

Isaiah VI, Chapters 40-49, Hebrew Text with Translation and Footnotes

In our study of **Isaiah 1-39**, we have stated that "**The Book of Isaiah** has been the occasion for a lengthy debate with reference to its nature. Is it the work of one historical author, Isaiah of Jerusalem, who lived in the eighth century B.C.E.? Or, is it in reality a combination of the messages of three great individual spokespersons / prophets for YHWH--

1. Isaiah of Jerusalem, from the eighth century B.C.E. (**chapters 1-39**, with later additions);
2. an unnamed spokesperson for YHWH, who updated and applied Isaiah of Jerusalem's message to a new generation two centuries later, in the sixth century B.C.E., near the close of the Babylonian exile, to whom scholars have given the name "Deutero-Isaiah," that is, the "Second Isaiah" (**chapters 40-55**);
3. another unnamed spokesperson for YHWH, who in a similar way to the "Second Isaiah" updated and applied the message of the historical Isaiah to the Jewish people who had returned from Babylonian exile in 536 B.C.E., and who lived in the new circumstances of the rebuilt temple and the nation that was once again being built, to whom scholars have given the name "Trito-Isaiah," that is, the "Third Isaiah." (**chapters 56-66**)

We stated in that study that we would not attempt to resolve this disputed matter as we simply read the **Book of Isaiah**. And the fact is, those scholars who hold that the eighth century B.C.E. Spokesperson Isaiah of Jerusalem wrote the entire **book**, acknowledge that the materials contained in **chapters 40-55** apply to the Jews in Babylonian exile, just prior to their return to their beloved Land of Israel. It is very obvious from the reading of these chapters that this is indeed where they fit in Israel's history. Again, they acknowledge that the materials contained in **chapters 56-66** apply to post-exilic times, and the situation in which the returned exiles found themselves after having returned to the Land of Israel.

Christopher R. North, in his commentary, **The Second Isaiah** (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1964; henceforth "North") states that "It is all but unanimously agreed that the historical background of **Isaiah 40-55** is the closing years of the Babylonian exile...The Persian conqueror Cyrus II (the Great), who died in 529 B.C.E., is twice named in the prophecy (**45:28; 45:1**)...He rose to prominence some years before 550, and after a series of spectacular victories, first over the Medes, then over Croesus of Lydia (547 B.C.E.), and finally over the Babylonians, he entered Babylon in 538 B.C.E. and gave permission to the peoples who had been deported there to return to their own countries...

"In **Isaiah 40-55** Assyria is not mentioned except as an oppressor in the undefined past (**52:4**). The Jews...are in exile (**42:22-25; 48:20**) in the land of the Chaldens (**47:5-6**)...Even, therefore if **40-55** was written by the eighth-century Isaiah, it is against this sixth-century background (about 550-538 B.C.E.) that it must be interpreted...

"The predictions of a prophet were always related to the circumstances of his own time and it is difficult to see the relevance for Isaiah's time of a corpus of sixteen chapters containing descriptions of events and persons two centuries later. What is predicted in **Isaiah 40-55** is the rapidly approaching overthrow of Babylon and the return of the Jews to their homeland. The exile is not

predicted (as in **39:5ff...**) but has already taken place, and the oppressor is not Assyria in the eighth century but Babylon in the sixth.” (Pp. 1-3)

Chapters 40-55, like the messages in **Ezekiel 33-48**, are written to give comfort to the exiled Israelites, during their long hard service in captivity, announcing the mighty act of YHWH God in coming to their aid (through an ‘anointed / messiah / King Cyrus), bringing them out from their captivity, leading them in a ‘new Exodus’ back to their home-land.

And those scholars who hold to the view that the historical Isaiah wrote the entire **Book of Isaiah**, acknowledge that the materials contained in **chapters 56-66** are concerned with the Israelites who had returned to their homeland, and were now living under the dominance of the Persian Empire. So, whatever one may think about the authorship, the materials say what they say—and the task of the interpreter is to attempt to determine accurately what those materials say—a difficult and challenging task, but a highly rewarding one!

Outline of Isaiah 40-55 (“Second Isaiah”)

George A. F. Knight, in his **Isaiah 40-55, Servant Theology** (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co, Grand Rapids, 1984; henceforth, “Knight”) states concerning these chapters that “No section of the **Old Testament** has attracted more attention than has **Isaiah 40-55**. The literature on it is more extensive than any one man could hope to read and digest in a decade. Yet **Deutero-Isaiah** will continue to attract exegetes so long as men [and women] study the **Bible**, for these sixteen chapters are as decisive and significant for an understanding of the Christian faith as are the sixteen chapters of Paul’s **Epistle to the Romans**...

“We might ask ourselves what Jeremiah or Habakkuk would have given to have possessed our sixteen chapters, for these two prophets would surely have found in them the answers to their torturing problems. Their task was to interpret the mind of God as the might of Babylon closed in upon little Judah a century after Isaiah’s death. If Jeremiah or Habakkuk had been able to read **Isaiah 40-55**, the tortured cry of ‘Why?’ would hardly have been wrung from their lips as they witnessed the destruction and violence of their time. **Deutero-Isaiah’s** answer to their problem was not, of course, in existence in their day...

“We can see that God, in His wisdom, continued to raise up an interpreter-prophet to expound His actions at each of the great crises in Israel’s story—at the Exodus [Moses], at the loss of the ark to the Philistines [Samuel], at the creation of the monarchy [Nathan], at the crisis connected with Baal worship [Elijah], at the fall of the Northern Kingdom [Amos, Hosea, Isaiah], at the fall of the Southern Kingdom [Jeremiah], during the exile itself in Babylon [Ezekiel], and so on. It would surely be strange then if God had omitted to raise up a prophet at the vitally significant moment of the return from exile, since this marks the climax of Israel’s historical experience...

“We receive the impression that **Deutero-Isaiah** has steeped himself in the works of his illustrious predecessor. Isaiah had proclaimed certain things about the **עֵצָה**, (**etsah**, or plan, of God that was yet to be worked out in Israel’s life and experience. **Deutero-Isaiah** now proceeds to show how that **עֵצָה**, (**etsah** was taking form and reality in his own day and generation and even declares that it will continue to work in Israel’s life in a unique and extraordinary manner in days to follow...

“Deutero-Isaiah was first of all a theological giant. He conceived his work in terms of a literary and theological whole. Thus while he made use of a number of ancient forms artistic writing for the sake of variety, he has threaded these units together to form one closely knit argument and developing thesis...As we read Deutero-Isaiah’s work with attention to detail, we become aware of the brilliant manner in which his argument advances from point to point...

“The so-called ‘Servant’ passages (**42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12**) are to be understood best when we read them in the setting in which Deutero-Isaiah actually placed them, for they each in turn advance the total argument just where they stand...The whole sixteen chapters together are in fact a poem about God’s relationship to His ‘servant’ Israel, in whom He has determined to glorify Himself.

“The main theme of these sixteen chapters is not the return from exile, as is usually taken for granted, though that is indeed a central issue. The main theme is the revelation **Deutero-Isaiah** makes of the nature and purpose of God in His immanence in Israel as the Servant of the universe...

“**Isaiah 40-55** is a document of fundamental theological importance. The roots of much of both Jewish and Christian theology are to be found in it. Therefore its study is both essential and very rewarding.” (Pp. 1-5)

We summarize **Isaiah 40-55** as follows:

The deliverance and restoration of Israel from Babylonian captivity by Israel's incomparable God, YHWH (**chapters 40-48**)

Voices proclaim comfort for God's forgiven people, calling them to prepare the way for Him Whose word never fails, the victorious Shepherd, King, and Creator--the incomparable God Who comes with strength for the weary exiles (**chapter 40**)

YHWH, the Lord of all history, Who long ago foretold the coming of one from the east--challenges the nations with their worthless idols--He calls Israel to be His servant, whom He will help, giving them victory (**41:1-16**)

YHWH creates springs in the desert--but what can the worthless idols do? YHWH stirs up one from the north, giving Jerusalem good news--but the idols do nothing! (**41:17-29**)

YHWH's servant brings justice to the nations (**42:1-4**)

YHWH the incomparable Creator makes His servant a covenant and light for the nations, opening blind eyes and giving hearing to the deaf! (**42:5-9**)

A universal song of praise for YHWH, the Divine Warrior, Who, like a woman in labor--pains, leads the blind into the light, something idols can never do! (**42:10-17**)

YHWH invites His blind and deaf servant Israel to hear and see--He Himself has handed them over to enemies, because of their disobedience (**42:18-25**)

But YHWH, Israel's Creator is their Redeemer, Who calls them back from captivity, and Who will be with them, as they become witnesses of His actions, which no other can accomplish! **(43:1-13)**

YHWH, Israel's Redeemer, Creator, and King, brings down Babylon, in a new exodus—giving water in the desert—but Israel is unfaithful! YHWH calls Israel into dialogue with Himself! **(43:14-28)**

Still, YHWH has chosen Israel as His servant—He will pour out water and His Spirit on Israel's children—YHWH the King, Redeemer, Divine Warrior, and Only God, Who foretells the future—will do what idols can never do! **(44:1-20)**

YHWH's servant Israel called to remember their Redeemer, and sing for joy **(44:21-23)**

YHWH, Israel's Redeemer and Creator, the only God, fulfills the words of His messengers, calling the Persian Cyrus to allow Jerusalem to be rebuilt **(44:24-28)**

YHWH speaks to His anointed King Cyrus—He will go before Cyrus, giving him victory, revealing Himself to Him as the only God, Who forms light and darkness, bringing prosperity and creating disaster **(45:1-7)**

YHWH issues a call for righteousness throughout the earth, that will bring salvation—this is His creation! **(45:8)**

YHWH rebukes those who do not acknowledge their Creator, questioning His plans—He is the Maker, the Father Creator, Who raises up Cyrus to free His people **(45:9-13)**

YHWH foretells the coming of the nations to Israel, confessing Israel's God as the only God **(45:14)**

Israel's Savior is a God Who hides Himself, but saves His people—while the idol-Gods of the nations, Who can be seen and touched in their temples, can do nothing! He Creates the world, and foretells the future—there is no other God than He—Who invites all the earth to come and worship Him as the invisible God, the only source of righteousness and strength! **(45:15-25)**

The Gods of Babylon Who have to be carried—are contrasted with YHWH, Who instead of being carried, carries Israel—YHWH is the only God, Who acts in history, summoning a bird of prey from afar to fulfill His purpose of righteousness! **(Chapter 46)**

Babylon is told to go down, to sit in the dust of destruction by the Divine Warrior **(Chapter 47)**

Stubborn Israel is spoken to by YHWH, Who has tested and refined her, and now foretells her freedom from Babylon through YHWH's chosen ally [Cyrus] **(chapter 48)**

The Servant of YHWH's Ministry and Israel's Restoration **(chapters 49-55)**

The call before birth of YHWH's servant Israel, Who will be a weapon in the Divine Warrior's hand, used to bring Israel itself back, and to be a light to the nations, receiving universal worship (49:1-7)

The servant will be a "covenant"--restoring the captives from distant lands, leading them homewards, as YHWH comforts His people (49:10-13)

Zion thinks she is forsaken by YHWH--but YHWH will never forget His people! The Divine Warrior will cause the nations to restore Israel! (49:14-26)

YHWH has divorced His people because of their missing-of-the-mark--but not because of any Divine weakness--He is the all-powerful Creator! (50:1-3)

YHWH's servant welcomes Divine instruction, and is not rebellious, but willingly suffers for YHWH (50:4-9)

The servant will guide those in darkness into the light--but all human lights will fail (50:10-11)

YHWH's people are called back to their roots, to the God of Abraham and Sarah, Who can turn the desert into Eden (51:1-3)

YHWH foretells teaching, justice, light, righteousness, and salvation for the nations; though heaven and earth perish, YHWH's salvation and righteousness will never fail! (51:4-8)

YHWH's strong arm that cut Rahab [the ancient dragon] to pieces, and led Israel through the sea, is called to restore His people to Zion (51:9-11) (Here we must take advantage of modern knowledge of the Ancient Near East. The author pictures YHWH as playing the role of Marduk, the Mesopotamian God Who slew Tiamat, cutting her in two, forming heaven and earth by her two halves. See James B. Pritchard, **Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament**, the section entitled "The Creation Epic" (known as the "Enuma Elish") on pages 60-72. Writers in the **Hebrew Bible** take advantage of the ancient myths to say that the only true God is YHWH, Who conquered the powers of chaos--but immediately they "historicize" the ancient myths--for example, "Rahab" becomes a name for Egypt, and the ancient dragon symbolizes the armies of Pharaoh that were drowned in the Red Sea!)

YHWH, Israel's Maker testifies that His people need never fear human oppressors--the Divine Warrior has placed His word in His people's mouth, calling them His people! (51:12-16)

Jerusalem, who has drunk the cup of YHWH's wrath, suffering double calamity, will never drink that cup again--but it will be given to her enemies! (51:17-23)

Jerusalem's captivity is over--she has suffered in Egypt and Assyria, but now she will be redeemed! (52:1-6)

The good news of peace and salvation, and Israel's God's reign, is heard—therefore Jerusalem can burst into songs of joy! **(52:7-10)**

YHWH's people are commanded to depart from Babylon **(52:11-12)**

YHWH describes His servant: a contrast of wisdom and exaltation, over against grotesque suffering—who will bring startling understanding (and cleansing) to both Israel and the nations. It is a message that is hard to believe—but this "arm of YHWH," a despised and rejected sufferer, is an offering for Israel's sins. YHWH has chosen to crush him, as a Divine sacrifice—yet, even though he died innocently, he lives triumphantly, and YHWH's will prospers through him! **(52:13-53:12)**

Zion is urged to sing and shout for joy—for though she is now forsaken and barren, a divorced, childless widow--YHWH the Divine Warrior, her Husband and Maker, will bring her back to Himself, to always love her and give her a glorious future! **(54:1-8)**

It is like YHWH's covenant with Noah, after the flood! **(54:9-10)**

YHWH promises to give the afflicted city a glorious future, preventing any enemy from prevailing against her! **(54:11-17)**

YHWH's invitation to the thirsty and hungry: come! come! listen! listen! give ear! come! hear Me! I will make an everlasting covenant with you! Nations will come and share! There is free and full forgiveness! **(55:1-7)**

YHWH's thoughts and ways are far above Israel's--His word accomplishes the Divine purpose--and that purpose is joy, peace, and prosperity for His people! **(55:8-13)**

Isaiah, Chapter 40, Hebrew Text with Translation and Footnotes

40:1¹ נְחֻמָּה נְחֻמָּה עַמִּי

¹Slotki entitles **chapter 40** “The Omnipotent God’s Deliverance of Zion.”

He states that **verses 1-2** are “a Divine instruction to the prophets to comfort Israel and to announce the end of the Babylonian captivity.” (P. 184) We agree that this is an announcement of the end of Jerusalem’s captivity in Babylon, but whether or not the prophets are the ones being addressed is not stated by the text—it is only found in the **Babylonian Talmud**, as Slotki admits.

North comments on **verses 1-11** that “This passage contains what may originally have been four separate pieces, **verses 1-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-11**. The first three are ‘auditions’ [interview for employment] and may be said to constitute the Prophet’s ‘call’...All four themes are taken up and expanded in the course of the prophecy. Except in these opening verses the fortunes of Zion-Jerusalem are not prominent in **chapters 40-48** (only **41:27, 44:26-28**), but are one of the main themes in **49-55**. For these reasons, and because the conclusion of the prophecy (**55:12-13**) refers back to the beginning; it seems probable that **40:1-11** was intended as the overture [introduction] to the completed whole [of **chapters 40-55**].” (P. 71)

We agree with the description of this material as an “overture” rather than as an “audition.”

Oswalt comments that “**Chapters 40-48** particularly address the questions concerning God’s ability and desire to deliver that the exile would pose [others would say, that the exile had posed]. This focus is evident immediately in **chapter 40**. Would not the exile prove that God had either forsaken His people or was not the Lord of history? Would it not mean that He had been unable to defend His people from the pagan nations or that he had been defeated by His people’s pernicious sinfulness?...

“Isaiah’s answer to both questions is a resounding No! He shows that a new historical situation would not invalidate the truths he had proclaimed to Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Indeed, the new situation would only make those truths clearer. The exile would give God an even greater opportunity to show His sovereignty and His trustworthiness. Thus **chapter 40**, the introductory chapter, makes two points: God is the sole ruler of the universe (**verses 12-26**), and He can be trusted to deliver (**verses 1-11, 27-31**.” (Pp. 45-46)

Oswalt adds that “**Verses 1-11** provide a stirring opening for the new section of the prophecy. In four evenly balanced strophes the prophet lays the groundwork for the rest of the **book**. He establishes that the theme from this point on will no longer be judgment but restoration (**verses 1-2**), that this restoration will be through the personal intervention of God (**verses 3-5**), that no human force or condition can prevail against God’s promise (**verses 6-8**), and that there is good news of Divine might coupled with Divine compassion (**verses 9-11**.” (P. 47)

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Oswalt comments on **verses 1-2** that “The opening strophe of the poem dramatically sets the tone of the next 27 chapters. Whatever may lie ahead for the people of Judah and Jerusalem, God’s ultimate purpose for them is not destruction but redemption, not death but life. The two verses achieve a warm and affectionate note, from the opening words through the assurance that all is paid, all is forgiven.” (P. 49)

Yes! Not “all will be paid,” or “all will be forgiven” when the Suffering Servant does his work, but it has already happened, long before the text’s mention of the Suffering Servant!

But also, No! This is not some general message of what lies ahead for the people of Judah and Jerusalem—it is a very specific message to the Jerusalemites who are in captivity, that their captivity has come to its end, and they will soon be going home! Throughout his commentary, Oswalt does not deny that this is what Isaiah is talking about—but he only rarely mentions it, and downplays the specific context time and again, whereas we think that this context must be made much more prominent in interpretation.

Knight states concerning the author of **verse 1** that he is “more than a mouthpiece; he is the channel through which the Word [of YHWH] reaches into history; and without [the faith and obedience of just such prophets], we cannot see how God would have acted in any of the historical situations recorded in the **Old Testament**...

“**Deutero-Isaiah** is here the channel for the inbreaking of a new Divine Word into Israel’s consciousness. This particular Word, which comes down like the rain from heaven (compare **Isaiah 55:10**), results in that historical incident in which the Israelite exiles in 539 B.C.E. are set free from servitude in Babylon by King Cyrus and are permitted to return home to Jerusalem, there to rebuild their ancient city and to reconstitute their ancestral worship.” (P. 7)

Alexander states that “The specific application of this chapter to the return from Babylon has no foundation in the text itself, but is supposed by some to be implied in the relation of this chapter to the one before it which contains a prediction of the exile; and this prediction is regarded...as the text or theme of the prophecies that follow. But the promise in itself considered is a general one of consolation, protection, and change for the better, to be wrought by the power and wisdom of [YHWH], which are contrasted, first, with those of men, of nations and of rulers, then with the utter impotence of idols. That the ultimate fulfilment of the promise was still distant is implied in the exhortation to faith and patience.” (P. 93)

Alexander is attempting to make the materials in **Isaiah 40-55** apply to the distant coming of the Messiah and His Church, and therefore overlooking or re-interpreting the many statements throughout these chapters that speak specifically to the return of the Jewish exiles from Babylon. We think he is wrong, and is failing to see

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יֹאמֶר אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

Comfort! Comfort² My people,³

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the text in its historical context—but we must take his view seriously, as we examine his comments throughout these chapters.

Alexander sums up **chapter 40** by stating “A glorious change awaits the Church, consisting in a new and gracious manifestation of [YHWH’s] presence, for which His people are exhorted to prepare, **verses 1-5**. Though one generation perish after another, this promise shall eventually be fulfilled, because it rests not upon human but Divine authority, **verses 6-8**. Zion may even now see Him approaching as the Conqueror of His enemies, and at the same time as the Shepherd of His people, **verses 9-11**. The fulfilment of these pledges is insured by His infinite wisdom, His almighty power, and His independence both of individuals and nations, **verses 12-17**. How much more is He superior to material images, by which men represent Him or supply His place, **verses 18-25**. The same power which supports the heavens is pledged for the support of Israel, **verses 26-31**.” (P. 93)

And so, instead of being a message of hope for the Jewish exiles, concerning their soon-coming return to Jerusalem, the passage is in fact, according to Alexander, about the Church, the Heavenly Zion—even though Alexander has to mention Israel at the close of his summary.

²The repeated command of YHWH, נַחֲמוּ נַחֲמוּ, Comfort! Comfort...! is the piel plural imperative. It is the Divinely assigned task of those addressed to comfort, to console YHWH’s people. Those Israelites held captive in Babylon no longer need to be sad, or hopeless! YHWH is acting on their behalf, and those to whom these words are addressed must let them know that. The Divine message is not one of condemnation—it is a comforting word addressed to the exiles, assuring them of YHWH’s forgiveness, and their coming release from captivity.

North comments that “The Prophet overhears an iterated [repeated] Divine summons to comfort Jerusalem with the tidings that her ‘warfare’ is ended...’It would be hard to find in any language words that more gently woo the broken heart of a people’ (George Adam Smith, in **The Legacy of Israel**, p. 13).”

He adds that “Forty years had passed since a stricken Jerusalem had cried forlornly, ‘None comforts me’ (אֵין מְנַחֵם לִי, **Lamentations 1:21**; compare **1:2, 9, 16-17**).” (P. 72)

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says⁴ your (plural) God!⁵

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Knight states that “We hear the twice repeated command to *comfort*. The word does not mean to comfort or console another in his trouble: it means to comfort him out of his trouble into joy.” (P. 7) And Westermann adds, “Never before had a prophet addressed Israel in such terms.” (P. 13)

Alexander comments that “This command is not addressed specifically to the priests or prophets, much less to the messengers from Babylon announcing the restoration of the Jews, but to any who might be supposed to hear the order... Notwithstanding what they suffered, they were still [YHWH’s] people, He was still their God.” (P. 94) In spite of what he has said about the message being addressed to the Church, here Alexander has to admit it is related to the restoration of the Jews from Babylonian exile. But then he goes on to say, “The prefatory exhortation in this verse affords a key to the whole prophecy, as being consolatory in its tone and purpose. There is evident allusion to the threatening in **chapter 39:7**...Having there predicted the captivity in Babylon, as one of the successive strokes, by which the fall of Israel as a nation, and the total collapse of its peculiar privileges, should be brought about, the Prophet is now sent to assure the spiritual Israel, the true people of [YHWH], that although the Jewish nation should soon cease to be externally identified with the Church, the Church itself should not only continue to exist, but in a far more glorious state than ever.” (P. 94)

Thus Alexander turns this and the following chapters into a prediction of the fall of Israel and its replacement by the Christian Church. But we hold that in these chapters the exiles in Babylon are reassured that they are still the Israel of God, and that God has a marvelous future awaiting them, in spite of their having gone into exile.

³Knight comments that “All the peoples of the earth belong to God [YHWH]; all men are His creatures. Yet Israel is God’s possession among all people (**Exodus 19:5**). They are in fact *My people*...They are no longer ‘Not My people’ of **Hosea 1:9**, or even just ‘this people’ (**Isaiah 6:9**)...

“So what we have here is the word of grace revealing God’s constant concern that Israel should hold onto the covenant relationship by which Yahweh has bound her to Himself. Though the destruction of Jerusalem, the scattering of *My people*, and the harsh subjection of the nation to the rule of the Babylonians had seemed like a breaking of the covenant which God had made of old, yet our author now declares that behind and through and within that overwhelming tragedy God is still present as Israel’s God, and the basis of God’s purpose for the whole universe is still His Word of comfort to His covenant people.” (Pp. 7-8)

That the Divine message is intended not only for Israel, but also for the whole universe, becomes clear in a number of statements that follow throughout **Isaiah 40-55**, as it becomes clear that YHWH wants the whole world to know about what He has done for the exiles in Babylon, in releasing them from their captivity.

40:2 דַּבְּרוּ עַל-לֵב יְרוּשָׁלַם׃

וּקְרְאוּ אֵלַיהָ׃

כִּי מֵלֵאָה צְבֵאָה׃

כִּי נִרְצָה עֲוֹנָהּ׃

כִּי לִקְחָהּ מִיַּד יְהוָה כַּפְּלִים׃

בְּכָל-חַטָּאתֶיהָ׃

Speak⁶ to Jerusalem's⁷ heart,⁸

⁴Oswalt recalls how John Calvin insisted on translating by the imperfect / future, “your God will say,” instead of using the “gnomic present” “your God says,” implying a continuing saying of God. **Rahlf**s has λέγει ὁ θεός, “says the God.” Our English translations all have the present tense.

⁵The people had been sent into captivity by YHWH; that captivity had endured for almost seventy years. Many Israelites no doubt had begun to feel that their situation was hopeless, that YHWH had forever forsaken them because of their guilts / missings-of-the-mark and disobedience to YHWH's covenant--just as **Leviticus 26:14-33** and **Deuteronomy 28:15-66** had warned them.

But the Divine voice speaks to the captives in Babylon. It says to the Israelite captives that YHWH is still their God! He has not forsaken them in their captivity. He is still speaking to them. That's good news! And as the voice continues to speak, the good news gets better and better!

⁶The verb here, דַּבְּרוּ, **dabberu**, is masculine plural imperative. We take it to mean whoever hears the message of good news is called to take it up, and speak it to others.

Oswalt comments “that the verbs in **verses 1-2** are plural and with no specified subject has proved fertile ground for speculation extending at least as far back as the Greek translation, which has “priests, speak!”...The [Aramaic] targums open **verse 1** with ‘O you prophets, prophesy consolations...’ F.M. Cross suggested that the words are directed to members of a supposed Divine council...It seems more likely that it is addressed to any and all human speakers who might have reason to speak for God to Jerusalem. In any case the lack of specification shows that it is the message that matters here, not the messenger.” (P. 50)

⁷North comments that “‘Jerusalem’ in **Deutero-Isaiah** stands not only for a

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geographical location, but for an idea, the community of God's people. There is little difference between 'My people,' 'Jerusalem,' and 'Jacob-Israel.' Jerusalem is already on the way to becoming a symbol." (P. 74)

⁸For this expression, "speak to the heart," see the following passages:

Genesis 34:3, where it is said of Shechem the Hivite, who had just raped Dinah,

And his innermost-being clung to Dinah, daughter of Jacob,
and he loved the young woman.
And he spoke to the young woman's heart.

Genesis 50:21, where Joseph speaks to his brothers, to whom he has revealed himself:

And now, do not be afraid.
I, I will support you (plural) and your little ones.
And he comforted them,
and he spoke to their heart.

Judges 19:3a, where a Levite's concubine has run away, and he goes to find her and bring her back:

And her husband / man arose, and he went after her,
to speak to her heart, to cause her to return...

Ruth 2:13, where Ruth speaks to Boaz, who has treated her kindly:

And she said, I will / may I find favor in your eyes, my lord / sir,
because you have comforted me,
and because you spoke to your maid-servant's heart.
And I, shall I not be like one of your maid-servants?

2 Samuel 19:7a^{Heb} / **8a**^{Eng}, where Joab rebukes David, and tells him:

And now, arise, go forth, and speak to your servants' heart!

2 Chronicles 30:22, where Hezekiah speaks to the heart of the Levites;

Hosea 2:16^{Heb} / **14**^{Eng}, where YHWH promises concerning His alienated wife,

Therefore, look—I am seducing her;
and I will cause her to go into the wilderness.
And I will speak to her heart.

(continued...)

and cry out⁹ to her,^{10, 1}

⁸(...continued)

North comments that “Some such meaning as ‘reassure,’ ‘encourage,’ with a note of affectionate concern, is common to all eight passages.” (P. 73)

⁹The root verb here, **קָרָא**, “to call,” “proclaim,” “preach,” occurs in the **Book of Isaiah** some 73 times, at:

1:13, 26; 4:1; 6:3, 4; 7:3, 14; 8:3, 4; 9:5; 12:4; 13:3; 14:9, 20; 21:8, 11, 14; 22:12, 20; 29:11, 12; 30:7; 31:4; 32:5; 34:12, 14, 16; 35:8; 36:13, 14, 16; 35:8; 36:13; 37:14; 40:2, 3, 6 (twice), 26; 41:21, 4, 9, 25; 42:6; 43:1, 7, 22; 44:5, 7; 45:3, 4; 46:11; 47:1, 5; 48:2, 8, 12, 13, 15; 49:1; 50:2; 51:2, 19; 54:5, 6; 55:5, 6, 7; 62:12; 63:19; 64:6' 65:1, 12, 15, 24 and 66:4.

The **Book of Isaiah** as a whole then, is indeed a “preacher’s book,” with its continuing call to the listener to take up the Divine word, the message of good news, and make it heard.

Oswalt comments that “through the entire segment [40:1-11] speech is the prominent element. Eleven words relating to speaking appear. Three times the speech of God is mentioned. Alongside God’s voice are other voices, perhaps those of angels [we see no mention of angels in the text]. There is also the voice of the prophet and the voice of Jerusalem. This good news must be spoken, announced, proclaimed. God has spoken and who can keep silent?...

“As God breaks into the world and interprets His actions through inspired speech to and through inspired messengers [where does the text say anything about ‘inspired speech’ or ‘inspired messengers’? It does not—this is Oswalt’s reading into the ancient text his modern theory of ‘verbal inspiration’], He provides the only hope for a fading, dying humanity. Humans may pass away like grass, but the Word of God will stand forever. That word is one of comfort and restoration because of atonement and forgiveness.” (Pp. 47-48)

Yes, and we add, that good news can be taken up and repeated by anyone who hears—it isn’t confined to an exclusive body of “inspired speakers” such as prophets or priests. Whether young or old, whether male or female, even the lowliest of people, without inspiration, without education, without ordination, can take up that good news, and speak it—with saving power—because it is God’s Word!

What do you think?

¹⁰Knight comments on **verse 2** that “God is evidently convinced that Israel is capable of making a response, hopefully one of joy and obedience; for it is God Who has completed the act necessary for her [Jerusalem’s] redemption and not she herself.” (P. 8)

(continued...)

that her warfare is complete,¹¹

¹⁰(...continued)

But is this really the case? Does not the Divine message state that Israel has “paid double” into the hand of YHWH for all her missings-of-the-mark / sins? Did not Jerusalem herself have something to do with this double payment? It seems apparent that such a comment has been influenced by a Protestant theology of grace alone, instead of letting the text speak its message.

These first two lines of **verse 2** raise three questions: Who is being told to speak and to cry out? And, who is meant by “Jerusalem”? And, what exactly does it mean to speak to Jerusalem’s “heart”?

We assume that anyone who hears the Divine voice is being commissioned to speak and to cry out, and this would mean primarily the captives in Babylon, identified as “Jerusalem” or “Zion,” who are commanded to repeat and proclaim YHWH’s words of hope both to their fellow captives, and then to those still remaining in the towns and villages of Judah.

We assume that the name “Jerusalem” is applied to all the Israelite captives in Babylon, since it was the major city of Judah; we think it is a synonym for “Israel.”

We assume that speaking to Jerusalem’s “heart” means that the message is intended for the deepest feelings and emotions of the captives, where the “well-springs of life” are located—words of comfort and encouragement; words of kindness and love; words designed to alleviate fear and hopelessness; words enabling hope for the future—telling her that her warfare is over, and assuring her of YHWH’s forgiveness, since she has doubly paid for her sins. See our end-note 1, where passages from the **Hebrew Bible** with the phrase **דבר על-לב**, “speak upon / to (the) heart,” are quoted.

How will you answer these three questions?

¹¹The phrase **מְלֵאָה זְבֵאָה** is literally “it was full / satisfied / ended, her army / time of service / warfare.” 1QIs^a has **מְלֵא**, that is, the 3rd person masculine singular qal perfect instead of the Masoretic Text’s 3rd person feminine singular qal perfect.

Translations vary: from “her warfare is accomplished,” to “her term of service is over,” to “she has served her term,” to “her hard service has been completed,” to “her period of service is ended,” to ἐπλήσθη ἡ ταπεινώσις αὐτῆς, “her humiliation is fulfilled / completed.”

Slotki states that the “time of service” means “the sufferings in exile.” (P. 184)

Knight thinks in terms of “forced labor” (p. 8), and comments that “the forced labor that Israel had been doing for the last fifty years in a land of alien Gods was in

(continued...)

¹¹(...continued)

reality a service she had to render to God. Now, however, the [Divine] message sounded, and Israel's long term of military conscription was *ended*." (P. 9)

North translates this line by "that she has served her sentence." He comments that "there is the suggestion that sin can, and must be, expiated by the bearing of its penalty. The prophets never thought of the exile as due to political misfortune, the fate of a small country doomed at the hands of an aggressive empires, but as penalty for sin, 'received at Yahweh's hand.'" (P. 73)

For the Hebrew reader, this statement calls to mind the name used for YHWH, **יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת**, "YHWH of Armies," in Whose service are numerous armies, with those "doing service / warfare" for Him.

Oswalt notes that "the root **צָבָא**, **tsaba**) evidently connotes a period of enlistment in burdensome work." (P. 43) See:

Numbers 4:23,

From a son of thirty year(s) and upwards,
as far as a son of fifty year(s) you (singular) shall appoint them--
everyone coming to do warfare (in the) army,
to serve a (time of) service in (the) tent of meeting.
(Translations of the last two lines vary:

King James, "all that enter in to perform the service, to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation."

Tanakh, "all who are subject to service in the performance of tasks for the Tent of Meeting."

New Revised Standard, "all who qualify to do work in the tent of meeting."

New International, "who come to serve in the work at the Tent of Meeting."

New Jerusalem, "eligible for military service, who will have their duties in the Tent of Meeting."

This last translation is by far the best.)

Job 7:1,

Is there not a warfare / struggle for a man upon the earth?
And (are not) his days like days of a hired worker?

Job 14:14,

If a (strong) man dies, will he live again?
All (the) days of my warfare I would wait / hope,

(continued...)

that her iniquity / guilt¹² was accepted / forgiven,¹³

¹¹(...continued)

until my change / replacement would come!

This is more than a temporary armistice; it is the declaration of YHWH–Israel’s God—that their war is over, and that the captives / “Jerusalem,” can return to their / her homeland.

Westermann comments that “Deutero-Isaiah completely identified himself with his fellow-countrymen...He was at one with them in believing that the downfall of the nation was the result of Divine judgment...The thoughts of his fellow-exiles [he was a fellow-exile with the prophet Ezekiel] were his thoughts too, and he had been every bit as flagging and weary as they. It was a word from outside himself, a command, that made him a prophet, as it had done his predecessors [the pre-exilic ‘prophets of doom’]. This was the source of all that he was to say...It was ‘the word of our God,’ and it alone, as God guaranteed, would not become void (**Isaiah 55:6-11**). Since God still spoke it, Deutero-Isaiah was able to preach...And the word itself has one theme: ‘Cry to her that her time of service is ended (**40:2**)...Deutero-Isaiah’s whole proclamation is summed up in its opening and closing statements (**40:8** [the word of God stands forever] and **56:6-11** [the word of God will not return to Him void]), concerning the word of God.” (Pp. 7-8) And that word of God is simply this: “Israel’s time of service is ended”!

¹²Knight comments that “The one Hebrew word rendered by [guilt / iniquity] is pregnant with a double meaning, for it means ‘[guilt / iniquity] plus its punishment...His next word, *received*, refers to something like ‘satisfaction,’ so ‘expiation has been made’; and of course it is God alone Who can accept Israel’s sin.” (P. 9)

¹³Line four of **verse 2** is given varying translations, from “her iniquity is pardoned” to “her iniquity is expiated,” to “her penalty is paid,” to “her sin has been paid for,” to “her guilt has been atoned for,” to “the sin / missing-of-the-mark of hers was loosed / released / forgiven.”

This statement is similar to the dynamic symbolism of Israel’s yearly Day of Atonement, when all of Israel’s iniquities and missings-of-the-mark / sins were pronounced forgiven, carried away. Here, YHWH calls for the good news to be proclaimed to the captive Israelites that they are forgiven, released from the burden of missings-of-the-mark / sins. It is not announced as something that will happen in the future, but as something that has happened—in spite of the insistence of Christian commentators, influenced by the **New Testament Book of Hebrews**, that only with the coming and death of YHWH’s Suffering Servant will it truly and fully occur.

See, for example, Oswalt’s note where he states: “Hebrew נִרְצָה, **nirtsah** has the basic meaning of ‘to be acceptable’ [but in the niphil, as here, meaning ‘was

(continued...)

¹³(...continued)

accepted'] (see **Leviticus 26:41-43**). How Israel could make amends for that iniquity is not spelled out here, but see **53:11**." (P. 43)

Oswalt is evidently implying that Israel could only "make amends" and "be accepted" through the vicarious sacrifice of the suffering servant, which, in his view, would only occur some 700 years in the future, with the coming of Jesus Christ. Motyer holds this same view (p. 2990). But such a view, we think, is in fact a denial of what this verse, **Isaiah 40:2** is claiming, that the acceptance has been accomplished. YHWH has forgiven Israel's sin, centuries before the coming of Christ! Compare:

Leviticus 26:40-43,

- 40 And they will confess their iniquity,
and their fathers' iniquity
in their treacherous act which they did faithlessly against Me,
and also that they walked with Me in opposition.
- 41 Also I, I will walk with them in opposition;
and I will bring them into their enemies' land;
or at that time their uncircumcised heart will humble itself;
and at that time they will make their iniquity acceptable / pleasing.
- 42 And I will remember My covenant (with) Jacob,
and also My covenant (with) Isaac,
and also My covenant with Abraham I will remember;
and I will remember the land.
- 43 And the land will be deserted from them;
and it will make pleasing / acceptable its times of rest by its being left
desolate from them;
and they will make their guilt / iniquity pleasing / acceptable
on account of, and on account of they refused My judicial-decisions,
and My statutes their innermost being abhorred.
(This text in **Leviticus 26** claims that both the land and the people are able to
make themselves pleasing / acceptable to YHWH, by the land's observance of
times of rest and by the peoples' repentance / confession.)

Isaiah 53:11,

Out of his innermost being's labor,
he will see,
he will be satisfied.
By his knowledge / by knowledge of him,
my rightly-related servant will make rightly-related the many--
and their guilt--
he, he will bear (as a heavy load).

(continued...)

that she received from YHWH's hand double (punishment)
for all her sins / missings-of-the-mark!¹⁴

¹³(...continued)

It is certainly true that the work of the suffering servant of **Isaiah 53** is that of vicarious suffering for the guilt and sins of Israel, thereby making Israel acceptable to YHWH and forgiven by YHWH. But that is not to deny that already, before the suffering servant's coming, YHWH had made Israel's guilt acceptable and forgiven her sins. For this is exactly what **Isaiah 40:2** proclaims as good news—YHWH has accepted Israel; He has forgiven her!

Westermann comments that **Second Isaiah's** preaching "differs from all other **Old Testament** preaching of salvation in that its essence is the proclamation of an event regarded as having already come about; **Deutero-Isaiah** proclaimed that the great change from judgment to salvation was already accomplished fact...The prologue itself starts with this accomplished fact, 'Cry to her that her time of service is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned.'" (P. 11)

Christians who claim that there is no real or full forgiveness in the **Hebrew Bible**, or in the Jewish religion, need to reconsider that claim in the light of this passage and many others. And interpreters of **Isaiah 52:13-54:12** who claim **Isaiah 53** teaches there can be no genuine forgiveness until the coming and death of the suffering servant need to revise their understanding of the servant's work in the light of this clear affirmation. That the suffering servant has accomplished / accomplishes / will accomplish forgiveness is certain; but it is also certain that the captives in Babylon have already received Divine forgiveness. Forgiveness and acceptance did not begin with the suffering servant, or with Jesus Christ! It all began with YHWH God—and the true and living God has always been a God of forgiveness and grace!

What do you think? Is this a put-down of Jesus Christ and His death on the cross? We say, Not at all. What Jesus did in His death was an embodiment and fulfillment of what God has always done for sinners!

Motyer quotes U. E. Simon as stating "Yahweh replies to all [Israel's] sins...not with the grocer's scale and weights, but with a double pardon...the pardon of grace." (P. 299)

¹⁴North comments that "looking back over forty years, **Deutero-Isaiah** could hear Yahweh say that Jerusalem had received from His hand 'twice-over for all her sins'... She had drained to the dregs the cup of His wrath (**51:7**). N. K. Gottwald [**Studies in the Book of Lamentations**, p. 115] is right to say that 'the **Book of Lamentations** was one of the major sources of **Deutero-** and **Trito-Isaiah**.'" (P. 19)

Strangely, Knight comments that "It is true that she [Jerusalem] had suffered double, twice over, for all her sins, so it appeared that she had made double payment

(continued...)

¹⁴(...continued)

for her past disloyalty. But even if she were to suffer ten times as much as she had done, she could never pay for them in any sense at all.” (P. 9)

But this is to deny the good news of the Divine message, that she has done exactly that—suffered double, twice over, for all her sins--and her iniquity is forgiven!

Alexander, in his commentary on **verse 2**, claims that its verbs are “prophetic perfects,” meaning Israel’s warfare will be accomplished, that her iniquity will be pardoned, and that she will receive double from YHWH’s hand, that is, when the suffering servant messiah comes. In our opinion, this is just another attempt to get around the clear teaching of this passage.

Knight goes on to say, that because of the nature of sin as rebellion against God, “God alone is in the position to deal effectively with it. On such a basis, therefore, **Deutero-Isaiah** could see how God could accept the forced service of the exile as if it were indeed Divine service, the work that God has required in payment for her apostasy. On Israel’s part, the basis of her sin lay in her breaking off relations with her Divine Husband...Those relations only God Himself could now restore, even though Israel had now completed her service to that end...

“We have before us, then, three thrilling statements, all of them proclaimed so matter-of-factly:

- (1) Israel’s forced labor is ended;
- (2) Israel’s punishment has been accepted;
- (3) Israel has now received from the Lord’s hand the payment which He has exacted...

“Two centuries before, Amos had declared that...Israel was doubly responsible when she rebelled against that light (**Amos 2:4, 6; 3:1-2**). But this was all now a thing of the past, declared **Deutero-Isaiah**, for *her iniquity is now pardoned.*” (Pp. 9-10)

Oswalt states that “The exact sense of כִּפְּלַיִם, **kiphalayim**, [‘double’] here is not clear. Some commentators believe it should be taken literally in the sense that she has suffered twice as much as she deserves, or that it means two generations have suffered [so, A. Philips]. G. von Rad suggested the idea of equivalency...Alexander and others have suggested that the reference is to the reward of grace and favor now about to be received. But the previous two phrases indicate that this is not the case. Calvin’s suggestion that the sense is ‘large and abundant’ seems to fit best here...

“All three phrases suggest completeness: service—fulfilled; iniquity—atoned for; sin—paid in full...Israel has suffered immensely for her sins, but now it is complete; she need fear nothing more from God’s hand.” (P. 50) Yes, indeed!

(continued...)

¹⁴(...continued)

North comments that “The prophet of consolation is speaking to the grandchildren of those whom his predecessors had castigated so severely...Jerusalem has suffered ‘more than enough.’” (P. 73)

¹⁵North states that in **verses 3-11** the prophet affirms “Yahweh is returning, accompanied by His people whom He has freed from exile, and His glory...is to be revealed to all mankind simultaneously.” (Pp. 16-17)

He entitles **verses 3-5** “A Highway for Our God,” and states that “The Prophet hears a herald bidding angelic ministers prepare a processional highway for Yahweh’s return to Jerusalem. Valleys are to be raised, mountains leveled, and every hindrance removed. ‘The majesty of Yahweh’ is to be disclosed simultaneously to all mankind... Ezekiel had witnessed the departure of ‘the glory of Yahweh’ from the doomed city of Jerusalem. Now Yahweh is to return in public triumph.” (P. 74)

But where in the text is anything said about “angelic ministers”? The language sounds like it is a call for those hearing the message to do the preparing. What do you think?

Slotki says that in **verses 3-5** “A heavenly voice is heard calling for a highway to be prepared for the Lord Who is leading the exiles back to Zion. The language is figurative for the removal of all obstacles in the way of the deliverance.” (P. 185)

Oswalt comments on **verses 3-5** that “The second strophe of the poem now details how it is that comfort can be offered to a sinful, ruined people...Neither Israel nor any other human agency is the cause of the comfort here extended. It is the coming of God, the revelation of Him in human sight...This opening theme, the coming of God, is reiterated in **52:7-10**. Israel’s only hope is God’s breaking into human history. The appearance of this theme at both these places is of great significance for understanding the message of the **book**.” (Pp. 50-51)

Isaiah 52:7-10

- 7 How beautiful upon the mountains (are the) feet of one announcing good news!
 One causing Peace! to be heard,
 one announcing glad tidings of Good!
 One causing salvation / deliverance to be heard,
 one saying to Zion,
 Your God reigned!
- 8 A voice of your (feminine singular) watchmen—
 they lifted up a voice—together they will ring out;
 because eye to eye they see,
 as YHWH returns (to) Zion!

(continued...)

פְּנֵי דֶרֶךְ יְהוָה
 יִשְׂרָוּ בְּעֵרְבָה
 מִסֵּלָה לְאֱלֹהֵינוּ:

A voice--¹⁶ calling in the desert / wilderness:

¹⁵(...continued)

- 9 Break forth! Shout for joy together,
 ruins of Jerusalem!
 Because YHWH comforted His people,
 He redeemed / acted as Next-of-Kin to Jerusalem!
- 10 YHWH made bare His set-apart arm,
 to (the) eyes of all the nations;
 and all ends of (the) earth will see
 our God's salvation / deliverance!

Later, Oswalt states concerning **verses 3-5** that they depict “the irresistible, triumphal march of the universe’s King. Nothing in the world can deter Him, not deserts, mountains, or valleys.” (P. 52)

But where is anything said in this text about the “universe’s King”? And if His march cannot be deterred, why the need for making a straight highway through the desert, lifting up the valleys and lowering the mountains? We think the making of the straight and level highway is not for the sake of YHWH, but for the sake of the former captives He will be leading across the desert to their home in Jerusalem, like a great Shepherd, with lambs in His arms.

Alexander, as we would expect from his previous statements, holds that “the only image presented is that of God returning to Jerusalem, revisiting His people, as He did in every signal manifestation of His presence, but above all at the advent of messiah, and the opening of the new dispensation.” (P. 95) That is, according to Alexander, there may be a slight reference to the return of the exiles from Babylon, but the main point of the passage is messiah’s advent, and the opening of the new (Christian) dispensation.

But where in this passage is anything said of “messiah’s advent” or “the opening of the new dispensation”? Alexander is reading all of this into the text. If the passage has to do with the messiah, the only messiah mentioned in **Isaiah 40-55** is the Persian, Cyrus—**45:1**, who is so labeled because of his releasing the Jewish exiles in Babylon to return to Jerusalem.

¹⁶The reader of **Isaiah** asks, “Whose voice is meant?” And the fact is, the text gives no answer. Is it the author’s own voice? Is it the voice of angels (so Knight, p.

(continued...)

Make clear YHWH's way!
Make straight in the desert-plain
a highway for our God!¹⁷

¹⁶(...continued)

10)? Is it the voice of Jerusalem / Zion as **verse 10** states, crying out to all the other Israelites who remained in the land?

Regardless of how the question is answered, there can be no doubt that it is YHWH's message that is being proclaimed, a message that **Second Isaiah** assures its readers, will never fail.

Oswalt comments that "Once again we hear a disembodied voice crying [out], and once again it is apparent that the identity of the messenger has been completely subsumed under the message ...The messenger is not important compared to the wonder that God would come among us." (P. 51)

¹⁷Translations of the first line of **verse 3** vary with regards to whether the voice is depicted as located in the wilderness when it cries out," or whether the phrase "In the wilderness..." is the first part of the message that the voice is crying out.

King James, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare..."

Tanakh, "A voice rings out: "Clear in the desert..."

New Revised Standard, "A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare..."

New International, "A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare..."

New Jerusalem, "A voice cries, 'Prepare in the desert..."

Rahlfs, φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ, "a voice crying out in the wilderness"—which can be taken either way, as the Greek text has no punctuation indicating how it should be taken.

We think that in fact, the text is ambiguous, and can be taken either way, as either a voice crying out in the wilderness, or as a voice crying out, "In the wilderness..."

Codex Sinaiticus has a mark indicating that its copyist understood the text in the first way, as "a voice crying out in the wilderness:..." Our edition of **Rahlfs Septuaginta** gives the same indication, with the quotation of the voice crying out in the wilderness beginning "Prepare..." The same thing is found in the **Gospels (Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4 and John 1:23)**, where editors of the Greek text give indications that the word "Prepare" is the first word of the voice crying out in the wilderness, and this passage in **Second Isaiah** is applied to the work of John the Baptist, preparing people in the 1st century for the coming of Christ—quite different from its original meaning here in **Isaiah 40**.

Oswalt comments that "Despite the antiquity of the interpretation attested in the **Septuagint** and quoted in the **New Testament**...'The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare...' the Hebrew text, both in its parallel structure and in its punctu-

(continued...)

¹⁷(...continued)

ation, seems to demand the reading given here [‘A voice crying out, “In the desert prepare...”].’ (P. 51)

This is very important for Oswald’s interpretation. He holds that “The Hebrew text says that it is God Who comes out of the wilderness for His people.” He thinks that it is a mistake to take this as “a reference to the Lord bringing the exiles back across the wilderness from Babylon. As even those who prefer this understanding admit, the way back from Babylon did not come through the desert but went around it. Furthermore, there is no reference to the exiles here; it is God alone Who comes (compare **63:1-6**).” (**ibid.**)

But we insist that the two verses preceding **verse 3** are without doubt referring to the exiles, and later in this text, **verse 11**, when it describes YHWH as the good Shepherd Who is carrying His lambs in His arms. And we think it is best to understand the text to be calling for a new way through the desert / wilderness, leveling it out like a new highway, not because YHWH needs it, as if He can’t bound over hills and valleys, but because His “flock” of exiles is with Him.

We think that Oswald’s insistence on understanding the coming of YHWH apart from the return of the exiles from Babylon is completely severing the text from its setting / context.

Oswald concludes that to understand it as referring to YHWH’s return of the exiles from Babylon “suffers from the lack of any mention of the people. In my view, the best understanding is that this passage rests on the Sinai tradition (compare also **Habakkuk 3:3**). Thus God is seen figuratively as coming from His distant residence on Sinai to aid His people in their hour of distress. The people cannot help themselves, and there is no one else, so God Himself must come (compare also **Isaiah 59:15-20**).” (P. 52)

But we respond, where is there any mention of Mount Sinai, or YHWH’s dwelling there in this text (as there is in **Habakkuk 3:3**)? There is none. But the captives are very much in evidence in this context. They are the ones in **verses 1-2** being comforted as “My people”, being called by the name “Jerusalem”; they are the ones being told that their warfare / time of service is completed, that their guilt / iniquity has been satisfied / forgiven / atoned for, that YHWH has received double payment for all her sins. They are the ones anxiously looking forward to their return to the homeland from which they have been taken captive—and a level highway straight through the desert of Arabia, with YHWH leading them like a Shepherd carrying His lambs in His arms (**verse 11**) is most appropriate and applicable to them.

Again the reader asks, “To whom is this voice addressed? Is Jerusalem / Israel herself being assigned the task of preparing a level road through the wilderness? And what need does YHWH have for a road being prepared for Him? Is His stride hamper-

(continued...)

40:4¹⁸ כַּל-גֵּיאַ יִנְשָׂא

וְכַל-הַר וְגִבְעָה יִשְׁפֹּלוּ

וְהָיָה הָעֵקֶב לְמִישׁוֹר

וְהָרְכָסִים לְבִקְעָה:

Every valley will be raised up,
and every mountain and hill will be made low.

¹⁷(...continued)

ed by steep hills and deep valleys? Or is this a matter of a “new exodus,” with YHWH again leading His people, the former captives through the wilderness? Is the preparation of a level road meant for them, as He leads them home? As the imagery continues, in **verse 11** YHWH is depicted as coming like a great Shepherd, carrying His lambs in His arms. We say, that’s the reason for preparing the road, not to make it easier for YHWH, but to make easier for the flock that He is bringing with Him.

Knight comments that “Now all the heavens are ringing with shouts and commands as God’s generals prepare the way for the King of kings, and **Deutero-Isaiah**’s language soars as he speaks of the majesty and dominion of God. What follows is of course poetry, and no poet expects his words to be taken literally. What the poetry expresses, however, is no less than this: when God completes the rescue of His bride from her exile in Babylon, His action will have cosmic significance. His method in rescuing her **Deutero-Isaiah** discusses only later.” (Pp. 10-11)

But where is anything said about “God’s generals,” or “the King of kings”? And has not the author already discussed His method in rescuing His people? Has He not proclaimed her forgiven, her debt doubly paid? The captives have paid their debt, doubly; and YHWH has pardoned her iniquity. Do we, should we, go beyond that Divine proclamation, to inquire how YHWH could do such a thing? Christian interpreters have been prone to say that such payment of debt and pardoning of iniquity could only be accomplished by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. But obviously, this is not the case. The debt has been paid, doubly; and the iniquity of the exiles in Babylon has been forgiven—long before the coming of Christ!

¹⁸Oswalt comments on **verse 4** that “The one thing the people can do is to prepare the way for the coming King...They do not yet see the King, but they dare to believe that he is coming.” (P. 52)

But, we ask, where is “the coming King” mentioned in this text? And, what does Oswalt mean by “the coming King”? He is probably talking about the messiah, but this text is not about the messiah, or a coming human king—it is about YHWH, Who is coming to His people in Babylon, to return them to their homeland. The only king / messiah named in **Isaiah 40-55** is Cyrus, the Persian!

And the hilly ground will become a level place,
and the rough places a valley-plain!¹⁹

40:5 וּנְגִלָה כְבוֹד יְהוָה
וּרְאוּ כָל-בָּשָׂר יַחְדָּו

כִּי פִי יְהוָה דָּבַר:

And YHWH's glorious radiance²⁰, ² will be revealed,²¹

¹⁹Knight comments that “When in **Deutero-Isaiah**’s day an Eastern monarch traveled through his dominions in his slow and simply constructed chariot, sappers were accustomed to go ahead ...in order to build the road that the king had to travel.” (P. 11)

This word, “sappers,” is a modern military title for “pioneers” or “combat engineers,” soldiers whose duty is to perform a variety of military engineering duties such as bridge-building, laying or clearing of minefields, as well as general construction such as road and airfield construction and repair.

“But,” Knight states, “Babylonia did not possess such roads in 540 B.C.E. So **Deutero-Isaiah** knew how these sappers in a primitive sort of way had to level the hillocks and build up the ditches and fill in the holes so that the royal chariot might make some kind of speed. With this picture in mind, he then invites us to imagine what is involved in the astonishing idea that the living God will march before His people across the deserts and hills that lie between Babylon and home.” (**ibid.**)

Alexander states concerning **verse 4** that “The whole impression here intended to be made is that of a way opened through a wilderness by leveling the ground and the removal of obstructions, as a natural image for the removal of the hindrances to God’s revisiting His people.” (P. 96)

That is, Alexander sees no connection between this verse and the return of the exiles from Babylon. But we insist that this is the context in which this verse is spoken / written; and there would be no need for opening a way through a wilderness simply for God’s revisiting His people—it is because He is leading His people through the wilderness that these preparations need to be made.

²⁰Whereas the destruction of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity of her people reflected negatively on her God YHWH’s honor / glory, now His coming to overthrow Babylon through His messiah Cyrus, and then His returning the captives from Babylon to Jerusalem, will reveal / uncover His glorious radiance.

For occurrences of the phrase כְבוֹד יְהוָה, **kebhodh yhwh**, “glorious radiance of YHWH” in the **Hebrew Bible**, see our end-note 2.

(continued...)

and all flesh^{22, 3} will see (it) together!²³

²⁰(...continued)

Knight states that this is “an even more astonishing declaration: *The glory of the Lord shall be revealed*...The visible manifestation of God, Who is yet essentially invisible and incomprehensible...Glory was actually revelation of the invisible heart of God... Later in his work he [**Deutero-Isaiah**] maintains that the glory of God is to be understood in terms of redemptive, recreative, suffering love.” (Pp. 12-13)

²¹The phrase **וְנִגְלָה כְבוֹד יְהוָה**, literally “and it will be uncovered / revealed-glorious radiance of YHWH,” is to be compared with **1 Samuel 4:21-22**, which tells what the daughter-in-law of Eli, who was dying in childbirth, said upon learning of the capture of the ark of the covenant:

- 21 And she named the youth, Ichabod (which means, ‘Where (is the) glorious radiance?’)
saying, Glorious radiance was taken captive from Israel,
over (the) ark of the God being taken away,
and over her father-in-law and her husband [who had died]!
(Here the belief is expressed that the glorious radiance of YHWH appeared over the ark of the covenant in Israel’s sanctuary in Shiloh.)
- 22 And she said, Glorious radiance was taken captive from Israel,
because (the) ark of the God was taken away.

Here, in **Isaiah 40:5** this same root verb is used, **גלה**, but instead of meaning “taken captive,” that is, being “uncovered” by having clothes taken off, and led off as captives, it means that YHWH’s glory / honor has been uncovered, “revealed.” Knight states that “By the word ‘revealed’ he employs a pun. The verb means ‘to be uncovered.’ But to go into exile was also described as being uncovered.” (P. 13)

²²The phrase **כָּל־בָּשָׂר**, **kol-basar**, “all flesh” is a claim concerning those who will see the revelation of YHWH in what happens to the former slaves.

For all of the occurrences of this phrase in the **Hebrew Bible**, see our end-note 3, where it becomes obvious that the phrase “all flesh” is used in differing senses, from including all humans and animals together, to speaking of the entire physical body of an animal or an individual. Sometimes when the phrase “all flesh” occurs, it does not literally mean “every human being,” but allows for exceptions.

North comments that “These colossal preparations recall the martial triumphs of the kings of antiquity. But they are even more reminiscent of cultic rites in which Gods were carried in festal procession, as in a cuneiform text addressed to Nabu (compare **Isaiah 46:1**) which reads: ‘Make haste to set out, Thou son of Bel, who knows the ways and are familiar with the ceremonies! Make His (Marduk’s) way prosperous, put His road in repair, make His pathway straight, hew out a footpath for Him’...

(continued...)

²²(...continued)

“To say that **Deutero-Isaiah** used language similar to that of heathen rituals he scorned is not to derogate [belittle] him. His whole prophecy is based on the principle of contrast: everywhere he insists that what the Gods of Babylon made a show to do, but could not, Yahweh can do with omnipotent ease...

“But the immediate inspiration of this and similar passages (e.g., **41:17-20; 43:16-21**) describing the way back from Babylon, is the saga of the exodus and the wilderness wanderings...God had acted in the past, and He could, and would, act again, and as marvelously.” (Pp. 75-76)

²³Slotki comments that the text means YHWH / the Lord “shall reveal Himself” by the fulfillment of His promise to Israel. He comments on the phrase “all flesh...together” that it means “All mankind will recognize the working of Providence in the affairs of the world.” (P. 185)

But we think that is too general—what the message means, we think, is that whenever any and all people hear the story of what YHWH has done for His people in Babylonian captivity, it will be an uncovering, a revelation of YHWH’s glorious radiance—His steadfast love and grace to them.

Oswalt comments that “The direct result of the Lord’s coming will be the revelation of His glory. The revelation of God’s glory must be considered one of the ruling concepts in the entire **book**. Words for ‘glory’ [or ‘glorious radiance’] occur 37 times: 20 in **chapters 1-39** and 17 in **chapters 40-66**, 5 of which are in **chapter 66**...

“The glory of God is the manifestation of His absolute reality. The great sin of humanity is our attempt to arrogate that reality to ourselves without submitting to Him [we add, or pretending that we can with our theological conclusions put God in a box, determining exactly what He will or can do]. No doubt Isaiah’s experience in the temple forever fixed within him the realization that one’s only hope to participate in the Divine glory is as God graciously chooses to share it...

“What is in view here then is not merely the return from exile but the realization of God’s saving purpose for the whole world [but where in this passage is anything said about ‘God’s saving purpose for the whole world’? It foretells ‘all flesh’ seeing God’s glorious radiance, but that is all it says]. Young is correct in asserting that the reference to all flesh here points to the end of time [but where, in the entire **Bible**, let alone in the **Book of Isaiah**, is this phrase, ‘the end of time’ found? It is not! There are passages foretelling the coming of ‘all flesh’ to worship God, or foretelling ‘the time of the end’ of certain kingdoms, but not ‘the end of time’].” (P. 52)

We are amazed at how much Oswalt, following Young, can read into biblical texts! **Isaiah 40**, is dealing with YHWH’s coming to bring the captive Israelites home to Jerusalem—and there is nothing ‘mere’ about that for Israel and for the **Book of Isaiah**!

(continued...)

Because YHWH's voice spoke!²⁴

40:6²⁵ קוֹל אִמַּר קוֹרָא

²³(...continued)

The text states that “all flesh,” seeing that Divine act in history, will recognize YHWH’s glorious radiance. But no more than that!

Alexander disagrees. He states that “The specific reference of this verse to the restoration of the Jews from exile is not only gratuitous [uncalled for; lacking reason] but inconsistent with the strength and comprehensiveness of its expressions. The simple meaning is, that when the way should be prepared, the glory of God would be universally displayed; a promise too extensive to be fully verified in that event or period of history.” (P. 96)

We say that the reference to the return of the Jews from exile is not at all gratuitous—it is the context in which this statement is made. But we grant that the verse holds this event to be of world-wide significance—an uncovering of YHWH’s glory or nature—that will have universal significance for “all flesh together (or, at one time).” His view that the real reference of the verse is to the coming of the messiah, Jesus. But the fact is that the coming of Jesus was not seen by “all flesh together” either. His coming was certainly intended for “all flesh.” But it would take some three centuries for the message of Christ to reach throughout the Roman Empire, let alone “all flesh.” And still today, all flesh has not seen that glory.

What do you think? Do you suppose that YHWH’s sending Cyrus to free the Jews is a revelation of the true nature of YHWH, as the God of forgiveness and grace, whose punishment comes to an end, and Who leads in a renewal of His people by His gracious forgiveness and deliverance at the very time when their future seems most hopeless? Or is the prediction of this verse unrealistically grandiose? How important do you think the return of the Jews from Babylon is for God’s glory? For Second Isaiah YHWH’s foretelling of these events—Israel’s doom and then hope—is the great proof of His Deity over against the Gods of the other Near-Eastern religions, a proof that we believe still holds good today, and is of universal significance!

²⁴The prophet wants his readers to know that all of this is what YHWH has spoken—it is isn’t something the author is making up on his own.

Knight comments that “The Word of God cannot return unto God void, but must accomplish that which He utters as His will. **Deutero-Isaiah** has more to say about this at **55:8-11**. Thus the redemption announced by the voice is bound to become event, and so event occurs in history. Yahweh’s mouth has spoken it.” (P. 13)

²⁵Slotki comments on **verses 6-8** that “The transience of human existence and enterprise is contrasted with the eternity of the word of God.” (P. 185) But where does this text say anything about “human enterprise”?

(continued...)

וְאָמַר מִה אֶקְרָא
כָּל-הַבֶּשֶׂר חַצִּיר
וְכָל-חֲסָדוֹ כְּצִיץ הַשָּׂדֶה:

²⁵(...continued)

North entitles these verses “Creaturely Transience and Divine Permanence,” and comments that “The burden of the proclamation is that all sentient life is as evanescent [vanishing, fading] as the flower that fades. By contrast, the ‘word’ of God will endure forever.”

Then, commenting on what is meant by the “word of God,” he states that “The ‘word’ of God which is to endure forever must neither be limited to the ‘words’ of this passage...nor even to the words of this whole prophecy. It is rather the active will of God, His declared and all-embracing purpose (compare **45:11**), the word by which the heavens were made (**Psalms 33:6**), by which all mankind shall come to the knowledge of God (**45:23**), the word settled forever in heaven (**Psalms 119:89**). The Word already was when all things began (**John 1:1**).” (P. 78)

Oswalt comments that “Now the picture shifts from God to humanity, and the difference is shocking. We move from eternity to temporality, from power to powerlessness, from significance to insignificance.” (P. 52)

Already in **verses 3-5** the needs of the captives in Babylon are involved in the need for building a highway for YHWH that is straight and level—since although YHWH does not need such a thing, the former captives from Babylon whom YHWH will be leading through the desert like a Shepherd carrying lambs in His arms will need it. The captive Israelites are like a flock of sheep, that easily go astray; their new-born are helpless and cannot make it on such a journey, through such difficult terrain; only in YHWH’s strong arms can they make the journey! In **verses 6-8** the imagery shifts to the comparison of the people to grass that quickly withers when the hot wind blows on it. But when God speaks, not even the desert wind can stop His progress across the desert with His people! His word, which has proclaimed forgiveness and redemption from captivity will never fail! Their return is certain!

Knight comments on **verse 6** that “The date is now somewhere between 545 and 540 B.C.E. About forty-five years before this time the end had come upon Jerusalem. In those days, before there was medical care and social security as we know it, human life was nasty, brutish, and short. Thus it is likely that very few of **Deutero-Isaiah’s** hearers would even remember the events of 587 B.C.E. when Jerusalem was destroyed...When the brevity of the human span is seen in its stark reality against the vanity of human existence, then the meaninglessness of human life becomes even more apparent.” (Pp. 13-14)

A voice, saying Proclaim!²⁶

And one said,²⁷ What shall I proclaim?

All the flesh²⁸ (is) grass,²⁹

²⁶In **verse 3** an unidentified voice cried out. Here in **verse 6** that same voice calls upon someone else, again unidentified, to cry out. Slotki comments that “Another supernatural voice answers the call.” (P. 186) But what indication is there that this is a “supernatural” voice?

Alexander comments that “There is a pleasing mystery...in the dialogue of these anonymous voices, which is dispelled by undertaking to determine too precisely who the speakers are. All that the words necessarily convey is, that one voice speaks and another voice answers. Interpreters are universally agreed that the last clause contains the words which the second speaker is required to utter. It is possible, however, to connect these words immediately with what precedes, and understand them as presenting an objection to the required proclamation. *What shall (or can) I cry, (since) all flesh is grass, etc.*” (P. 97)

²⁷Oswalt translates by “I said,” and notes that he is following the Greek translation, καὶ εἶπα, and 1QIs^a, which reads the [cohortative] qal imperfect with *waw*-conversive, וואמר, “and I would say.” This makes the words that follow the prophet’s words, whereas the Masoretic Text leaves the identity of the speaker unclear—the “harder reading,” and therefore the most likely to be original, with the Greek translator and the Qumran copyist clearing up the mystery.

King James has “And he said”; **Tanakh** has “Another asks”; **New Revised Standard, New International** and **New Jerusalem** all have “And I said.” Slotki comments that “A heavenly voice is heard again (compare **verse 3**).” (P. 185)

But neither **verse 3** or **verse 6** in the original Hebrew identify the voice’s speaker or its origin.

Such ambiguity in translation is frustrating to the beginning student of the Hebrew text, but something that the serious student must adapt to, refusing to be dogmatic or pretend that the text is clear, when in fact it is ambiguous. The identity of the one speaking is uncertain. And in addition, there is much that is ambiguous and enigmatic in the overall message of the **Book of Isaiah**. All is not clear and obvious—as much as we would like it to be!

Westermann claims that **verses 6-7** record the Divine call of **Second Isaiah**. (P. 6) The passage can be understood in this way, but the text in fact is not that specific.

²⁸For the phrase “all flesh,” here “all the flesh,” see end-note 2 and footnote 24.

²⁹Oswalt asks, “What better picture of inconsequentiality and mortality could be

(continued...)

²⁹(...continued)

found than *grass*? Quickly grown and quickly withered, it is blown this way and that by every wind. So it is, says Isaiah, of humanity.” (P. 53) Compare:

2 Kings 19:26, YHWH tells Sennacherib that He long ago planned turning fortified cities into ruins:

and their inhabitants short of hand [Greek, “were weak in the hand”];
they were shattered and ashamed;
they became herbage of a field,
and green grass (synonym), grass of rooftops,
and scorched before it stood / grew up. **Isaiah 37:27**, same;

Isaiah 15:6,

Because waters of Nimrim will be wastes;
because herbage dried up,
grass was finished;
there was no greenness!

Isaiah 51:12,

I, I (am) He, your (plural) Comforter!
Who are you,
and you were afraid of a man?
He will die!
And (you were afraid) of a son of a human?
He will be given (to the) grass!

Psalms 37:2, which says concerning evil-doers,

Because like the grass they will quickly wither,
and like green grass (synonym) they will sink / droop.

Psalms 90:5-6, speaking of human beings--

5 You flooded them--
they will be a sleep;
in the morning, like the grass it passes on.
(Translations vary:

King James, “Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning *they are like grass which groweth up.*”

Tanakh, “You engulf men in sleep; at daybreak they are like grass that renews itself”;

(continued...)

²⁹(...continued)

New Revised Standard, “You sweep them away; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning;”

New International, ‘You sweep men away in the sleep of death; they are like the new grass of the morning—“

New Jerusalem, “You flood them with sleep--in the morning they will be like growing grass:”

Rahfs, “The years will be things scorned for them; the early morning as if grass passes by;”

6 In the morning it will flourish and will pass on;
to / in the evening it will wither and will dry up.

Psalm 103:15-16,

15 (Weak) man, like the grass (are) his days;
like a flower of the field, so he will flourish;
16 because a wind passes over it, and it is not;
and its place will not recognize it again.

Psalm 129:6, a prayer for demise of those who hate Zion:

They will be / May they be like the grass of rooftops,
which before it grew up withered.

(Translations of the last line vary:

King James, “which withereth afore it groweth up”;

Tanakh, “that fades before it can be pulled up”;

New Revised Standard, “that withers before it grows up” **New International**, similar;

New Jerusalem, “dried up before it is cut”;

Rahfs, ὅς πρὸ τοῦ ἐκσπασθῆναι ἐξηράνθη, “which before being pulled up, withered.”

Biblical literature is relentless in its depiction of humanity’s brevity. Human life is like the green growth of spring—like the herbs in the field, like the grass of the prairie—like flowers that spring up in April or May—beautiful but fleeting. As soon as the hot days of summer arrive, and the hot wind begins to blow, the green growth withers and passes away. So it is with human lives—soon gone, too feeble, too weak to endure.

It is true of all humanity; it was true of the great conquerors of Israel—Assyria and Babylonia—it was just as true of the Israelites, including those who were taken away into captivity in Babylon. It is just as true of us who live in the 21st century. How quickly we are gone from this earthly scene!

Note how all of this is rooted in the **Psalms—37, 90, 103, 129**--and Westermann points out how the entirety of **Second Isaiah** is deeply rooted in the **Psalter**: “Almost

(continued...)

and all its steadfast-love³⁰ (is) like a blossom of the field.³¹

²⁹(...continued)

every page in **Deutero-Isaiah** reveals affinities between his proclamation and the language of the **Psalter**. The form of the oracle of salvation is not native to the prophetic tradition, but to that of the **Psalms**. The **Psalter** survived the loss of the temple and became an important component part of the exiles' worship [the exiles had lost their temple with its rituals of animal sacrifice; but they had not lost their hymn- and prayer-book, the **Psalter!**].

“Because of the circumstances in which the exiles found themselves, the **psalms** which the prophet most frequently echoes are inevitably the **psalms** of lamentation; however, since the **Psalter** shows that lament and praise are essentially co-related, we may logically expect to find **Deutero-Isaiah's** diction influenced by the **psalms** of praise as well. The influence is, in actual fact, much stronger than has hitherto been realized.” (P. 23) We agree.

³⁰The Hebrew noun is חֶסֶד, “its steadfast-love.” **Rahlfs** translates by δόξα, “glory,” an unusual translation of the Hebrew noun, not found anywhere else in the **Greek Bible**, but the Greek translation is followed in the **New Testament, 1 Peter 1:24**. Oswalt translates by “dependability,” but that is only a guess. Other translations are “the goodness thereof,” “its goodness,” “their constancy,” “their glory,” and “its beauty.” **Rahlfs** has “all glory of a person.”

חֶסֶד, **chesedh**, “steadfast-love, is, for the **Hebrew Bible**, an integral part of YHWH's character; and it is also what YHWH wants from His people, perhaps above all else—see **Micah 6:8**. The **Hebrew Bible** sings the beauty of the Divine **chesedh**, YHWH's un failing steadfast-love for His people—see for example **Psalms 136**, with its 26 repetitions of the phrase כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֶסֶד יְיָ, “because to long-lasting-time (is) His steadfast-love!”

Alexander comments that “To assume a new sense of חֶסֶד, **chesedh**, in this one case is a violation of the soundest principles of lexicography, and instead of letting the writer express his own ideas, forces upon him what the commentator thinks he might had said or should have said...The contrast is then between the short-lived and precarious favor of man, and the infallible promise of God.” (P. 97)

North understands חֶסֶד, **chesedh** to mean “‘constant love,’ ‘devotion,’ ‘loyalty,’ between relatives or friends, master and slave, king and subject, or those bound by covenant obligations. This is the meaning here: compare **Hosea 6:4**: ‘Your **chesedh** is like a morning cloud, or like the dew that quickly vanishes.’ Man's constancy begins brightly, but languishes so quickly.” (Pp. 77-78)

(continued...)

³⁰(...continued)

Verse 6 is quoted in **1 Peter 1:23-25**, where Peter tells the believers that they:

- 23 having been caused to be born again, not out of perishable seed, but imperishable,
 through God's living and abiding word.
- 24 Because all flesh (is) like grass,
 and all its glory (is) like a flower of (the) grass:
 the grass withered,
 and the flower fell off.
- 25 But then a word of (the) Lord endures into the age(s);
 and then this is the word that was brought as good news to you (plural).

Alexander states that "The quotation in **1 Peter** confirms the supposition, here suggested by the context, that the words have reference to the preaching of the gospel, or the introduction of the new dispensation." (P. 97) We think that the most that can be made of this quotation is that just as the word of God called the exiles out from Babylon, so it is God's word that is proclaimed in the Christian message—not that **Isaiah 40:6** is predicting the Christian good news and a "new dispensation."

Alexander later agrees with this, stating that "Kimchi explains *word* [in **verse 8**, which mentions 'the word of our God'] to mean the word of prophecy, while others give it the specific sense of promise, and others understand it as denoting the gospel, on the authority of **1 Peter 1:25**...[But] by *word* he means neither promise, nor prophecy, nor gospel merely, but every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (**Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4**). There is a tacit antithesis between the word of God and man; what man says is uncertain and precarious, what God says cannot fail." (P. 98)

³¹The unidentified voice speaking here, affirms that human steadfast-love is, like humans themselves, extremely temporary and quickly gone. Of course, that is true, as time and death take away humanity's steadfast-love. But not so with YHWH, Whose word abides forever, never fading away like humanity's steadfast-love. According to the Divine voice, YHWH's care for His people, even though He has allowed them to become exiled captives in Babylon, has never ended! They are still encompassed by His steadfast-love.

³²The Qumran manuscript 1QIs^a has significant problems with **verses 7-8**.

Verse 7 begins with יבֶשׁ חֲצִירׁ נִבֵּל צִיץׁ, "It was dry—green grass, it withered—a

blossom," just like our Masoretic Hebrew text. But then it continues with וְדִבְרֵי־

אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִקְוֶה לְעוֹלָםׁ, "and our God's word will stand for long-lasting-time." In fact,

this is the same as **verse 8** in the Masoretic Text, with **verse 7** being omitted. But

above the line of its **verse 7**, the Qumran copyist has written, in smaller letters

כִּי רוּחַ נִשְׁבַּח בּוֹאׁ, "because Spirit / wind blew on it / coming." Then on the left side

(continued...)

כִּי רוּחַ יְהוָה נִשְׁבָּה בּוֹ

אֲכַן חֲצִיר הָעֵמִם:

It was dry–green grass; it withered—a blossom,³³
because YHWH’s wind / breath³⁴ blew upon it.
Surely grass (is) the people!³⁵

³²(...continued)

of this page in the manuscript, he has written, again in smaller letters, **verse 8**, יבש חציר נבל ציץ ודבר אלהינו blossom, and word of our God...” The noun חֲצִיר has the letter yodh, י, written above its last letter, evidently meaning that the copyist has a different Hebrew text which read the plural instead of the singular, i.e., “grasses” instead of “grass.”

The entirety of **verse 7** was omitted by the oldest and best Greek manuscripts, but was added in by later Greek translators. The omission was probably due to the eye of copyists skipping from the first four words in **verse 7** to the first four words in **verse 8**, which are identical in the Hebrew, making it all the easier for a copyist’s eye to skip from one verse to the next.

³³See footnote 29 for Westermann’s comment concerning this passage’s relationship to the **Psalter**.

³⁴Slotki translates by “the breath of the Lord,” and comments that this is “a reference probably to the sirocco or the hot east wind which, when it blows in the spring, blights the vegetation of Palestine.” (P. 186)

³⁵Oswalt comments on **verse 7** that “The transience of humanity makes it unable to survive in any conflict with God.” (P. 53) But we see nothing in the text concerning “conflict with God.” It simply contrasts humanity’s transience with the continuance of YHWH’s word’s. Indeed, what the passage affirms concerning the transiency of humanity applies to all humanity, whether in harmony with God or out of harmony—it applies to saint and sinner alike!

Oswalt goes on to say, “The prophet probably has in mind here the imagery of the *hamsin*, a hot, dry wind from the east that is likely to blow in May and that can turn the countryside from green to brown in 48 hours or less [here, we agree!]...”

“This truth applies not only to the oppressors but also to the oppressed [yes!]. The great powers will not be able to prevail against God to keep Him from delivering His Own, but neither are the people of God able to save themselves...The prophet wants to make clear that the weakness of humanity applies to Israelites as well as to non-Israelites. Salvation is from God alone.” (Pp. 53-54)

(continued...)

40:8 יִבֶּשׁ חֲצִיר נֹבֵל צִיץ

וְדַבַּר-אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִקּוּם לְעוֹלָם:

It was dry–green grass; it withered–a blossom.

But our God’s word will stand for long-lasting time!³⁶

³⁵(...continued)

But where in the text is anything said concerning oppressors and oppressed, or about the great powers hindering God’s saving power, or for that matter, anything about “salvation”? Again, we see Oswalt reading theological ideas into the text—perhaps validly if he is preaching to modern people, but hardly valid as a commentary to help in understanding the original meaning of the text.

³⁶Oswalt comments on **verse 8** that “This verse repeats the points made in the previous two verses and drives them home with the powerful final statement.” We agree. But Oswalt continues, stating that “The Spirit that breathes out destruction for all human pride is the same Spirit Who speaks the eternal Word of life over all withered and faded human hopes. Here is the paradox introduced at the beginning of the **book**: if I insist I am permanent, then I become nothing; if I admit that God alone is permanent, then He breathes His permanence on me. Whatever may lie ahead for the Israelites, they may know that God’s word of promise will not fail them.” (P. 54)

But where in the text is anything said about the Spirit breathing out destruction for all human pride, or upon human hopes? In fact, the text states that it is YHWH’s wind / Spirit that causes all humanity—whether proud or humble, whether hopeful or hopeless, to wither and disappear. The text affirms that God’s word will continue, without fading or withering, but it says nothing concerning that word being a “word of promise,” or about that word imparting permanence to anyone. All of this is Oswalt’s reading his theological ideas into the text which in fact does not mention them.

The same thing is true when interpreters claim that the “word of God” means “the **Bible**.” We must remember that while there were various scrolls in existence at the time of **Second Isaiah**, there was no such thing as one book, “the **Bible**.” There was no **Tanakh**, **Jewish Bible**, let alone any **New Testament**. The collection of writings into one book was a phenomenon that occurred in post-Christian times, with the Jews forming their canon of scriptures, their **Tanakh**, probably as late as the last decade of the first century C.E. (in reaction to Christianity), and the Christian **New Testament** not being brought together as one book until the fourth century C.E.

Of course, there was no “canonical **Bible**” in the eighth or sixth century B.C.E., just as there was not in the first century C.E. Here, the author is referring to the voice that he has heard, proclaiming the time of Israel’s service is ended, YHWH’s forgiveness of the exiles, and His coming to return them from Babylon to their homeland. Nothing can cause that word to fail. See Westermann’s comments in footnote 11.

(continued...)

³⁶(...continued)

But with this said, the fact is that this is also true of the canonical **Bible**, which is a product of the first and fourth centuries C.E. Just think about the countless generations of humanity that have gone before us—all of them withering away, whether devout or godless, whether Jewish or Christian, whether believers or unbelievers. But by contrast, the Word of God, which comes to us through the biblical writings, has continued on, generation after generation, century after century, with unabated strength and power. That’s what the text wants us to know. We humans are transient, but God and His word continue on with permanency. How essential it is then, to listen to, and believe, and live by that word!

Knight states that “This means that it is the Word of God alone that remains constant, steadfast and reliable. It alone [in contrast to humanity] is alive for evermore, on the ground that it is the Word of the *living* God.” (P. 14)

³⁷North entitles **verses 9-11** “The Evangel [commonly defined as ‘the Christian Gospel’; North probably means simply ‘Good News’] of the Good Shepherd.” He states that these verses constitute “a summons to Jerusalem to announce to the townships of Judah the near advent of Yahweh. He is coming as a Ruler, accompanied by the captives He has liberated. His gentle care of them is described under the figure of a shepherd tending his flock.” (P. 78)

Oswalt comments on **verses 9-11** that “With mounting urgency [the voice] calls Jerusalem to become part of God’s great work. Salvation is not for the Jerusalemites so that they can bask in God’s mercy. Rather, it is for the sake of the world (**2:1-5; 66:18-19**). This task begins as Zion, seeing the Lord’s approach, shouts the good news to all the villages around (**52:7-10**.” (P. 54)

Yes, Jerusalem is being called to become part of God’s great work—and that part is to be the **מְבַשֶּׂרֶת**, “female bearer of good news,” “heraldess” of God’s action in Israel’s history, both to herself and to all the surrounding villages of Judah.

But Oswalt has to read in ideas found elsewhere in **Isaiah** concerning this being a “world-wide” proclamation, an idea not found in the present text of **Isaiah 40**. We think that this reading in of theological ideas easily prevents a proper understanding of the text—even though we agree that those ideas will be found elsewhere in **Isaiah**, as YHWH’s ultimate intention for Zion / Jerusalem.

Slotki states that in **verses 9-11** “A Divine voice requests the prophets to announce from the mountain tops the advent of the Lord of hosts leading the returning exiles like a powerful and victorious warrior, but also like a kind and gentle shepherd.” (P. 186)

(continued...)

מְבַשֶּׁרֶת צִיּוֹן
הֲרִימִי בְּפֶתַח קוֹלִי
מְבַשֶּׁרֶת יְרוּשָׁלַם
הֲרִימִי אֶל-תִּירְאִי
אֲמַרִי לְעַרְי יְהוּדָה
הִנֵּה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

³⁷(...continued)

We agree that this is what the voice tells those it addresses to announce; but Slotki, like Oswalt, is reading into the text that it is a “Divine” voice, and also that it is “the prophets” who are commanded (his ‘requested’) to announce this good news.

The fact is, this is not “a request,” but a command; and instead of the prophets being commanded to announce the good news, it is the female Jerusalem who is commanded to be the heraldess of the good news. That YHWH is a “victorious warrior” is in fact not stated in this text, only that YHWH comes with might, and with a ruling arm. If the author had intended to describe YHWH as a “victorious Warrior,” he would have used the Divine name **יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת**, “YHWH of Hosts,” which occurs some 63 times in the **Book of Isaiah**. Here it is YHWH as Shepherd Who comes with might and with a ruling arm.

Knight states that having heard the good news, “Jerusalem dare not keep it to herself...She is not to be afraid about her task; she is to shout her message at the top of her voice...It is Israel herself, under the feminine figure of either Zion or Jerusalem, who is to be the missionary instrument in the world.” (P. 15)

But this passage only mentions that Jerusalem is to proclaim the good news to the villages around Judah—there is nothing here about Jerusalem being commissioned as a world-wide missionary. Knight is “jumping the gun” in this comment.

Later, Knight states that “The people of Judah, then, were to be the first to hear the good news. The remnant, now in Babylon, was to shout it to them the moment they succeeded in getting home to Judah...What she is to say is: *Behold your God*, meaning ‘Your God is here.’ When she does so, then those careworn and impoverished villagers will know a joy such as they have not known for a generation [or more]; they will learn that, despite all appearances to the contrary, their covenant God is still alive, that His Word remains ‘erect,’ unlike the flowers which droop and die, and that God is here with the exiles as they return from Babylon.” (Pp. 15-16)

Upon a high mountain, go up³⁸ for yourself / get yourself up,
heraldess of good news Zion!
Raise high³⁹ with strength your voice,
heraldess of good news Jerusalem!⁴⁰
Raise high, do not be afraid;⁴¹, ⁴

³⁸The verb here is עָלִי, qal feminine singular imperative, “go up!” The reason for the feminine is that the city of Jerusalem, Zion, is being addressed.

³⁹The verb here is הִרְיִמִי, hiphil imperative, feminine singular, “raise high!”, again being addressed to Jerusalem / Zion.

⁴⁰Lines 2 and 4 of **verse 9** are parallel, identifying the female heraldess of the good news as Zion and Jerusalem, which are synonyms.

Alexander states that there are two constructions of מְבַשֶּׂרֶת צִיּוֹן, “heraldess Zion,” and the parallel expression מְבַשֶּׂרֶת יְרוּשָׁלַם, “heraldess Jerusalem.” The first construction is, “the person being addressed in the bearer of good tidings to Zion and Jerusalem.” The second construction is “the ancient one contained in the Peshito Syriac and the three Greek versions of Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion, according to which Zion or Jerusalem herself is represented as the bearer of good tidings to the towns of Judah...It is the duty of the [people of God] to communicate as well as to receive the joyful tidings.” (Pp. 99-100)

North comments that “Zion-Jerusalem has already heard the glad tidings (**verses 1-2**) and is now to pass them on to her ‘daughter’ townships. As the triumphal procession (**verses 3-5**) approaches the city, its inhabitants are to *go up with all speed to the high mountain*, somewhat hyperbolic for what must be the Mount of Olives...There they are to lift up their voices...The cry is to go out *to the townships of Judah*, ‘You God is at hand!’...

“The gaze of the beholders will be fixed, not upon the returning exiles but on Yahweh. *He* is still the center of the picture. Two qualities He displays, the might of a ruler and the gentleness of a shepherd. The figure of the shepherd combines both. The king in the Ancient East was the ‘shepherd’ of his people, and wherever in the **Old Testament** the word shepherd is used figuratively, it is always of a ruler.” (P. 79)

⁴¹The verbs here are הִרְיִמִי again, hiphil imperative, feminine singular, “raise high!”, and תִּירָאִי qal imperfect feminine singular imperative, “(do not) be afraid!”

For this phrase, “Do not fear / be afraid” in **Isaiah 40-55**, see our end-note 4.

(continued...)

say⁴² to Judah's cities,
Look—your God!⁴³

⁴¹(...continued)

Oswalt comments that “Zion need not fear that God has cast her off, nor that His word will fail. She is to take the position of a [prophetess], declaring God's activity when that activity is still far off in the future, all in the sublime confidence that God will not fail her or the world.” (P. 54)

But where does this text state that God's activity is still “far off in the future?” It does not. The context of **Isaiah 40** is the good news that God's activity is in the present, and in the immediate future. God has fully forgiven Israel; Cyrus is on the verge of freeing the Israelite exiles to return home; and YHWH is telling the exiles to prepare for His leading them through the desert like a great Shepherd, carrying His lambs in His arms, leading His flock home.

And we wonder, Why is Oswalt so insistent that the Divine action on behalf of Israel is “still far off in the future”? We think it is because he believes that the Divine action envisioned is the coming of Jesus Christ, the suffering servant, not the immediate deliverance of the exiles from Babylon. But in our opinion, he is reading all of this into the text, not genuinely finding it there.

⁴²The verb here is אָמַרְיִ, qal perfect feminine singular imperative, “say!” There can be no doubt that Isaiah is depicting a feminine evangelist!

⁴³That's the message that the Divine voice wants proclaimed by His people Zion / Jerusalem, throughout Judah—“Look—your God!” Indeed that's the “good news.” God is present! He has not forsaken you! He is acting for the deliverance of your brothers and sisters, the captives in Babylon! It is a Divine action that can be seen taking place in the present, as the exiles are told to prepare for their return from Babylon, with a message of good news for the villages of Judah as they witness the return of their fellow countrymen to Jerusalem.

As Westermann puts it, “Deutero-Isaiah's gospel...spontaneously evokes joy. The moment the exiles arrive back home, Zion-Jerusalem becomes a herald of joy (**40:9; 52:8**); from then on, page after page, there are commands to exult and rejoice. They reach out far beyond the little band directly affected by the saving event (**41:16; 51:11; 52:9; 54:1; 55:1**), for they are addressed to the inhabitants round about (**42:11-12**), to the ends of the earth (**42:10**), to the sea and the islands, the desert and its inhabitants (**42:10-11**), to the wild beasts of the desert (**43:20**), to heaven and earth, mountains and trees (**44:23; 49:13; 55:12**)...Since by its very nature **Deutero-Isaiah's** message was bound to evoke joy as its inevitable response, it is itself everywhere irradiated with joy.” (P. 12)

Westermann is piling up proof-texts here, not all of which say exactly what he says—but overall, the fact is evident: **Second Isaiah's** message is one of resounding

(continued...)

40:10 הִנֵּה אֲרֵנִי יְהוָה בְּחִזֵּק יָבוֹא

וְזָרְעוּ מִשְׁלָה לּוֹ

הִנֵּה שְׂכָרוֹ אִתּוֹ

וּפְעֻלָּתוֹ לְפָנָיו:

Look—my Lord YHWH with strength will come--⁴⁴

⁴³(...continued)

joy for both the returning exiles and for all the world.

Oswalt comments that “The essence of the message is: ‘Look, it’s God.’ As in **verses 3-5**, salvation is neither more nor less than the Divine presence. God does not save the people with programs sent from afar. Neither does He save them with theological conceptions coolly administered from on high. He comes! This was the good news then and is still today. The only difference is the tense of the verb: today we shout to the world, ‘He has come!’” (P. 54)

While we basically agree with Oswalt concerning the message being “Look—it’s God,” we disagree with his statement concerning the tense of the verb. The fact is, Israel was again and again able to speak of God’s coming and presence in three tenses: past, present, and future. YHWH is the God Who came to Israel in Egyptian slavery, and brought them out; He is the God Whom they worshiped and acknowledged as being constantly present with them as the Good Shepherd guiding them through life’s journey (see **Psalms 23** and **103**, etc.). He is also the God Who, they believed, would come to their aid in the future, as the many prophecies of the coming David-like messiah make obvious.

And the fact is that Christians likewise speak of the God Who has acted in the past--in creation and in salvation / deliverance of His people, again and again, never in a more surprising and powerful way than in the coming of Jesus Christ. We, like Israel, also speak of God in the present tense, believing that God is present with us, here and now; and we, like Israel, love and use such passages as **Psalms 23** and **103**, along with our belief in the Spirit Who is present with us, comforting and guiding us, teaching and leading us into truth. And like Israel, we also believe in the future coming of God into our lives, and into the life of our world, in judgment and in salvation. No, the tense hasn’t changed! What do you think?

⁴⁴Translations of this first line of **verse 10** vary:

King James, “Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong *hand*”;

Tanakh, “ Behold, the Lord GOD comes in might”;

New Revised Standard, “See, the Lord GOD comes with might”;

(continued...)

and His arm is reigning for Him!^{45, 5}

⁴⁴(...continued)

New International, “See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power”;

New Jerusalem, “Here is Lord Yahweh coming with power”;

Rahlfs, ἰδοὺ κύριος μετὰ ἰσχύος ἔρχεται, “Behold / look—Lord with strength comes / is coming.”

Alexander, Lo, the Lord Jehovah will come (or is coming) in (the person of) a strong one.”

In fact, the verb **יָבוֹא**, is qal imperfect or future, “will come.” But this coming is in the immediate future, already having begun with the Divine announcement, and so translations vary between “will come” and “comes,” and “coming,” “is coming.” The Divine coming is not yet completed, but it is already under way, and the hearers are able to look and see it. But as the author writes, the Divine coming to free the captives in Babylon is still in the future—the near future.

It is also obvious from these translations how difficult it is for translators to deal with the Divine name YHWH, which occurs well over 6,000 times in the **Hebrew Bible**. Here the Divine name is double, **אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה**, literally “My Lord YHWH.” But the Greek translation of **אֲדֹנָי** is κύριος, “Lord,” and the translators of the **Hebrew Bible** into Greek used this same noun, κύριος to translate YHWH. So here, the translator simply drops one of the names of God, rather than have the Divine name as κύριος κύριος, “Lord Lord.” **King James, Tanakh and New Revised Standard** all translate YHWH by “God,” which is normally their translation of **אֱלֹהִים**, **elohiym**, and which is suggested by the Masoretic pointing of YHWH.

New International mistranslates YHWH by “Sovereign,” which is not at all the meaning of YHWH. If the name is to be translated rather than simply pronounced, it will have to be something like “He Will Be,” or better, we think, “He Will Cause to Be,” certainly not “I Am” as is common in some circles, influenced by the Greek translation of YHWH in **Exodus 3:14**. In our opinion, it would be helpful if translators simply used “Yahweh,” or as we do, “YHWH,” since we cannot be certain how the Divine name was spelled or pronounced.

What do you think? What will you teach the children about God’s name?

⁴⁵For YHWH’s “arm” working in history, see our end-note 5.

Prior to this present working of YHWH’s “arm” to deliver the Israelite captives from Babylon, the main uses of “arm” with reference to YHWH are found in the story of the exodus of Israel from Egyptian slavery. This leads us to think of the deliverance from Babylon as a “new exodus.” Compare:

(continued...)

Look—His reward^{46, 6} (is) with Him,

⁴⁵(...continued)

Deuteronomy 4:34,

Or has a God attempted to come to take for Himself a nation from (the) midst of
a nation,
with trials / tests, with signs, and with wonders and with war?
And with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm and with great marvelous
deeds,
like all that YHWH your God did for you (plural) in Egypt, before your
eyes?

Knight comments that “The transcendent God, [the prophet] now declares, is about to stoop to enter history once again with *might*...This might or power he portrays by the anthropomorphic picture of God’s arm ruling for Him. This symbolic use of arm occurs only in **Isaiah 40-66**. An arm is for stretching out, it is for action, it is for doing the task determined upon by the whole man.” (P. 16)

⁴⁶The phrase שָׂכָרוֹ, “His pay / wages / reward,” may mean that the former exiles in Babylon are what YHWH has received, His “wages” as a result of His action in freeing them.

Or it may mean that YHWH comes with a “reward” for those exiles, perhaps in the form of their return home and their newly given freedom, since according to **Isaiah 40:2** their “time of service” has been completed, and they have themselves paid double for their sins.

Slotki holds that the “reward” is “for the righteous for their good deeds,” but admits that “others regard the returning exiles as the reward which God had earned, so to speak, by defeating the Babylonians.” (P. 187) What do you think?

See our end-note 6 for all occurrences of this noun, שָׂכָר, **sakar**, in the **Hebrew Bible**. From those passages, we think the following are the most relevant:

Genesis 15:1,

After these things,
YHWH’s word came to Abram in the vision, saying:
You shall not be afraid, Abram;
I (am) a shield for you,
your exceedingly great pay / wages / reward!
(What does Abram get as a result of his obedience / trust in YHWH? He gets YHWH Himself! What could be greater pay / wages / reward than that? We think this could well be the meaning of **Isaiah 40:10**.)

(continued...)

and His recompense / reward⁴⁷ (is) before Him!⁴⁸

⁴⁶(...continued)

Isaiah 62:11,

Look–YHWH has caused to be heard
to (the) end of the earth:
Speak to Zion’s daughter,
Look, your salvation / deliverance came!
Look, your pay / wages reward (are) with Him,
and your recompense / wages (earned by work) before Him!

Jeremiah 31:16,

In this way YHWH spoke:
Hold back your voice from crying
and your eyes from tears!
Because there is pay / wages / reward for your labor,
(it is) a saying of YHWH!
And they will return from (the) land of an enemy!

⁴⁷Here, the synonymous noun to שָׂכָר is פְּעֻלָּה, “recompense / reward / wage.” Slotki states that the second noun, **pe(ullah)**, is “the poetical parallel to **sakar**.” (P. 187)

Indeed the Divine voice says, It pays to serve YHWH! There is a reward for His service!

North comments that the Divine wages / prize / work are “the reward or recompense...of toil...Yahweh’s שָׂכָר and פְּעֻלָּה are not, as English translations may suggest, largesse [money or gifts given freely] He is going to distribute, but His people whom He has acquired by His labors in their behalf.” (P. 79)

⁴⁸What do you think this means, “His recompense / reward is before Him”? We think it means that YHWH, the Good Shepherd, is driving His flock—the exiles from Babylon—before Him—and that they, His redeemed / delivered people, are His recompense / reward.”

Oswalt disagrees, states that the “most natural” meaning is that YHWH “will give the wealth (כְּבוֹד) of the nations to them.” (P. 55) See:

Isaiah 61:6,

And you (plural) will be called Priests of YHWH;
Ministers of our God, it will be said to you.

(continued...)

⁴⁸(...continued)

Wealth of nations you shall eat,
and in their abundance you shall boast.

Isaiah 66:12,

Because in this way YHWH spoke:
Look at Me
–reaching out to her like a river of peace,
and like an overflowing wadi, honor of nations.
And you people will nurse,
you will be carried on (the) hip,
and upon knees you will be played with.

But why go far away from the context of **Isaiah 40** to explain its meaning? The context is clearly that of the return of Jerusalem's exiles from Babylon, as YHWH the Good Shepherd carries His lambs in His arms. Oswalt seems determined to minimize the context of **Isaiah 40**, changing it into a future, eschatological context, such as is found in the last chapters of **Isaiah**.

He states that "The primary argument" against his understanding of the passage "is that the following verse speaks of the shepherd leading his flock. For this reason several commentators believe that the payment which the Lord receives for His victory is the redeemed people and that He comes bringing them with Him...This meaning is especially espoused by those who refer the passage to the return from exile, whereas it is clear that God is coming to His people having won the victory elsewhere." (P. 55)

Where does the text say that God has "won the victory elsewhere"? We do not think that this is clear at all. What do you think?

Knight thinks that YHWH Himself, coming to be with His people, is the reward / recompense: "God's 'wages' and *recompense* are His Own abiding presence with the poor exiled Israelites, His covenant people of old...God Himself is still 'your shield; your reward shall be very great' as He had promised to Abraham (**Genesis 15:1**)...God Himself, in the shape of Israel's *reward*, has so identified Himself with her in her tribulation that the pain and suffering which Israel has been going through, and which Israel has been suffering to her cost, has now become God's costly redemptive experience. For He is carrying Israel *in His arms* and so He is meeting the buffetings of fate in her place. This verse thus foreshadows our theologian's [**Deutero-Isaiah's**] argument at **43:24**."

You did not purchase for Me with the silver (aromatic) reed(s);
and (with the) fat of your sacrifices you did not satisfy Me!
Howbeit you caused Me to labor with your missings-of-the-mark;
you caused Me to toil with your iniquities.

(continued...)

40:11 כָּרְעָה עֲדָרָהּ יִרְעֶהּ

בְּזִרְעוֹ יִקְבֹּץ טְלָאִים

וּבְחִיקוֹ יִשָּׂא

עֲלוֹת יִנְהַל:

Like one shepherding his flock, He will shepherd;
with / in His arm He will gather together lambs;
and in His grasp / on His chest⁴⁹ He will carry (them);
He will guide those giving milk (to their lambs).⁵⁰

⁴⁸(...continued)

“The words *His recompense before Him*, meaning His payment being the first thing we see, (**verse 10**) explain that God Himself has paid the wages, has paid the price that Israel should have paid, but obviously could not do herself.

“The picture here of the Good Shepherd embodies the reversal for Israel of all the horrors of the past—of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, of the bitterness of separation from dear ones, of the agony and thirst of the desert march, of the sense of hopelessness they had known, and of the purposelessness of their lives in exile...

“It is still questioned whether **Deutero-Isaiah** was personally acquainted with Ezekiel in exile. Certainly Ezekiel delights to use the same picture as **Deutero-Isaiah** does, of God as the Good Shepherd of His people (**Ezekiel 34**).” (Pp. 17-18)

⁴⁹1QIs^a (in its margin) as well as Aquila and Symmachus omit the conjunction “and” in this phrase.

⁵⁰For YHWH as Shepherd of the sheep, see:

Genesis 48:15b, where Jacob / Israel describes God as:

the God, the One Sheperding me
ever since I was (?) until this day.

Genesis 49:24b, where Jacob describes God as:

Strong One of Jacob--
from there, (the) Shepherd, Stone of Israel.

Psalm 23:1-2,

(continued...)

⁵⁰(...continued)

- 1 YHWH (is) One Shepherding me,
I will not lack / want.
- 2 In pastures of grass He will cause me to lie down;
besides waters of resting-places He will lead / guide me.

Psalm 28:9, a prayer to YHWH:

Save / deliver Your people!
And bless Your inheritance / heritage!
And shepherd them, and carry them as far as long-lasting-time!

Psalm 80:2a^{Heb} / **1a**^{Eng},

Shepherd of Israel, give ear!
One Who drives Joseph like a flock...

Ezekiel 34:15,

I, I will shepherd My flock,
and I, I will cause them to lie down—
(it is) a saying of My lord YHWH!
(This imagery is taken up in the **New Testament** in statements concerning Jesus Christ: **John 10:10, 14; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 2:25; 5:14; Revelation 7:17.**)

Knight comments on **verse 11** that “The connection between the words *might* and *wages* is now explained in an astonishing metaphor...The strength of Almighty God is the strength of the gentle giant; the strength of tenderness and love and care. This is good news indeed...God’s action in picking up the lambs in His arms is actually an act of salvation.”

Compare **Isaiah 59:16**

And he saw that there is no man
and He was appalled,
because there is no one entreating.
And His arm saved / delivered for Him,
and His right-relationship, it supported Him.

John 10:28,

And I, I am giving to them life everlasting;
and they will not perish into the ages.
And no one will snatch them out of My hand!

(continued...)

⁵⁰(...continued)

Knight continues: “**Deutero-Isaiah** is not the first to make this plain. Israel had long since learned to picture strength and gentleness as necessarily conjoined in the Good Shepherd Who was their God...Yet the picture unfolds from a situation that appears to the human eye as what we would call a complete loss. Israel’s God had been finally defeated, it seemed, when Nebuchadrezzar’s God had strengthened him to destroy Yahweh’s temple and people, and had brought about the negation of the promise made to Israel’s father Abraham [**Genesis 12:1-3; 17:6-7**]. Now, declares [the prophet], despite all appearances...the Word of God does in fact still stand (**verse 8**).” (P. 17)

⁵¹North entitles **verses 12-26** “The Incomparable.”

Slotki states that in **verses 12-20**, “The magnitude of God’s power and wisdom and His transcendent greatness are compared with the insignificance of the nations and the utter worthlessness of their manufactured Gods.”

He says that the answer to the questions raised in **verse 12** is “that only God the Omnipotent is capable of measuring, meting [‘measuring out’] and weighing such huge masses of the material world and of giving them their suitable shapes, forms and proportions.” (P. 187)

Westermann states that “What Deutero-Isaiah is seeking to do by this means [language used in praise of God, depicting His majesty and goodness] is, in the time of his people’s deep affliction, to make them recapture the vision of God as great and majestic; for only such a God can be imagined powerful enough to bring about the new miraculous deliverance...This resuscitation of the praises of God and their fusion with the proclamation of salvation is particularly characteristic of **Deutero-Isaiah**.” (P. 14)

Oswalt states that in **verses 12-16** “Isaiah addresses the second question that the people would have in the light of the exile. The first he dealt with in **verses 1-11**: Does God want to deliver us? Has He not given up on us because of our persistent sinning? The prophet answered them with a resounding negative. God is not defeated by Israel’s sin. Not only does He want to restore them, but He intends to use them in the proclamation of the good news (**verse 10**).

“That word of hope gives rise to a second question: *Can* God deliver His people? It is one thing to desire to act; it is quite another to have the ability to act. Although God had once dramatically delivered His city from the Assyrians (**37:36-37**), would not its fall to the Babylonians, as predicted in Isaiah’s own words (**39:6**), mean that the Lord was merely one more local God Who would be swallowed up by the relentless march of world empires and their more powerful Gods?

(continued...)

⁵¹(...continued)

“Again Isaiah’s response is a resounding negative...In the strongest terms he asserts that there is none like the Lord, either in the cosmos (**verses 12-14, 22, 25-26**) or in history (**verses 15-17, 23-24**). He is utterly without compare (**verses 18, 25**), especially to the Gods (**verses 19-20, 25-26**). Thus it is plain that such a being is able to do whatever He wishes to do.” (Pp. 57-58)

Oswalt comments on **verses 12-14** that “With a series of rhetorical questions Isaiah asserts that the Lord is unique. This assertion implies several points that are at the heart of biblical religion: God is one, without any pantheon; He is the sole Creator; He is beyond nature, not part of it. The daring, indeed, the near-unintelligibility, of such ideas in the ancient world is lost on many modern Western readers because they take the propositions for granted. But they are by no means self-evident. Indeed, the history of world religions ought to suggest the very opposite: Deity is the soul of the cosmos, manifesting itself in many different ways in different cultures, but with no one manifestation being essentially different from any other...The **Bible** insists from start to finish (Isaiah is clearly not trying to convince his hearers of some brand-new idea) on a set of ideas that flies directly in the face of the whole world’s considered wisdom.” (Pp. 58-59)

While we are in basic agreement with this comment, we do not agree that the **Bible** “from start to finish” consistently teaches this, especially the **Hebrew Bible**. There are a small number of passages in the **Hebrew Bible** that can be understood in terms of “Henotheism” (the belief in and worship of a single God while accepting the existence or possible existence of other Gods) or even in terms of “Polytheism” (the belief in many Gods). See, for example:

Deuteronomy 4:19-20, YHWH is teaching Israel to worship Him alone:

19 And so that you will not lift up your eyes to the heavens,
and you will see the sun and the moon and the stars,
all the heavens’ host / army [i.e. heavenly ‘soldiers’ with heavenly might];
and you will be drawn away, and you will worship them and serve them—
[this means they are Gods, Who can be worshiped and served]
which YHWH your God divided to all the peoples
beneath all the heavens.

(This seems to say that YHWH divided the sun, moon, and stars, heavenly beings capable of being worshiped, to the peoples other than Israel, to be worshiped, while He demanded that Israel worship Him alone, **verse 20**. These heavenly bodies were in fact worshiped by the nations surrounding Israel. The Jewish commentator Jeffrey Tigay states in **The JPS Torah Commentary Deuteronomy** that ‘The Lord...assigned these [the sun, moon and stars] to other peoples as objects of worship...The concept that the Lord divided the peoples of the world between Himself and other heavenly beings is reminiscent of **32:8-9** according to the reading of a manuscript from Qumran and the Septuagint: when

(continued...)

וּשְׁמַיִם בְּזֶרֶת תִּכְּוֶן

⁵¹(...continued)

- God divided mankind into separate nations, 'He fixed the boundaries of the peoples equal to the number of Divine beings.' [P. 50])
- 20 And YHWH took you (plural),
and He brought you forth from the iron furnace, from Egypt,
to be for Him for a people of inheritance,
as (it is) this day.

Deuteronomy 32:8-9,

- 8 When (the) Most High gave nations an inheritance,
when He divided (the) children of humanity,
He causes to stand (the) borders of peoples,
to / by (the) number of Israel's children.
- 9 Because YHWH's portion (is) His people,
Jacob, territory of His inheritance.
- (**New Revised Standard** translates the last part of **verse 8** through **verse 9** by "he fixed the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the gods; the LORD's own portion was his people, Jacob his allotted share.")

Also, see **Psalms 82:1**,

God [a plural noun in Hebrew] took His stand in the council of El [the supreme Deity of the Canaanite pantheon with its many Gods];
in (the) midst of Gods, He will judge / judges.

Granted that there are other ways of understanding these passages—but they can easily be understood as expressing "Henotheism." We do not think they can be understood as advocating "Monotheism"!

Motyer states that "In style this passage [40:12-31] is a 'disputation,' an argument put forward to count a position that someone had adopted." (P. 302)

Knight comments on **verse 12** that in it, "**Deutero-Isaiah** sets out to teach what the power and the arm of the Lord that he has mentioned really mean. And his reason for doing so is to assure Israel that the loving purpose of God Almighty is such that He can permit Himself to stoop to carry His lambs without losing His right to be known as the Creator of all.

"Who then is the Good Shepherd to whom **Deutero-Isaiah** has referred...? It is He Who could measure the waters in the hollow of His hand...Nearly all the features which **Deutero-Isaiah** describes in these chapters [40-55] are to be found in **Genesis 1-3**." (P. 19)

וְכֹל בְּשֵׁלֶשׁ עֶפְרַיִם הָאָרֶץ
וְשָׁקַל בַּפֶּלֶס הַרִים

וְגִבְעוֹת בְּמֵאזְנַיִם:

Who measured water⁵² in his hollow (hand),
and heavens with the span⁵³ (of his fingers) measured (synonym) out,
and all the earth's dust⁵⁴ with the measure,⁵⁵
and weighed the mountains in the scale,
and hills in balances?⁵⁶

⁵²Where our Hebrew text has מַיִם, “water / waters,” 1QIs^a has מַיִם יָם, “waters of (the) sea.” Oswalt notes this, and holds that the Masoretic text should be read, since it is the “harder” reading, but also because of its assonance with the following word, שָׁמַיִם, “heavens.” (P. 56) We agree. But still, it seems obvious that the “water / waters” being mentioned are something much greater than just a jug of water—it is the Creator God Who is being asked about, and surely something like “waters of the sea(s)” is what is meant, as the Qumran copyist insists.

In this text, measuring the water in the hollow of a hand is parallel to measuring out the heavens in the span--that is, between a thumb and little finger--and is also parallel to taking up all the dust / dirt of the earth in a measuring instrument, as well as weighing all earth's mountains and hills in a scale--demanding, we think, something as large as all the waters of the earth's seas as their parallel.

⁵³Where our Hebrew text has בְּזֵרֶת, “with the span,” 1QIs^a has בְּזֵרֶתוֹ, “with His span.”

⁵⁴Where our Hebrew text has “all of earth's dust,” **Rahlf**s has “and all the earth,” omitting the word “dust.”

⁵⁵The phrase here is בְּשֵׁלֶשׁ, literally “in the third.” **Brown-Driver-Briggs** guesses this probably means “a third of an ephah,” which Oswalt thinks would be “a quart.” (P. 56) Matters of measurement in ancient documents are very difficult to be exact about in translation.

⁵⁶North states that the questions in **verse 12** “are not, ‘Who is able to measure this and weigh that?’—scientists today can do that with some accuracy—but ‘Who measured this in His palm and weighed that in scales?’—this when He created the world...

(continued...)

⁵⁶(...continued)

“The general picture is similar to that in **Psalm 104:1-9**. Yahweh is a colossal figure Whose palm held ‘the waters’ and Whose ‘span’ measured out the heavens.” (P. 83)

- 104:1 Bless [kneel in adoration to speak words of blessing] O my innermost-being,
to YHWH!
YHWH, my God, You are exceedingly great!
You are clothed (in) splendor and majesty—
- 104:2 wrapping light (around Yourself) like a robe,
spreading out heavens like a tent-curtain.
- 104:3 The One Who lays beams of his upper rooms in the waters;
the One Who places clouds (for) His chariot;
the One Who walks upon wind-clouds;
- 104:4 One making His messengers winds
His servants flaming fire(s).
- 104:5 He founded earth upon its foundations—
it will not be moved (for) long-lasting time and forever.
- 104:6 You covered it (with) deep ocean like a dress;
over mountains waters stood;
- 104:7 from Your rebuke they flee;
from Your voice’s thunder they are alarmed.
- 104:8 Mountains ascend; valleys descend—
to this place you established for them.
- 104:9 A boundary You have established—they will not cross over;
they will not return to cover the earth!

Again we observe how apparent it is that Second Isaiah has been deeply influenced by the **Psalms**!

⁵⁷Slotki comments on **verses 13-14**, that they depict “God’s infinite wisdom. The questions are rhetorical [questions asked in order to produce an effect or to make a statement rather than to elicit information].” (P. 188)

Motyer states that “In Babylonian mythology, the Creator God Marduk could not proceed with creation without consulting ‘Ea, the all-wise,’ but the Lord works with unaided wisdom. In both Babylonian and Canaanite creation stories the Creator must overcome opposing forces before the way opens for the work of creation...In **verse 12** the Creator was alone in the work of creation; here He is alone also in the wisdom needed for the work.” (P. 303)

But in so saying, Motyer overlooks the fact that there are a number of passages in the **Hebrew Bible** depicting YHWH as the One having slain the mythological monsters. See, for example, **Isaiah 27:1** and **51:9**.

(continued...)

וְאִישׁ עֲצָתוֹ יוֹדִיעֵנוּ:

Who measured out YHWH's Spirit / wind,⁵⁸

and (what) man⁵⁹ made known His counsel to Him?⁶⁰

⁵⁷(...continued)

North states that “These verses, besides answering the questions in **verse 12**, go on to ask questions to which the only answer can be ‘No one!’” (P. 83) Exactly!

YHWH, the great Creator of the universes, has power unequalled. He is the Designer / Builder of the “black hole” and the “big bang.” He is the Creator of the stars, and all their planets, and our Father as well, Who loves us with an unending love. What a God! That’s the God we worship!

⁵⁸The noun רוּחַ is notoriously ambiguous, sometimes meaning “wind,” sometimes meaning “spirit” or “Spirit.” If the question is concerning the wind, it is a continuation of the questions in the preceding verse, implying all the winds that blow on planet earth, over which humanity has so little control, but which play such a significant role in the heating and cooling of the earth. If, as seems more likely, the question is concerning the Spirit of YHWH, the “Holy / Set-apart Spirit,” then the question has moved from the seen and known physical world to unseen and mysterious spiritual world.

Slotki says that here the noun means “the Divine Mind.” (P. 188)

Oswalt states, “Thus Isaiah asks, if we cannot even take the measure of the physical world, how can we take God’s measure? This line of thinking is similar to the one found in **Job 38-41.**” (P. 59)

In those chapters, Job is astounded by YHWH’s questions that amount to a professor of zoology’s questioning a beginning student of zoology’s knowledge, leaving the student perplexed at his ignorance. How much larger have those questions become in the light of modern zoology with its knowledge of so many different animal species, and with modern physics with its exploding stars and black holes and “big booms” and countless universes!

⁵⁹The original text of 1QIs^a did not have the word “man”—but a later hand has written in אִישׁ above the word the word for “his counsel.”

⁶⁰What man, or woman for that matter, could give the Creator God advice, counseling Him on what or how He should operate? Who would you name? Leonardo da Vinci? Galileo? Albert Einstein? Albert Schweitzer? Stephen Hawking? What about Job, or his three friends, or the young man who claimed to have “perfect knowledge,” Elihu? Undoubtedly there have been, and are some very intelligent human beings, who far surpass others in their society and in their time.

(continued...)

⁶⁰(...continued)

But how much do the smartest, most intelligent of them know? Do they not, all of them, have “feet of clay”? Are not all of them extremely limited, seeing only partially, “through a mirror darkly,” as the inspired apostle Paul states of himself in **1 Corinthians 13**? And we say, in the light of that statement, how foolish of Christian readers of the **New Testament** to act as if everything Paul wrote is the absolute truth!

Oswalt states that “The answer to the rhetorical questions in both **verses 13 and 14** is that no one has advised God either in the creation or in the administration of the world.” (P. 60)

This is not completely true—for all sorts of human beings have cried out to God bemoaning their fate, calling on God to do things differently, i.e., giving, or at least attempting to give Him advice.

We see such throughout the **Hebrew Bible**, with Moses as a prime example—see **Exodus 32-34**, where Moses prevails on YHWH to change His course of action. Such a thing continues with Job and his friends, and Jeremiah, and many of Israel’s psalmists, who make every effort to give God advice. And, according to the **Bible**, YHWH has sometimes listened to such advice, and accommodated His actions by it. Prayer is effective, although certainly not magical!

But Oswalt is right, in spite of his overstatement. No human being advised God the Creator on how to create the world—how and how much water to put in it, how big to make the heavens, how to constitute earth’s soil, what size to make the mountains and hills!—for human beings were not in existence when creation occurred; and even if they had been present, such knowledge is “above their pay-grade”!

Oswalt goes on to deny that Israelites believed in a Divine council in which YHWH would listen to the advice of others in that council. He states that passages such as **1 Kings 22:19-23**; **Job 1:6** [where YHWH responds to the challenge of the satan who attends His council] and **Psalms 82** [God took His stand in the congregation of El (chief God of the Canaanite pantheon); in (the) midst of Gods, He judges / gives judicial decrees] are not to be taken as expressing such a belief—but are only “descriptive or polemical in nature.” (P. 60)

We think that is an attempt to deny what is clearly depicted as being believed in Israel, and overlooks passages that depict genuine spokespersons / prophets as being present for the Divine **סוּד**, “council.” See, for example:

Jeremiah 23:18, Jeremiah asks concerning the false prophets:

For who stood in YHWH’s council,
and saw and heard His word?
Who gave attention (to) His word and listened?

(continued...)

⁶⁰(...continued)

Jeremiah 23:22,

And if they stood in My council,
and (if) they caused My word to be heard to / by My people,
and caused them to turn back from their evil way,
and from (the) evil of their deeds...

Amos 3:7,

Because my Lord YHWH will not do a thing,
unless he uncovered / revealed His counsel to His servants the prophets!

Psalms 25:14,

YHWH's counsel belongs to those fearing / reverencing Him,
and His covenant to make known (to) them!

Psalms 89:8^{Heb} / 7^{Eng}, where YHWH is called:

El [Chief God in the Canaanite pantheon]—awesome in (the) great council of set-apart Ones,
and fearsome more than all those surrounding Him! (Compare **Psalms 82:1.**)

Job 15:8, where Eliphaz asks Job:

Will you listen in Eloah's council,
and did you diminish wisdom?

Job 29:4, Job speaks of a former time:

just as I was in (the) days of my harvest-time / prime,
when Eloah's counsel (was) over my tent.

These passages demonstrate the Israelite belief in a Divine council, and in the Divine counsel being given to select human beings, especially the prophets. We cannot understand why Oswalt wants to deny this. Does it not fit Oswalt's understanding of YHWH's omnipotence?

Knight comments concerning the noun עֲצָה, "counsel," "advice," "design," "purpose" that "Isaiah of Jerusalem long before had spoken of God's עֲצָה when he declared that God's messianic figure would utter the very עֲצָה of God (**Isaiah 9:6;**

(continued...)

40:14 אֶת־מִי נִוְעַץ

וַיְבִינְהוּ

וַיִּלְמְדֵהוּ בְּאֶרֶץ מִשְׁפָּט

וַיִּלְמְדֵהוּ דַעַת

וְדַרְךְ תְּבוּנוֹת יוֹדִיעֵנּוּ:

Whom did He consult,

and he gave Him understanding?

--and he taught Him in a way of justice?⁶¹

--and he taught Him knowledge?⁶²

--and a way / path of understandings he made known to Him?⁶³

⁶⁰(...continued)

11:2). Yet in all **Deutero-Isaiah's** long and intricate argument he assumed that it is Israel herself who is to become God's messianic agent, and that it will incorporate within its own unique relationship to God the plans and purpose of God with power for the redemption of the world." (P. 19)

⁶¹From this point on, **verse 14b** through **verse 16** 1QIs^a has the text written in smaller letters, probably indicating that the passage was missing in the Hebrew manuscript being copied, and then filled in from a different source.

Slotki translates the phrase **אֶרֶץ מִשְׁפָּט**, "way / path of justice," by "path of right," and comments that this means "the order of nature." (P. 188) We doubt that this is correct.

Knight comments that "It is ludicrous to suppose, [**Deutero-Isaiah**] declares, that any human mind could ever fully understand either this mysterious universe, or the depths and fullness of God's *mishpot*, His total revealed way of life for man." (P. 19)

This is an unusual understanding and translation of **מִשְׁפָּט**, "justice." We do not think that the "way of justice" is YHWH's "total revealed way of life for man." What about the "way of wisdom," and the "way of love"?

⁶²This fourth line of **verse 14** is omitted by **Rahlfs**.

⁶³Oswalt states that "Implicit in the discussion of counselors in **verses 13-14** is the plan of God for the redemption of His people. From where did God get this idea?

(continued...)

⁶³(...continued)

Some adviser? Is it the result of a heavenly committee meeting? Or does it come independently from the heart and mind of the One on Whom all things depend? If its origin is the former, then its outcome is indeed dubious. But if it is the latter, nothing in all the earth can prevent its realization. Thus Isaiah cleverly prepares his readers for his later comments on redemption.” (P. 60)

Oswalt says “the plan of God for the redemption of His people” is implicit in **verses 13-14**, but the fact is, these verses do not mention anything concerning God’s plan for redemption. This is simply being read into the text by Oswalt.

We think it would be much more accurate to say that these verses are concerned with the Divine wisdom, and its source. Did it come to YHWH from someone else, from some other God or heavenly being? Notice the words “understanding,” and “knowledge,” and “the path of understanding,” and “counsel.” These are words commonly found in the “wisdom literature” of the **Hebrew Bible**. Isaiah is asking, Where did YHWH get His understanding and knowledge, and the ability to mark out a path of understanding and counsel for others? Was there some “higher source” for YHWH’s wisdom?

We think it is misleading to introduce theological ideas into a text where they are not genuinely found. What do you think?

⁶⁴Both **verses 15** and **16** are written in a smaller script than normal in 1QIs^a. Perhaps the verses were missing in the manuscript being copied, and were taken from another manuscript.

Slotki says that **verses 15-17** describe “the comparative nothingness of the material world in the presence of the Creator and His rule over its destinies.” (P. 188)

Oswalt comments on these verses that “The prophet now moves from the realm of the cosmos to the realm of history, and from the mode of rhetorical question to that of flat assertion. None of the nations can stand on a par with the independent First Cause of all things or prevent the accomplishment of His will...However powerful the nations are, they are no match for God.” (P. 60)

But is this the case? We think not. These verses take up YHWH’s relationship to nations, but some of the same content of **verses 13-14** continues, as the text depicts YHWH taking up the coastlands like fine dust. Nothing is said here about “history,” nor is anything said about “the independent First Cause of all things,” nor anything about “the accomplishment of His will.” And we wonder, Where does Oswalt get all of this? Not from the text itself, but from his personal theology.

We do see that nations (without the definite article) are being compared with YHWH, and the comparison is not good for “nations” or “coastlands.” They are like a

(continued...)

וְכִשְׁחַק מֵאֲזֵנִים נֶחְשָׁבוּ

הֵן אֵיִם כְּבֶרֶק יִטּוּל:

Look–nations (are) like a drop from a bucket,

and like dust (on) balances / scales⁶⁵ were considered!⁶⁶

⁶⁴(...continued)

drop from a bucket compared to YHWH. They are like dust on a scale, not able to cause the scale to record their weight—they are, in comparison with YHWH, nothing, and are considered by YHWH as less than nothing, and תְּהוֹ, **tohu**, “confusion / chaos.” What a powerful affirmation of the greatness and supremacy of YHWH God!

Oswalt states that “the prophet insists again and again on the Lord’s absolute sovereignty over all the nations.” (P. 60) But where does this text mention “absolute sovereignty”? It does not. We say, If you’re going to comment on a biblical text, stick to what the text actually says.

What do you think?

Knight comments on **verse 15** that “Language nowhere offers more striking pictures than do these lines of the greatness and power of God. And even though we today live in a vastly more expansive universe than **Deutero-Isaiah** could ever have imagined, his similes resound as validly now as ever.” (P. 20) We agree—do you?

⁶⁵1QIs^a has “clouds” instead of “balances / scales.”

⁶⁶Who considered the nations like this? The text doesn’t make it explicit, but we say “considered by YHWH.”

Oswalt asks, “What are the nations—so impressive in their glory, and earthshaking in their power? [That is, in human eyes, by human accounting.] They are the drop of water falling back into the cistern as the bucket is pulled up, the speck of dust on the pan of the balance scales that does not even cause the scales to flutter. Both are ephemeral and neither is cause for a moment’s notice. [That is, in YHWH’s estimation.]” (P. 61)

As these notes are being written, here in America we have just gone through the closing of the college football season, with its numerous “bowl games.” How powerful the winning schools and teams appear; what heroes are their star quarterbacks and running backs and defensive players when they win! But now the season is over, and we can hardly remember which teams played in which bowl games, let alone remember the names of all but a few of the players. A moment of glory; a name in a record book. And then it all passes into history, and is gone. What is all of this compared to YHWH the Creator of the heavens with its innumerable galaxies? We say with this text in

(continued...)

Look—He lifts up coast-lands⁶⁷ like the fine dust!⁶⁸

40:16⁶⁹ וְלִבְנוֹן אֵין דֵּי בַעַר

⁶⁶(...continued)

Isaiah 40, it is all quickly gone (Oswalt’s ‘ephemeral’), it is nothing in comparison with YHWH our God!

Do you agree? Why? Why not? Whose glory will you sing? Your own?

⁶⁷The noun here is אֵין, translated “isles,” “coasts,” “regions,” “islands” and “coasts and islands.” The author is looking from the standpoint of Israel, thinking of the many different islands in the Mediterranean, and its coastlands—in our day, Lebanon, Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, Italy, Spain, Egypt, North Africa. Put that seemingly enormous area all together can be taken up in YHWH’s hands as a very little thing, nothing more significant than fine dust. And what of the entire earth? No bigger than a baseball!

Oswalt states that “It refers to what lies at the edges of the continents, that is, to the ends of the earth.” (P. 61) But we doubt that eighth or sixth century authors had knowledge of “continents,” and we would reword his last phrase to say “to the ends of the known earth in the author’s time,” a much smaller world than is known today in the 21st century.

This noun, אֵין occurs some 34 times in the **Hebrew Bible**, and over half of those occurrences are in the **Book of Isaiah**. See:

Genesis 10:5; Isaiah 11:11; 13:22; 24:15; 34:14; 40:15; 41:1, 5; 42:4, 10, 12; 42:15; 49:1; 51:5; 59:18; 60:9; 66:19; Jeremiah 2:10; 31:10; 50:39; Ezekiel 26:15, 18 (twice); 27:3, 6, 7, 15, 35; 39:6; Zephaniah 2:11; Psalms 72:10; 97:1; Esther 10:1 and Daniel 11:18.

⁶⁸For this last line of **verse 15 Rahlfs** has “and like *sielos* are considered.” We do not know what this Greek word means. Can it mean “fat hog”? We doubt it. The Greek verb is plural, whereas the verb of our Hebrew text is singular.

⁶⁹Slotki comments on **verse 16** that “Humanity cannot adequately pay homage to the Ruler of the world. All the forests of Lebanon, with their abundance of wood and beasts, will not provide a sacrifice commensurate [proportionate] with His greatness.” (P. 188)

Oswalt expands greatly on this. He states that “Isaiah now takes up a specific figure to illustrate his point...The figure of speech here is a synecdoche, in which one part stands for the whole. Thus the smallness of Lebanon stands for the smallness of the whole world compared to God.” (P. 61) Perhaps...but we ask, how does Oswalt

(continued...)

וְחַיְתוֹ אֵין דִּי עוֹלָה:

And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn,
and its wild-life is not sufficient for an offering-up!⁷⁰

⁶⁹(...continued)

know that this a synecdoche, that “Lebanon,” only a small part of the earth, is used to mean the whole earth? The text says nothing like this, and we think Oswalt is reading all of this into the text.

Oswalt continues: “God is so great that even the vast cedar forests of Lebanon could not provide enough wood for the kinds of sacrifices He deserves. Nor could the abundant animals of those forests provide enough offerings...There is no way in which the earth can provide the kind of worship He truly deserves. If He is to be appeased for the sins of the earth, He Himself will have to provide the means (**53:10**).” (*Ibid.*)

We think this second comment is much better than the first. But according to Second Isaiah, YHWH does not need to be appeased, at least for the sins of Israel. He has already freely and fully forgiven His people in Babylonian captivity—read **Isaiah 40:1-2** again!

Oswalt is right about the vast cedar forests of Lebanon. But then he mistakenly states that there is no worship that can be effective in appeasing earthly sins. This is to deny what **verse 2** has stated, that Israel’s sins have been forgiven (without any mention of sacrifice), that YHWH has been repaid double for all her sins. Oswalt is bound and determined to make the entire **Book of Isaiah** centered in the “suffering servant” in **52:13-53:12** which he thinks means exclusively the messiah, Jesus Christ. And in doing so, Oswalt has to deny what the **Book of Leviticus** teaches about the forgiveness of human sin through animal sacrifices, and especially what it states concerning Israel’s once yearly “Day of Covering / Atonement.”

Oswalt, along with the author of the **New Testament Book of Hebrews (10:4)** may claim that forgiveness through animal sacrifice is impossible; but the **Hebrew Bible** claims that it is possible, through sacrifices much smaller than the forests and animals of Lebanon, based on YHWH’s promise and grace.

We can say that all the water in all earth’s oceans is not adequate to wash away human sins; but that does not mean that Christian baptism is worthless, or that sincere repentance and the waters of baptism cannot impart forgiveness. Compare **Acts 2:38**, where Peter promises forgiveness on the basis of repentance and baptism.

What do you think? How can you determine whether or not a statement is meant as “synecdoche”?

⁷⁰We say, No—all the cedars of the mountains of Lebanon, stretching some 110 miles along the Mediterranean coast, and all the animals in their vast forests are not

(continued...)

40:17 כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם כַּאֲיֵן נִגְדוּ

מֵאַפְס וְתֵהוּ נִחְשְׁבוּ־לּוֹ:

All the nations (are) like nothing before Him!⁷¹

They were considered (by Him) less than a ceasing⁷² and formlessness!⁷³

⁷⁰(...continued)

enough, by themselves, to make an adequate worship offering to YHWH. But if YHWH promises to forgive through the sacrifice of one animal, with a tiny altar fire in the sanctuary, accompanied by genuine penitence and humility, by YHWH's grace such worship will be adequate. What do you say?

⁷¹North comments that "It is almost as though all the nations, in Yahweh's presence, *are not there!* The Prophet was speaking of Egypt, Babylon, Greece, and the rest. He would doubtless have said the same thing of the 'great powers' of today:

Empty nothings, וְתֵהוּ אַפְס, 'non-existence and chaos'...

"The meaning is not that God is contemptuous of the nations but that *vis-a-vis* [in relation to, with regard to] Him, their pretensions and their towers of Babel are totally insignificant. There are thousands of millions of stars in the galaxy of which the sun is a member. If the diameter of the galaxy were reduced to the dimensions of the continent of Europe, the sun would be a tiny speck and the earth invisible. And no one knows how many millions of galaxies there are, at an average distance of two million light-years from one another." (P. 85)

⁷²Where our Hebrew text reads מֵאַפְס, 1QIs^a reads כַּאֲפֵס, "like a ceasing," as do the Syrohexaplar, the Syriac translation found in Origen's Hexapla, the term for an edition of the **Hebrew Bible** in six versions. It is an immense and complex word-for-word comparison of Greek translations with the original **Hebrew Scriptures**. "The term especially and generally applies to the edition of the **Hebrew Bible** compiled by the theologian and scholar Origen of Alexandria, sometime before the year 240 C.E., which placed side by side:

1. a column with the Hebrew text of the **Hebrew Bible**;
2. a column with the Hebrew text transliterated into Greek characters;
3. A Greek translation of the **Hebrew Bible** by Aquila of Sinope;
4. A Greek translation of the **Hebrew Bible** by Symmachus the Ebionite;
5. A recension [revised edition] of the **Septuagint**, the earliest Greek translation of the **Hebrew Bible**, with marks indicating where the Greek text has no corresponding Hebrew basis;
6. A Greek translation of the **Hebrew Bible** by Theodotian.

"The original work, which is said to have had about 6000 pages in 15 volumes

(continued...)

⁷²(...continued)

and which probably only ever existed in a single complete copy, seems to have been stored in the library of the bishops of Caesarea for some centuries, but it was destroyed during the Muslim invasion of the year 638 at the latest.” (Adapted from **Wikipedia**, 3/17/2016)

Translations vary for the phrase **מֵאֵיִן**, literally “from ceasing,” from “as nothingness,” to “less than nothing,” to “worthless,” to “as nothing.”

⁷³Oswalt comments on **verse 17** that “Figures of speech [the synecdoche, a figure of speech in which the part represents the whole which he reads into **verse 16**] give way to plain statements [we do not think **verse 17** is any plainer than **verse 16**; indeed, **verse 16** may be plainer than **verse 17**, with its statement concerning the nothingness of earthly nations]. With three powerfully negative words (**אֵיִן**, **ayin**, ‘that which is not’; **אֵפֶס**, **jephes**, ‘that which does not exist’; and **תְּהוֹ**, **thohu**, ‘chaos, emptiness’), Isaiah asserts that beside God the earthly nations do not exist. This remarkable statement is of course hyperbolic [overstatement / exaggeration]...

“But what does it mean? It means God is another order of being than the human nations. He is not merely greater than they, as the Gods were considered to be. Rather, the nations are not on the same plane of existence as He is. This radical discontinuity between the human and Divine is the central concept that distinguishes **Old Testament** religion and its daughters—Judaism and Christianity—from all others. It is at the heart of the Western world-view, and if surrendered, will plunge us back into the darkest of dark ages.” (Pp. 61-62)

What are we to make of this comment by Oswalt? Where does the **Hebrew Bible** say anything about “orders of being”—reminiscent of the “great chain of being” of Plato and Aristotle, and Neoplatonism in the Middle Ages? Where does it say anything about the “radical discontinuity between the human and Divine”?

What does the **Book of Genesis** mean when it affirms that humanity is made “in the image and likeness” of YHWH God? Is that “discontinuity”? We think not. Of course, the **Hebrew Bible** affirms that YHWH God is not subject to human limitations of time and space; but it constantly affirms that human beings are created by God in His image, and that they are called to be “God’s children,” His “inheritance,” “His people,” who should imitate His character. The **New Testament** affirms that Jesus Christ truly became human.

The present passage affirms in an unmistakable way the supremacy of YHWH to human beings. But it says nothing about “radical discontinuity between the human and Divine.” That is Oswalt’s Neo-platonic philosophical view of the great chain of being which he is reading into the text—not truly finding it there.

(continued...)

⁷³(...continued)

Will failure to accept that concept plunge us back into the “darkest of the dark ages”? We doubt that. But we fear that this kind of abuse of biblical teaching—reading into the ancient text centuries later philosophical / theological ideas—plays a role in why many in the West are turning away from respect for the **Bible**. What do you think?

Oswalt, perhaps realizing the extremity of his statement, goes on to admit that “Many statements both in [**Isaiah**] and elsewhere in the **Old Testament** make clear that God does value the nations.” See:

Isaiah 2:2-4 (all the nations will come to the exalted Zion and learn YHWH’s ways);

Isaiah 11:10 (the peoples and nations will share in the “Root of Jesse’s resting-place”);

Isaiah 19:23-25 (all three—Egypt, Assyria and Israel—will be a blessing in the earth);

Isaiah 25:6-8 (YHWH will make a great feast for all peoples and nations, swallowing up death forever, wiping away all tears);

Psalms 8 (YHWH has given humanity—all human beings—dominion over His earthly creation).

“It is simply that by comparison with the Lord (the sense of *in His presence*), Assyria and its Gods, Babylonia and its Gods, Persia and its Gods [we add, Israel and its temple ritual] fade into nothingness.” (P. 62)

We also add that study of **Amos 9:7** along with these positive statements concerning the nations in **Isaiah**, will cause the biblical student to take a quite different view from that expressed by Oswalt.

9:7 Are you not like (the) children of (the) Cushites / Ethiopians to Me, children of Israel?

(It is) a saying of YHWH!

Did I bring up Israel from Egypt-land?

And (also I brought up the) Philistines from Caphtor / Crete, and Aram / Syria from Qir!

Yes, Israel is a chosen nation, in whose history YHWH has acted powerfully in delivering them from Egypt-land (the “exodus”), according to the biblical story. But those blackest of the black people—the Nubians / Somalis / Ethiopians who live to the south of Egypt-land are like Israel to Me—says YHWH!

YHWH is depicted by Amos as asking, Have I been active in Israel’s history; of course. But that is not the only place I have been similarly active. Your most hated

(continued...)

40:18 וְאֵל-מִי תִדְמֶינּוּ אֵל

וּמִה-דְּמוּת תַּעֲרֹכוּ לּוֹ:

And to whom will you (plural) liken El / Supreme God?⁷⁴

⁷³(...continued)

neighbors / enemies—the Philistines, and the Syrians—I have also been similarly active in their histories, delivering them, giving them their present living situations!

This saying of YHWH teaches that YHWH is the God of all the earth, the God of all the nations and peoples of the earth, Whose saving / delivering power has been and is active in those nations and peoples, just as it has been in Israel. They have their stories to tell, just as does Israel.

What do you think? Compared to YHWH's greatness, all the nations, including Israel, "fade into nothingness"! Yes, including Israel (and the United States of America)! But YHWH cares for all people, just as He cares for Israel; He is active in the histories of other nations, specifically in Philistia and Syria, just as He is in the history of Israel. It is just this understanding of YHWH's love and care for all peoples and nations that motivated the ministry of Jesus Christ, and led to His "great commission" to His followers to "go into all the world," not to tell them that God has not been active in their history, but to affirm that the God Who created them and has guided their history is the God revealed in Jesus Christ!

Can you make this a part of your theology?

Knight asks, "Is any sacrifice of any significance at all, if the humans who seek to offer it are themselves *as nothing before Him*?...Our author **Deutero-Isaiah** employs this word אֵל...on seven occasions in his sixteen chapters [see **40:17, 23; 41:29; 44:9; 45:18, 19; 45:19; 49:4**]. What he is obviously concerned to do by this frequent use of the word is to declare the great reality, namely, that it is God Who is all in all, and that all else must therefore be less than nothing. See our end-note 10 for all occurrences of this word in the **Hebrew Bible**.

Alexander sums up **verse 17** by stating "the verse contains the strongest possible expression of insignificance and even non-existence, as predicable even of whole nations, in comparison with God, and in His presence." (P. 109)

⁷⁴The word for God here is אֵל, el, "God," the name used by the Canaanites for the Supreme God of the Canaanite pantheon, but also used for YHWH some 230 times, especially in the **Books of Job** (55 times) and **Psalms** (74 times).

Alexander states that "the use of the Divine name אֵל (expressive of omnipo-

(continued...)

And what likeness^{75, 7} will you arrange / set in order for Him?⁷⁶

⁷⁴(...continued)

tence) is here emphatic and significant, as a preparation for the subsequent exposure of the impotence of idols.” (P. 109)

⁷⁵This noun, דְּמִוּת, “likeness,” is found some 25 times in the **Hebrew Bible**. It is one of the words used for YHWH God’s making humanity in His likeness, and it is also used for the birth of Adam’s son Seth in Adam’s likeness (**Genesis 1:26; 5:3**). That is, YHWH God makes humanity in His likeness, and human beings bear children in their likeness, like them bearing the Divine image and likeness.

But the question here is, What likeness can humanity make for God? For all the occurrences of this noun דְּמִוּת, **demuth**, “likeness” in the **Hebrew Bible**, see our end-note 7, and especially see the passages in **Ezekiel**, in which Ezekiel struggles to give a description of YHWH’s glorious radiance, having to resort to multiple usages of “likeness,” and “like” and “as”—and resulting in statements that are not very helpful, but rather very confusing!

⁷⁶Oswalt states that **verse 18** “introduces the conclusion to the foregoing arguments [and we ask, what arguments? We see questions and affirmations, not arguments.] If it is true that God is absolutely alone in His creation and maintenance of the world [but in **Genesis** the plural is used, ‘Let us make humanity,’ hardly sounding ‘alone,’ and the creatures are assigned God-like duties in the maintenance of the world, with the heavenly bodies assigned the task of ruling over the day and the night, and human beings assigned the task of giving birth (on-going creation) and taking dominion over the earth—how can this be understood as God’s being ‘absolutely alone’ in His creation? We say, It cannot—for God makes co-creators out of His creatures!], and if it is true that the nations of humanity simply disappear in comparison to Him [but as Oswalt himself states, they do not ‘simply disappear’; God still recognizes them and has a blessed future for them!], how can one represent Him? What thing from creation will one use for that purpose?” (P. 62)

How will you answer Oswalt? We say that the “thing from creation” to use is a human being, since humans were made in the image and likeness of God. Of course, that image and likeness will only be remotely approximate, and will never clear up all that is mysterious and hidden about God. See the descriptive passages in the **Book of Ezekiel** in our end-note 7, especially **Ezekiel 1:26**, where Ezekiel sees the Divine chariot in a vision:

1:26 and from above the expanse which (was) over their head,
like an appearance of a sapphire stone,
a likeness of a throne;
and over the throne’s likeness
a likeness like an appearance of a human
upon it, from above.

(continued...)

⁷⁶(...continued)

(Translations vary for this text which is unique in biblical literature for its attempt to depict what God looks like:

King James, “And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.

Tanakh, “Above the expanse over their heads was the semblance of a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and on top, upon this semblance of a throne, there was the semblance of a human form.”

New Revised Standard, “And above the dome over their heads there was something like a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a throne was something that seemed like a human form.”

New International, “Above the expanse over their heads was what looked like a throne of sapphire, and high above on the throne was a figure like that of a man.”

New Jerusalem, “Beyond the solid surface above their heads, there was what seemed like a sapphire, in the form of a throne. High above on the form of a throne was a form with the appearance of a human being.”

Rahfs, “like a vision / appearance of a sapphire stone, likeness of a throne over it, and upon the likeness of the throne a likeness, like a sight / appearance (synonym) of a person above.” (Note how guarded the language is, with so many “likes,” but finally comes down to “a likeness like an appearance of a human.”)

What do you think? Can you do better than Ezekiel? And what do you understand by the Christian belief that in seeing Jesus, we see God? Exactly? Or as “a likeness like an appearance”? The author of the **Book of Hebrews (1:3)** states that Jesus Christ:

being (the) radiance / reflection of the glorious radiance [of God],
and exact reproduction / representation of His [God’s] substance...

Do you agree with the author of **Hebrews**, with his difficult Greek philosophical terminology applied to Jesus Christ? Are we to believe that Jesus Christ is the “exact reproduction of God’s substance”? Does God have flesh and blood like Jesus? Could God be put to death (like some modern theologians have claimed they have done, including Gabriel Vahanian, Paul Van Buren, William Hamilton, John A.T. Robinson, Thomas J.J. Altizer and John D. Caputo)? We believe that Jesus Christ is the “Word of God,” and that following Him, we will come to know God. But “the exact reproduction of God’s substance”? Surely, we think, this is overstatement by a zealous convert to Christianity (the author of the Book of Hebrews). What do you think?

Oswalt states that “If God’s transcendence [going beyond the limits of the universe or material existence] is the most fundamental truth of **Old Testament** theology

(continued...)

⁷⁶(...continued)

[but is it? YHWH is depicted in the **Hebrew Bible** as both beyond the limits of the universe(s) and material existence, but as also immanent in the universe(s), and as appearing to His human creatures within their material existence, working miracles on their behalf, hearing their prayers, destroying evil, coming to them in their time of need, etc., sometimes like a ravenous wild animal, coming to take their lives] its immediate corollary is the next most fundamental: one cannot [no-one should not] make an image of God. Any likeness (דְמוּת, **demuth**) of Him that we contingent creatures attempt will of necessity be wrong. Furthermore, it plays directly into the hands of our passionate desire to make God controllable by making Him part of our cosmos. Thus the **Old Testament** throughout [but this is overstatement, as Oswalt himself admits when he later says 'from Sinai onward [idolatry] was not acceptable behavior (footnote 58, p. 63, implying that before Sinai it was acceptable) wages a never-ending battle against making images of God." (Pp. 62-63)

We basically agree with this comment, but also observe that Oswalt and others, like Job's three friends, attempt to make God controllable by their dogmatic theologies which state what God can and cannot do, will and will not do--the three friends of Job with their theory of retribution which they hold God cannot violate, and Oswalt with his theory of atonement, which denies the possibility of God's forgiving through animal sacrifice, or without any sacrifice at all--only through the vicarious sacrifice of the suffering servant Jesus Christ.

The conclusion we draw from this is that we human beings must not try to control God, whether by making metal or wooden images of Him, or by designing theologies which seek to "put God in a box" of possibilities for action or inaction. The true and living God is free--He cannot be contained in a tiny hand-made idol; neither can He be contained in a theology-book like Calvin's **Institutes of the Christian Religion** or Aquinas' **Summa Theologica**, that state dogmatically what God can or cannot do. YHWH the Creator has made us, His human creatures, free; and He himself is gloriously free, not to be limited to or contained within our human constructs or imaginations! We need to bow in awe before the Creator, acknowledging our ignorance and finitude, not thinking we can contain or control Him! What do you think?

Knight comments that in this verse, "**Deutero-Isaiah** shows how puerile [childish] are the efforts of men--and he obviously exemplifies the Babylonians among whom the exiles were perforce living--to conceive of Divinity in any adequate manner." (P. 21)

And we ask Knight, Are you, then, able to conceive of Divinity in an adequate manner? Does your (and my) conception of God as revealed in Jesus adequate? Does it answer all the questions we or anyone else can ask? Or, must we not agree with the apostle Paul in **Romans 11:33-36** that despite our best efforts at understanding God and His ways, He remains mysteriously greater than what we have said or thought:

(continued...)

⁷⁶(...continued)

- 33 O depth of wealth and wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable are His judgments,
and inscrutable His ways!
- 34 For who knew (the) Lord's mind?
Or who became His counselor?
- 35 Or who gave to Him in advance,
and it will be repaid to him / by Him?
Because out of Him, and through Him, and to Him (are) the universe!
To Him (be) the glory into the ages. Amen!

⁷⁷North comments that **verses 19-20** “are notoriously difficult. As they stand they appear to be an answer to the questions in **verse 18**.” (P. 82)

Oswalt comments on **verses 19-20** that ‘Of all the likenesses one might choose to image God, surely the silliest, to Isaiah, is the *idol* [פֶּסֶל, **pesel**]. Here and in three other places (**41:6-7; 44:9-20; 46:5-7**) the prophet marshals his deepest sarcasm to depict how foolish it is to try to make a God out of earthly material...The sequence of verb tenses:

completed action, qal perfect נִסַּךְ, **nasak**, ‘he poured out’;

incompleted action, qal imperfect יִרְקַעֵנּוּ, **yeraqq(ennu**, “he will beat it out”;

continuous action, qal active participle, צוֹרֵף, **tsoreph**, ‘refining / testing’)

gives the reader a sense of being a witness to the ongoing process of bringing a God into being from the components of creation. The casting has been made, and now we watch as it is plated with gold and decorated, or perhaps stabilized with silver chains. This is the unconditional, unique Creator of the universe? Hardly!” (Pp. 63-64)

Knight states that “Man has first to make his Gods, or create his concepts, before he can bow down to them and worship them...If man essays to conceive of God in any form at all, his thoughts must necessarily eventuate as blasphemy...When man does try to create a likeness of the Divine, all that he can produce is the fatuous gold-lacquered image which the Babylonians imagined to be a God, and yet which they had to chain to a wall to keep upright.” (P. 21)

What do you think of the author of this passage’s poking fun at the idols that are worshiped by other religions? I have a Hindu ophthalmologist who did my cataract surgery, and has tended to my eyes for years. I asked him about this. He said, Well, it’s all a misunderstanding. We Hindus, it is true, use many symbols—that’s what the idols are—symbols, pointing to the reality of the great God Who is present in nature, and

(continued...)

וְצַרְף בְּזָהָב יִרְקַעֵנוּ

וְרִתְקוֹת כֶּסֶף צוֹרְף:

The idol—an engraver poured (it) out,

and a refiner with the gold will hammer it out,⁷⁸

⁷⁷(...continued)

all around us. These symbols serve to constantly remind us of this reality. We don't worship them as if they were really God! We know that God is much greater than that!

An article on the Internet answering the question “Do Hindus believe in God?” states, “Hindus believe that there is one true God, the supreme Spirit, called Brahman. Brahman has many forms, pervades the whole universe, and is symbolized by the sacred syllable Om (or Aum). Most Hindus believe that Brahman is present in every person as the eternal spirit or soul, called the atman.”

What do you think? I have fellow ministers, and members of my own family, who have many crosses of differing shapes throughout their offices and homes. In our churches, we have many symbols, especially crosses, and beautiful stained glass windows; and we sing songs such as “The Old Rugged Cross,” or “There is Power in the Blood,” which an outsider, upon seeing and hearing, might think we worship wooden or metal crosses, or the blood of Jesus. Is that so different from what my friend, the Hindu thinks? Go into a Roman Catholic cathedral, such as Saint Peter's in Rome, and observe the countless statues and beautiful works of art, all of them pointing to the Divine. Is the Sistine Chapel all that different from a Hindu temple?

What I suggest is, that instead of poking fun at those who have idols or images in their worship, we should get into conversation with them, asking what it is those idols point to, what they are symbolic of, explaining our conviction that the God Who created all of us, and Who is active in all of our lives and histories, is best seen in Jesus Christ—in His ministry and love and selfless giving for all of us.

What do you think? Do you think it is good to laugh at, or make fun of others' religion, as the prophet apparently does here in **Isaiah 40**? We think his criticism of hand-made Gods is true, however, and should be applied to all religious objects used in worship, including Jewish and Christian objects.

⁷⁸Elliger, the editor of **Isaiah** in **Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia**, holds that **Isaiah 41:6-7** should be moved from its present location and inserted here. We agree that it fits here, and seems out of place in **chapter 41**. But we do not agree that it is the role of an editor or commentator to re-write the text he is commenting on. What do you think?

and (with) chains of silver of an engraver.⁷⁹

40:20⁸⁰ תְּמַסְכֵּן תְּרוּמָה עֵץ לֹא־יִרְקַב יִבְחַר
חֲרַשׁ חֲכָם יִבְקֹשׁ־לוֹ לְהַכִּין פֶּסֶל
לֹא יִמוּט:

Shall one impoverished⁸¹ choose an offering of wood not being rotten?⁸²

⁷⁹Where our Hebrew text has וַיִּתְקַן כְּסָף צֹרֶף, “and chains of silver refining,” **Rahlfs** has “a likeness he prepared it.”

⁸⁰Alexander sums up **verse 20** by stating that “while the rich waste their gold and silver upon idols, the poor are equally extravagant in wood.” (P. 110)

He then adds, that “To say that the poor man uses wood instead of gold and silver, is coherent and appropriate, but far less significant and striking than to say, that the man who has already reduced himself to want by lavish gifts to his idol, still continues his devotions, and as he no longer can afford an image of the precious metals is resolved at least to have a durable wooden one.” (P. 111)

⁸¹The first word of **verse 20** is omitted by the Greek and Syriac translations.

Oswalt states that the meaning of the first two words in **verse 20**, תְּמַסְכֵּן תְּרוּמָה is uncertain, and that is certainly the case, as the varying translations make obvious (see the next footnote).

1QIs^a has the two words, but both of them written in smaller Hebrew letters, indicating some problem with them, probably that they were not in the Hebrew manuscript being copied, and then were added in by a later hand. **Rahlfs'** Greek text does not have anything representing the two words.

It seems fairly clear that the second word תְּרוּמָה, **terumah**, means “contribution,” or “offering,” literally “something lifted off, separated.” But it is missing in the Syriac, Aramaic and Latin Vulgate translations.

There is no clarity with regards to the first word. According to its Masoretic pointing, the word begins with a ה-interrogative, indicating that the sentence to follow is a question, “Shall a...?” But in an unpointed Hebrew text, the ה could just as easily be read as the definite article “The...”

(continued...)

⁸¹(...continued)

The word that the ה-interrogative / definite article is attached to, מִסְכֵּן, is found nowhere else in the **Hebrew Bible**. It is apparently a pual participle from the root סָכַן, which according to **Brown-Driver-Briggs** has three different meanings:

1. to be of use or service, benefit;
2. incur danger;
3. be poor (but this is only if that is its meaning here in **Isaiah 40:20**).

A noun with similar spelling is the feminine plural מִסְכָּנוֹת, which apparently means “storage-places.” Another noun with similar spelling is מִסְכֵּן, which is found only in **Ecclesiastes** as an adjective, meaning “poor” (**4:13; 9:15, 15, 16**). However, in an unpointed text it is identical to the word here in **Isaiah 40:20**, מִסְכֵּן, and that is probably the reason that the meaning “impoverished person” has been given to it here. Another noun with similar spelling is מִסְכֵּנִת, **miskenuth**, which occurs in **Deuteronomy 8:9** with the meaning “poverty / scarcity,” which, along with the preceding noun, gives additional reason for the meaning “impoverished person.” See Oswalt’s footnote 62 on his p. 64 for discussion of other possibilities.

Problems with words like this demonstrate the inadequacy of claims of a verbally inspired, infallible text of the **Bible**, which even the staunchest defenders of such claims have no means of resolving. For us, it only confirms our conviction that the **Bible** has come to us through human authors, who, although inspired, and their writings of great value, still were human, and subject to human fallibilities and mistakes, just as was the process of transmission of their writings—but which nonetheless bring to us their intriguing, inviting message concerning God. What do you think?

⁸²The opening words of **verse 20** are given varying translations:

King James, “He that *is* so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree *that* will not rot”;

Tanakh, “As a gift, he chooses the mulberry -- A wood that does not rot”;

New Revised Standard, “As a gift one chooses mulberry wood-- wood that will not rot--”;

New International, “A man too poor to present such an offering selects wood that will not rot.”

New Jerusalem, “Someone too poor to afford a sacrifice chooses a piece of wood that will not rot;”

Rahlfs, “For. wood not rotted he chooses a builder / carpenter.”

Oswalt, “He selects valuable sissou, a wood that will not rot.”

Slotki, “A holm-oak is set apart...”

(continued...)

A wise engraver he will seek for himself to make ready an idol,
(that) will not be shaken.⁸³

⁸²(...continued)

Oswalt states concerning his translation that “The meaning of the first two words of **verse 20** is uncertain, largely because of questions concerning the first, which occurs only here in the **Bible**. If [my (Oswalt’s) translation] is correct, **verses 19-20** describe a single process, casting and decorating the idol, and fixing it to a durable base. The process as described in **verse 20** is threefold: choosing the wood, finding a draftsman capable of working it, and fastening the idol to its base in a permanent way. The concern here is understandable: it would be a very bad omen for an idol to topple over... Here, as in **verse 19**, the irony is heavy. Shall the God Who made the world alone without an adviser be represented by a thing that skilled technicians have to make from the stuff of creation that then cannot even be trusted to stand up by itself?” (P. 64)

See **1 Samuel 5:2-5**, where it is depicted how the Philistines have captured the ark of the covenant and taken it to Ashdod:

- 2 And the Philistines took the God’s ark / chest,
and they brought it (to the) house / sanctuary of Dagon;
and they placed it next to Dagon.
- 3 And the Ashdodites arose early on the next day,
and look–Dagon, falling before it to the ground,
before YHWH’s ark / chest!
And they took Dagon,
and they returned it to its place.
- 4 And they arose early in the morning on the next day,
and look–Dagon, falling before it to the ground,
before YHWH’s ark / chest,
and Dagon’s head and two palms of his hands–
cut off, to / upon the threshold!
Only Dagon was left remaining by / upon it.
- 5 Therefore (the) priests of Dagon and all those coming (into) Dagon’s house /
sanctuary will not walk upon (the) threshold of Dagon in Ashdod,
until this day.

Slotki admits that “The clause *a holm-oak is set apart* is of uncertain meaning, and many modern commentators give preference to the older rendering: ‘he that is too impoverished for such an oblation,’ i.e. he cannot afford a wooden idol overlaid with gold and adorned with silver chains.” (P. 189)

⁸³Knight comments on **verse 20** that “With biting sarcasm **Deutero-Isaiah** suggests that if a man is too poor to rise to a gold-plated image, then he can be happy making do with a piece of wood, provided only that it does not move, fall over.” (P. 21)
See:

(continued...)

⁸³(...continued)

Isaiah 44:12-14,

- 12 He carved (with) an iron instrument,
and worked in / over the (red-hot) coal(s);
and with the hammers he formed it,
and he made it with an arm of his strength.
Also, he got hungry, and had no strength;
he did not drink water, and he grew weary.
- 13 He carved trees;
he stretched out a line;
he traces out (its figure) with a stylus / marking tool.
He makes it with the planes / scraping tools,
and with a compass he traces it out.
And he made it like a man's figure,
like a human's beauty,
to inhabit a house / temple.
- 14 (He planted) cedars to cut down for himself;
and he took cypress and oak,
and it grew strong for him among trees of (the) forest.
He planted a fir,
and rain causes growth.

Jeremiah 10:3-4,

- 3 Because statutes of the peoples—they (are) a vapor / breath;
because a tree from a forest, he cut it down;
work of a craftsman's hands with the axe.
- 4 With silver and with gold he beautifies it;
with nails and with hammers they strongly fasten it,
and it will not move.

What do you think? Do you think biting sarcasm is a fitting tool for the bearer of good news to use? You can say these same things concerning the construction of crosses and statues built to adorn Christian churches.

⁸⁴Slotki comments on **verses 21-26** that “the theme of **verses 12-20** is taken up again, and illustrations from Nature and history re-emphasize the omnipotence and magnificence of the Creator and Ruler of heaven and earth.” (P. 189)

Oswalt comments similarly that “As in **verses 12-20**, the insistence on the incomparability of God is absolute. When Isaiah finishes we have no doubt regarding his theology: The Holy One...is the sole Ruler of heaven and earth. To think of comparing Him to anything in creation is foolishness.” (P. 66)

(continued...)

הֵלֹוא תִשְׁמְעוּ
הֵלֹוא תִגְדּוּ מִרֵאשׁ לָכֶם
הֵלֹוא תִבְנִיתֶם
מוֹסְדוֹת הָאָרֶץ:

Will you (plural) not know?

Will you not hear?⁸⁵

⁸⁴(...continued)

Knight states that in **verse 21**, “Sweeping all this Babylonian nonsense aside, **Deutero-Isaiah** returns to ask questions in the Socratic manner.” (P. 21) That means, disciplined questioning used to pursue thought in many directions, to explore complex ideas, to get to the truth of things, to open up issues and problems, to uncover assumptions, to analyze concepts, to distinguish what we know from what we don't know, to follow out logical implications of thought or to control the discussion. It is questioning that is systematic, disciplined, deep--and that usually focuses on fundamental concepts, principles, theories, issues or problems.

Socrates died in 399 B.C.E. Are we to assume that a Jewish author from the eighth or sixth century, long before the birth of Socrates, was using the kind of questioning search for wisdom / knowledge as Socrates was later to use? We think this is the case, and that it is much better to call the questions raised here “Socratic-like” than to simply label them “rhetorical.”

Knight continues: “**Deutero-Isaiah** is well aware that the Babylonians gazed at the same sky his own fathers had seen over Jerusalem. [In fact, the Babylonians developed the science of astronomy which had lasting impact on the future of astronomy.] Yet the Babylonians had developed no conception of an incomparable, wholly other God as the Author and Sustainer of their lives.” (P. 21)

Oswalt says, “As in **verse 12**, the appeal begins with rhetorical questions, which assume that the hearers have indeed known the answers to the questions...It is not merely a question of being aware of certain concepts regarding the Lord's transcendence, but whether the hearers will give credence to them. There are overtones of **6:9-10** here: it is possible to hear and yet refuse to hear.” (P. 66)

What do you think? Rhetorical questions, or Socratic questions? We say, Socratic.

⁸⁵We sense in these first two lines of questioning, with their imperfect / future verbs, that the author wants his hearers to examine their motivations—i.e., are you

(continued...)

Has it not been declared from (the) first^{86, 8} to you?

Have you not been caused to understand

⁸⁵(...continued)

willing to know, to learn new things? Are you willing to listen to the message, to hear something you have never heard before? What is your attitude towards learning?

Our English translations unite almost unanimously in translating these imperfect / future verbs in the past tense—for example, **King James** has “Have ye not known? have ye not heard?” **New Jerusalem** has “Did you not know, had you not heard?”

Alexander states that “The English Version and some others exchange both the futures for praeters [meaning “past tenses”]...But the most satisfactory, because the safest and most regular construction, is the strict one given in the **Septuagint** (Will you not know? Will you not hear?).” (Pp. 111-12)

⁸⁶The succeeding lines of **verse 21** use the perfect / past tense, and call upon the reader to question whether or not they have understood what they have heard and been taught “from the first,” which we take to mean from the earliest times in their lives, i.e., as their parents and priests have taught them. “Have you understood what you have been taught, or has it gone in one ear and out the other?”

We think that what the question has reference to is the earliest teaching of the Israelite children in their homes and in their religious gatherings—perhaps in their synagogues / gatherings in Babylon—as they heard the biblical stories of God’s creation, of Adam and Eve, of Cain and Abel, and God’s care for them? Have they really gotten anything from that teaching?

Slotki holds that what is to be understood is “that all creation derives its existence from God alone and that glory and worship are due to Him only.” (P. 189)

Knight holds that “from the first” should be translated “from the beginning,” and that this is referring to the beginning of the Jewish nation under the leadership of Moses and his reception of **Torah** from YHWH. “The word [מֵרֵאשִׁית]...is seemingly a technical term in **Deutero-Isaiah’s** vocabulary which he employs to describe the beginning of revelation and God’s first act of redemption in the days of Moses.” (Pp. 21-22)

But see our end-note 8, where it will be seen that this phrase is not at all a “technical term” in **Isaiah 40-55**, and does not always refer to the beginning of revelation and redemption in the days of Moses. Knight is reading all of this into the text, and we think it is highly irresponsible for a biblical theologian to make such unfounded claims.

Alexander takes מֵרֵאשִׁית, as a reference “to the beginning of the human race, or of the world itself, which is...favored by the subsequent appeal to the creation.” (P. 112)

(from the) foundations of the earth?⁸⁷

⁸⁷Oswalt notes that “The Masoretic Text lacks the preposition מִי [‘from’] at [the beginning of this line], but the recognition that prepositions in one colon can govern the corresponding words in the following one adequately explains the phenomenon here.” (P. 64)

Perhaps...but the text can be read without the preposition as asking the question, “Have you not been caused to understand foundations of the earth?”, that is, that the earth has to have had much more solid and realistic foundations than a hand-made idol could ever be responsible for?

And we ask, What does the question mean, “Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?” Does this mean “since the earth’s founding,” i.e., “since creation”? Is it a parallel to the preceding phrase “from the first”?

Tanakh translates by “Have you not discerned How the earth was founded?” And **New Jerusalem** has “Have you not understood how the earth was set on its foundations?”

Delitzsch understood this verse as asking, “Has no understanding of the foundations of the earth dawned on you yet?” We agree. The question can be understood as calling upon those addressed to question, seeking to discover / understand the foundations of the earth.

It is an intriguing question. Does the earth have foundations, as do houses, especially large buildings like the temple complex in Jerusalem, with its massive ashlar going down to bed-rock? Do the heavens? Do the stars? Does the universe? Is Job correct when he states in **Job 26:7**:

(God) stretches out north over formlessness,
hanging earth upon nothing--what? (i.e., with no foundations?)

I remember hearing lectures by Harry Rimmer at Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas, who proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that the **Bible** is the inspired, infallible word of God, because of this statement of Job, which modern physics has proved to be true. But Rimmer didn’t mention these other statements about the earth resting on foundations and pillars. Do you think this kind of language in the **Bible** is supposed to be scientifically correct? What about the following biblical statements?

2 Samuel 22:8,

And the earth reeled to and fro and quaked;
foundations of the heavens quake;
and they reeled to and fro because He was angry!
(Do the heavens have foundations?)

(continued...)

⁸⁷(...continued)

2 Samuel 22:16,

And channels of (the) sea were seen / appeared,
and foundations of (the inhabited) earth were uncovered,
by YHWH's rebuke,
by (the) breath of His anger! Compare the similar **Psalm 18:16**.
(Does the earth rest on foundations at the bottom of the sea, which appear
during violent storms?)

Job 9:6, where Job states that **אֱלֹהִים**, Supreme God is,

The One Who causes earth to shake out of its place,
and its pillars shudder...

Job 26:11, where Job says,

Pillars of heavens shake / rock,
and are astounded by His rebuke.

Psalm 75:3,

Earth and all its inhabitants were being shaken;
I, I regulated / adjusted its pillars. Selah
(If the earth "hangs on nothing," what are these "pillars"?)

What will you say about the earth's (and the heavens') foundations / pillars? Is this to be understood as the language of poetry, which is not to be taken literally? We think that we today are going to have to understand it in this way, but it also reflects an ancient conviction that the earth and heaven rested on solid foundations / pillars.

From a modern viewpoint, what would you say the "foundations" of the earth are? Is it enough to attribute earth's seeming stability to the law of gravity, holding it in its orbit around the sun, while both the sun and all its planets including the earth, hurtle through space as the result of an observable "big bang" 13.7 billion years ago? And we ask, is the law of gravity without a law-Giver? Did the "black hole" and the "big bang" "just happen"? Is the mysterious, invisible "black hole" a modern substitute for YHWH, the mysterious, invisible Creator? Is the "big bang" another way of saying "creation"? Do you think our modern view of the universe is any less amazing and awe-inspiring and puzzling than the ancient view which caused ancient humans to bow in worship?

We think the modern view is much grander, much more amazing, much more a cause for humility and awe before the wonders that surround us and have given us "a stable place of habitation"—much more a cause for worship of God's amazing greatness and might!

(continued...)

⁸⁷(...continued)

Oswalt comments that the phrase “from the foundations of the earth” refers to “the beginnings of the earth and envisions a time when the world was not. What [Isaiah] is saying is that careful thought about the origins of the world must point to a Creator beyond the cosmos itself; if the cosmos had an origination, it could not itself be responsible for that event. Thus Aristotle came to his Unmoved Mover. The current theory of a ‘big bang’ for the origin of the universe still does not address the question of the origin of the stuff of the ‘bang.’ Isaiah boldly asserts that behind it all is a person—the Lord—and that nothing which is part of the creation, whether Gods or humans, can thwart His plans.” (P. 66)

Yes—but does “foundations of the earth” mean “beginnings of the earth”? The biblical writers know the Hebrew word for “beginning,” רֵאשִׁית!

Alexander comments that “By the *foundations* of the earth we are not to understand a literal description of its structure, nor an allusion to the four elements of earth, air, fire and water (Kimchi)... but as a substitution of the concrete for the abstract, the foundations of the earth being put, by a natural and common figure, for its being founded, i.e., its creation.” (P. 112)

Perhaps—but this may be Alexander’s way of explaining away an ancient belief that the earth rested upon solid “foundations.”

What do you think?

⁸⁸Oswalt comments on **verses 22-23** that “The implications of God’s transcendence are spelled out with a series of three participles. They emphasize the person who acts in these ways at all time; it is of his character to do these things.” (P. 66)

The three participles are:

הַיִּשֵׁב, “the One sitting”;

הַנּוֹטֵה, “the One stretching out”;

הַנּוֹתֵן, “the One giving / bringing.”

He states concerning **verse 22** that “This verse deals with the implications in the physical world, stressing God’s otherness...His throne *sits above the circle of the earth* ...As the transcendent One, He sits enthroned above the zenith; He is above the world, not part of it. From that vantage point the people of earth with their often monumental egos are very small indeed: *like grasshoppers.*” (Pp 66-67)

(continued...)

וַיֵּשְׁבֵהָ כַּחֲגָבִים
הַנוֹטָה כְּדֹק שָׁמַיִם
וַיִּמְתְּחֵם כַּאֲהַל לַשַּׁבָּת:

The One Who sits above the earth's circle / vault / horizon--⁸⁹
and its inhabitants (are) like the grasshoppers / locusts;⁹⁰

⁸⁸(...continued)

But Oswalt is importing the words “otherness” and “transcendent.” To say that an astronaut in a space capsule is “above” the world does not mean he or she is “other” or “transcendent.” And indeed, this ancient depiction of YHWH as sitting on a throne just above planet earth, in terms of our modern world-view which envisions billions of star-worlds is far too small a depiction to any longer be relevant! The Creator of the universes is much “higher” and much greater than that! What do you think?

⁸⁹The noun here is חֲוֶה, “vault,” “dome,” “arch.” Translations vary between “circle” and “vault.” Evidently, the ancient writer, looking up into the sky, thought that the visible heavens were something like a huge “circle” or “dome” stretched out over the earth.

Slotki states that “to the ancients, the earth appeared as a circular disc, covered by the sky which had the shape of a vaulted [‘arched roof’] canopy.” (P. 189)

If you teach Sunday School, what do you tell your students this means? Is it giving us astronomical information as to the location of God’s throne in the heavens, just above the dome of the planet earth’s sky / atmosphere? And how close would that be?

And with our modern understanding of the enormity of the physical universes, with untold numbers of galaxies moving further and further away from an initial “big bang,” does it make sense to think about God as being located just above the horizon of the tiny planet earth?

Would you not have to say that while such imagery may have been meaningful 700 to 500 years before Christ, it has now, with our new knowledge of the enormity of God’s creation, become out-dated, and hardly meaningful? We are reminded of YHWH’s speeches to Job in **Job 38-41**, where YHWH showed Job his view of God was too small. Would you say this same criticism should be made of the first two lines of **Isaiah 40:22**?

⁹⁰Will you say that according to this passage, the throne of God cannot be too far away, since from its vantage point people on earth appear to be the size of grasshop-

(continued...)

⁹⁰(...continued)

pers? Can individual human beings be seen by the naked eye from a satellite orbiting earth? And if so, how big do they appear to be? We doubt that they can be seen, without extremely powerful magnification. But what about astronauts standing on the moon? Can they see individuals on earth? Of course not. But what about from the sun, or from another galaxy?

Alexander mentions how various scholars in his day divided over whether this passage proved that the Prophet was acquainted with the true shape of the earth, or instead proved that he had a false idea of the heavens. He mentions another scholar who stated that “God is here described as bearing just the same proportion to mankind that the latter bear to insects.” (P. 113)

Knight comments that “This plan had to do not with grasshoppers (or locusts) but with people, the people of Yahweh. For what is the life of a locust? It is a life of destruction and production of chaos (תְּהוֹמוֹת); it is a life of rending and devouring. That is how unredeemed man behaves.” (P. 22)

This is Knight’s expansion on the biblical text, which itself draws no such conclusions from the mention of grasshoppers / locusts. And we would say to Knight that the life of modern human beings is largely a life of “rending and devouring,” as we eat far too much and destroy our health in the process, as well as poisoning the air and polluting the rivers and the land.

We think the mention is limited to the size of grasshoppers / locusts—they are tiny, insignificant in comparison to the Creator of the universe—and so are we! What do you think?

⁹¹For this imagery, of YHWH “stretching out the heavens,” see our end-note 9 with its additional passages where similar language occurs. In **Psalm 104:2** the phrase is “stretching out heavens like the curtain.” **Rahlf’s** has “as if a skin.”

But here in **Isaiah 40:22**, the phrase פִּירֵיעָה, “like the curtain,” does not occur; instead it is the phrase כִּדֹּק, “(stretches out heavens) like the **doq**” an unusual word which only occurs here in the **Hebrew Bible**.

Oswalt holds that דֹּק means “a very thin, fine thing,” from דָּקַק, ‘to crush finely,’ (p. 65) and compares the similar word in **Isaiah 40:15**, הֲנֵן אַיִם כַּפֶּתֶק יִשׁוּל, “Look—coastlands like the dust He lifts up.”

Oswalt translates by “gossamer,” a fine, filmy substance consisting of cobwebs spun by small spiders, which is seen especially in autumn. We think Oswald’s view is

(continued...)

and spreads them like the tent for the dwelling.⁹²

40:23⁹³ הַנּוֹתֵן רוֹזְנִים לְאֵין

שֶׁפִּטִּי אֶרֶץ כְּתֵהוּ עֲשֵׂה:

⁹¹(...continued)

compelling, and that the translation ought to be something like “a very fine” or “finest of materials.”

⁹²If we are correct in our translation of אֶרֶץ by “the finest of materials,” then the author makes it clear that he is still referring to its usage “like the tent”: וַיִּמְתְּחֵם לְשֶׁבֶת כְּפֵתֵהוּ עֲשֵׂה, “and He spreads them out like the tent for the dwelling.”

For the last two lines of **verse 22**, **Rahlf's** has literally, “the One Who caused to stand like a vaulted room the heaven, and stretched (it out) like a tent for dwelling.”

It is an amazing fact that the way the heavens surround planet earth, depicted by this ancient author as “like the tent,” enable the earth to be a place for habitation of living creatures, protected from harmful radiation by its tent-like atmosphere.

Do you think that the possibilities for life on planet earth, with the myriad of provisions that enable life to exist and sustain itself, are all an accident, that they just “happened”? Isn't such a view incredibly naive? Does it not point to a great Designer / Engineer, Who has intentionally created the earth as a dwelling-place for living beings?

And if you respond, It all happened by natural evolution, we ask, Has not that evolution been aimed at marvelous results, creative goals, not just chance products? Is your “natural evolution” little more than a substitute for a “Creator God”? If you claim life came “from the stars,” is that not little more than a substitute for its coming from a Divine Creator, admitting it has not created itself? Would it not be far more reasonable to believe in a “guided evolution” in which there have been many twists and turns, but still a slow and steady movement aimed at human life on planet earth, along with untold billions and billions of other designs and purposes?

⁹³Slotki comments on **verses 23-24** that “Even the destinies of the greatest are in the hands of God, and their very existence, without His protection, is like stubble in a whirlwind.” (P. 190)

Alexander likewise states that **verse 23** means “Not only nature but man, not only individuals but nations, not only nations but their rulers, are completely subject to the power of God.” (P. 113)

⁹⁴Oswalt notes that מְלָכִים, “rulers,” is “a poetic term connoting gravity and authority; in all its other occurrences it parallels ‘kings.’” (P. 65) We agree. See:

Judges 5:3a,

Listen kings;
give ear / pay attention rulers!

Habakkuk 1:10a,

And he, against kings he mocks;
and rulers—an object of derision to him...

Psalms 2:2,

Kings of earth take their stand,
and rulers took counsel together,
against YHWH,
and against His anointed one / messiah.

Proverbs 8:15,

By Me, kings reign;
and rulers enact statutes of right-relationship;

Proverbs 31:4,

Not for kings, Lemoel; not for kings, to drink wine,
and for rulers—where (is) strong drink?--

⁹⁵What is the meaning of this line? Does it mean that YHWH intentionally sets up / appoints rulers to fail? Oswalt comments that “These weighty people whom someone has appointed to an important task are really appointed to nothingness...Those *leaders* who are expected to establish right order...God makes them and their work as *nothing at all* [i.e., ‘confusion, chaos’].” (P. 67)

And we wonder--When Oswalt says “whom someone has appointed,” does he exclude God as the “Appointer” of earthly rulers? Does Oswalt not believe that God is active in human history, appointing governing authorities? Numerous passages in the **Bible** claim that God plays just such a role in the histories of nations.

(continued...)

earth's judges,¹⁰ He made like the chaos / confusion!^{96, 11}

⁹⁵(...continued)

Does then this first line of **verse 23** mean that YHWH brings rulers to an empty, meaningless end, not enabling them to succeed, that He is against earthly rulers?

We say no. In the **Book of Isaiah**, rulers are depicted as YHWH's servants. Isaiah depicts YHWH as calling Assyria "the rod of My anger" in **10:5**, whom YHWH will use in punishing Northern Israel, but whom He will punish for his proud arrogance (**10:12-19**). In **32:1** both YHWH's ideal king and princes are described as agents of righteousness and justice in society, and, as **Isaiah 30:2** states:

And each one will be like a hiding-place (from the) wind,
and a hiding-place (from the) storm;
like channels of water in parched ground;
like a shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

See especially the depiction of Cyrus, the Persian emperor, as YHWH's "messiah" in **chapter 45:1**; whom YHWH calls His servant in freeing the Israelite exiles from Babylon, accomplishing YHWH's purpose.

We are reminded of the **New Testament** affirmations that all rulers are appointed by God—see **Romans 13:1-7** (for the purpose of being a terror to evil conduct, and giving approval to good conduct) and **1 Peter 2:13-17**, both of which have to do with the Roman government, which was for three centuries all too often a "beastly" government, persecuting and putting Christian believers to death (see the **Book of Revelation**). Nonetheless, both Paul and Peter affirm that Christians should obey and support the governing officials who have authority over them.

In the light of these and many other biblical teachings, it seems best to take this statement as meaning that YHWH brings rulers to nothing when they fail to accomplish the tasks of good, compassionate government for which He appointed them.

Still, the truth is that even the most powerful kings and rulers—presidents, dictators, caesars, governors, etc., serve for a little while, and then soon disappear—in spite of all their grandiose schemes and plans, and in spite of all the good (or evil) they may have accomplished. Human life is fleeting! What do you think this first line of **verse 23** means?

⁹⁶The noun for "judges" is שֹׁפְטִים. The root שָׁפַט occurs some 15 times in the **Book of Isaiah**--each of those occurrences is given in our end-note 10. From a reading of these passages, it is clear that the Divinely intended role of judges is a very important one for society. Judges are intended to be the defenders of orphans and widows; one of the distinguishing marks of the expected messiah is his devotion to being just such a judge, bringing genuine justice to the earth.

(continued...)

40:24 אֶף בִּלְ-נִטְעוּ

אֶף בִּלְ-זָרְעוּ

אֶף בִּלְ-שָׂרֵשׁ בְּאֶרֶץ גִּזְעָם

וְגַם-נִשְׁף בָּהֶם וַיִּבְשּׁוּ

וַיִּסְעֲרָה כְּקֹשׁ הַשָּׂאִים:

Also they were not planted;

also they were not sown;

also (there is) no root in the earth (for) their stem;

and also (synonym) He blew⁹⁷ on them and they withered;

⁹⁶(...continued)

But in actual experience, those appointed to act as judges all too often betray their mission, and serve their own interests, or the interests of a select group, rather than caring for the widow and orphan, and bringing justice to society.

So, when we again ask, what is meant by “He made earth’s judges כִּתְהוּ, like the confusion / chaos”? our answer is that this is only meant of those judges who betray their Divine calling.

This is the only occurrence of this exact phrase כִּתְהוּ in the **Hebrew Bible**, but the noun תְהוּ by itself occurs some twenty times. For these occurrences, see our end-note 11.

We think that in this passage “judges” are another form of “rulers.” And we think that what we have said about the rulers in the preceding footnote applies likewise to earth’s judges.

Slotki comments that “Both Hebrew terms [for princes and judges] embrace kings and governors as well as military and civil leaders.” (P. 190)

⁹⁷Where our Hebrew text has נִשְׁף, “He blew,” the original text of 1QIs^a has עִשָּׁף (we do not find this verb in the Hebrew Lexicon); but a later hand has written the letter ן above the letter ע above the ן in order to correct the reading.

and a tempest / storm-wind like the chaff carries them away!⁹⁸

⁹⁸Alexander states that the essential meaning of the whole **verse [24]** is, that God can extirpate [root out, completely destroy] them [earth's rulers], not only in the end, but in a moment; not only in the height of their prosperity, but long before they have attained it." (Pp. 113-14)

Oswalt comments on **verse 24** that "This verse makes the same point as the previous one, but in graphic terms similar to those of **verses 6-8** ['all flesh is grass']." (P. 67)

But is this verse talking about "all flesh," or just those rulers and judges who fail to carry out YHWH's purpose for appointing them? We think the latter. It is true of course, that "all flesh" is grass, and soon withers and disappears. But this is especially true of those rulers who fail to fulfill YHWH's purpose.

The verse uses three synonymous phrases, one after the other:

אֶף בִּלְנִפְעוֹ, also they were not planted;
אֶף בִּלְזָרְעוֹ, also they were not sown;
אֶף בִּלְשָׂרֵשׁ, also (there is) no root

Compare **Rahfs** Greek translation, which uses future verbs:

οὐ γὰρ μὴ σπείρωσιν, for they will not sow;
οὐδὲ μὴ φυτεύσωσιν, neither will they plant;
οὐδὲ μὴ ῥιζωθῆ, neither will they be rooted

We take the author to be describing the rulers / judges who fail to fulfill His purposes, whom YHWH will reduce to nothing, to confusion / chaos. He is describing them as plants which have not been planted, sown, or taken root. They have no permanence, but will quickly disappear. True permanence comes only from being rooted in YHWH and His Word!

We are reminded of the "Parable of the Sower" of Jesus—**Matthew 13:1-15; Mark 4:1-12; Luke 8:4-10**.

Also, for the last two lines of **verse 24**, compare:

Isaiah 41:2, which we understand to be speaking about Cyrus, the Persian ruler,

Who stirred up a righteous one from (the) east?
He proclaims it / it meets him at his foot / step;
He gives nations before him,

(continued...)

⁹⁸(...continued)

and kings He / he beats down.
He makes like dust (by) his sword
like chaff driven about (by) his bow.

Psalm 83:14^{Heb} / **13**^{Eng},

My God, set / make them like the whirlwind,
like chaff / stubble before a wind!

“Chaff” driven by the wind is a common image for the **Hebrew Bible**. See elsewhere: **Job 21:18; Psalm 1:4; 35:5; Isaiah 17:13; 29:5; 33:11; 41:15; Jeremiah 13:24; Daniel 2:35; Hosea 13:3 and Zephaniah 2:2.**

Knight states that the logical question that comes from contemplating **verses 22-23** is “Why then should the exiles stand in awe of the silly power of Babylon? It might look as if the royal line of Babylon were well rooted in the soil of Mesopotamia, because for almost a century now the dynasty of Nebuchadrezzar had been ruling throughout the Near East, an area which included Israel’s beloved Judah and the ruins of their ancient city of Jerusalem. But what is a human *root* when it has dug down merely into negation? God has only to breathe on the dictator of Babylon and he will *wither*, even as goes the *stubble* that is swirled into oblivion by the *tempest* out of the desert.” (P. 22)

But what Knight labels “the silly power” is not so silly to those taken prisoner by it for 70 years in Babylon! The twentieth century revealed “the silly power” of Hitler, and Hirohito, and Stalin and Chairman Mao. But for the millions dying in Nazi concentration camps, or the marines going to drive the Japanese soldiers out of islands in the Pacific, or the millions working as slaves in the Gulag Archipelago, those powers were not so “silly.” They were very real and dreadful— even though believers in God were convinced that they would not stand.

What do you think? Do you think the Muslim extremists in ISIS are a “silly power”? They do not seem so “silly” to those who are being beheaded and enslaved! In the depiction of Jesus versus the Jewish high priest in the **New Testament Gospels**, the leaders of first-century Judaism may appear as rather “silly”—but they were anything but silly in their condemning Jesus and getting the Romans to put Him to death! The author of the **Book of Revelation** does not think the Roman Government that was fighting against Christianity in the first three centuries was “silly,” but depicts it as a powerful, beastly reality.

⁹⁹North states that in **verse 25** “Yahweh intervenes in *propria persona* [‘for Himself’], as He does out of the stormwind...when the arguments of Job and his friends are exhausted (**Job 38:1**): *Then to whom will you liken Me or whom do I resemble?*” (P. 87)

(continued...)

וְאִשׁוּרָה

יֹאמֶר קְדוֹשׁ:

And to whom will you people compare Me,
and I will resemble (him)?

Says Set-apart One.^{100, 12}

40:26¹⁰¹ שְׂאֵל-מָרוֹם עֵינֵיכֶם וְרֵאוּ

⁹⁹(...continued)

Oswalt comments on **verse 25** that “Once again, as in **verse 18**, the rhetorical question concerning comparison follows the appeals to God’s rule of nature and history...The difference between **verses 18** and **25** is that the latter is given as a quotation from God. He directly asks His people to find someone who is His equal (וְאִשׁוּרָה, literally ‘(To whom) I will be equal’) if they can.

We say that this is not simply a “rhetorical” question, but a “Socratic” question—calling on the reader to question and examine and compare earthly rulers—especially to compare them with the Creator of the universe. How permanent are they? How long will their reigns last? How much real power do they in fact have?

Having lived through the last two-thirds of the twentieth century, I have felt the dread of human dictators such as Hitler, Hirohito and Mussolini, and seen their murderous empires crushed; I have learned the cruelties of Stalin and Chairman Mao, along with other cruel, murderous dictators. I have also seen the rapid passing of Roosevelt, Reagan, and Kennedy. Human life and power, whether for good or for evil, quickly disappears. But the earth continues on, and life emerges out of the destruction and brutality, and new leaders appear to serve their allotted times. And while some stars grow dark and die, new stars are given birth, and the Creator of it all continues on unfazed in an expanding universe. It is utterly ridiculous to seriously compare the Creator to any human ruler, or to any other object in this tiny planet earth!

¹⁰⁰Oswalt comments that in **verse 25** YHWH is called “Set-apart One,” or “Holy One,” without the definite article, “showing that this is a personal name, not just a descriptor [word used to describe].” (P. 68) For occurrences of this name for YHWH, see our end-note 12.

¹⁰¹North states that “Babylon was the home and center of star-worship. The Babylonian Gods were mostly star-Gods. The Prophet of the exile make bold to affirm that the God of his captive people ‘created’ the stars whom their captors worshiped as Gods. *Astra regunt homines, sed Deus regit astra* [Stars rule humans, but God rules stars]. Never, except in the cross, has there been such a victory over defeat and humiliation.” (P. 88)

(continued...)

מִי־בְרָא אֱלֹהִים
 הַמּוֹצִיא בַּמַּסְפֵּר צְבָאִים
 לְכֹלֵם בְּשֵׁם יְקָרָא
 מִרְבֵּי אוֹנִים וְאֲמִיץ פֶּחַ
 אִישׁ לֹא נִעְדָּר:

Lift up your eyes (to the) height,¹⁰² and see—¹⁰³

¹⁰¹(...continued)

Oswalt comments on **verse 26** that “From the invitation to compare the author moves, as he did in **verses 19** and **20**, to a possible comparison, here apparently the heavens...The heavens are probably alluded to here because they were supposed to be a visible representation of the Gods...Here the prophet argues that far from being Deities worthy of being worshiped, the stars (implied by *their host* and *numbers them*) are not even self-existent. They are contingent creatures who come and go at the command of the Lord as do sheep before a shepherd, or soldiers before a general. Would we compare such as these to the One Who created them and rules them?” (P. 69)

¹⁰²For this call to the reader to “lift up your eyes (to the) height,” compare:

Isaiah 37:23,

Whom have you reproached, and reviled?
 And over Whom have you raised (your) voice?
 And you lifted your eyes on high,
 against Israel’s Set-apart One!

Isaiah 49:18,

Lift up your eyes all around, and see—
 All of them gathered, they came to you.
 As I live—a saying of YHWH—
 that you shall wear all of them like the ornament,
 and you shall bind them on like the bride!

Isaiah 60:4,

Lift up your eyes and see all around--
 all of them were gathered;
 they were coming to you--

(continued...)

Who created¹⁰⁴ these?¹⁰⁵

¹⁰²(...continued)

your sons from afar will come,
and your daughters upon a hip will be supported.

¹⁰³Knight says, “When the sun sets in the evening, out comes the *host* [צְבָאָה] of the stars. It is as if God were the commanding officer of a vast army in the heavens... Fantastically numerous as they are, God knows them all—and not just by number but actually by name.” (P. 23)

Yes, the noun צְבָאָה, “host,” is a military term, and as Alexander notes, so is the verb that follows, “to bring out.” He comments that “The common explanation of the phrase [‘the One bringing out their host by number’] as denoting order and arrangement is favored not only by the military form of the whole description, but by the parallel expression *by name*, which is not used to qualify the noun but the verb, and to show in what way the Commander of this mighty host exerts His power, in what way He brings out and calls His soldiers, viz., by number and by name.” (P. 114)

Compare the Divine name occurring some 266 times in the **Hebrew Bible**, יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת, “YHWH of Armies.” It may well be that the “armies” referred to in the Divine name are the armies of the stars.

Knight goes on to ask, “If God so cares for the host, צְבָאָה of stars on high that He knows each of their personalities as a distinct entity and can identify each by its own individual name...then how much more must He have counted the hairs on your heads, O you trembling host, צְבָאָה of Israel?” (P. 23)

¹⁰⁴The verb here is בָּרָא, “He created.” Occurrences of this verb are as follows:

Genesis, 11 times;
Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, 1 time each;
Isaiah, 21 times;
Jeremiah 1 time;
Ezekiel, 3 times;
Amos, 1 time;
Malachi, 1 time;
Psalms, 6 times;
Ecclesiastes. 1 time.

As these figures demonstrate, the **Book of Isaiah** mentions “create” more than any other **book** in the **Hebrew Bible**, even more than **Genesis**! Oswalt concludes from this that “It is a fundamental truth for Isaiah that since God has the absolutely conting-

(continued...)

¹⁰⁴(...continued)

ent freedom of the Creator, He is free to save His people.” (P. 69) Yes—and the fact is, creation didn’t end with **Genesis 1-3**.

Yes, YHWH is free to save His people, but He is also free to send His people into captivity, if they turn away from His Self-revealing Word and guidance! Israel (and we too) should never forget that!

¹⁰⁵Slotki comments that by “these” is meant “the stars.” (P. 190)

¹⁰⁶We say, If YHWH is the Creator of the “black hole,” and the “big bang,” with the constantly expanding star-universes that are coming forth from that initial explosion, then there is nothing impossible for Him. And if, as the **New Testament** joins with the **Hebrew Bible** in claiming, He is the God of steadfast-love for His creatures, there is no limit to His care for us, nor any limit to the good that He can and will accomplish in our lives if we will trust and obey Him!

Oswalt states that “The stars have not existed forever [modern science agrees]; someone [we say, some infinite Power] brought them into existence once. Who was that? [Modern theory answers, ‘the Big Bang,’ in which the stars emerged, expanding from that initial ‘black hole.’ But Oswalt says, it was] the God enthroned above the cherubim in the temple of Jerusalem, of course. Who else?” (**Ibid.**)

“Of course?” Is this in fact, a “slam-dunk” question that can be answered realistically in such a simplistic way? Or is it a “Socratic” question, which calls for examining and further investigation? As Oswalt, and everyone else knows, the temple no longer exists in Jerusalem, and there are no cherubim hovering over YHWH’s ancient ark / chest of the covenant in that temple. Oswalt’s simple answer simply does not, and will not satisfy.

Surely the Creator of the “black hole” and the “big bang” exists somewhere other than above the no-longer existent cherubim in a temple that no longer exists in Jerusalem, a temple that only came into existence over 27 billion years later, that existed for only a comparative moment in time, and that exists no longer!

We say the Creator of the innumerable star-worlds may have been symbolized by that temple with its hand-made, gold-plated or solid gold furniture, but surely He is much grander and greater and mysterious and “ancient of days” than that!

And the fact is, the author does not say “Look at the mysterious golden ark / chest with its golden cherubim to see the Creator. He doesn’t say Look at the “Holy of Holies” in the ancient sanctuary in Jerusalem—but Lift up your eyes on high—Look at the stars! Indeed, they are still there!

(continued...)

to all of them by name He calls;
from abundance of strength,¹⁰⁷ and might of power,
not one was lacking.¹⁰⁸

40.27¹⁰⁹ לְמִהַּ תֹּאמַר יַעֲקֹב

¹⁰⁶(...continued)

It is in looking at the majesty, and diversity, and astoundingly infinite star-universes, through the Hubble Space Telescope, that we will begin to get a grasp of the Creator's limitless, unbelievable power! And as we fall in awe and humility, convicted of how small we are, and how much in need we are of knowing that infinite Creator Who has given us being, our hearts will become open to His Word—spoken to us through the prophets like those who speak to us in the **Book of Isaiah**, a word embodied in Jesus Christ! What do you say?

Ortlund comments that “God’s creating the stars would have been awe-inspiring even in ancient Israel, where about 5,000 stars were visible at night. Astronomers now estimate, however, that there are more than 400 billion stars in the Milky Way galaxy, and that there are 125 billion galaxies in the universe. The total number of stars is estimated at 1×10^{22} or 10 billion trillions.” (P. 1311)

An estimate, yes. But only an estimate, in this infinitely expanding universe of God’s creation! And we must ask ourselves, How big is our world-view? How big, how powerful is our God?

¹⁰⁷Where our Hebrew text has the adjectival phrase וְאִמְרֵי, “and strong,” 1QIs^a along with the ancient versions read the nominal phrase וְאִמְרֵי, “and strength,” making no difference for the meaning.

¹⁰⁸And we say, If YHWH knows every single star of that innumerable army of stars, calling each one forth by name, like a mighty general who knows every soldier by name, or like a great shepherd who knows every animal in his herd by name; and if not one star is missing because of His mighty power and limitless strength, should we not know that He can and will take care of us, His creatures? It seems too good to be true—but the **Book of Isaiah** tells the reader, it is the truth!

Do you dare to believe it? And if we dare to believe, how can we ever again be pessimistic, or lose courage, or fail to look to the future with throbbing hope? See **verses 27-31!** What powerful good news this message was for the exiles in Babylon; what good news it still is for us in the 21st century!

¹⁰⁹Slotki comments that in **verses 27-31**, “The prophet, whose previous address may have been directed to mankind in general, now turns to Israel in particular and, pointing to God’s omnipotence, assures them of His beneficence to those who trust in Him.” (P. 191)

(continued...)

¹⁰⁹(...continued)

North entitles these verses “The Eagle Wings of Hope,” and comments that “Israel has fallen a prey to self-pity. Does he not know that Yahweh is the eternal God, Who faints not, neither grows weary? Natural strength becomes exhausted, but those who wait for God are renewed in strength that never fails.

“**40:12-26**, more than any passage in the **Bible**, presents something like a cosmological argument. But no matter how persuasive the cosmological [argument that the existence of the world or universe is strong evidence for the existence of a God who created it] and teleological [argument from design] arguments might be, they would afford little comfort to the soul in anguish. The crucial question is whether God is concerned with human life and destiny.” (P. 89) **Verses 27-31** respond to just this question.

Oswalt states that in these verses, “the prophet reverts to his opening question [we do not see the ‘opening question’ Oswalt is referring to, but assume he means the question of whether or not God is concerned with Israel’s plight] and, in the light of **12-26** concludes the entire discussion. He puts in the mouths of His people the perennial question of all who suffer: Why doesn’t God take action to right this situation?

“While this question would certainly be appropriate for the Babylonian exiles, it is by no means limited to them...Isaiah seems to say, ‘In the light of what I have said, how can you believe God is ignoring you? Don’t you understand? God is utterly other than us [where does Isaiah say this? Greater, different, yes. But utterly other—our Creator, Who made us in His image and likeness?] He does not work on our timetable, and He has none of our limitations. But He is at work and you can depend on Him.” (Pp. 71-72)

Knight comments on **verse 27** that “Naturally Israel has not yet known that God is like this. She has not yet heard the Word of God uttered through the mouth of His prophet, nor seen it take shape in a historical situation. Only then can the comfort announced in **verse 1** become meaningful to her. Israel in exile had supposed that Yahweh had forgotten her. The temple was lying in ruins, and the temple was [in their view] that spot alone where God and man could meet in sacramental worship. Jerusalem was now destroyed, and Jerusalem alone was God’s chosen city, and as such was as much the medium of unfolding revelation as had been the line of David. The holy land, which God had given His people forever (**Genesis 17:8; 28:13**) was now overrun by hordes of heedless pagans. Much that **Deutero-Isaiah** has to say later is virtually a wrestling with the significance of these very problems. He is triumphantly able to show how Israel could lose her temple, her city, her land, even her very *raison d’être* [‘reason for existence’], and yet discover that God could be wholly faithful to the promises He had made.” (Pp. 23-24)

What do you think? Have you heard people expressing similar pessimistic views? Many elderly people today lament the passing of the church or religion as they

(continued...)

וּתְדַבֵּר יִשְׂרָאֵל
 נִסְתַּרְהָ דְרַכֵּי מִיְהוָה
 וּמֵאַלְהֵי מִשְׁפָּטֵי יַעֲבֹר:

For what (reason) will you say, Jacob,
 and will you speak,¹¹⁰ Israel,¹¹¹ (saying)

¹⁰⁹(...continued)

knew it in the past, and the abandonment of religious ideas that they have held precious, as if that means “God is dead,” or “There is no more hope.” They and we need to hear the message of **Isaiah 40-55**, and **56-66**, with their confident, positive affirmations of the Living God, Who is alive and well, bringing into being a “new heavens and earth,” while the old forms of religion become out-dated and no longer necessary!

¹¹⁰**Rahfs** translates by “and why did you speak?”

The verbs in these first two lines of **verse 27** are imperfect / future verbs, תֹּאמַר, “you (singular) will say, you say,” and תְּדַבֵּר, “you will speak, you speak.” Oswalt states that this use of the imperfect tense “underlines the perennial nature of the sad assertions.” (P. 72) The verbs can be translated “Why will you continue to say / speak?”

Oswalt adds that “It is Jacob / Israel who makes the statement, and he makes it of the Lord— *my God*. Implicit in the name of the nation are all the connotations of the covenant. This is not just any people; they are God’s covenant people, to whom God has given Himself as their special possession. How could they imagine that He could forget them?” (P. 72) See **Isaiah 49:14-16**:

- 14 And Zion said,
 YHWH forsook me!
 And my Lord forgot me!
- 15 Will a woman forget her nursing child?
 —withhold mercy (from) a son of her womb?
 Even these will forget,
 and I, I will not forget you (feminine singular)!
- 16 Look—upon (the) hollow of (My) hands I inscribed you (feminine singular)!
 Your walls are before Me constantly!

¹¹¹Knight comments that “**Deutero-Isaiah** begins this section of his argument by addressing the despondent nation first as *Jacob* and then as *Israel*. By reminding them of their eponymous [one whose name has been given to others] ancestor in this way, **Deutero-Isaiah** is alluding to the promise that God had made to Jacob...that Jacob’s

(continued...)

¹¹¹(...continued)

seed would be as numerous as the dust of the earth (**Genesis 28:14**)...

“Now Yahweh, through **Deutero-Isaiah**, assures His people that though they share the common human lot and as such are also dust, they are precious in His sight...

“**Deutero-Isaiah**’s teaching now becomes very clear. If God has indeed full control over the stars of heaven (**verse 26**), he argues, then He is also in control of the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob...

“**Deutero-Isaiah** now addresses his people by the other name that Jacob had won for himself, once he had wrestled with God and had prevailed, [that is], *Israel* (**Genesis 32:24-32**). Before Jacob had undergone his distinctive spiritual experience which earned him this new name, though he was chosen by God, he had been a mean, selfish, and despicable man...But now, by God’s grace, he had become a new man altogether. He was thus worthy of a new name to describe the new man he had become...

“The people who now bore Jacob’s name had necessarily become the blessed people Israel, ‘strong with God.’ Why then should Israel, strong with God, so runs **Deutero-Isaiah**’s argument, imagine that because of fleeting circumstances, her way is *hid* from her God? Even in Babylon Yahweh was surely still her God, and Israel was still ‘My people’ (**verse 1**).” (Pp. 24-25)

We agree with Knight’s comment, but are not sure that “Israel” means “strong with God.”

As Hamilton notes in his commentary on **Genesis**, “The new name given to Jacob is *Israel*, and the explanation following is that Jacob has *struggled with God, and with men have you succeeded*...The original meaning of Israel is much debated (‘God rules’? ‘God heals’? ‘God judges’?) as is the relationship between **יִשְׂרָאֵל**, and the verb **שָׂרַיִת**, (‘you have struggled’?). Uncertainty about the meaning of **שָׂרַיִת** is engendered by the fact that [this verb] occurs only one other time in the **Old Testament**, **Hosea 12:4**^{Heb} / **3**^{Eng}, **Hosea**’s reference to Jacob: ‘he strove with...God.’ The ancient versions disagreed on the meaning of **שָׂרַיִת** in **Genesis 32:29**^{Heb} / **8**^{Eng}. The Greek translation, the Latin Vulgate and the Peshitta Syriac derive it from **srr** (Aramaic), ‘be strong.’ Aquila and Symmachus derive it from **sarar**, ‘to rule.’” (2, p. 334) The exact meaning of **יִשְׂרָאֵל**, “Israel,” is thus difficult to determine. If the root verb is **שָׂרַיִת**, which means “to struggle,” “to fight,” the name means “El will fight,” or “El fights.” The

(continued...)

My way¹¹² was hidden from YHWH,¹¹³

and from my God, my justice¹¹⁴ passes over!¹¹⁵

40.28 הַלּוֹא יִדְעַת אֱ-לֹא שְׂמַעַתָּ

אֱלֹהֵי עוֹלָם יְהוָה

בּוֹרֵא קְצוֹת הָאָרֶץ

לֹא יֵעָרְךָ וְלֹא יִגַּע

¹¹¹(...continued)

other suggested root verbs include שָׁרַר, “to rule,” “to be strong,” and יָשַׁר, “to be just,” “to be right.”

¹¹²Alexander comments that “‘Way’ is a common figure for the course of life, experience, or what the world calls fortune, destiny or fate.” (P. 115)

¹¹³North says that this line means “In a universe so vast I am lost and He can no longer find me!” (P. 89)

¹¹⁴Oswalt comments that the word מִשְׁפָּט, **mishpot**, “justice,” occurs 43 time in **Isaiah** (22 times in **chapters 1-39**, and 20 times in **chapters 40-46**). “It speaks of God’s right administration of all matters. He will not do anything that is unfair, untrue, or inappropriate to all the considerations in any matter. This **mishpot** will be one of the many characteristics of the messianic kingdom...and it is a characteristic that God expects of His people...

“Thus the assertion strikes at the heart of God’s character: He either does not know or does not care about what is right concerning Israel. To Isaiah such a charge is sheer foolishness in the light of what he has just said (especially **verse 14**), and he explicates that in the following verse.” (P. 72)

¹¹⁵Alexander comments that “The state of mind described is a sceptical despondency as to the fulfilment of God’s promises...This form of unbelief is more or less familiar to the personal experience of believers in all ages.” (P. 115)

We are reminded of the many complaints of Job, threatening to take God into the law-court, charging Him with injustice in His treatment of Job, His servant. It is the cry here of the exiles in Babylonian captivity, who feel their prolonged captivity, now fifty years or more--two generations, going on three--even if in some ways deserved, has gone on now for far too long. YHWH has either forgotten them, or no longer cares what is happening to them.

אִין חִקֵּר לְתַבְּוֹנָתוֹ:

Did you (singular) not know?¹¹⁶ Or did you not hear?¹¹⁷

God of long-lasting-time (is) YHWH—¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶**Rahfs** begins this first line of **verse 28** with the phrase “And now...”

¹¹⁷The questions of these first two lines of **verse 28** are directed to the individual Israelite (the verbs are 2nd person singular), who should have known, who should have heard these truths concerning YHWH. How is that?

These are the truths that their mothers and fathers have repeated in their ears since their earliest memories, as they told or sang the stories of YHWH’s creation of the world in the long-distant past, and told of His care for His people throughout Israel’s long history, beginning with the stories of Abraham. In their weekly, monthly, and yearly celebrations, those stories have been repeated over and over. Even in Babylonian captivity, those stories have continued to be told, repeated in every child’s ears. Haven’t you been listening? Haven’t you known?

¹¹⁸Translations of this third line of **verse 28** vary. Most have “the everlasting God,” but **Tanakh**, more correctly has “God from of old.” **Rahfs** has “God eternal, the God.” We translate by “God of long-lasting time.”

The Hebrew noun עוֹלָם, (**olam**, means “long duration,” and oftentimes has reference both to antiquity and to futurity. See the article on this noun by H. D. Preuss in **Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament X**, pp. 530-45. Preuss defines its meaning as “long ago, bygone times,” or “the distant future.” See also the article by Herman Sasse on αἰών in **Theological Dictionary of the New Testament I**, pp. 197-209, where Sasse states that “In **Deutero-Isaiah** אֱלֹהֵי עוֹלָם really means θεὸς αἰώνιος (**Isaiah 40:28**), עוֹלָם no longer signifying merely the remote past, but unending time or eternity.” (P. 201) But this is only because of the **Rahfs**’ translation, as Greek philosophical terminology begins to take the place of Hebrew terminology.

Knight comments on **verse 28** that “The truth of this amazing good news **Deutero-Isaiah** drives home in a final magnificent word picture. Even as Israel cast her eyes upon all the ridiculous Gods of Mesopotamia she should be reassured that her own national, covenant God was no other than the Creator of all things...

“Everlasting, עוֹלָם, is a word that is not primarily concerned with life beyond the grave. It comes from the root meaning ‘hidden.’ And so it speaks of the mists of the past, hidden from the thought of man, and it looks toward the mists of the future, into which man’s mind cannot even begin to pry. It speaks of the God Who is Lord even of the hidden realities that human beings can envisage only in terms of infinite time.

(continued...)

¹¹⁸(...continued)

Moreover, the word Creator [no--the verb **בָּרָא**, 'create'] is that which occurs at **Genesis 1:1**...The significance and emphasis of the word before us is rather upon the continual creative activity of God--the word is an active participle--Who continually does what no man and no heavenly power can do...In fact this verb is reserved by both **Genesis** and **Deutero-Isaiah** for the action of the Almighty alone." (P. 25)

This is exciting to understand and believe. God's creation is not just something that happened in the far distant past, a one-time act, never to occur again. No, God is creating here and now, in the present, creating new heavens and new earth! Do we dare to believe this in our day? Instead of God being dead, is the true and living God actively at work in our time and place, creating a new and wonderful future for His people who love and serve Him? Second Isaiah proclaims the good news that this is true! Jesus Christ proclaimed the same thing, as he spoke of the kingdom of God as both present and coming!

¹¹⁹This phrase, **קְצוֹת הָאָרֶץ**, "ends of the earth / land," with a feminine plural first noun, occurs only three times elsewhere in the **Hebrew Bible**:

Isaiah 41:5, speaking about the approach of Cyrus, the Persian conqueror:

Coastlands saw, and they were afraid;
extremities of the earth, they will tremble;
they drew near, and they came!
(Here, we think, the meaning is "the known world" of Cyrus' day.)

Isaiah 41:9, where YHWH is depicted as speaking to Israel / Jacob, His servant,

whom I strengthened from the earth's extremities,
and from its corners / sides I called you;
and I said to you, You are My servant,
I chose you, and I did not reject you!
(Here, the earth's extremities evidently mean Egypt-land.)

Job 28:24, where, in the "Interlude on Wisdom," it is said concerning God:

Because He looks to the earth's ends,
beneath all the heavens He sees--
(Here the phrase is universal in meaning.)

We think it is obvious that the phrase here in **Isaiah 40:28** is universal in meaning, as in **Job 28:24**, meaning the entire created earth.

He will not be tired, and He will not grow weary;^{120, 13}
there is no searching of His understanding!¹²¹

¹²⁰For occurrences of this verb, from the root **יָנַע** in the **Hebrew Bible** see our end-note 10. It is a very common human experience, both for Israelites and non-Israelites, to grow weary; but this verse claims that it is not something that YHWH ever has experienced!

But see **Isaiah 43:24**, where YHWH is depicted as claiming that Israel has wearied Him with her guilts / iniquities; and **Malachi 2:17**, where it is claimed that the returned Israelites have wearied YHWH with their words.

We say, it is the biblical claim that YHWH never grows weary in His creative work—but He does grow weary with the iniquity and negative talk of His people.

¹²¹The phrase **אֵין חֵקֶר לְתַבּוּנָתוֹ**, literally “there is no searching to / of His understanding,” certainly does not mean there are no attempts to search out Divine thought / understanding—for history is filled with the endless attempts of human beings to do just that, and every age has its intellectual and theological heroes such as Paul, and Calvin, and Luther, who are supposed to have accomplished the task. But wiser people know and acknowledge their limitations, confessing with the **Book of Isaiah** that such attempts can never be successful, and will always fall short. Compare:

Job 5:9, Eliphaz claims that the Divine wonders are beyond searching out:

Who does great things, and there is no searching out;
wonders / marvels until there is no counting;

Job 9:10, where Job states concerning God, that He is:

One doing great deeds, until there is no searching (them out),
and wonders, until there is no counting (them).
(That is, Job agrees with Eliphaz’s earlier statement in **5:9**.)

Romans 11:33,

O depth of wealth / riches and wisdom and knowledge of God;
how unsearchable / unfathomable His judgments;
and inscrutable / incomprehensible his ways!
(Obviously, Paul agrees with Eliphaz and Job.)

Ephesians 3:8,

To me, to the least of all set-apart people, was given this grace / favor,
to proclaim good news to the nations the inscrutable wealth / riches of the
Christ.

(continued...)

40.29 נָתַן לַיָּעֵף כֹּחַ

וְלַאִין אֹנִים עֲצָמָה יִרְבֶּה:

(He) gives strength to the weary one;

and to the one not having strength, He increases might.¹²²

¹²¹(...continued)

What do you think of ministers / teachers / professors / scientists who think they can explain everything satisfactorily, and who think there is no longer any “mystery” in the light of their superior intelligence?

Albert Einstein is quoted as saying, “The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed.” (Charles L. Wallis, **The Treasure Chest**, Harper and Row, New York, 1965, p. 24); quoted from **Living Philosophies**)

We admire the Apostle Paul for his statement in **Romans 11:33**, after having done his best to explain the ways of God, admitting that in truth God’s ways cannot be fully tracked out. And then confessing in **1 Corinthians 13:12** that now, in this life, he knows only partially; that he and we see through a mirror dimly. Indeed, that is the human condition—in the 1st century, and even more so now, in the 21st century!

Oswalt comments on **verse 28** that “since their God, the Lord, is the eternal Creator, His strength is tireless and His wisdom is unfathomable. He can do whatever He wishes in His Own time. Apparent delay never means either a lack of awareness or a lack of ability on His part. It is characteristic of the creation that it wears out and becomes exhausted [is that true of the new star-universes constantly emerging from black holes? It is certainly not apparent that the death of stars is the end of their creative power!]. But Isaiah has insisted in every way available that God is not part of the creation.” (P. 73)

Alexander comments on **verse 28** that “This verse contains an answer to the unbelieving fears expressed in the verse before it, which ascribed to God an imperfection or infirmity with which He is not chargeable...The seeming inconsistency between His words and deeds, far from arguing unfaithfulness or weakness upon His part, does but prove our incapacity to understand or fathom His profound designs.” (Pp. 115-16)

¹²²Slotki comments on **verse 29** that “Far from being faint and weary, God grants power and strength to the faint and to him that has no might if they are worthy of them (compare **verse 31**).” (P. 191)

But where does **Deutero-Isaiah** say “if they are worthy of them”? What he says

(continued...)

40.30 וַיֵּעֲפוּ נְעָרִים וַיִּגְעוּ

וּבַחֹרִים כְּשׁוֹל יִכְשָׁלוּ:

Even young men will be weary and grow tired,
and choice young men, stumbling will fall.¹²³

40.31¹²⁴, ¹⁴ וְקוֹי יְהוָה יִחְלִיפוּ כֹחַ

¹²²(...continued)

is that power and strength are given to those who are fainting and weak, but who nonetheless are “waiting for YHWH.”

Oswalt comments that “Far from becoming diminished Himself, God has an excess of energy to give to those who lack it (see **verse 26**).” (P. 73)

For the last line of **verse 29**, **Rahlfs** strangely has, “and to the ones not being in pain, grief,” reflecting a Hebrew text quite different from ours.

¹²³Oswalt comments on **verse 30** that “Even the most vital [full of energy, lively] on earth must eventually be worn down, their strength has its limits. This thought restates the same idea found in **verses 6-8, 24**. Humans at their most vigorous are mortal and fallible.” (P. 74)

Alexander states that “There is here an obvious allusion to the terms of **verse 28**. What is there denied of God [God will not faint or grow weary] is here affirmed, not only of men in general, but of the stoutest and most vigorous, aptly represented by the young men chosen for military service.” (P. 116)

¹²⁴Slotki states that in **verse 31**, “The difficulty of the apparent anti-climax, (1) fly, (2) run, and (3) walk, may perhaps be explained if we regard the sequence as corresponding to the three stages in the dangers and hardships which the returning exiles will have to meet and overcome. These, in chronological order, are (1) the escape from the land of captivity, (2) the trek to the homeland, and (3) the resettlement...”

“Surmounting the acute dangers involved in the escape may well be described as ‘flying on eagles’ wings’...The hazards of the journey and the protracted hardships of the resettlement may justifiably be compared, in view of their unequal duration, to running and walking respectively. The exiles are assured that their faith and trust in God will enable them to *renew their strength* and to surmount with ease (*not be weary... and not faint*) all the dangers, hazards and hardships in the three successive stages of their redemption.” (P. 192) Do you agree with Slotki’s view?

(continued...)

יֵלְכוּ אֲבָר כְּנִשְׂרִים
 יִרְוּצוּ וְלֹא יִיָּנְעוּ
 יִלְכוּ וְלֹא יִיעֲפוּ:

And those waiting for YHWH will renew¹²⁵ (their) strength;¹²⁶

¹²⁴(...continued)

Alexander comments that the verb קָוָה “is to *wait for* or *expect*, implying faith and patience...The class of persons meant to be described are those who show their confidence in God’s ability and willingness to execute His promises, by patiently awaiting their fulfilment. The restriction of these words to the exiles in Babylon is entirely gratuitous. Although applicable, as a general proposition, to that case among others, they admit of a more direct and striking application to the case of those who under the old dispensation kept its end in view, and still ‘waited for the consolation of Israel,’ and ‘looked for redemption in Jerusalem.’ (**Luke 1:25, 38**).” (P. 116)

Critics of Alexander’s “dispensationalist” theology can just as well call his view “entirely gratuitous.” The fact is that the immediate context is the release of the Jewish exiles from Babylon under the Persian Cyrus, YHWH’s “messiah” (**Isaiah 45:1**). And Luke’s statements concerning looking for consolation and redemption does not mean looking for a new dispensation. What do you think?

¹²⁵Wolf-Stek note that the verb here, יִחַלְּיפוּ (hiphil imperfect, 3rd masculine plural) is literally “they will exchange.”

“The Hebrew for this verb is used of changes of clothes (**Genesis 35:2; Judges 14:12**), which can symbolize strength and beauty (**Isaiah 52:11**).” (P. 1073)

¹²⁶Oswalt comments that **verse 31** “includes the third repetition of the two words for wearing out and becoming exhausted...The point being made through the repetition is clear; God is not contingent; even the most powerful of earth are contingent; God graciously makes His vitality available to the failing of earth. But does the receiving depend on any particular condition?...”

“Only one, and it is specified here: waiting on the Lord. This expression implies two things: complete dependence on God and a willingness to allow Him to decide the terms...To wait on Him is to declare our confidence in His eventual action on our behalf. Thus waiting (קָוָה) in Hebrew is not merely killing time but a life of confident expectation...Those who give up their own frantic efforts to save themselves and turn expectantly to God will be able to *replace* or *exchange*...their worn-out strength for new

(continued...)

they will lift up (their) wing(s) like the griffon-vultures;¹²⁷
they will run and will not be weary,
they will walk, and will not grow tired!¹²⁸

¹²⁶(...continued)
strength.” (P. 74)

Compare **41:1** where this exact phrase is used as “peoples”—are told יִחַלְפוּ כְּכַנְף, “let them exchange / renew strength.” This is a possibility for all people, not just for Israelites!

¹²⁷Oswalt comments on this second line of **verse 31** that “Far from being crushed to earth by their own helplessness, those who depend on God can stretch their wings in the effortless way of eagles, and sail off on the wind.” (P. 74)

We Americans, with our love for eagles as a national symbol, like that translation of נִשְׂרִימוּ--but it is most likely that originating in Israel, the noun refers to “griffon-vultures,” the large (20 pound) scavenger birds that swoop effortlessly over vast areas (some 90 miles) of the wilderness and desert, playing the role of “garbage trucks,” not nearly so romantic-sounding as “eagles.” See the Internet for **National Geographic’s** film concerning griffon-vultures.

Alexander states that there are three distinct interpretations:

1. “They shall mount up with wings.”
2. “They shall put forth new feathers like the moulting eagle.”
3. “They shall raise the pinion (or the wing) like the eagles.”

He comments that “In the last clause the verbs יִנַּעַ and יִעֲרַ [‘grow weary’ and ‘faint’] are introduced together for the third time in a beautiful antithesis. In **verse 28** they are applied to [YHWH], in **verse 30** to the strongest and most vigorous of men, as they are in themselves, and here to the ‘waiters [those who wait] for [YHWH], the believers in His promises, who glory in infirmity that His strength may be made perfect in their weakness (**2 Corinthians 12:9**).” (P. 117)

¹²⁸Knight comments on **verses 29-31** that “**Deutero-Isaiah** has just established the absolute otherness of God from man [no, not the ‘absolute otherness from,’ but the ‘absolute supremacy to’!]. Now he proceeds to depict the grace of God leaping over the chasm that He has made between Himself and man [but if **Genesis** depicts humanity as being made in the Divine image and likeness, surely God the Creator has already bridged that ‘chasm’!]....

(continued...)

1. **Passages in the Hebrew Bible with the Phrase דבר על-לב
“Speak Upon a Heart”**

Genesis 34:3, where it is said of Shechem, who has just raped Jacob’s daughter Dinah:

And his innermost-being clung on / to Dinah, daughter of Jacob,
and he loved the young girl.

And he spoke to the young girl’s heart.

(Dinah was undoubtedly filled with fear and troubled by anxious thoughts; but even though he had taken advantage of her sexually, Shechem felt love for her, and wanted to alleviate her fear and anxious thoughts.)

Genesis 50:21, where Joseph, whose brothers have come to him, fearfully begging his forgiveness, speaks:

And now, do not be afraid.

I, I will support you (plural) and your children / little ones.

And he comforted them,

and he spoke upon / to their heart.

¹²⁸(...continued)

“Now **Deutero-Isaiah** tells us that God gives this very *power* of His, His *might*, meaning something like His bounding vitality, to those who are most in need of it, the weary and the exhausted among Israel [the text does not say ‘among Israel,’ but simply ‘to those who wait for YHWH’!]...

“Yet once again God requires the co-operation of human faith [the word ‘faith’ is not found in this text—what it says is קוֹי יְהוָה, ‘those awaiting YHWH’], just as in the case of Jacob, before His gift of strength or vitality can be appropriated by the weary exiles. It is *they who wait for the Lord* who find a miracle taking place in their experience. If God, says **Deutero-Isaiah**, was able to create in the beginning and can keep on creating this vast and complex universe, then He can as easily create a new thing in the life of those who passionately seek Him [again, no—those who await Him!]. He can make pinions grow where there were none before.” (Pp. 25-26)

Oswalt mentions that George Adam Smith “relates the three terms to the experience of the exiles: The soaring joy of freedom, running to reestablish their culture in the homeland, and the tedious walking of daily life once more.” But Oswalt says, “This is surely far beyond anything in the prophet’s mind.” (P. 75)

Oswalt suggests the idea of flying should be understood in terms of exchanging strength, and running and walking as referring to “steady forward progress.”

What do you think these three phrases refer to?

(Joseph's brothers are fearful for their lives; just as YHWH is doing with the captives in Babylon, Joseph is seeking to alleviate their fears, and comfort their anxious thoughts— fears and anxious thoughts that existed in their hearts.)

Judges 19:3a, where it is said of a Levite who is trying to get his estranged concubine to return:

And her husband (the Levite) arose, and he went after her,
to speak upon / to her heart,
to cause her to return...

(Their relationship has been broken; he speaks in kindness, hoping that his words will cause her to return to him.)

1 Samuel 1:13, where it is said of Hannah who is praying in the sanctuary at Shiloh:

And Hannah, she is / was speaking upon / to / in her heart--
only here lips moving / waving,
and her voice was not heard.

And Eli counted / considered for a drunken woman.

(Hannah's prayer is internal, not expressed publicly or out loud; but it is deeply sincere.)

2 Samuel 19:8a, Joab reprimands David for his excessive love for Absalom who was trying to kill him, and tells him:

And now, arise—go out,
and speak upon / to your servants' heart...(expressing thanks for saving
his life).

(Joab means humble, apologetic speech, designed to win back the hearts of his soldiers who feel David has betrayed them.)

Isaiah 40:2, YHWH is speaking to the captive Israelites in Babylon, instructing them that He is still their God, offering them comfort, and calling upon them to speak the good news to their fellow Israelites:

Speak upon / to Jerusalem's heart...

(That is, speak words that can penetrate to the depths of those who hear, words of comfort and hope for the future—telling her that her war is over, and assuring her of YHWH's forgiveness, since she has fully paid for her sins.)

Hosea 2:16^{Heb} / 12^{Eng}, YHWH is telling what He is going to do with Israel, His unfaithful wife:

Therefore, look—I am enticing / seducing her;
and I will lead her (into) the wilderness;
and I will speak upon her heart.

(It is the language of love, of seduction—of speaking to a wayward wife in a manner that will cause her to want to return to her husband.)

Ruth 2:13, where Ruth speaks to Boaz, who has allowed her to come and glean in his fields:

And she said, Will I find favor / grace in your eyes, my lord?

Because you comforted me,
and because you spoke upon / to your maid-servant's heart.

And I, shall I not be like one of your maid-servants?

(The words Boaz had spoken to Ruth were instruction to stay gleaning in his field, having given orders to his reapers not to take advantage of her; she was to eat and drink what was provided for his workers. In addition, he told her he knew of the kindness she had shown to her mother-in-law, and how she had left her home in Moab to come and live in Bethlehem, Israel, taking refuge under the wings of YHWH. They were words of kindness, the guarantee of work and physical necessities; they were words of acknowledgment and recognition. That's something of what it means to "speak upon / to a heart.")

2 Chronicles 30:22a, in a time of reassembling the scattered Israelites to observe the passover, the Levites worked hard to cleanse the people and sacrifice their lambs; therefore:

And Hezekiah spoke upon / to (the) heart of all the Levites,
the ones showing wisdom (and) good skill for the YHWH...

(That is, Hezekiah congratulated the Levites, showing appreciation for their wise skill in leading Israel's worship.)

2. **Occurrences of the Phrase כְּבוֹד יְהוָה, “Glorious Radiance of YHWH
in the Hebrew Bible:**

Exodus 16:7,

And morning—
and you will see YHWH’s glorious radiance,
when He heard your murmurings against YHWH;
and we—
(for) what (reason) that you will murmur against us?

Exodus 16:10,

And it happened as Aaron (was) speaking to all (the) congregation of Israel’s
children;
and they turned to the wilderness, and look—
YHWH’s glorious radiance was seen in the cloud!

Exodus 24:16

And YHWH’s glorious radiance settled upon Mount Sinai;
and the cloud covered it (for) six days.
And He called to Moses on the seventh day from the cloud’s midst.

Exodus 24:17

And (the) appearance of YHWH’s glorious radiance
was like consuming fire on the mountain’s top,
in (the) eyes of Israel’s children.

Exodus 40:34,

And the cloud covered (the) tent of meeting;
and YHWH’s glorious radiance filled the dwelling-place.

Exodus 40:35,

And Moses was not able to enter into (the) tent of meeting;
because the cloud tented over it,
and YHWH’s glorious radiance filled the dwelling-place.

Leviticus 9:6,

And Moses said,
This is the thing / word which YHWH commanded (that) you will do;
and YHWH’s glorious radiance will appear to you people.

Leviticus 9:23,

And Moses came and Aaron to (the) tent of meeting;
and they went forth,
and they blessed the people;
and the glorious radiance of YHWH appeared to all the people.

Numbers 14:10,

And all the congregation said to stone them with the stones;
and YHWH's glorious radiance appeared / was seen in (the) tent of
meeting,
to all Israel's children.

Numbers 14:21,

And indeed, as I live [it is a Divine oath],
and YHWH's glorious radiance will fill all the earth / land!

Numbers 16:19,

And Qorah assembled against them all the congregation,
to / at (the) door of (the) tent of meeting.
And YHWH's glorious radiance appeared / was seen to / by all the congregation.

Numbers 17:7,

And it happened when the congregation was gathered against Mose and against
Aaron;
and they turned to / towards (the) tent of meeting,
and look—the cloud covered it,
and YHWH's glorious radiance appeared / was seen.

Numbers 20:6,

And Moses and Aaron came from before the assembly to (the) door of (the) tent
of meeting;
and they fell upon their faces;
and YHWH's glorious radiance appeared / was seen to / by them.

Joshua 7:19,

And Joshua said to Achan,
My son, place honor / glory to the YHWH, God of Israel,
and give to Him thanksgiving;
and declare to me now / please what you did—
you shall not lie from / to me!

(Here is a human who is told to give glory or honor to YHWH, something quite different from YHWH's Own glorious radiance that appears or is seen. It is something that the sinner can give to Him through honest confession.)

1 Kings 8:11,

And the priests will not be able to stand to minister before the cloud,
because YHWH's glorious radiance filled YHWH's house / sanctuary! **2**
Chronicles 7:2, same;

Isaiah 24:23,

And the white one / moon will be ashamed
and the hot one / sun will be embarrassed (synonym);
because YHWH of Armies reigned on Mount Zion,
and in Jerusalem,
and before His officials / elders, glorious radiance!

Isaiah 35:2

It will certainly bud forth and it will rejoice;
even (with) rejoicing and ringing cries;
glory / honor of the Lebanon will be given to it
splendor of the Carmel,
and the Sharon,
these will see YHWH's glorious radiance,

Isaiah 40:5

And YHWH's glorious radiance will be revealed,
and all flesh will see (it) together!
Because YHWH's voice spoke!

Isaiah 58:8,

Then your light will break forth like the dawn,
and your healing will spring up speedily;
and your right-relationship will walk before you.
YHWH's glorious radiance will come behind you!

Isaiah 60:1,

Arise! Become light!
Because your light came,
And YHWH's glorious radiance arose over you (feminine singular)!

Ezekiel 1:28, where Ezekiel is describing his vision of YHWH's glorious radiance:

like an appearance of the rainbow which (is) in the cloud on a day of the rain,
in this way an appearance (all) around;
it (was) an appearance of a likeness of YHWH's glorious radiance.
And I saw, and I fell upon my face.
And I heard a voice speaking.

Ezekiel 3:12,

And a Spirit / wind lifted me up;
and I heard behind me a sound of great quaking / shaking:
(saying) Blessed (is) YHWH's glorious radiance,
(coming) from His / its place.

(Translations vary:

King James, "Then the spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing, *saying*, Blessed *be* the glory of the LORD from his place."

Tanakh, "Then a spirit carried me away, and behind me I heard a great roaring sound: 'Blessed is the Presence of the LORD, in His place'..."

New Revised Standard, "Then the spirit lifted me up, and as the glory of the LORD rose from its place, I heard behind me the sound of loud rumbling"...

New International, "Then the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me a loud rumbling sound--May the glory of the LORD be praised in his dwelling place!--"

New Jerusalem, "The spirit lifted me up, and behind me I heard a great vibrating sound, 'Blessed be the glory of Yahweh in his dwelling-place!'"

Rahifs, "and a spirit / Spirit lifted me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great earthquake, Blessed (is) the glory of (the) Lord out of the place of His!"

Ezekiel 3:23,

And I stood up, and I went forth to the valley;
and look--there (was) YHWH's glorious radiance standing,
like the glorious radiance which I saw beside (the) river Kebhar.
And I fell upon my face.

Ezekiel 10:4 (twice),

And YHWH's glorious radiance rose up from upon the cherub,
upon (the) threshold of the house / sanctuary;
and the house / sanctuary was filled with the cloud.
And the court was filled with (the) brightness of YHWH's glorious radiance.

Ezekiel 10:18,

And YHWH's glorious radiance went forth from upon (the) threshold of the house
/ sanctuary;
and it stood / stopped upon the cherubim .

Ezekiel 11:23,

And YHWH's glorious radiance went up from upon the city's midst,
and it stood upon the mountain which (is) east to / of the city.

Ezekiel 43:4,

And YHWH's glorious radiance came to the house / sanctuary,
(by) way of (the) gate which its face (is the) way of the eastern lands.

Ezekiel 43:5,

And a wind / Spirit lifted me up
and it brought me to the enclosure / court, the inner one;
and look—YHWH's glorious radiance filled the house / sanctuary!

Ezekiel 44:4,

And it brought me (by) way of the north gate to (the) front of the house /
sanctuary;
and I saw, and look—YHWH's glorious radiance filled YHWH house /
sanctuary.
And I fell upon my face.

Habakkuk 2:14,

Because the earth / land will be filled to know YHWH's glorious radiance,
like the waters cover over (the) sea!

Psalms 24:8,

Who (is) this King of the glorious radiance?
YHWH—a mighty and strong Man!
YHWH, a strong Man of war!

Psalms 24:10,

Who (is) He, this King of the glorious radiance?
YHWH of Armies--
He (is) King of the glorious radiance! Selah

Psalm 104:31,

YHWH's glorious radiance will be to long-lasting-time!
YHWH will rejoice in His works!

Psalm 138:5,

And they will sing in ways of YHWH / about YHWH's ways--
because YHWH's glorious radiance (is) great!

2 Chronicles 5:14,

And the priests were not able to stand to minister from before / in front of the
cloud;
because YHWH's glorious radiance filled the God's house / sanctuary.

2 Chronicles 7:1,

And as Solomon finished praying,
and the fire came down from the heavens.
And it devoured the offering-up and the sacrifices;
and YHWH's glorious radiance filled the house / sanctuary.

2 Chronicles 7:3,

And all Israel's children (were) seeing,
as the fire came down,
and YHWH's glorious radiance (was) upon the house / sanctuary.
And they bowed, faces to (the) ground upon the pavement.
And they worshiped,
and (gave) thanksgivings to the YHWH,
because (He is) good;
because His steadfast-love (is) to long-lasting-time.

2 Chronicles 26:18,

And they stood against Uzziah the king,
and they said to him,
It does not belong to you, Uzziah, to cause smoke to go up to the YHWH,
but (it belongs) to the priests, sons of Aaron, the ones set-apart to cause
smoke to go up;
Go forth from the sanctuary,
because you acted faithlessly;
and it does not belong to you for glorious radiance from YHWH God.
(This last line is given varying translations:
King James, "neither *shall it be* for thine honour from the LORD God."
Tanakh, "there will be no glory in it for you from the LORD God."
New Revised Standard, "and it will bring you no honor from the LORD God.")

New International, “and you will not be honored by the LORD God.”

New Jerusalem, “and will have no honour from Yahweh God.”

Rahfs, καὶ οὐκ ἔσται σοι τοῦτο εἰς δόξαν παρὰ κυρίου θεοῦ, “and this will not be for you for glorious radiance with / from (the) Lord God.”

3. Occurrences of the Phrase כָּל־בְּשָׂרַיִם, “All Flesh,” in the Hebrew Bible

Genesis 6:12, 13, 17, 19 (twice); **7:15, 16, 21**; **8:17**; **9:11, 9:15** (twice), **16, 9:17**, all concerning those who died in the world-wide flood in the days of Noah, in which all flesh perished, with the exception of Noah and his family who were on Noah’s ark / barge; according to **Genesis 6:7**, YHWH intention was:

I will wipe out the humanity which I created from upon the ground’s surface,
from humanity to animal to creeper and to bird of the heavens;
because I am sorry that I made them!

(The statements that follow are that all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth (**6:12**) and YHWH had determined to bring all flesh to an end because the earth was filled with violence through them (**6:13**). Everything with the “breath of life” is to be destroyed (**6:17**), and this is said specifically to apply to the animals as well (**6:19; 7:15, 16**). “All flesh” included things creeping on the earth, birds, cattle, wild animals and swarmers (**7:21; 8:17**). God’s covenant with Noah and all future generations is that never again will “all flesh” be cut off as had just happened (**9:11, 15, 16, 17**).

Leviticus 4:11, all flesh of a young bull being sacrificed.

Leviticus 13:13, priest inspects all the flesh of a person who has had severe skin disease.

Leviticus 15:16, man who has had a seminal discharge in the night shall wash all his flesh.

Leviticus 17:14 (three times), the life of all flesh is its blood.

Leviticus 18:6, prohibition of sexual intercourse with בְּשָׂרוֹ שְׂאֵר, “all / any flesh (synonym) of his flesh,” that is, with a close relative.

Numbers 8:7, Levites are to be shaved over all their flesh, in preparation for ordination as priests.

Numbers 16:22b, Moses and Aaron address YHWH:

EI / Supreme God of the spirits belonging to all flesh,
Shall one man miss-the-mark / sin,
and over all the congregation You will be angry?

Numbers 18:15,

All / every opener of the womb belonging to all flesh,
which you (plural) shall bring near to the YHWH [as a sacrifice],

among the human(s) and among the animal(s) shall be yours;
only you shall surely redeem (the) first-born of the human(s),
and (the) firstborn of the unclean animal(s) you shall redeem.
(Again, "all flesh" includes humans and animals.)

Numbers 27:16,

YHWH, God of the spirits belonging to all flesh, will appoint
a man over the congregation.

Deuteronomy 5:26, the Israelites say to Moses:

Because / for who all all flesh
that heard (the) voice of (the) God of lives,
speaking from the fire's midst like us,
and will live?

Isaiah 40:5-6,

5 And YHWH's glory / honor will be revealed,
and all flesh will see (it) together!
Because YHWH's voice spoke!
6 A voice, saying Proclaim!
And he said, What shall I proclaim?
All the flesh (is) grass,
and all its steadfast-love (is) like a blossom of the field.

Isaiah 49:26

And I will cause your oppressors to eat their (own) flesh,
and they will get drunk with their (own) blood, like sweet wine!
And all flesh will know that I (am) YHWH, your Savior,
and your Redeemer / Next-of-Kin, Mighty One of Jacob!

Isaiah 66:16,

Because with the fire YHWH (is) judging,
and with His sword--all flesh,
and the one(s) slain (by) YHWH will be multiplied.

Isaiah 66:23

And it will happen as often as a month (comes) in its month,
a Rest-day in its Rest-day,
all flesh will come to worship before Me--
said YHWH.

Jeremiah 12:12,

Upon all heights in the wilderness / desert came destroyers,
because YHWH has a sword,
devouring from (one) end of (the) earth / land
and as far as (the other) end of the earth / land;
there is no peace to for all flesh!

Jeremiah 25:31,

A roar came as far as the earth's / land/s end;
because YHWH has a contention with the nations;
He has passed judgment to / on all flesh.
The wicked—He gave them to the sword.
(It is) a saying of YHWH!

Jeremiah 32:27,

Look—I (am) YHWH, God of all flesh.
Will any word / thing be too wonderful for Me?
(For this last line, **Rahfs** has: “will anything be hidden from Me?”)

Jeremiah 45:5, a word of YHWH given to Jeremiah for Baruch, his scribe:

And you, will you seek great things for yourself?
You shall not seek (such things)!
Because look at Me—bringing evil upon all flesh--
(It is) a saying of YHWH--
And I will give to you your innermost-being / life as spoil / a prize of war,
over / in all the places where you will go!
(Obviously, “all flesh” here is not meant literally, for Baruch is excluded from that
evil, just as is the “remnant” of Judah that will be delivered.)

Ezekiel 10:12, the entire “chariot” which Ezekiel sees in a vision is described as

וְכָל־בְּשָׂרָם, “and all their flesh,” as it were a living creature with various parts
of flesh..

Ezekiel 21:4, where YHWH says concerning the fire that is coming in the south /
negebh:

And all flesh till see that I, YHWH, burned it--
it will not be quenched!

Ezekiel 21:9-10,

9 Since I cut off from you rightly-related and wicked--
Therefore My sword shall go forth from its scabbard,
to / against all flesh from south / *negebh* (to) north!

10 And all flesh shall know that I (am) YHWH--
I brought forth My sword from its scabbard;
It shall not return again!

Joel 3:1,

And it will be / happen afterwards,
I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh--
and your sons and your daughters will prophesy / speak for Me;
your old men will dream dreams;
your young men will see visions!

Zechariah 2:17,

Hush! all flesh from before YHWH,
because He was roused from His set-apart dwelling-place!

Psalm 65:3^{Heb} / 2^{Eng},

One hearing prayer,
to You all flesh will come!

Psalm 136:25, YHWH is the One Who is:

Giving bread / food to all flesh--
for His steadfast-love is to long-lasting time!

Psalm 145:21,

My mouth will speak YHWH's praise,
and all flesh will bless His set-apart name,
to long-lasting-time and forever!

Job 12:10, which says of YHWH:

in Whose hand (is the) innermost-being of everything living,
and breath of all flesh of man.

Job 34:15, where Elihu says if El / Shaddai should set His heart to gather in all spirits,

all flesh would expire together,
and humanity would return to (the) dust.

Proverbs 4:22, the wise teacher states concerning his sayings:

Because they are life for those finding them,
and healing for all his flesh!

4. **Repetitions of the Phrase, “Do Not Fear” in Isaiah 40-55**

Isaiah 40:9

Upon a high mountain, go up for yourself / get yourself up,
proclaimer / heraldess of good news (to) Zion!
Raise high with strength your voice,
proclaimer of good news / heraldess (to) Jerusalem!
Raise high, do not be afraid,
say to Judah’s cities,
Look—your God!

Isaiah 41:10

You shall not be afraid, because I (am) with you!
You shall not be dismayed, because I (am) your God;
I will make you firm. Surely I will help you,
surely I will support you, with My right hand of My right-relationship!

Isaiah 41:13,

Because I (am) YHWH your God, strengthening your right hand,
the One saying to you (singular), You shall not be afraid,
I, I will help you!

Isaiah 41:14

You shall not be afraid, worm Jacob!
Men of Israel,
I, I will help you--a saying of YHWH,
and your Redeemer / Next-of-Kin, Israel’s Set-apart One!

Isaiah 43:1

And now, in this way YHWH spoke,
your Creator, Jacob, and your Former, Israel:
You shall not be afraid, because I redeemed / acted as next-of-kin for you;
I called by your name; you belong to Me!

Isaiah 43:5,

You shall not be afraid, because I (am) with you!
From (the) rising / east I will bring your descendant(s);
and from (the) west I will gather you!

Isaiah 44:2,

In this way YHWH spoke, your Maker,
and your Former from (the) womb:
He will help you (singular).
Do not be afraid My servant Jacob;
and Yeshurun—I chose him!

Isaiah 51:7,

Listen to Me, those knowing right-relationship,
a people (with) My teaching / *torah* in their heart;
you (plural) shall not be afraid of man's reproach;
and from their revilings you shall not be dismayed!

Isaiah 54:4,

Do not be afraid, because you will not be put to shame;
and you will not be humiliated--because you will not be caused shame!
Because your youth's shame, you will forget,
and (the) reproach of your widowhood you will not remember again!

Isaiah 54:14,

In righteousness you (feminine singular) will be established,
those who are far away from oppression.
Because you will not be afraid, and (you will not be afraid) of terror,
because it will not draw near to you!

5. **Occurrences of the Divine זרוע, “Arm” in the Hebrew Bible**

Exodus 6:6, Moses tells the Egyptian slaves God Almighty will deliver them with outstretched arm;

Exodus 15:16, because of YHWH's arm's greatness, the Canaanites are frozen like stone as Israel passes by;

Deuteronomy 4:34, YHWH's outstretched arm worked miracles for the Israelite slaves in Egypt; **5:15**, same; **7:19**, same; **9:29**, same; **11:2**, similar; **26:8**, same; **2 Kings 17:36**, similar; **Psalms 136:12**, similar;

Deuteronomy 33:27a,

A dwelling-place—God of past time / aforesaid,
and beneath—arms of long-lasting time.

Translations of the entire **verse 27** vary:

King James, “The God of old is your refuge, his the eternal arm which here below drives the enemy before you; he it is who says, 'Destroy!'”

Tanakh, “The ancient God is a refuge, A support are the arms everlasting. He drove out the enemy before you By His command: Destroy!”

New Revised Standard, “He subdues the ancient gods, shatters the forces of old; he drove out the enemy before you, and said, ‘Destroy!’”

New International, “The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. He will drive out your enemies before you, saying, 'Destroy them!'”

New Jerusalem, “The God of old is your refuge, his the eternal arm which here below drives the enemy before you; he it is who says, 'Destroy!'”

Rahlfs, καὶ σκέπασις θεοῦ ἀρχῆς καὶ ὑπὸ ἰσχὺν βραχιόνων ἀειάων καὶ ἐκβαλεῖ ἀπὸ προσώπου σου ἐχθρὸν λέγων ἀπόλοιο, “And a shelter / protection of God of (the) beginning; and under(neath are) strong, everlasting arms; and He casts out an enemy from before you, saying “May you perish!”

1 Kings 8:42, foreigners will hear of YHWH's outstretched arm when they come to pray in Solomon's temple in Jerusalem. **2 Chronicles 6:32**, same;

Isaiah 30:30,

And YHWH will cause to be heard His voice's splendor / majesty,
and He will cause to be seen His arm's descent,
with storming anger, and a flame of devouring fire--
a driving storm and rain-storm and hail-stone(s).

Isaiah 33:2,

O YHWH, show favor to us!
For You we waited.
Be their arm for the mornings,
surely our salvation / deliverance in a time of distress!

Isaiah 40:10-11

10 Look—my Lord YHWH with strength will come--
and His arm reigning for Him!
Look—His reward (is) with Him,
and His recompense (is) before Him!
11 Like one shepherding his flock, He will shepherd;
with His arm He will gather together lambs;
and in His grasp He will carry (them);
He will lead those giving milk (to their lambs).

Isaiah 48:14,

Gather together, all of you people, and listen!
Who among them declared these things?
YHWH loved him.
He will do / accomplish His desire on Babylon,
and His arm (on the) Chaldeans.

Isaiah 51:5,

My Lord YHWH opened an ear for me,
and I, I was not disobedient;
I was not turned away backwards.

Isaiah 51:9,

Awake! Awake!
Dress (Yourself with) strength, arm of YHWH!
Awake as (in) days of old / ancient time,
(in) generations of long-lasting (past) times!
Are You not She,
the One Who cut Rahab in pieces (feminine participle),
Who pierced (feminine participle) (the) Dragon?

Isaiah 52:10,

YHWH made bare His set-apart arm,
to (the) eyes of all the nations;
and all ends of (the) earth will see
our God's salvation / deliverance!

Isaiah 53:1,

Who put confidence in our report?
And YHWH's arm,
to whom was it revealed?

Isaiah 59:16,

And he saw that there is no man
and He was appalled,
because there is no one entreating.
And His arm saved / delivered for Him,
and His righteousness, it supported Him.

Isaiah 62:8,

YHWH swore by His right hand,
and by (the) arm of His strength,
I will not give your grain again (as) food for your enemies,
and foreigners will not drink you new wine which you toiled for!

Isaiah 63:5, where YHWH is depicted as saying:

And I looked, and there was no one helping;
and I was appalled, and there was no one supporting.
And My arm saved / delivered for Me,
and My rage, it supported Me.

Isaiah 63:12,

(Where is the) One leading by Moses' right hand with an arm of His beauty,
dividing waters from before them,
to make for Himself an everlasting name?

Jeremiah 17:5, cursed is the man who trusts in the arm of flesh, rather than in YHWH!

Jeremiah 21:5, YHWH promises to fight with His strong arm on behalf of the
Babylonians attacking Jerusalem!

Jeremiah 27:5, YHWH is depicted as saying with His outstretched arm he created the
earth. **Jeremiah 32:17,** similar;

Ezekiel 20:33, YHWH is depicted as swearing that with an outstretched arm He will be
King over Israel;

Ezekiel 20:34, He is also depicted as saying He will bring the Israelite out from the
nations where they are scattered with an outstretched arm;

Psalm 44:4^{Heb} / 3^{Eng} Israel did not win the land by its own arm, but by God's right hand and arm;

Psalm 71:18, the elderly psalmist wants to declare God's arm to the next generation;

Psalm 77:16^{Heb} / 15^{Eng}, with His arm, God redeemed His people;

Psalm 79:11, a prayer for God by His arm to preserve prisoners condemned to die;

Psalm 89:11^{Heb} / 10^{Eng},

You (YHWH) crushed Rahab like a pierced one;
with an arm of Your strength, You scattered Your enemies!

Psalm 89:14, YHWH has a mighty arm;

Psalm 89:22, YHWH promised of old to strengthen David;

Psalm 98:1, YHWH's right hand and set-apart arm have worked salvation for Him;

Job 40:9, Job is asked if he has an arm like El, the Supreme God.

6. **Occurrences of the Noun, שָׂכָר, Sakar, “Pay / Wages / Reward
in the Hebrew Bible**

Genesis 15:1,

After these words / things,
YHWH’s word was / came to Abram in the vision, saying:
You shall not be afraid, Abram;
I (am) a shield for you,
your exceedingly great pay / wages / reward!
(What does Abram get as a result of his obedience / trust in YHWH? YHWH
Himself! What could be greater pay / wages / reward than that?)

Genesis 30:18, Leah makes a play on the noun שָׂכָר, naming her child יִשָּׂאֵר,
“Issachar,” since she thought the child was here pay / wages / reward from God.

Genesis 30:28, Jacob is bargaining with Laban concerning what his “pay / wages” will
be for his work shepherding Laban’s flocks; **30:32, 33; 31:8** (twice), same.

Exodus 2:9, the pay / wages Pharaoh’s daughter will pay the Israelite woman raising
Moses;

Exodus 22:14^{Heb} / 15^{Eng}, what is paid for use of an animal;

Numbers 18:31, a “tithe of the tithes” offered by the Israelites will belong to the priests,
as their “pay / wages” for service in the tabernacle / moveable sanctuary.

Deuteronomy 15:18, when an Israelite frees a Hebrew slave, he must provide him
liberally with animals, grain, and wine, as “pay / wages” for the six years he has
served him.

Deuteronomy 24:15, the “pay / wages” of a poor person must be paid daily, before the
sun sets.

1 Kings 5:20^{Heb} / 6^{Eng}, Solomon agrees to pay Hiram whatever “wages” he sets for his
workers in cutting down cedars of Lebanon.

Isaiah 40:10

Look—my Lord YHWH with strength will come--
and His arm reigning for Him!
Look—His pay / wages / reward (is) with Him,
and His recompense (is) before Him!

Isaiah 62:11,

Look—YHWH has caused to be heard to (the) end of the earth:
Speak to Zion's daughter, Look, your salvation / deliverance came!
Look, your reward (is) with Him, and your recompense before Him!

Jeremiah 31:16,

In this way YHWH spoke:
Hold back your voice from crying and your eyes from tears!
Because there is pay / wages / reward for your labor--(it is) a saying of YHWH!
And they will return from (the) land of an enemy!

Ezekiel 29:18, YHWH tells Ezekiel that Nebuchadnezzar and his soldiers got no pay / wages / reward for their hard labor in fighting against Tyre.

Ezekiel 29:19, as pay / wages / reward for all their hard labor against Tyre, YHWH says that He will give them Egypt's wealth.
(If YHWH is depicted as paying / rewarding Israel for her labor, He is also depicted as paying / rewarding the Babylonian conqueror Nebuchadnezzar as well!)

Jonah 1:3, the price Jonah pays for passage on a ship from Joppa to Tarshish;

Zechariah 8:10 (twice), YHWH reminds the returned exiles that if former times there were no pay / wages / reward for the labor of men or animals; but now things will be better.

Zechariah 11:12 (twice), Zechariah becomes shepherd of a flock doomed to slaughter; he asks for his pay / wages / reward, and is given 30 pieces of silver;

Malachi 3:5, YHWH is against people who oppress their hired laborers in their pay / wages / reward;

Psalms 127:3,

Look—YHWH's inheritance (is) children;
(His) pay / wages / reward, fruit of the womb!

Ecclesiastes 4:9,

Better the two than the one,
for whom there will be a good pay / wages / reward in their labor!

Ecclesiastes 9:5

Because the living are knowing that they will die;
and the dead ones, they are not knowing anything!

And there is no more wages,
because their memory is forgotten.

1 Chronicles 11:35, a personal name; **26:4**, the name Issachar;

2 Chronicles 15:7, the prophet Azariah tells King Asa and the people of Judah and Benjamin:

And you (plural), be strong,
and do not let your hands sink / relax;
because there is pay / wages / reward to your labor!

7. **Occurrences of the Noun דְּמִוּת, “Likeness” in the Hebrew Bible**

Genesis 1:26,

And God said, Let us make humanity in our image, according to our likeness!
And they will rule over the sea’s fish, and over the heavens’ bird(s),
and over the animal(s), and over all the land / earth,
and over all the creepers, the one(s) creeping upon the land / earth!
(The text goes into explicit detail of the God-like role of humanity in ruling over
the earth!)

Genesis 5:1,

This (is a) scroll / book of humanity’s bringings-forth.
In (the) day of God’s creating humanity,
in God’s likeness He made him.

Genesis 5:3,

And Adam / (the) human was thirty and a hundred year(s) old.
And he gave birth in his likeness, according to his image;
and he called his name Seth.

2 Kings 16:10,

And the King Ahaz went to meet Tiglath Pileser, King of Assyria, (to) Dumascus
(sic.);
and he saw the altar which (was) in Damascus.
And the King Ahaz sent to Uriah the priest a likeness of the altar,
and its construction-pattern for all its construction.

Isaiah 13:4a,

A voice / sound of a crowd in the mountains—
likeness of a great people...

Isaiah 40:18,

And to whom will you (plural) liken El?
And what likeness, will you set in order for Him?

Ezekiel 1:5 (twice),

and from its [the Divine chariot in Ezekiel’s vision] midst a likeness of four live
animals,
and these, their appearance--likeness of a human to these.

Ezekiel 1:10a,

and likeness of their faces—faces of a human...

Ezekiel 1:13a,

and likeness of the live animals—their appearance like coals of fire...

Ezekiel 1:16, in description of the chariot's four wheels,

and one likeness to (the) four of them...

Ezekiel 1:22a,

and a likeness over (the) heads of the live animals—an expanse...

Ezekiel 1:26 (three times),

and from above the expanse which (was) over their head,
like an appearance of a sapphire stone,
a likeness of a throne;
and over the throne's likeness
a likeness like an appearance of a human
upon it, from above.

(Translations vary for this text which is unique in biblical literature for its attempt to depict what God looks like:

King James, “And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.”

Tanakh, “Above the expanse over their heads was the semblance of a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and on top, upon this semblance of a throne, there was the semblance of a human form.”

New Revised Standard, “ And above the dome over their heads there was something like a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a throne was something that seemed like a human form.”

New International, “Above the expanse over their heads was what looked like a throne of sapphire, and high above on the throne was a figure like that of a man.”

New Jerusalem, “Beyond the solid surface above their heads, there was what seemed like a sapphire, in the form of a throne. High above on the form of a throne was a form with the appearance of a human being.”

Rahfs, “like a vision / appearance of a sapphire stone, likeness of a throne over it, and upon the likeness of the throne a likeness, like a sight / appearance (synonym) of a person above.” (Note how guarded the language is, with so many “likes.”)

Ezekiel 1:28,

like an appearance of the rainbow which will be in the cloud on a day of the rain,
so (was the) appearance of the brightness all around;
it (was) an appearance of a likeness of YHWH's glorious radiance.
And I saw, and I fell upon my face;
and I heard a voice speaking:

Ezekiel 8:2a,

And I saw, and look—a likeness, like an appearance of fire...
(Instead of “fire,” some translations change the Hebrew noun **אֵשׁ**, “fire” to **אִישׁ**,
“a man,” as does the Greek translation with *ἀνδρός*, “of a man.”)

Ezekiel 10:1,

And I saw, and look—to / towards the expanse which (was) over (the) head of the
cherubim like a sapphire stone,
like the appearance of a likeness of a throne appeared over them.

Ezekiel 10:10,

and their appearance, one likeness for (the) four of them;
just as it would be—the wheel in (the) midst of the wheel.

Ezekiel 10:21,

Four, four faces to (each) one;
and four wings to (each) one;
and a likeness of hands of a human beneath their wings.

Ezekiel 10:22,

and (the) likeness of their faces,
they (were) the faces which I saw beside the Kebhar Canal,
their appearance and them--
each one to across his faces, the go.

Ezekiel 23:15, the prostitute Oholibah sees here lovers, the Chaldeans,

belted (with a) waist-cloth on their waists,
hanging down turbans on their heads;
appearance of officers, all of them,
likeness of sons of Babylon;
Chaldea (the) land of their birth.

Psalm 58:5,

They have a poison, like a likeness of a serpent's poison;
like a deaf venomous serpent will shut its ear.

Daniel 10:16a,

And look—like a likeness of a human's children, one touching upon my lips...

2 Chronicles 4:3, in a description of a huge metal bowl in the sanctuary:

and a likeness of oxen beneath it...

8. **Occurrences of the Phrase מִרִאשׁוֹ, “From First,” in the Hebrew Bible**

Numbers 23:9a, where Balaam says to Balak:

Because from (the) top of hills I will see him [Israel],
and from (the) hills I will behold him...

Deuteronomy 32:42,

I will make My arrows drunk with blood,
and My sword will devour flesh--
from (the) blood of (the) pierced / fatally wounded and captive(s),
from (the) head (of the) long-haired enemy!

Joshua 15:9a, a boundary that extends

from (the) top of the mountain.

2 Chronicles 25:12,

And ten thousand lives, children of Judah captured;
and they brought them to (the) top of the rock / cliff,
and they threw them from (the) top of the rock / cliff,
and all of them were burst open.

Proverbs 8:23, where Wisdom speaks:

From long-lasting time I was installed,
from (the) first, from ancient times of earth / land.
(Meaning, as the context shows, from the creation of the earth.)

Ecclesiastes 3:11,

The whole He made beautiful in its time;
also the long time He placed in their heart,
so that the human will not discover the work
which the God did, from first and until end.
(Meaning, from God's first work.)

Song of Solomon 4:8, where the male lover invites his female lover to come with him
from top of Senir and Hermon (two names of the mountain, one Amorite the
other Hebrew)

Isaiah 40:21,

Do they not know, do they not hear,
has it not been declared from (the) first to you people, have they not
understood,

(the) foundations of the earth?

(What is meant by “from (the) first” is not made clear; perhaps it means from the beginning times of their lives, when their parents taught them. Knight holds that it is a “technical term” used by **Deutero-Isaiah** to mean “from the time of Moses.”)

Isaiah 41:4,

Who did and made—

calling the generations from (the) beginning?

I, YHWH, first, and with (those) afterwards—I (am) He!

(Meaning, from the beginning of the human race.)

Isaiah 41:26,

Who declared from (the) first, and we will know?

And from beforehand, and we will say Right!

Also there is no one declaring,

also there is no one causing to hear,

also there is no one listening (to) your words!

(The phrase is parallel to “from beforehand;” it evidently means from the earliest existence of humanity.)

Isaiah 42:11,

Let the desert and its cities lift up (their voice);

villages (in which) Qedar lives!

Let the inhabitants of Sela cry aloud--

from (the) top of mountains let them cry aloud (synonym)!

Isaiah 48:16,

Draw near to Me; Listen to / hear this!

From (the) first I did not speak in the secrecy.

From (the) time of its happening, there I (am);

and now, my Lord YHWH sent me forth, and His Spirit.

(What “from the first” means here is indefinite, and translations vary:

King James, “from the beginning,” parallel to “from the time that it was”;

Tanakh, “From the beginning,” parallel to “From the time anything existed”;

New Revised Standard, “From the beginning,” parallel to “from the time it came to be”;

New International, “From the first announcement,” followed by “at the time it happens”;

New Jerusalem, “from the first,” followed by “when it happened”;

Rahlf's, “not from (the) beginning / first did I speak in secret; neither in a dark place of earth when it happened...”

(We take it to mean “from the first time I revealed Myself to you.” Knight holds that this means “from the time of Moses and the *Torah*,” but YHWH had revealed Himself much earlier than that, as depicted in **Genesis 1-12**)

Ezekiel 17:22, the phrase

from (the) top of its twig.

9.

**Additional Passages to Isaiah 40:22b
for Imagery of Stretching Out the Heavens:**

Isaiah 42:5,

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

Isaiah 44:24,

In this way YHWH spoke, your Redeemer / Next-of-Kin
–and He formed you from (the) womb:
I–YHWH, One making everything
stretching out heavens by Myself,
hammering out the earth–Who (was) with Me?

Isaiah 45:12; where YHWH states,

I, I made (the) earth,
and humanity upon it, I created;
I, My hands stretched out (the) heavens
and all its (heavenly) army I commanded.

Isaiah 51:13,

And you forgot YHWH your Maker--
Who stretches out (the) heavens,
and founds / establishes (the) earth.
And you were constantly in dread all the day
from before (the) rage of the oppressor,
just like one setting himself to destroy--
and where (is) the oppressor's rage?

Jeremiah 10:12, Jeremiah is told to say that YHWH is:

One making earth / land in / by His strength,
preparing (the inhabited) earth in / by His wisdom,
and in / by His understanding He stretched out heavens. **Jeremiah 51:15,** same;

Zechariah 12:1b,

(It is) a saying of YHWH,
One stretching our heavens,

and founding earth / land,
and forming a human's spirit in his inward part.

2 Samuel 22:10,

And He stretched out heavens and came down;
and a heavy cloud beneath His feet. **Psalm 18:10**, same.

Job 9:8, where Job describes לַיְהוָה, God, as:

One stretching out heavens by Himself,
and walking upon heights of (the) sea...

Psalm 104:2, which states that YHWH:

Wraps Himself (with) light like the robe;
stretches out heavens like the curtain.

Psalm 144:5,

YHWH, stretch out your heavens, and You will come down!
Touch on mountains, and they will smoke!

10. Occurrences of the Root שפט in the Book of Isaiah

Isaiah 1:17,

Learn to do good!
Seek after justice!
Pronounce blessed (?) *chamots*.
Act as judges (who deliver the) orphan!
Take up the cause of (the) widow!

Isaiah 1:23,

Your princes—rebellious men,
and companions of thieves;
all of it / them loving a bribe,
and pursuing rewards!
They do not seek justice (for the) orphan,
and a widow's case will not come to them!

Isaiah 1:26,

And I will cause your judges to return, like at the first;
and your counselors like in the beginning;
afterwards, it will called to you, the city of right-relationship,
faithful city.

Isaiah 2:4,

And He will judge between the nations;
and He will decide / reprove / rebuke for many peoples.
And they will beat their swords into pieces,
and their spears into pruning knives.
Nation will not lift up a sword to a nation,
and they will not again learn war!

Isaiah 3:2,

Mighty man and man of war,
judge and spokesperson / prophet,
and one divining, and elderly person / official,

Isaiah 5:3,

And now, inhabitant of Jerusalem, and man / person of Judah,
judge now / please between Me and My vineyard.

Isaiah 11:3,

And his delight will be in YHWH's trembling respect.
And he will not judge / govern by his eyes' sight,
nor will he decide by his ear's hearing.

Isaiah 11:4,

But he will judge / govern poor people through right relationships;
and he will decide for earth's humble people through what is right.
And he will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
and with his lips' breath he will put wickedness to death!

Isaiah 16:5,

and a throne will be established in the steadfast-love;
and he / one will sit upon it in true-faithfulness,
in David's tent,
one judging, and seeking justice
and swift (to) right relationship.

Isaiah 33:22,

Because YHWH (is) our Judge;
YHWH (is) our statute-giver;
YHWH is our King.
He will save / deliver us.

Isaiah 40:23,

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

Isaiah 43:26

Cause Me to remember;
let us enter into judgment together!
You (singular) relate / tell,
so that you will be justified!

Isaiah 51:5,

My right-relationship (is) near;
My salvation / deliverance went forth.
And My arm will judge peoples!
For me coastlands wait,
and for My arm they hope.

Isaiah 59:4,

There is no one entering law-suit in right-relationship;
and there is no one going to law in true-faithfulness;
trusting upon confusion / chaos,
and speaking emptiness / vanity,
conceiving trouble,
and giving birth to wickedness!

Isaiah 66:16,

Because with the fire YHWH (is) judging,
and with His sword--all flesh,
and the one(s) slain (by) YHWH will be multiplied.

11. Occurrences of the Noun תְּהוֹ, Tohu in the Hebrew Bible

Genesis 1:2, where it is said concerning the condition of the world upon its creation by God:

And the earth was / became formless and chaotic,
and darkness over the deep-ocean's surface,
and God's Spirit, hovering
over the surface of the waters.

Translations of the phrase תְּהוֹ וְבֵהוּ vary: **King James**, "without form and void"; **Tanakh**, "unformed and void"; **New Revised Standard** and **New Jerusalem**, "a formless void"; **New International**, "formless and empty"; Greek, *ἀόρατος καὶ ἀκατασκεύαστος*, 'unseen and unformed'. The verse is descriptive of the original condition of the earth, before God's spoken commands bring order and life to the earth.

Deuteronomy 32:10,

He found him (Jacob) in a land of wilderness--
and in a howling chaos of waste.

He surrounded him, He understood him,
He guarded him like a pupil of His eye!

Translations of line 3 vary: **King James**, 'the waste howling wilderness'; **Tanakh**, 'an empty howling waste'; **New Jerusalem**, 'the howling expanses of the wastelands.'

1 Samuel 12:21 (twice), where Samuel tells the people of Israel Samuel tells the people to serve YHWH with all their heart,

And you (plural) shall not turn aside;
because (following) after the chaos / formlessness
(are) those things which will not profit and will not deliver / save,
because they (are) chaos / formlessness!

[Translations of the second line vary: **King James**, 'for *then* should ye go after vain *things*'; **Tanakh** 'to follow worthless things'; **New Revised Standard**, 'after useless things'; translations of the noun תְּהוֹ / *tohu* vary: [**King James**, 'vain'; **Tanakh** 'useless'; **New Revised Standard** 'worthless.'

Isaiah 24:10,

A city of chaos / formlessness was broken;
every house was shut up from entering.

Translations of the first line vary: **King James**, 'The city of confusion'; **Tanakh**, 'Towns are broken, empty'; **New Revised Standard**, 'The city of chaos'; **New International**, 'The ruined city'; **New Jerusalem**, 'The city of nothingness.'

Isaiah 29:21,

Those bringing a human being into condemnation with a word,
and for the one reproving in the gate they lay a snare,
and they thrust aside a rightly-related person into the תְּהוֹ / *tohu* confusion /
chaos.

Translations of the last phrase vary: **King James**, 'for a thing of nought';
Tanakh, 'by falsehood'; **New Revised Standard**, 'without grounds'; **New
International**, 'with false testimony'; **New Jerusalem**, 'groundlessly.'

Isaiah 34:11, concerning the land of Edom,

And pelican and porcupine will possess / inherit it,
and owl and raven will dwell in it.

And He will lift up over it a line / string of תְּהוֹ / *tohu* chaos and confusion.
and stone weights of בְּהוֹ / *bohu*, emptiness.

Translations of the last phrase in the third line vary: **King James & New
Revised Standard**, 'the line of confusion'; **Tanakh**, 'a line of chaos'; **New
International** and **New Jerusalem**, 'the measuring line of chaos'; translations of
the fourth line vary: **King James** 'stones of emptiness'; **Tanakh**, 'weights of
emptiness'; **New Revised Standard**, 'the plummet of chaos'; **New Internation-
al**, 'the plumb line of desolation'; and **New Jerusalem**, 'the plumb line of
emptiness.'

Isaiah 40:17,

All the nations (are) like nothing before Him;
less than nothing and תְּהוֹ / *tohu*, confusion / chaos.

Translations of the last line vary: **King James**, 'less than nothing and vanity';
Tanakh, 'less than nothing'; **New Revised Standard**, 'less than nothing and
emptiness'; **New International**, 'worthless and less than nothing'; **New Jerusa-
lem**, 'nothingness and emptiness.'

Isaiah 40:23, YHWH is:

The One giving / placing rulers to nothing;
judges of earth / land He made like תְּהוֹ / *tohu* confusion / chaos.

Translations of the last word vary: **King James**, 'as vanity'; **Tanakh** and **New
Revised Standard**, 'as nothing'; **New International**, 'to nothing'; **New Jerusa-
lem**, 'to mere emptiness.'

Isaiah 41:29, YHWH says concerning human-made idols,

Look! All of them, trouble / sorrow / wickedness!
Their works—nothing!

Wind and תְּהוֹמוֹת / *tohu*, confusion / chaos.

Translations of the last line vary: **King James**, 'wind and confusion'; **Tanakh** 'naught and nil'; **New Revised Standard**, 'empty wind'; **New International**, 'wind and confusion'; **New Jerusalem**, 'wind and emptiness.'

Isaiah 44:9,

Those forming an idol / image—all of them are תְּהוֹמוֹת / *tohu*, confusion / chaos.
and their desires, will not profit.

And their witnesses, they will not / do not see,
and they will not / do not know, so that they are put to shame.

Translations of *tohu* at the end of the first line vary: **King James**, 'vanity';
Tanakh 'to no purpose'; **New Revised Standard & New International**, 'nothing';
New Jerusalem, 'nothingness.'

Isaiah 45:18-19,

18 Because in this way YHWH spoke:

One creating the heavens, He (is);
the God forming the earth and making it, He (is);
the One establishing it, not *tohu*, confusion / chaos, He created it
for the habitation / dwelling He formed it—
I, YHWH—and there is not Another!

The phrase in the fourth line, "not *tohu*," has varying translations: **King James**,
'not in vain'; **Tanakh**, 'not a waste'; **New Revised Standard**, 'not a chaos',' **New
International**, 'not to be empty'; **New Jerusalem**, 'not to be chaos.'

19 Not in the secret place did I speak;

in a place, a land of darkness, I did not speak (synonym).
To Jacob's seed / descendant(s)—Seek Me *tohu*, confusion / chaos!
I, YHWH am speaking,
declaring right-relationship(s), upright things!

The phrase at the end of line 3 is given varying translations: **King James** and
New International, 'in vain' **Tanakh**, 'in a wasteland'; **New Revised Standard**
and **New Jerusalem**, 'in chaos.'

Isaiah 49:4a,

And I, I said, For emptiness I toiled / grew weary!

For *tohu* / confusion / chaos and a vapor / breath, I used up my strength!
Translations of the first phrase in line 2 vary: **King James**, 'for nought'; **Tanakh**,
'for empty breath']; **New Revised Standard** and **New Jerusalem**, 'for nothing';
New International, 'in vain.']

Isaiah 59:4,

There is no one calling out in / with righteousness,
and there is no one judging in / with true faithfulness.

They are) trusting upon **tohu** / confusion / chaos
and speaking emptiness / vanity;
conceiving trouble,
and giving birth (to) wickedness / sorrow!

Translation of **tohu** in the third line vary: **King James**, 'vanity'; **Tanakh**, 'emptiness'; **New Revised Standard**, 'empty pleas'; **New International**, 'empty arguments'; **New Jerusalem**, 'empty words.'

Jeremiah 4:23, Jeremiah sees a reversal of creation as in **Genesis 1**:

I saw the earth / land,
and look—**tohu wabohu** confusion / chaos and emptiness;
and to the heavens,
and their light was not / was gone!

Translations of the phrase **tohu wabohu** in the second line vary: most are identical to their translation of **Genesis 1:2**, except **New Revised Standard**, which has "waste and void," and **New Jerusalem** which has 'a formless waste.'

Psalms 107:40, YHWH

(Is) One Pouring contempt upon noble people,
and causes them to go astray in **tohu** – confusion / chaos.

Translations of the last word vary: **King James**, 'in the wilderness'; **Tanakh**, 'in deserts'; **New Revised Standard** and **New Jerusalem**, 'in wastes'; **New International** 'in a waste.'

Job 6:18,

Travelers / caravans turn aside their way / path,
they went up into **tohu** / confusion / chaos, and they perished!

Translations of the phrase in line 2 vary: **King James**, 'to nothing'; **Tanakh**, 'into the desert'; others, 'into the waste / wastelands.'

Job 12:24, where Job says that God

Takes away (the) heart / mind of (the) heads of the land's / earth's people,
and causes them to go astray into **tohu**, confusion / chaos not (a right)
way / road.

Translations of the last phrase vary: **King James**, 'a wilderness *where there is* no way'; **Tanakh** and others, 'in a trackless waste.'

Job 26:7,

He stretches out (the) north upon **tohu**, confusion / chaos,
hanging earth / land upon nothingness.

Translations of "upon **tohu**" vary: **King James**, 'the empty place'; **Tanakh**, 'chaos'; **New Revised Standard**, 'the void'; **New International**, 'empty space.'

12. **Occurrences of the Name for YHWH, קדוּשׁ, “Set-apart One,” “Holy One”
in Isaiah and Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible:**

Isaiah 1:4, (Set-apart One of Israel);

Isaiah 5:16, (The El / Supreme God, the Set-apart One);

Isaiah 5:19, (Set-apart One of Israel);

Isaiah 5:24, (Set-apart One of Israel);

Isaiah 6:3, (Set-apart, Set-apart, Set-apart, YHWH of Armies);

Isaiah 10:17, (Israel’s Set-apart One);

Isaiah 10:20, (YHWH, Set-apart One of Israel);

Isaiah 12:6, (Set-apart One of Israel);

Isaiah 17:7, (Set-apart One of Israel);

Isaiah 29:19, (Set-apart One of Israel);

Isaiah 29:23, (Set-apart One of Jacob);

Isaiah 30:11, (Set-apart One of Israel);

Isaiah 30:12, (Set-apart One of Israel);

Isaiah 30:15, (my Lord YHWH, Set-apart One of Israel);

Isaiah 31:1, (Set-apart One of Israel);

Isaiah 40:25, (Set-apart One);

Isaiah 41:14, (your Redeemer, and Set-apart One of Israel);

Isaiah 41:16, (you will rejoice in the YHWH, in Set-apart One of Israel);

Isaiah 41:20, (Set-apart One of Israel);

Isaiah 43:3, (YHWH your God, Set-apart One of Israel);

Isaiah 43:14, (YHWH your [plural] Redeemer, Set-apart One of Israel);

Isaiah 43:15, (YHWH, your [plural] Set-apart One);

Isaiah 45:11, (YHWH, Set-apart One of Israel);

Isaiah 47:4, (Set-apart One of Israel);

Isaiah 48:17, (YHWH your [singular] Set-apart One of Israel);

Isaiah 49:7, (YHWH, One redeeming Israel, his Set-apart One);

Isaiah 54:5, (your [singular] Redeemer, Set-apart One of Israel, God of all the earth);

Isaiah 55:5, (Set-apart One of Israel);

Isaiah 60:9, (Set-apart One of Israel);

Isaiah 60:14, (Set-apart One of Israel);

2 Kings 19:22, (Set-apart One of Israel);

Jeremiah 50:29, (Set-apart One of Israel);

Jeremiah 51:5, (Set-apart One of Israel);

Psalms 71:22, (Set-apart One of Israel);

Psalms 78:41, (Set-apart One of Israel);

Psalms 89:19, (Set-apart One of Israel);

Habakkuk 3:3, (Set-apart One from Mount Paran);

Job 6:10, (Set-apart One);

Hosea 12:1, (עַם-קְדוֹשִׁים נֶאֱמָן), Judah is confirmed / established with Set-apart Ones);

Proverbs 9:10, (knowledge of Set-apart Ones is understanding);

Proverbs 30:3, (and knowledge of Set-apart Ones I will / would know).

13. **Occurrences of the Root נגע “Grow Weary” in the Hebrew Bible**

Joshua 7:3, of growing weary in battle;

Joshua 24:13, wearisome labor on the land;

2 Samuel 23:10, Eleazar’s hand grew weary in battle with the sword;

Isaiah 40:28 (here), YHWH does not grow weary;

Isaiah 40:30, even youths grow weary;

Isaiah 40:31, those who wait for YHWH will not grow weary;

Isaiah 43:22, YHWH says that Israel has grown weary of Him;

Isaiah 43:23, YHWH has not wearied Israel with requests for incense-offerings;

Isaiah 43:24, Israel has wearied YHWH with her guilts / iniquities;

Isaiah 47:12, Babylon has labored wearily with her sorceries, from her youth; **47:15**, same;

Isaiah 49:4, YHWH servant claims he has labored wearily for nothing;

Isaiah 57:10, the prostitute Israel has gone wearily on her way;

Isaiah 62:8, YHWH promises that His people will no longer labor wearily for wine which they cannot drink.

Isaiah 65:23, in the new heavens and new earth YHWH people will not labor wearily in vain;

Jeremiah 45:3, Baruch complains that he is weary with his groaning;

Jeremiah 51:58, the Babylonians labor wearily for nothing;

Habakkuk 2:13, it is from YHWH that the nations labor wearily for nothing;

Malachi 2:17 (twice), the returned Israelites have wearied YHWH with their words;

Psalms 6:7^{Heb} / 6^{Eng}, the psalmist has grown weary with his moaning;

Psalms 69:4^{Heb} / 3^{Eng}, the psalmist has grown weary with his crying out to God;

Job 9:29, Job knows that he will be condemned; why then does he labor wearily for nothing?

Proverbs 23:4a, do not labor wearily to get rich;

Ecclesiastes 10:15, the labor of a foolish person wearies him;

Lamentations 5:5, the survivors of Jerusalem's destruction are weary because of their pursuers.

14.

Dispensationalism

“Dispensationalism is a Christian evangelical, futurist, Biblical interpretation that believes that God has related to human beings in different ways under different Biblical covenants in a series of ‘dispensations,’ or periods in history.

“As a system, dispensationalism is expounded in the writings of John Nelson Darby (1800–82) and the Plymouth Brethren movement, and propagated through works such as Cyrus Scofield's **Scofield Reference Bible**.

“The theology of dispensationalism consists of a distinctive eschatological end times perspective, as all dispensationalists hold to premillennialism and most hold to a pretribulation rapture. Dispensationalists believe that the nation of Israel is distinct from the Christian Church, and that God has yet to fulfill his promises to national Israel. These promises include the land promises, which in the future world to come result in a millennial kingdom and Third Temple where Christ, upon his return, will rule the world from Jerusalem for a thousand years. In other areas of theology, dispensationalists hold to a wide range of beliefs within the evangelical and fundamentalist spectrum.”
(from **Wikipedia**, 7/15/2015)

