One of Israel...? And can Yahweh tolerate His Own people taking decisions in this critical moment without asking Him whether their plans have His approval...?” (Pp. 312-13)

כִּי רַב מְאֹד  
וְעַל פָּרָשִׁים  
כִּי־עֲצָמוּ  
וְלֹא שָׁעוּ עַל־קְדוּשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל  
וְאֶת־יְהוָה לֹא דָרְשׁוּ:

Alas / woe<sup>3</sup>—those going down (to) Egypt<sup>4</sup> for help;  
upon horses they are leaning / relying,<sup>5</sup>  
and they trusted<sup>6</sup> in chariot(s),  
because (they are) exceedingly great,  
and upon horsemen,  
because they are strong.  
And they did not look to (the) Set-apart One of Israel,

<sup>3</sup>Watts comments that “Woe expresses distress over the situation in Jerusalem. In Assyria’s declining years, Jerusalem’s leaders cast about for political alliances that will help them profit from that collapse. Egypt seems to be the best support for their aims...They fail to appreciate the advantage of Divine assistance over human promises.” (P. 409)

<sup>4</sup>Where our Hebrew text has the noun מִצְרַיִם, **mitsrayim**, “Egypt” by itself, what Watts calls an “adverbial accusative,” 1QIs<sup>a</sup> has the preposition לְמִצְרַיִם, making it clear that what is meant is “to Egypt.”

<sup>5</sup>Slotki comments that “Perhaps it was their lack of war-horses, of which Assyria had an abundance (compare **Isaiah 36:8-9**), that made them turn to Egypt for help, since that country was famed for its horses.” (P. 148) Compare **Psalms 20:8**<sup>Heb</sup> / **7**<sup>Eng</sup>,

These, by the chariot; and those by the horses--  
and / but we will cause remembrance by YHWH our God’s name!

Motyer states that “*Rely* means to lean on for support.” Compare **2 Samuel 1:6**, where king Saul is depicted as “leaning upon his spear.” (P. 254)

The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has πεποιθότες, “convinced / persuaded (upon horses).”

<sup>6</sup>**Rahlfs** omits the mention of “trust” in the Hebrew text.

and to YHWH they did not seek!<sup>7</sup>

31:2<sup>8</sup> וְגַם־הוּא חָכֵם׃

וַיָּבֵא רָע׃

וְאֶת־דְּבָרָיו לֹא הִסִּיר׃

וְקָם עַל־בֵּית מְרַעִים׃

וְעַל־עֲזָרַת פְּעָלֵי אֹן׃

And also, He was wise,<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Alexander comments that “To seek Jehovah is not merely to consult Him, but to seek His aid, resort to Him, implying the strongest confidence.” (P. 490)

<sup>8</sup>Alexander translates / comments on **verse 2**: “*And (yet) He too is wise, and brings evil, and His words He removes not, and He rises up against the house of evil-doers, and against the help of the workers of iniquity.*”

“God was as wise as the Egyptians, and ought therefore to have been consulted: He was as wise as the Jews, and could therefore thwart their boasted policy.” He adds that there is “obvious irony” in the statement. (P. 490)

Kaiser comments on **verse 2**, “Ought not the rulers in Jerusalem to have remembered that Yahweh is wise...and understands His Own affairs as well as the ambassadors who have set off for Egypt and the court at whose bidding they have departed, and indeed perhaps the war party among the people? This has already been shown by the fact that in the meantime He has begun to bring about the misfortunes prophesied [earlier]. Quite clearly, then, He has not taken back His word once it has been proclaimed, and it therefore remains in force. Consequently, further misfortune is to be expected.” (P. 313)

<sup>9</sup>Slotki’s translation has “Yet He also is wise,” and Slotki comments that “The prophet speaks ironically. Wisdom is not a monopoly of the politicians of the pro-Egyptian party; God also possesses it!” (P. 148)

Oswalt likewise states that “*Yet He too is wise* seems to be a jibe at the royal counselors who were supposed to be so wise, yet had counseled this kind of dependence upon Egypt...These wise men were acting as if God knew nothing, as if the Creator of the universe did not understand enough to guide His creatures correctly.” (P. 571)

and He brought evil.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Slotki says that this means “calamity to those who deserve it.” (P. 148)

Perhaps...but the Hebrew word רָע, **ra**( means “bad” or “evil,” and does not have the specific connotation of “calamity.” And “evil” comes upon all people, at one time or another—not just on “those who deserve it.”

See: **Isaiah 45:7**, where YHWH is depicted as describing Himself as:

יוֹצֵר אֹרֶךְ וּבֹרֵא חֹשֶׁךְ  
עֹשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם וּבֹרֵא רָע  
אֲנִי יְהוָה עֹשֶׂה כָּל-אֵלֵּהּ:

One Who fashions light, and Who creates darkness,

Who makes peace / prosperity, and creates evil (רָע, **ra**)–

I (am) YHWH, One Who does all these (things)!

**Deuteronomy 32:39**,

(You people,) see now that I, I (am) He—  
and there is no God beside (or “with”) Me!  
I, I will put to death, and I will bring to life;  
I struck, and I, I will heal!  
And there is none delivering from My hand!

**1 Samuel 2:6**, where Hannah says,

YHWH kills / puts death and preserves / revives life;  
He brings down (to) sheol / the grave / underworld, and raises up!

**Exodus 4:11**,

And YHWH said to him (Moses),  
Who placed a mouth for the human?  
Or Who will place one speechless or deaf,  
or clear-sighted, or blind?  
Is it not I, YHWH?

What do you think? Do you blame evil on the Devil / Satan? And if you do, do you think the Devil / Satan is a second God? If there is only one God, Who created everything (as Isaiah insistently proclaims), isn't He responsible for evil? Think about it!

Motyer states, “Thus, if His people see the dreaded Assyrians on the march, the Lord is in it in all His wisdom.” (P. 255)

(continued...)

He did not turn aside His words;<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>(...continued)

Does your faith tell you the same thing? If YHWH is the Creator of all that is, including evil, then when bad things happen to us, can we not confidently say that YHWH is present in those occurrences, and trust Him to bring good out of evil? Isn't this what the great Christian pastor, Paul, taught the Roman believers in **Romans 8**?

Oswalt states that "The theological question relates to the meaning of evil here. Unlike the English word 'evil,' Hebrew רָע, **ra**( can mean both moral evil and what we would call misfortune [but there is no statement in the **Hebrew Bible** to this effect; rather, the noun is used indiscriminately to include all kinds of evil. Oswalt's argument reminds us of rabbinic arguments in the **Talmud**, where they get around difficulties in the text in the same fashion!]. The **Bible** never attributes moral evil to God, but it does attribute to Him those turns of events considered to be bad or unfortunate. That is surely the case here." (P. 571)

We disagree, and think Oswalt is trying to get around the difficulty with which this text (and others) confronts us. If "moral evil" is not finally caused by YHWH, who is it caused by? Human beings who make bad moral choices? Who gave human beings the ability to make such choices? Is it the devil / satan? Who created the devil / satan? The biblical answer is clear: "YHWH"!

Watts gets around difficulty by changing the text (as has Irwin before him). Instead of רָע, **ra**( , "evil," he reads רְעַ, **rea**( , "purpose." And, in fact, in an unpointed ("pre-Masoretic") text, there is no difference between the two nouns. But is it realistic to say that YHWH "brought a purpose"? No, and that is why Watts translates by "He achieves," which we think is not an accurate translation of וַיַּבֵּחַ, **wayyabhe**).

**Rahfs** translates by κακά, "evils" or "evil things." What do you say?

<sup>11</sup>Alexander states that הֶסִיר, **hesiyr**, "turn aside," here "seems to have the sense of withdrawing or revoking; as in **Joshua 9:15**, it denotes a practical revocation by neglecting to fulfill." (P. 490)

**Joshua 9:15** tells how Joshua, without consulting YHWH, failed to fulfill the commandment of YHWH to destroy all the Canaanites, as he entered into a covenant with the people of Gibeon.

Oswalt states that "*not turning aside His words* does not mean God will not change His approach to us if we change. He will, as the **Book of Jonah** indicates, and as Jonah knew He would (**Jonah 3:10; 4:1-2**). What it does mean is that no avenue other than repentance can deflect God's pronouncements concerning us. He is as

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and He will stand / rise up<sup>12</sup> against evil-doers' household,<sup>13</sup>  
and against (the) help of those doing wickedness.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>(...continued)  
implacable as time itself unless we change, and all the Egyptians in the world cannot alter what He says." (Pp. 571-72)

<sup>12</sup>Alexander states that *to stand*, or "*to rise up* is to show one's self, address one's self to action, and implies a state of previous forbearance or neglect." (P. 490)

<sup>13</sup>Alexander observes that "*the house of evil-doers* is their family or race...here applied to the unbelieving Jews." (P. 490)

Motyer states that in **verse 2** "all the verbs are in the perfect tense, describing what never changes." (P. 254) However, the verb in this last line may be intended as imperfect or future tense, if the *waw* is understood to be conversive / consecutive. And because God has done something in the past does not necessarily mean He will always do the same thing in the future—although we agree with his conclusion that these statements concerning God's being wise, and bringing evil, and upholding / confirming His word, and rising up against evil-doers, can certainly be depended on in the long-run. But we must avoid attempting to "put God in a box," saying what He will or will not do, especially in the short-run.

<sup>14</sup>Alexander states that "The Egyptians are called their [the Israelites'] *help*, and both are threatened with destruction." (P. 490)

Motyer comments that "Judah has sought help in Egypt but the Lord will not have His people helped other than by Himself or on any other basis than trust in Himself." (P. 255)

Yes...but as the longer story unfolds, Israel is delivered from Babylonian exile through the help of Cyrus, the Medo-Persian. See **Isaiah 45**. We think Motyer is too quick to jump to theological conclusions, drawing what he calls "principles" too quickly, and reminding us of the friends of Job who drew such "principles" concerning Divine retribution. Even if their basic principle was true enough, it was terribly flawed in the way they applied it to Job. What do you think?

Oswalt comments that "*house of the wicked...help of the workers of iniquity* probably refers to the nation of Judah [not Egypt]. If so, it is a strong denunciation. It does not matter what a people's birthright is, nor what its history may have been. Neither does it matter what their strength is, nor who they have as allies. If they refuse to trust in God and to conform their lives to His character, they are workers of iniquity and they will discover that God, far from being their possession, is against them to destroy them." (P. 572)

(continued...)



<sup>14</sup>(...continued)

But Divine destruction is not the final end. The Divine fire is purgatorial, cleansing in nature. Beyond destruction and death is YHWH, Who is greater than destruction, and death, and the grave, and the underworld, and evil. Death and evil are not the final victors, but rather, YHWH, the God of steadfast-love and forgiveness is.

As **Ezekiel 16:53-63** so powerfully teaches, YHWH will restore the fortunes of those who have suffered His fiery destruction; He will forgive, and renew. Instead of putting His prostitute wife to death, He will make a new covenant with her—remarry her! He will restore the fortunes of the prostitute cities Sodom and Samaria as well. Jesus, having died upon the cross, was made alive in the Spirit, in which he went to the people who were disobedient in the days of Noah—who had been drowned in the universal flood—and proclaimed good news to them, so that they might live in the Spirit (**1 Peter 3-4**)

Do you agree? Why? Why not? Will you attempt to interpret these biblical passages from **Ezekiel** and **1 Peter** in other ways, making them say something else? Do you think death and destruction are the final victors? Or is YHWH, the God of forgiveness and life and hope for the hopeless?

<sup>15</sup>Alexander translates / comments on **verse 3**: “*And Egypt (is) man and not God, and their horses flesh and not spirit; and Jehovah shall stretch out His hand, and the helper shall stumble, and the helped fall, and together all of them shall cease (or be destroyed).*”

“This verse repeats the contrast between human and Divine aid, and the threatening that the unbelievers and their foreign helpers should be involved in the same destruction...”

“The antithesis of *flesh* and *spirit*, like that of *God* and *man*, is not metaphysical [concerned with abstract thought] but rhetorical, and is intended simply to express extreme dissimilitude or inequality. Reliance upon Egypt is again sarcastically represented as reliance upon horses, and as such opposed to confidence in God. As Egypt here means the Egyptians, it is afterwards referred to as a plural. *Stumble* and *fall* are here poetical equivalents.” (P. 490)

Motyer comments on **verse 3**: “The incredible folly of choosing Egypt instead of the Lord!” (P. 255)

Kaiser comments on **verse 3**: “Thus the people of Judah have not only made a mistake in their choice of means to avert the danger that hangs over them, but have also brought guilt upon themselves (compare **30:1b**). This is shown by the unique double antithesis between the Egyptians as men and what God is...and between their forces as mere flesh which without the breath of life sent from God crumbles to death...”

(continued...)

וְלֹא־אֱלֹהִים  
 וְסוֹסֵיהֶם בֶּשֶׂר וְלֹא־רוּחַ  
 וַיְהִי־יָמָּה יִשָּׂה יָדוֹ  
 וְכַשֵּׁל עֹזָר  
 וְנִפֵּל עֹזָר  
 וַיַּחֲדוּ כָּל־יְכַלְיוֹן:

And Egypt (is) human,  
 and not El / Supreme God;<sup>16</sup>  
 and their horses (are) flesh,

<sup>15</sup>(...continued)

“The Egyptian army was defeated at Eltekeh. We know of no other army from the sources which we possess. Hezekiah was besieged in Jerusalem and as one fortress after another outside Jerusalem fell, he was forced to surrender (?).

“The confusion of creature and Creator was not limited to the days of Isaiah or of the **Old Testament**, and certainly appears in the history of nations and states in a particularly clear form, to such an extent that it can be regarded as a temptation to obtain peace and prosperity by improper means...

“What takes place on a grand scale is a reflection of what takes place with the individual...Everyone must first wrestle with himself and therefore with his God in such a way that God conquers and he is defeated. When this happens, mankind will have become more peaceful in at least one case. For whether or not we can maintain peace and further it depends upon whether we are able to let God be God, man be man and the world be the world.” (Pp. 313-14) Yes!

<sup>16</sup>Motyer comments that “God (אֱלֹהִים, )el) is the most transcendent of the ‘God words,’ meaning God in exalted majesty, power and glory.” (P. 255)

We say, אֱלֹהִים, )el, is the Divine name given to the Supreme God of the Canaanite pantheon, and has been taken up by Isaiah and his fellow Jews, as the appropriate name for YHWH—He is the Supreme God!

The Aramaic Targum, instead of אֱלֹהִים, )el, “Supreme God,” has רַב, rabh, “chief,” “great one.”

and not spirit / Spirit;<sup>17</sup>  
 and YHWH will stretch out His hand,<sup>18</sup>  
 and one helping will stumble,  
 and one helped will fall;  
 and together all of them will be finished!

31:4<sup>19</sup> כִּי כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה | אֵלַי

<sup>17</sup>Where our Hebrew text has וְלֹא־רוּחַ, “and not spirit / Spirit,” **Rahfs** has καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν βοήθεια, “and is not help.”

<sup>18</sup>Motyer comments on the phrase יָדוֹ יִטֶּה, “He (YHWH) will stretch out / incline / bend His hand”: “Stretches out—a mere hand movement is enough!” (P. 255)

And we say, Yes—for the God of the “black hole,” Who with one originating “big bang” has thrown the innumerable universes out into space, stopping an invading army of human beings in its track is nothing, a tiny blink on the screen of reality!

<sup>19</sup>Oswalt entitles **verses 4-9** “Mighty God.”

He comments that “As in **30:19-33**, Isaiah now turns from denunciation of the false hope to proclamation of the true hope. If God is implacable toward a sinful Judah, He is also implacable in the defense of a repentant Judah. Thus again the motivation to trust is both negative—Egypt cannot help—and positive—God will help even though we have sinned in refusing to trust Him...

“This announcement of hope before the fact is typical of this [**Book of Isaiah**] and, indeed of the gospel [he refers to **Isaiah 1:18-19; 40:1-5; 63:1-6; Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:9-10**]. God does not wait until we have repented to act in mercy. Rather, His mercy becomes the impetus to repent.” (P. 573) Yes!

We say, Oswalt is beginning to “sing the song of Isaiah,” and to understand why the church fathers called **Isaiah** the “Fifth Gospel.” We call the **Book of Isaiah** not the “Fifth” but the “First Gospel.”

Kaiser entitles **verses 4-9** “The Deliverance of Zion.”

He comments that “The decisive question concerning the content and the literary criticism of the present text is: What is the meaning of the simile of the lion in **verse 4**?” (Pp. 315-16)

Oswalt states that **verses 4-5**, “in their present setting...present two pictures of God’s persistence in the face of enemies. The first is a picture of fierce strength while the second is a picture of passionate attachment. God is both.” (Pp. 573-74)

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<sup>19</sup>(...continued)

Motyer comments on **verses 4-5** that “Opening with ‘For,’ the similes [figures of speech involving the comparison of one thing with another thing of a different kind, used to make a description more emphatic or vivid (e.g., as brave as a lion, crazy like a fox)] explain the foregoing [verse]. The Lord is both unabashed lion and protecting [or perhaps attacking] bird.” (P. 255)

Alexander translates **verse 4**: “*For thus said Jehovah unto me, As a lion growls, and a young lion, over his prey, against whom a multitude of shepherds is called forth, at their voice he is not frightened, and at their noise he is not humbled, so will Jehovah of hosts come down, to fight upon mount Zion and upon her hill.*”

He comments that “Most interpreters have, *for mount Zion*, in which sense **עַל**, (al, is used with **נִלְחַם**, **nilcham**, ‘wage war’ elsewhere. But as **צָבָא**, **tsabha**), ‘wage war’ itself, with this same preposition, means *to fight against* in **chapter 29:7**, Hitzig and Hendewerk regard this as a threatening that God will take part with the Assyrians against Jerusalem, the promise of deliverance beginning with the next verse...

“The **כִּי** at the beginning of this verse introduces the ground or reason of the declaration that the seeking of foreign aid was both unlawful and unnecessary. The *hill* is by some supposed to be Moriah, as an appendage of mount Zion. But it may just as well be simply parallel to *mountain*, the mountain of Zion and the hill thereof.” (Pp. 490-91)

Oswalt states that there is disagreement over the intent of [**verse 4**]. The majority of modern commentators...conclude that the sense is negative for two reasons. It does not make sense for Judah to be the lion’s prey if the imagery is intended to convey God’s love for Judah; and elsewhere **עַל צָבָא**, **tsebo**) (al means to ‘fight against.’ Thus it is said that the verse conveys the same thing as **verses 2** and **3**: Egypt (the shepherds) will not be able to protect Judah from God. However, the present context calls this view into question since **verse 5**, which is clearly positive, follows directly on **verse 4** with no break and no evidence of any intended contrast...

“There is no reason to take the figure allegorically, with each element having a specific symbolism. Rather, the main point is that a lion cannot be frightened away and neither can God...That **עַל**, (al can mean both ‘upon’ and ‘against’ with other verbs for ‘fight’ seems to leave that possibility open here. Since these two arguments are not conclusive and since the present context calls for the positive interpretation, we conclude that this interpretation is most likely. The Lion of Judah cannot be frightened off by a pack of people shouting and beating on pans.” (P. 574)

(continued...)

כַּאֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה הָאֲרִיָּה וְהִכְפִּיר עַל-טֶרְפוֹ  
אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָא עָלָיו מְלֵא רַעִים מִקּוֹלָם  
לֹא יִחַת וּמִהֲמוֹנָם לֹא יַעֲנֶה  
כִּן יֵרֵד יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת לְצַבָּא  
עַל-הַר-צִיּוֹן וְעַל-גְּבַעְתָּהּ:

<sup>19</sup>(...continued)

Watts comments on **verse 4** that “The *lion’s* self-assured and undeterred attention to his purpose is a parable of Yahweh’s intention to protect Zion. The *noise* and disturbance of international upheavals will not deter Him.” (P. 409)

Kaiser states that “The first argument in favor of taking the verses as a warning is that the Hebrew expression translated here ‘fight upon’ can as well mean ‘fight against’...If this translation is regarded as convincing, then the shepherds must be seen as the Judeans and their allies the Egyptians, who are unable to avert the disaster which the threat from Assyria is bringing upon Jerusalem...In this case, the prophet Isaiah, who would have uttered these prophecies against the coalition organized by Hezekiah, during the years between the advance of Sennacherib and his attack upon the capital of Judah...

“The simile is that of a lion defending his prey, which he regards...as his own property, against the attempts of the shepherds to take it back from him. In other words, the lion will not allow anyone to steal from him what belongs to him. This behavior is compared to Yahweh’s descent from heaven to fight upon the hill of Zion... Jerusalem belongs to Him because He has chosen it (compare **Psalm 132:13-14**) and therefore He will not allow it to fall into the hands of the attackers...

“In the introduction to **verse 4** the poet is claiming that he speaks with the authority of Yahweh and finds no difficulty in the fact that his own words speak of Yahweh in the third person...

“He contrasts the deliverance vainly expected from Egypt, that is, from men, with one which will be brought about not by men (**verse 8a**).” (Pp. 316-17)

These comments on **verse 4** reflect the puzzling nature of the prophetic message—which so oftentimes leaves us uncertain as to its exact meaning.

Because in this way YHWH spoke to me:<sup>20</sup>

Just like the lion and the young lion will growl over its prey / food,  
when it cries out against it (to) shepherds with its / their voice--  
it will not be dismayed and will not answer their shouting,  
So YHWH of Armies will descend to do battle<sup>21</sup>  
on Mount Zion and on its hill.

31:5<sup>22</sup> כַּעֲפָרִים עֹפֹת

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<sup>20</sup>Isaiah claims that YHWH is speaking to / communicating with him in a way he can hear and understand—and here we are, more than 2,500 years later, reading his words, singing his song, astonished at the power of his words—in spite of much that is puzzling and enigmatic, and which we no longer fully understand.

History is replete with shamans / priests / prophets / preachers / medicine men / common lay-people / the mentally ill who claim they are hearing Divine voices speaking to them. The immediate reaction of many is simply to dismiss all such claims as fraudulent—and we would agree that most often this is the case.

But we insist, such is not always the case—especially when we can witness the life and teaching of the one so claiming. Such was not the case with Moses, or Isaiah, or Jeremiah, or Socrates (the fountain-head of Greek philosophy, the teacher of Plato and Aristotle), etc., or especially with Jesus, or with Paul. Look at their lives, observe the fruits of their teaching. Don't assume that because there are frauds, all those claiming to hear the Divine voice are fraudulent!

Of course, if you are so wise as to be able to say with certainty that no such thing has ever happened, then that solves the matter for you. But if you don't really have such all-knowing certainty, perhaps you would do well to listen and be open to learning!

<sup>21</sup>Motyer comments that the phrase לַעֲבֹא עַל, **litsbo** (**al** means “to assemble, fight against.” (P. 255) We assume that he means “to assemble an army to fight against.” He adds that “Isaiah is expressing the same truth as **10:5-6**, with the Assyrians as the manifestation of the Lord's wrath.

5 Alas, Assyria—rod of My anger!  
And he (is) a staff / scepter in the hand of My indignation!  
6 Against a profane nation I will sent him forth!  
And to a people of My wrath I will command him--  
to spoil spoil, and to plunder plunder,  
and to place him as a trampling-place, like clay of (the) streets.

<sup>22</sup>Alexander translates / comments on **verse 5**: “As birds flying (over or around their nests [the text says nothing about ‘over or around their nests’]), so will Jehovah

(continued...)

כִּן יִגַן יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת עַל־יְרוּשָׁלַם גְּנוּן  
וְהַצִּיל פֶּסַח וְהַמְלִיט:

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<sup>22</sup>(...continued)

*cover over (or protect) Jerusalem, cover and rescue, pass over and save...*

“עֲפֹת, (**aphoth**, [qal participle, feminine plural, ‘flying’] is inapplicable to young birds in the nest. The feminine עֲפֹת also indicates a reference to the care of mothers for their young [where is this indicated?]...To pass over, in the sense of sparing, is appropriate.” (P. 491)

Oswalt comments that “This verse varies the figure by comparing God to a mother bird which flies back and forth over her nest when a predator is near, both to distract the enemy and, if necessary, to offer herself as a victim to save her little ones ...

“This verse presents another side of God’s relationship to Judah. Not only is He strong and determined, He is also personally attached to His people and will defend (or shield, as this is the verb from which that noun is derived) them, if need be, with Himself. (The Christian cannot help but see this motif brought to its final fulfilment in Christ, who interposed himself between us and the just result of our sins).” (P. 574)

Yes—but does the verse actually depict the bird as flying back and forth over her nest? See the next footnote.

Watts comments on **verse 5** that “The figure is changed but the assurance of Yahweh’s protection is even stronger. This promise fits the period and holds for the immediate future. Yet the reader is aware that Jerusalem is destroyed by the next generation.” (P. 409)

Kaiser states concerning **verse 5** that “It must be admitted that the poet also shows a certain awkwardness in his choice of images at the beginning of **verse 5**, for a flock of fluttering birds does not accord well with the one protecting God, Yahweh... The poet is telling us that Yahweh will protect Zion in the same way as birds fluttering backwards and forwards above their nests defend their brood (compare **Deuteronomy 32:11** and **Psalms 91**) [but does the text depict birds fluttering backwards and forwards above their nests? We think not].”

In order to arouse confidence in the future saving action of this God on behalf of His city, the poet alludes to the former saving act of Yahweh in Egypt, when He killed the firstborn of the Egyptians but spared those of Israel (**Exodus 13:23, 27**).” (P. 317)

Like birds flying,<sup>23</sup>

so YHWH of Armies<sup>24</sup> will certainly cover over / surround / defend<sup>25</sup> Jerusalem,  
and He will deliver, passing over and causing to escape.<sup>26</sup>

31:6<sup>27</sup> שׁוֹבוּ לְאַשֶׁר הָעֵמִיקוּ סָרָה

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<sup>23</sup>Slotki's translation has "hovering," as does Watts'; and we say Perhaps...but all that the text says is עֲפֹת, (**aphoth**, "flying." Slotki comments that the verse means YHWH will be hovering like birds over their helpless young to protect them from ravenous birds. We think Slotki's translation has been influenced by **Deuteronomy 32:11**,

Like a griffon vulture / eagle will stir up its nest,  
over its young birds it will hover [יִרְחֵף], **yeracheph**, not עֲפֹת, (**aphoth**)  
it will spread out its wings, it will lift it up,  
it will bear it upon its feathered-wings.

That is a beautiful picture—but may not be the picture intended here in **Isaiah 31:5**. We think it possible that the verse means YHWH will fly / swoop down like griffon vultures, or like falcons--to attack and rip apart the Assyrian armies.

But again we remember the nature of the prophetic message—not "face-to-face" revelation, but rather, based on vision and dream, and characterized by puzzling enigma. We say, Don't expect literal exactness and clarity!

<sup>24</sup>The phrase "YHWH of Armies" is shortened by **Rahlfs** to simply κύριος, "Lord."

<sup>25</sup>The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has ὑπερασπιεῖ, literally "He will hold a shield over."

<sup>26</sup>Motyer comments that "Here four verbs point to surrounding, sufficient help. *Pass over* is the same as in **Exodus 12:13, 23, 27**." (P. 255)

Where our Hebrew text has וְהַמְלִיט, "and He will cause to slip away / deliver,"  
1QIs<sup>a</sup> has וְהַפְלִיט, "and He will cause to escape."

<sup>27</sup>Motyer entitles **31:6-32:18** "The work of transformation."

He comments that "Isaiah now looks forward to a King [of course there are no capital letters in biblical Hebrew] who will reign in righteousness (**32:1**) and a Spirit [again, no capital letters] outpoured (**32:15**)..."

"**29:9-10** suggests Isaiah's awareness that the days leading up to the Assyrian invasion would constitute the spiritual point of no return of which he was warned at the

(continued...)



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<sup>27</sup>(...continued)

time of his call (see **Isaiah 6:9-10**). The element of appeal here (**31:6; 32:9, 11**) may well reflect the ministry at this period...Penitence and hearing the word of the Lord constitute the only true preparation for the coming of the eschatological acts of God.” (Pp. 255-56)

We are uneasy with regards to such language as “the eschatological acts of God”—words which imply the “final” acts of God, and the “end of history.”

These words are being read into the text, which knows no such language. When the Day of YHWH comes, it is not by any means the “end of time,” or the “end of the world.” It is a day of judgment, and a day of blessing, which opens into a new and glorious future.

We agree with Motyer that “Penitence and hearing the word of the Lord are the only true preparation”—for the coming of the Day of YHWH and that new, glorious future! What do you think?

Motyer entitles **31:6-9** “Call to return in the light of future and immediate prospects.”

Oswalt comments on **verses 6-7** that they are “in prose,” and “express the result of the announcement of salvation and prepare for the fuller explication of the nature of that salvation. The results are twofold...First there is conversion, which is followed by renunciation. The theological pattern here is very consistent with the rest of the [**Book of Isaiah**]. Sin, which is typically idolatrous (man making God in his image), results in judgment. That judgment not only calls the efficacy of the idols into question, but it also provides the backdrop against which God can disclose His unconditional love. That love prompts a turning back to God and a concomitant rejection of idolatry.” (P. 575)

We do not think the Hebrew is clear enough to say for certain that in these two verses “prose” is substituted for “poetry.” Hebrew students and translators disagree constantly over whether a given text is written in prose or in poetry. We say that biblical Hebrew is oftentimes spoken / written in small phrases, easily separated; and that while some instances are clearly poetic / parallel in nature, other instances are not so clear.

But to simply say the Hebrew is “prose,” and then translate it as long, multi-worded sentences, does not, we think, do justice to biblical Hebrew, and makes it much more difficult to understand.

Watts comments on **verses 6-7** that “Sentences in second person plural are apparently addressed to seventh-century Jerusalem. The rest of the verses are in third person plural form referring to eighth-century Israelites...”

“Now, Assyria is weak and near collapse. The day which **Isaiah 10:20-21** had foretold is near at hand when Israel will be forced to recognize how useless their idols

(continued...)

## בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Return<sup>28</sup> to the one from Whom they deeply revolted,<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>(...continued)

are. Instead, Jerusalem's leaders are determined to adopt an idolatrous political course. They are challenged to repudiate it." (P. 409)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 6**: "Since you need no protection but Jehovah's therefore, *return unto Him from Whom (or with respect to Whom) the children of Israel have deeply revolted (literally, have deepened revolt)*..."

"The last words may also be read, *from whom they (i.e. men indefinitely) have deeply revolted, O ye children of Israel.*" (P. 491)

<sup>28</sup>The verb is שׁוּבוּ, **shubhu**, qal masculine plural imperative, "Turn!", "Return!"  
But the next part of the sentence has the third person masculine plural, הָעַמִּיקוּ סְרָה, "they made deep turning-away."

Motyer comments that "*Return* is penitence that is more than mental, the practical re-direction of life." (P. 256)

We say, for Isaiah's view of penitence, see **Isaiah 1:16-18**, where he depicts YHWH as saying to the sinful people of Jerusalem:

- 16    Make yourselves clean!  
          Remove your deeds of wickedness from before My eyes!  
          Cease to do evil!,  
17       Learn to do good!  
          Seek, after justice!  
          Pronounce blessed... (?).  
          Act as judges (who deliver the) orphan!,  
          Take up the cause of (the) widow!  
18    Come now, and let us be reproved (by each other)!—  
          says YHWH--  
          if your sins will be like the scarlets,,  
          they will become white like (the) snow!,  
          If they will be made red like the scarlet-worm,  
          they will become like the (white) wool!

That's "returning," "penitence"! Can you give a better definition?

<sup>29</sup>As Slotki observes, "The text has the third person of the verb." (P. 149) The

(continued...)

children of Israel!<sup>30</sup>

31:7<sup>31</sup> כִּי בַיּוֹם הַהוּא יִמְאָסוּן

אִישׁ אֱלִילֵי כֶסֶפּוֹ

וְאֱלִילֵי זָהָבוֹ

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<sup>29</sup>(...continued)

phrase is סָרָה הָעֲמִיקוֹ, literally, “they made deep turning aside / apostasy.”

Oswalt states that “*they have deepened turning away* is a graphic phrase. Not only have people turned aside from following God, they have intentionally deepened that turning away.” (P. 575)

Watts holds that the verb is literally “they made deep,” and comments that “The word is used for the grave in **Isaiah 30:33**, for the plans of the government in **29:15**, and for the sign to be proposed in **7:11**. The figurative speech here in relation to...’rebellion’ refers to their [deep] determination.” (P. 408)

<sup>30</sup>For **verse 6**, **Rahfs** has ἐπιστράφητε οἱ τὴν βαθεῖαν βουλήν βουλευόμενοι καὶ ἄνομον, “Turn around, you (plural) who are deliberating / deciding on the deep and lawless counsel”, omitting the vocative phrase “children of Israel.”

<sup>31</sup>Alexander translates / comments on **verse 7**: “This acknowledgment you will be constrained to make sooner or later. *For in that day* (of miraculous deliverance) *they shall reject* (cast away with contempt), *a man* (i.e. each) *his idols of silver and his idols of gold, which your sinful hands have made for you, or, which your own hands have made for you as sin*, i.e. as an occasion and a means of sin. In like manner the golden calves are called the sin of Israel (**Deuteronomy 9:21; Amos 8:14**).

“Trust in idols and reliance upon human helpers are here, and often elsewhere, put together, as identical in principle, and closely connected in the experiences of ancient Israel.” (Pp. 491-92)

Oswalt comments that “When both the idols’ helplessness and God’s grace are revealed, the idols do not have a chance. Though they are made of valuable metals, they are valueless...”

“As Calvin says, ‘True conversion does not ask the price.’ The converse is also true: so long as a person is still asking whether he can afford a possible turning to God, that cost will always be too high.

“Mauchline shrewdly observes that this is not the first time that the Israelites had abandoned their idols, nor would it be the last. This is a testimony to the fundamentally idolatrous nature of humanity.” (P. 575)

אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ לָכֶם יְדֵיכֶם

חֲטָא:

Because on that day,<sup>32</sup> they will reject--<sup>33</sup>

each person his worthless Gods of his silver / money  
and his worthless Gods of his gold,<sup>34</sup>  
which your hands made for yourselves--  
a sin / missing-of-the-mark!<sup>35</sup>

31:8<sup>36</sup> וְנִפְלְ אֲשׁוּרֹ

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<sup>32</sup>Motyer comments that “Biblical faith seeks to be ready not simply to surmount the next crisis but to stand before God. Therefore, since that day will (too late!) cause people to reject in disgust what they have so long cultivated, the time for decisive action is now.” (P. 256)

<sup>33</sup>Slotki’s translation has “they shall cast away,” and Slotki says “Better, ‘reject,’ ‘despise.’ For the thought of the verse, compare **Isaiah 2:20** and **30:22**.” (P. 149)

<sup>34</sup>The two masculine singular pronouns (“his silver,” and “his gold” in the Hebrew text of **verse 7** are omitted by the Greek translation. In the remainder of the verse, where the Hebrew has “your (plural) hands,” the Greek has “their hands.”

<sup>35</sup>Watts notes that the word חֲטָא, **chet**), “a sin / missing-of-the-mark” that hangs on the end of **verse 7** is omitted by the Greek, Ethiopic and Arabic translations. He states that “Various commentators have trouble fitting [the word, which he translates by ‘sinful’] into the sentence.” (P. 408)

Again we are reminded of the puzzling nature of prophetic revelation!

<sup>36</sup>Oswalt comments on **verses 8-9** that they “now put the seal upon God’s promises. Mighty Assyria will be devastated by other-than-human means with the result that she will flee in panic. It is hard to believe that this refers to anything other than Sennacherib’s loss of his army in Judah to the death angel.” (Pp. 575-76)

Watts comments on **verses 8-9** that “Yahweh’s announcement is dramatic: Assyria is about to fall. A sword—not a person is explained by what follows. The morale of the army is deteriorating. Its choice troops are its elite core, the rock of its military prowess. Its officers will desert and disappear. And the power that Assyria once represented will be gone.” (Pp. 409-10)

Motyer comments on **verse 8** that “Now Isaiah turns to the immediate crisis.” (P. 256)

(continued...)

בַּחֶרֶב לֹא-אִישׁ וְחֶרֶב לֹא-אָדָם תֵּאֲכַלְנוּ  
וְנָס לוֹ מִפְּנֵי-חֶרֶב  
וּבְחֹרָיו לְמַס יִהְיוּ:

And Assyria will fall,

by a sword not of a man<sup>37</sup> and a sword not of a human will devour him.

And he will flee for himself<sup>38</sup> from before (the) sword,

<sup>36</sup>(...continued)

Alexander translates / comments on **verse 8**: “This future abandonment of all false confidences is described as springing from the demonstration of Jehovah’s willingness and power to save. *And Assyria shall fall by no man’s sword, and no mortal’s sword shall devour him, and he shall flee from before the sword, and his young men (or chosen warriors) shall become tributary (literally, tribute).*”

“The objection that the prophecy...was not fulfilled, proceeds upon the false assumption that it refers exclusively to the overthrow of Sennacherib’s host, whereas it describes the decline and fall of the Assyrian power after that catastrophe.” (P. 492)

Oswalt comments on **verse 8** that “When Judah turns to God and destroys her idols, then Assyria will feel the hand of God’s wrath. So God’s grace is announced prior to repentance, but the repentance becomes a condition to experiencing the full outworking of that grace.” (P. 576)

Kaiser comments that “Whether the people of Judah once hoped in vain for the liberation of Jerusalem from the Assyrians by the Egyptians, that is, by men (compare **31:3**), when at last ‘Assyria’ makes its final attack (compare **Isaiah 10:24-26**), it will be destroyed by sword of One Who is ‘not man’...”

“What matters to the poem is the fact, and not the way it will happen.” (P. 317)

<sup>37</sup>Slotki comments that “not of man” means “But of One Who is superhuman.” (P. 149) Oswalt agrees, and adds that it “makes the point that it is God, not man, Who delivers. This truth surfaces again and again in Scripture.” (P. 576) He is referring to the conception of Isaac, the crossing of the Red Sea, etc. etc.

<sup>38</sup>The Hebrew text of this line is **וְנָס לוֹ מִפְּנֵי-חֶרֶב**, literally, “and he will flee for himself from before a sword.” None of the translations we are comparing reflects “for himself.”

(continued...)

and his chosen ones will be for the forced laborers!<sup>39</sup>

31:9<sup>40</sup> וְסִלְעוּ מִמְגֹר יַעֲבֹר

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<sup>38</sup>(...continued)

This is what **Brown-Driver-Briggs** calls an “ethical dative,” which “throws the action back upon the subject, expressing the interest with which it is completed (P. 515)

Watts translates לֹ by “to it”: “Someone may flee *to it* from before a sword.”

<sup>39</sup>Translations of וּבַחֹרֵיוֹ לְמַס יִהְיוּ vary from “and his young men shall be discomfited,” to “And his young men pine away,” to “and his young men shall be put to forced labor,” to “and his young warriors will be enslaved.” The Greek translation is οἱ δὲ νεανίσκοι ἔσσονται εἰς ἥττημα, “but then the young men will be for a loss.”

Slotki’s translation has “And his young men shall become tributary,” but Slotki notes that “The Hebrew word מַס, **mas**, means ‘task-work, bond-service.’” (P. 150)

**Brown-Driver-Briggs** defines the noun as meaning “body of forced laborers, task-workers, labor-band or gang; also (late) forced service, task-work, serfdom.” Holladay defines by “compulsory labor, obligatory service.”

Watts’ translation is “but its choice soldiers will become slaves.”

Some Greek translations other than **Rahlfs** have φόρον, “tribute / tax.”

<sup>40</sup>Alexander translates / comments on **verse 9**: “*And his rock* (i.e. his strength) *from fear shall pass away, and his chiefs shall be afraid of a standard* (or signal, as denoting the presence of the enemy), *saith Jehovah, to Whom there is a fire in Zion and a furnace in Jerusalem...*”

“The true explanation of the clause [*from fear shall pass away*] seems to be that which supposes an allusion both to the sacred fire on the altar, and to the consuming fire of God’s presence, Whose altar flames in Zion and Whose wrath shall thence flame to destroy His enemies. Compare...the mystical name Ariel in...**29:1**.” (P. 492)

Kaiser comments on the last part of **verse 9**, that it is “describing how the defeated would be burnt on a huge mound of wood and a funeral pyre, and no doubt regarded this as the act of God Himself in His Self-revelation. The unusual mention of the fire and the oven should be taken in the sense of **Genesis 15:17** as an allusive description of the God Who is present in the fire, the hearth signifying the place in which the enemy are destroyed and burnt up.” (Pp. 317-18)

He adds that this must be the work of a later “apocalyptic thinker.” The reason for this is “the content of his statement: the expectation of a direct intervention of

(continued...)

וַחֲתוּ מִנֶּסֶס שָׂרְיֹו  
נְאֻם־יְהוָה  
אֲשֶׁר־אֹר לֹו בְּצִיּוֹן  
וַתִּנּוֹר לֹו בִירוּשָׁלַם:

And his Rock / rocky-cliff<sup>41</sup> will pass away from fear;

<sup>40</sup>(...continued)

Yahweh, transcending all historical reality, in the course of history is something which in our view cannot be attributed to a prophet who was one of a people still able to play an active part in history. The prophets believed that Yahweh acted through real forces of nature and history, working through realities, through droughts and earthquakes which afflicted a country or a city, and through nations whom He forced to carry out His will. What is expected here goes beyond those limits [but is this the case? Do not the prophets constantly refer to YHWH's miracle-working wonders in Israel's past, and preach that such miracles can occur again? We say they certainly do!]

“In a period in which the changing fortunes of the great powers in their struggle to control Syria and Palestine, and to achieve world domination, had long shown that there was no real chance of the recovery of independence and freedom by the tiny Jewish nation, their hopes were directed in an astonishing way towards their God, Who was capable of what seemed impossible to men. Just as it had received its very existence from Him, so it would finally receive everlasting deliverance, when the forces of this earth hostile to God rose up against the city of God in the guise of ‘Assyria,’ perhaps already a term for the Seleucid kingdom.” (P. 318)

In this way Kaiser interprets “Assyria” as a disguise for the Greek Seleucids, who threatened the tiny nation of Israel in post-exilic times, and holds that the passage is not really dealing with the Assyrians who threatened Israel in the time of Isaiah.

Beneath this kind of interpretation of the biblical text lies a conviction that miracles do not occur in human history—they are fading remnants of a pre-scientific mentality, which must be discarded by modern readers of the **Bible**.

But now that modern science is proclaiming that the universe was created in a “Big Bang,” with all reality emerging instantaneously from a tiny “Black Hole,” science itself is forcing modern humanity to believe in miracles once again. Indeed, the miracles of the **Bible** are tiny in comparison with the “Big Bang” miracle—and the deniers of the miraculous in history have had the ground cut out from beneath them! What do you think?

<sup>41</sup>Slotki holds that the “rock” or “rocky cliff” here is referring to “the king of

(continued...)

and his princes will be dismayed by / from / at a standard / signal—<sup>42</sup>  
a saying of YHWH,  
Who has a fire in Zion,<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>(...continued)  
Assyria.” (P. 150) Motyer agrees (p.256), but we say, Perhaps...but it may just as well be referring to the Gods of Assyria on Whom the Assyrians depended.

Oswalt states that ‘*His rock* has raised many questions of identification. Proposals have included the God Ashur, the city of Nineveh, and King Sennacherib... Perhaps the sense is ‘all his confidence will pass away.’” (Pp. 576-77)

Again we note the puzzling, enigmatic nature of the prophetic message!

<sup>42</sup>Slotki’s translation has “at the ensign,” and Slotki comments that this means the ensign “which God will, so to speak, set up. Another interpretation of the first half of the verse is: ‘and he (Asshur / Assyria) will pass by his rock (i.e. his place of safe retreat) from terror, and his officers flee from the standard in panic.’” (P. 150)

Oswalt’s translation is “because of the ensign,” and he states that this may denote either fleeing from their own ensign or being helpless at the sight of the enemy battle flags. The latter seems to fit the general sense of the verse best. When God raises His ensign against the powers of this world, not even the mightiest can stand against Him.” (P. 577)

**Rahlfs’** translation of this first half of **verse 9** is: πέτρα γὰρ περιλημφθήσονται ὡς χάρακι καὶ ἡττηθήσονται ὁ δὲ φεύγων ἀλώσεται , “for with a rock they shall be encompassed / surrounded, like a pointed stake / palisaded camp; and they shall be overcome / defeated; but then the one fleeing will be caught.”

Can you make sense of this puzzling Greek translation?

<sup>43</sup>Oswalt comments that “*Whose flame is in Zion* suggests that Jerusalem is the hearth upon which the flame of God burns. That flame denotes both God’s sanctity and His destructive power (compare the story of Nadab and Abihu, **Leviticus 10:1-5**). Because Jerusalem is that hearth, those who touch it bring themselves under threat of destruction...

“However, the mistake which Jews and Christians have made over the years is confusing the Source and the agent, and assuming that what God used was therefore inviolate in spite of its own character. But again and again God has shown the fallacy of such confusion...

“God transcends all created things, and while He condescends to give certain places and persons special significance, He is never to be merely identified with those. Thus the answer to the question ‘Is Jerusalem inviolable?’ is always no. But does God

(continued...)



and has a furnace in Jerusalem!<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>(...continued)

hover over Jerusalem with special concern and does He invest her with special significance? Yes!" (P. 577)

<sup>44</sup>Slotki comments that the "fire" and "furnace" of **verse 9** "will consume His [God's] enemies and radiate light and warmth to His beloved." (P. 150)

(continued...)

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<sup>44</sup>(...continued)