

Isaiah Chapter 43, Hebrew Text with Translation and Footnotes

43:1¹ וְעַתָּה כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה:

¹Alexander states that “The main subject of **chapter 43** is the true relation of Israel to [YHWH], and its application in the way both of warning and encouragement...

“The doctrine taught is that their segregation from the rest of men, as a peculiar people, was an act of sovereignty, independent of all merit in themselves, and not even intended for their benefit exclusively, but for the accomplishment of God’s gracious purposes respecting men in general. The inferences drawn from this fact are, that Israel would certainly escape the dangers which environed him, however imminent, and on the other hand that he must suffer for his unfaithfulness to God. In illustration of these truths, the Prophet introduces several historical allusions and specific prophecies, the most striking of the former having respect to the exodus from Egypt, and of the latter to the fall of Babylon. It is important to the just interpretation of the chapter that these parts of it should be seen in their true light and proportion, as incidental illustrations, not as the main subject of prophecy, which...is the general relation between God and His ancient people, and His mode of dealing with them, not at one time but at all times.

“Israel is the peculiar people of [YHWH], cherished and favored at the expense of other nations (**verses 1-4**). But these are one day to become partakers of the same advantages (**verses 5-9**). The proofs of the Divine protection are afforded by the history of Israel (**verses 10-13**). One of the most remarkable, yet future, is the downfall of Babylon and the liberation of the exiles (**verses 14-15**). An analogous example in more ancient times was the deliverance from Egypt (**verses 16-17**). But both these instances shall be forgotten in comparison with the great change which awaits the church hereafter (**verses 18-21**). Of all these distinguishing favors none was owing to the merit of the people, but all to the sovereign grace of God (**verses 22-25**). The people were not only destitute of merit, but deserving of punishment, which they had experienced and must experience gain (**verses 26-28**).” (Pp. 146-47)

Slotki comments on **verses 1-8** that “The section is contrasted with **verses 18-25** of the previous chapter. God, it is there declared, has subjected Israel to humiliation and exile as a punishment for his sins. Here Israel is assured that, despite all this, he is still the beloved people of God, and that a bright future is in store for him. Israel will pass unscathed through fire and water, mighty nations will take his place in bondage and Israel’s scattered children will be gathered from the farthest corners of the earth and brought back to their homeland.” (P. 205)

North entitles **verses 1-7** “Israel, Yahweh’s Family, Ransomed and Repatriated [Sent Back to Their Own Country].”

He comments that “Yahweh, Who created Israel, will protect His people in all perils that threaten them. He will give the rich lands of Africa as the price of their freedom, and gather them from all the countries to which they have been dispersed.” (P.

(continued...)

בְּרֵאשִׁית יַעֲקֹב וַיְצַדֵּךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל
אֶל-תִּירָא כִּי גֹאֲלִתִּיךְ
קָרָאתִי בְּשֵׁמֶךְ לִי-אֲתָהּ:

But now,^{2, 1} in this way YHWH spoke,

¹(...continued)
119)

Knight comments on **chapter 43** that “Theologically speaking, this is another high-ly significant chapter. It contains the roots of much of our Christian theology. For we are consistently to keep in mind that while Deutero-Isaiah addresses his contemporaries in and through a historical situation of pain and sorrow, he is also preaching about the meaning and significance of those same events. Thus he is here declaring the mind of God upon them—and that is theology.” (P. 59)

Oswalt comments on **verses 1-7**, “But now, God says, a new day is at hand. God will act on behalf of His chosen people out of pure grace. Although the fire had once burned them (**42:25**), it will not do so again (**43:2**). This will not be because of anything they have done. It is not said that they have become more perceptive or more obedient; nor is God’s salvation made conditional on their repentance. Isaiah simply announces that God’s people need not fear that His acts of punishment signal a negation of their election or a suspension of God’s loving care.” (P. 136)

He goes on in a footnote to say this does not mean “eternal security of the believer,” since the promise only has to do with the election of the nation, not the individuals in it. This comes from a dogmatic theologian, who imagines that every line in **Isaiah** is teaching “doctrine,” and everything said has to be in harmony with everything said elsewhere in the **Bible**—for us, an impossible view. We think the prophet is offering hope to a people who have suffered terribly, and doubt that dogmatic conclusions should be drawn from such an offer.

In the church I grew up in, our ministers constantly preached to us on Sunday mornings, Sunday nights and Wednesday nights with “doctrinal statements” about what was necessary for our salvation. But when deaths occurred, they turned from such doctrinal requirements to passages such as **Psalms 23**, to offer hope to the families of the deceased, and refrained from mentioning church doctrines that might detract from any hope the mourners might have. This passage in **Isaiah 43:1-2** could also be used in such a way, although I do not remember it ever being used in funerals. What do you think? On thing seems obvious—**Isaiah 43:1-3** can be seen as illustrated by **Daniel 3**, with its story of the three Hebrew young men thrown into the fiery furnace.

²We translate with the disjunctive *waw*, “but” instead of “and.”

(continued...)

your Creator, O Jacob, and your Former, O Israel:

²(...continued)

The phrase, וְעַתָּה, “and / but now,” occurs some 279 times in the **Hebrew Bible**, and is found 15 times in **Isaiah**, at **1:21; 5:3, 5; 16:14; 28:22; 36:8, 10; 37:20; 43:1; 44:1; 47:8; 48:16; 49:5; 52:5** and **64:7 / 8**.

Oswalt states that the phrase either indicates “a contrast between a former situation and a present one, or a present conclusion growing out of a description of what has been the case in the past.” (P. 136)

North states that “The assurance that flames will *not* now scorch is intended as a contrast with the flames that *did* scorch (**42:25**). The hopeless plight in which the exiles now find themselves is to be followed by a future rich in promise. We expect Yahweh to say ‘Rejoice!’ Instead, as if remembering their despondency, he says *Fear not!* (repeat-ed in **verse 5**, compare **40:9; 41:10, 13-14, 44:2, 54:4**—the words run like a thread through the prophecy).” (P. 119)

We think this is overstatement, when North speaks about “the hopeless plight in which the exiles now find themselves.” Again we observe that **Jeremiah 29:4-9** envisions the exiles as being able to build houses and plant gardens, as their children married and their families increased, finding their own welfare in the welfare of Babylon. And the fact is that when Cyrus offered the exiles the freedom to return to their homeland, many of them refused the offer, evidently considering themselves better off in Babylon. The Jewish communities in Babylonia thrived for centuries, and following the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in 70 C.E., Babylonia became the home of Jewish academies and scholarship, resulting in the **Babylonian Talmud**. See our end-note 1.

Knight comments on this phrase, ‘But now!’ that “In contrast to what has just been said (**chapter 42**), God will declare a great new thing. First, the significance arising from God’s arousing of Cyrus from the north is that Israel has no grounds whatsoever for lack of faith...

“Think, Israel! First I *created* you...Next I *formed* you...After that...I *redeemed* you. Is that not sufficient reason to know no fear, even in...Babylon? Your case is like that of a slave girl for whom her master has paid the necessary price in the first place, but who has run away from home, and has turned up eventually in the slave market.’ There the Master has recognized His servant in all her misery, and has called out to her: Israel...you are mine! even as she stands shivering in her nakedness. Thereupon he pays for her a second time in order to be able to take her home where she belongs. It is true that Israel had paid double for all her sins (**40:2**); but now it is apparent that God too has paid double, so to speak, in order to bring Israel back home to Himself once more.” (P. 59)

You shall not be afraid, because I redeemed / acted as next-of-kin for you;³

³Alexander states that “the meaning of this clause is, You [Israel] are not like the other nations of the earth, for I have purchased or redeemed you to Myself as a peculiar people.” (P. 148)

Knight comments that “We are bound to take serious theological note of Deutero-Isaiah’s use of the past tense in the verb גָּאַלְתִּיךָ, ‘I have redeemed you.’ This past tense is not a ‘prophetic future,’ as some suppose it must be, pointing to a redemption still to come...

“The Christian then should avoid all such ideas as ‘The Christian Faith is 2,000 years old’; or, without qualification, ‘Christ is the world’s Redeemer today because of what he did two thousand years ago.’ The **New Testament** sees the person and work of Christ quite otherwise. It declares him to be the word that was in the beginning with God (**John 1:1**); to be the first-born of all creation, for in him all things were created (**Colossians 1:15**. The **Fourth Gospel** believes that these words represent reality: ‘Before Abraham was, I am’ (**John 8:58**); ‘I and the Father are one’ (**John 10:30**)...

“With the **New Testament**, therefore, we should gladly accept that same reality which Deutero-Isaiah had truly grasped, that the redemptive love of the ‘I am,’ of the word, has always been operative, in all ages, in that God bestowed His covenant upon man in the begin-ning. Thus in Christ what we behold is the *epiphany* (historical event) of His redemptive love, the appearing in the flesh ἐφάπαξ, *ephapax* [once for all], as Paul declares, ‘once and for all,’ of the eternal reality of God’s saving love. The cross and resurrection are to be seen as effective both backwards in time before the birth of Christ, as well as in time far beyond his death...

“Thus ‘Fear not, for I have redeemed you’ was as true of the saving love of God in Christ in Deutero-Isaiah’s day as it was in Paul’s.

“God does not promise, however, to remove His beloved from a world of floods and diseases, of trials and tribulations. What He does promise is that when Israel passes through these things, He will walk beside her...

“The story of the three representative Israelites walking in the fires of the exile in Babylon without being burned, and finding a Fourth walking beside them (**Daniel 3**) may well be a *midrash* [exegesis, commentary] upon the verse that is before us...Moreover, this is a constant theme in the **Old Testament**, as we see from such passages as **Deuteronomy 31:6-8** [‘...It is the Lord your God Who goes before you; He will not leave you or forsake you’]; **Psalms 66:12** [‘You let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and water; yet You have brought us out to a place of abundance’] and **Psalms 91** [throughout]...

“Israel always sits precariously on the verge of chaos. Yet she is held back from falling into the abyss of chaos only by the might and the grace of God, for He has prom-

(continued...)

I called⁴ by your name; you belong to Me!⁵

³(...continued)

ised never again to allow the floods to overwhelm and destroy the earth as would be the proper expression of His righteous judgment.” (Pp. 60-61)

⁴Where our Hebrew text has קָרָאתִי, “I called,” the ancient versions interpolate the 2nd person pronominal suffix. Compare **Rahlfs**, ἐκάλεσά σε, “I called you.”

Oswalt observes that “Scholarly opinions vary considerably as to the significance of the perfect tenses of *redeemed* and *called*. Some believe that both are the so-called prophetic perfect in which future action is seen as already completed...Others see both as completed actions in the past...seeing the act of redemption as having occurred at the exodus...Others see ‘redeemed’ as prophetic and called’ as past, with present and future redemption springing from past calling... [Another scholar] sees both perfect verbs as representing timeless fact, true in all eras.” (P. 136)

We think this kind of variance in understanding of Hebrew tenses arises from the conviction that every statement in the **Book of Isaiah** is to be understood as “doctrine,” and to be harmonized with everything said elsewhere in the **Bible** concerning the subject—a hopeless procedure in our view.

We think the past tense should be taken seriously. YHWH is the Creator and Redeemer— and His creative action and saving / delivering redemption has occurred in humanity’s history, in the life of every people and nation, including every individual. If you reject this view, Who do you say has given the breathe of life to human beings? Who do you say is responsible for their being formed in the womb of their mother? Who do you think has been responsible for their being saved / delivered from all sorts of dangers and catastrophes in their history? What are you—a “theist” when it comes to the history of Israel, but an “atheist” when it comes to the history of others?

Remember **Amos 9:7**, where YHWH is depicted as affirming that He has been active in the history of the Philistines and Syrians, just as He has been in the history of Israel, and that the people of Cush / Ethiopia are as precious to Him as are the Israelites.

We believe that YHWH has always been, and always will be the Creator and Redeemer of Israel and of humanity. What do you think?

⁵Slotki holds that the perfect verbs “I redeemed” and “I called” are “prophetic perfects, expressing a future action with absolute certainty as if it had already taken place.” (P. 205)

Is Slotki correct? Or do the perfect verbs depict what YHWH has done in the past, in His redemption and calling of Israel to be His people? We think the perfect verbs are referring to Israel’s past, which Israel has failed to understand.

(continued...)

⁵(...continued)

Alexander holds that the phrase “to call by name” “includes the ideas of specific designation, public announcement, and solemn consecration to a certain work.” (P. 148)

Alexander comments on **verse 1** as a whole, that “The simplest and most satisfactory [understanding of the relationship between this verse and the surrounding material] is that, in this whole context, he is accounting for the sufferings of Israel and his preservation from destruction on the same ground, namely, that [YHWH] had chosen them and therefore would preserve them, but that they were unfaithful and must therefore suffer.” (P. 147)

Oswalt states that “Whatever Israel’s blindness and insensitivity may have been in the past, God says they are to forget that and concentrate on one fact: Whose they are.” (P. 137) We suspect that it would be better to say the one fact is “Who they are.”

Oswalt goes on to say, “It is a call not to be afraid: *Do not fear*. This expression points out what would be the deepest pain of the exile, the fear that Israel’s sense of identity, the glory of having been a particular people called out by the eternal God, was after all just a fantasy. Much can be endured if we have a sense of destiny borne out of particular identity. Strip that away from us and we think going on in life is hardly worth it. The repeated ‘do not fear’ (**41:10, 13, 14; 43:1, 5; 44:1, 8**) particularly addresses this issue: the fear that God has forsaken them, or worse, never was their in the first place.

“In the language of **Genesis 1** and **2** Isaiah reminds the people that just as God created and shaped the physical universe, so He brought them into existence as His Own people. [But **Genesis 1-2** makes that same claim for every person on earth!] Just as He created the heavens and shaped the earth, so He has created Israel [we add, hum-anity]; and do you think He will forget us?’ The use of the paired name, Jacob / Israel, underlines both the tenderness of God toward the people and also the sense of their being a creation of God. In Egypt and at Sinai God had taken a disparate people whose only commonality was an ancestor and had made them into a nation. They had not be-come a nation through the long slow processes of history [but is not the story of Abra-ham, Isaac, Jacob and his twelve sons, and the long period of captivity in Egypt as the descendants of the Patriarchs grew into a large nation a ‘long slow process of history’?], but had been forged in an instant (comparatively) through the will and activity of God alone.” (Pp. 137-38)

What do you think? Do you agree that this promise to Israel, made on the basis of God’s creation, applies just as well to all humanity as well as it does to Jacob / Israel?

⁶Oswalt comments on **verse 2** that “This verse expresses the consequence of belonging to God: preservation in the midst of trials because of God’s presence...God

(continued...)

וּבְנֵהֲרוֹת לֹא יִשְׁטָפוּךָ
כִּי־תֵלֵךְ בַּמַּו־אֵשׁ לֹא תִכּוֹה
וְלִהְבֵה לֹא תִבְעַר־בְּךָ:

If you cross over in the water, I am with you;
and in the rivers, they will not overflow you.
If you walk through fire, you will not be burned,
and a flame will not burn you!⁷

⁶(...continued)

does not say that there are no floods or forest fires, but He does promise that one can survive them because of His presence...Note the repetition of the phrase ‘God was with him’ in the Joseph story.”

He adds that “The nature of the difficulties described makes evident that no single historical circumstance is in view. While the Babylonian captivity would certainly qualify as a flood and a fire, other experiences in Israel’s history, both before and after that hor-rific event, would also qualify. But the author is speaking generally and establishing a principle that would apply to all such circumstances, not just to one.” (Pp. 138-39)

Compare in the **New Testament, Romans 8:31-39.**

Knight comments that “the *waters* symbolize several ideas for Israel, ever since God rescued her from the waters of the Red Sea. For example, the waters referred to may be the waters of judgment, as the Red Sea undoubtedly was for Egypt. Or again, the theological significance of waters is frequently linked in prophetic thought with the waters of chaos that rage continually both above the sky and underneath earth (compare **Exodus 20:4; Isaiah 51:10** [Do these texts say what Knight is saying? We doubt it])... Fire represents the holy and dreadful presence of God, present like a refiner’s fire. It is interesting to realize that the prophets of the **Old Testament** drew no line between God’s living, guiding presence with Israel in the burning zeal of His love, and His judgment upon Israel’s sin which was constantly pictured in terms of burning fire. This is because they believed that God is responsible for all that happens in human life. Thus trials and vexations are His holy presence...Thus he can exclaim with confidence that when you walk through fire you shall not be burned.” (P. 61)

⁷Slotki holds that *waters...rivers...fire...flame* are all “metaphors for perilous situations and conditions. Israel’s history proves this to be only too true.” (P. 205) Alexander agrees, stating that “Fire and water are common figures for calamity and danger.” (P. 148)

(continued...)

43:3⁸ כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ

קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל מוֹשִׁיעֶךָ

נִתַּתִּי כַפְרֶךָ מִצְרַיִם

כּוֹשׁ וְסָבָא תַחַתֶּיךָ:

Because⁹ I (am) YHWH your God,

Israel's Set-apart One, your Savior!¹⁰

I gave your ransom--Egypt;

⁷(...continued)

North likewise states that “Fire and water are mentioned together in **Psalm 66:12** as embracing extremes of danger...The passing through waters may be reminiscent of the exodus, and the story of the burning fiery furnace (**Daniel 3**) is probably a development from the motif of passing unscathed through fire.” (P. 120)

Alexander observes that “It is the genius of the [Hebrew] language to delight in short independent clauses, where we use more involved and complicated periods.” (P. 148)

I certainly agree with this; and it is the reason that in my translations I began some years ago to separate the short, independent clauses from one another, which makes for much easier reading and understanding, even in passages not considered “poetry.”

⁸Oswalt comments on **verse 3** that “He Who has named Israel now gives His Own names to Israel as indicators of the character that will support His people through what-ever may come on them in years ahead. In all three cases, the emphasis is on whose He is: *your God, of Israel, your Savior.*” (P. 139)

⁹1QIs^a omits the word כִּי, “because” at the beginning of this verse, but 1QIs^b has it.

¹⁰1QIs^a omits the phrase מוֹשִׁיעֶךָ, “your Savior / Deliverer,” but has the phrase גּוֹאֲלֶךָ, “your Redeemer,” written above the line.

The first two lines of **verse 3** are another Self-identification of YHWH.

Ethiopia and Seba¹¹ in exchange for you!¹²

¹¹Oswalt notes that “Seba is the northeastern part of Nubia; ‘Cush’ refers to Nubia, the land just south of the first cataract of the Nile, Egypt’s southern border.” (P. 135)

North comments that what this verse means is that “Yahweh will give the rich lands of Africa as the price of His people’s ransom. Seba is to be distinguished from Sheba...on the Arabian side of the Red Sea; it was the country south of Nubia (Hebrew, ‘Cush’). Cush and Seba correspond roughly to Upper Egypt and the Lower Sudan. Together with Egypt proper they were all of Africa known to the Hebrews...

“The text is generally taken to mean that Yahweh will give the African territories to Cyrus in return for the liberation of the exiles...No part of Africa had been included in the Babylonian Empire, so Egypt, Nubia, and Seba may be thought of as ‘extras’ to what Persia would naturally gain by the conquest of Babylon. In fact, it was not until Camby-ses, Cyrus’ successor, that the Persians invaded Egypt.” (P. 120)

¹²The last two lines of **verse 3** depict YHWH’s כִּפְּרֶךָ, “your ransom / covering,” which He gave for Israel’s redemption from Babylon—the African countries of Ethiopia and Seba, and the statement raises perplexing questions.

Slotki explains that “The liberation of Israel from Babylon by Cyrus when he captured it, and the conquest of Egypt and Seba by his son Cambyses, are described by the prophet as interdependent and predestined events. Persia is compensated for the loss of the Israelite captives by its conquests of three African peoples...Seba [is located] in the north of Ethiopia, between the White and Blue Nile.” (P. 206)

Oswalt comments that “Although the precise meaning of the ransom metaphor of **verses 3 and 4** is open to discussion, the general meaning is clear. For God no price is too high to pay for the redemption of His Own [We ask—does this mean Israel is ‘His Own,’ belongs to YHWH, to the exclusion of other nations? We say No! **Genesis 1-11** pictures all humanity—Adam and Eve and their descendants—as created by God, and therefore belonging to and responsible to Him. When God called Israel to Himself, He is depicted as saying to Israel, ‘If you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation’ (**Exodus 19:5-6, English Standard**). That means, as God’s treasured possession, they would have a special role to play in human history, as a nation of priests to all the other nations that belong to YHWH—not that they alone belonged to Him!...]...He would go to any length to find a substitute for them...

“What is not clear is whether a specific historical incident is intended. Many commentators...maintain that Cyrus is being promised the prize that both the Assyrian and Babylonian conquerors had sought—rule of the lush Nile Valley—in return for allowing the

(continued...)

¹²(...continued)

Jews to return home. A major problem with that suggestion is that it was only Cyrus's son, Cambyses, who conquered Egypt some time after Cyrus' death...

“Beyond that, an excessively literal reading raises some theological questions about God's indiscriminate condemning of surrounding nations merely to get Israel off the hook. [But does the text say anything about 'condemning' those nations? Cannot God's servant act as a ransom for others without himself being 'condemned'?] One should note, however, that the **Bible** does speak of the wicked being a ransom for the righteous (**Proverbs 21:18**). In that light, it seems best to see this passage as concrete imaging of that principle...” (P. 140)

Proverbs 21:18

כֶּפֶר לְצַדִּיק רָשָׁע
וְתַחַת יֹשְׁרִים בּוֹגֵד:

A ransom / covering for the rightly-related—a wicked person;
and in place of upright people one who acts faithlessly.

In the light of this “wise” saying, the truth of genuine religion becomes all the more distinct—in that it expresses an action in history that is the very opposite of God's offering His “servant” as “ransom” or “covering” or “atonement” for all people—including the wicked and the treacherous! **See Isaiah 52:13-53:12**. Nowhere has this been better fulfilled than in God's sending His son Jesus Christ to die on behalf of others! It is not a matter of the “wicked” becoming a ransom for the righteous, but just the opposite, the righteous give themselves as suffering servants on behalf of sinners, as a “ransom” on behalf of the “wicked.”

With this wise saying, the teacher calls upon the student to consider this matter of “covering” or “ransom” or “atonement.” Who ransoms others? Why? How? It is a very difficult matter, but one that will richly repay study and understanding. If it is indeed the case that oftentimes the righteous escape situations that bring punishment, while the wicked walk head-strongly into it (**Proverbs 11:8** “The righteous is delivered from trouble, and the wicked walks into it instead” (**English Standard**)), still, is this the will of God concerning “ransom”?

We say, the Christian faith cannot be properly understood without a consideration of this matter! Believers in Jesus Christ are called to “take up their cross” and follow Jesus, in his sacrificial giving up of himself as a “ransom” for the sake of others, on behalf of the wicked, the sinners of this world. It is not the other way around; it is not the way of this proverb! Or, if it is (as this passage seems to say), can it be that YHWH was using these African peoples as “suffering servants” on behalf of Israel?

(continued...)

43:4 מֵאֲשֶׁר יָקָרְתָּ בְּעֵינַי נִכְבַּדְתָּ וְאֲנִי אֶהְבַּתִּיךָ

וְאֶתְּן אֶדְמָה תַּחְתֶּיךָ

וּלְאֲמִים תַּחַת נַפְשֶׁךָ:

Because you were precious¹³ in My eyes, you were honored;¹⁴ and I, I loved you!¹⁵

¹²(...continued)

Alexander comments that ‘As the Israelite under the Mosaic law was obliged to redeem his first-born by the payment of a price, or by the substitution of some other object, so [YHWH] secured Israel as His Own by giving up the other nations, here represented by a single group [Are we then to think of YHWH as having to pay a ransom-price for what He has done in freeing His people? Is YHWH subject to such a commercial law? Shades of Job’s friends!]...

“It was in the character, not only of an absolute and sovereign God, but in that of Israel’s God, [Israel’s] Holy One, [Israel’s] Savior, that [YHWH] had thus chosen [the nation of Israel] to the exclusion of all other nations.” (Pp. 148-49)

The statement “to the exclusion of all other nations” is a direct contradiction of **Exodus 19:5-6**; and the imagery of giving up a nation as “ransom” in order to redeem Israel, sounds strange in the light of the further teaching of **Isaiah 40-55**, which is that YHWH’s servant is called to offer himself on behalf of the sinful (see **52:13-53:12**), and stranger still in the light of **Amos 9:7**, which affirms that YHWH is the God of all nations and peoples (including Africans), just as He is of Israel, and that His redeeming, delivering power is at work in the history of Israel’s most hated enemies, just as it is at work in Israel. Alexander and Oswalt do not take this matter of all the nations belonging to God seriously.

And we ask, Is it the case that whenever people or nations experience the mighty works of God in their midst, they immediately begin to feel special, different, better than others, and fail to see the universal nature of God and His saving power, instead of seeing themselves, because of God’s grace to them, as responsible to all the other nations that also belong to God?

How will you explain this? If you explain it as meaning that God loved Israel, but didn’t love the African nations just as much, have you not thereby turned your conception of God into a tribal / national Deity rather than the God of all the earth?

¹³This verb, יָקָרְתָּ, “you (singular) were precious,” reminds us of **Proverbs 3:15**, where wisdom is described as “more precious than rubies,” or **Psalms 45:10** where the king’s daughters are described as “precious.” It means “of great value,” “priceless.”

(continued...)

And I will give humanity¹⁶ in exchange for you,¹⁷

¹³(...continued)

The question is, if God declares that Israel is “precious,” should Israel conclude that all other nations are “less than precious” to God? Second and Third Isaiah would say, “That’s absolutely the wrong conclusion to draw!”

¹⁴The niph'al verb נִכְבְּדָתָּ means “honorable,” “weighty,” “distinguished.” Again, the danger is that Israel will draw the conclusion that all other nations are “dishonorable” in God’s sight—which is simply not the case, according to Second and Third Isaiah!

¹⁵What a powerful affirmation of self-worth! Almighty God, the Creator, says to His human creature, “You were precious in My eyes! You were honored! And I, I loved you!”

Knight observes “how rarely the love [וְאֲנִי אֶהְבֵּתִיךָ], ‘And I, I loved you’; **Rahfs** has κἀγὼ σε ἠγάπησα, ‘And I, you I loved,’ with the verb ἀγαπάω, used commonly in the **New Testament**, i.e., οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον ‘for in this way God so loved the world’], *ahabah*, of God is spoken of in the **Old Testament**...The word we find most commonly is רַחֲמִים, *chesedh*, God’s covenantal loyal-love [our ‘steadfast-love’].” (P. 63)

The **Synoptic Gospels** depict the practice of Jesus toward the people to whom he ministered in the first century in northern Israel. He saw the poor, the “untouchable lepers,” the mentally ill (“demon-possessed”), the foreigners, the prostitutes, the thief being crucified at his side--the “sinners”--as precious, as honored, as being loved and accepted by Jesus, as he shared with them, welcomed them, forgave them, giving them hope. If they drew the conclusion that they were exclusively the recipients of such astounding love, they were soon to learn that Jesus was sending them out into all the earth, to share that same love with all humanity.

So, for the followers of Jesus Christ to claim that they are “God’s beloved ones” is perfectly legitimate and true—a transforming basis for self-understanding. But for them to conclude that therefore “God loves us, only us,” is a tragic misunderstanding. The love of God that has come to us in Jesus Christ extends to all humanity, and it is our life-long task to make that love known to all others, regardless of their race or nationality. Such a task, says Second and Third Isaiah, will only be accomplished when those who have been forgiven by grace reach out to all they can in their world in self-giving service--as suffering servants who practice genuine righteousness, sacrificial love!

¹⁶1QIs^a has the definite article written above the line, “the humanity.”

Alexander explains that “‘Man’ is here used collectively or indefinitely for *other*

(continued...)

and peoples in exchange for your innermost-being / life!¹⁸

43:5¹⁹ אֶל-תִּירָא פִּי אֶתְךָ-אֲנִי

¹⁶(...continued)

men or the rest of men.” (P. 150)

¹⁷See our footnote 12, where this matter of “ransom” is discussed.

¹⁸Oswalt comments that ‘In parallel with **verse 3**, in **verse 4** God tells why He is willing to find a ransom for His people. There it was because He was their God, He belonged to them. Here it is because of what they are to Him. In neither case is the ransom due to any intrinsic worth in the one being ransomed, but because of Who God is and what He sees in them...

“The language is that which a bridegroom might use of his bride. Just as a groom finds his bride precious and worthy and lovable when others fail to see those qualities in her at all, God sees these things in us and is willing to pay any price to redeem His bride from her captors. But God’s grace is that He loves us without the self-delusion of some human grooms (and brides). He know what His people really are (**42:18-25** [deaf and blind prisoners], but that does not make them less precious to Him. That is grace.” (P. 140)

Do you agree with this? In the light of **Genesis 1-3**, we hold that every human being is God’s creation, made in God’s image and likeness, called by God to be His representatives in the earth. Simply by creation / birth they are precious and worthy and loveable—they have intrinsic worth, even if they have been blinded, deafened and impris-oned!

What do you say? Does every human being, as God’s creation, have “intrinsic worth”? Or, as Tulip theology insists, is every human being “totally depraved,” “enslaved to sin”? We say, every human being has “intrinsic worth,” because they are God’s creature, made in His image and likeness, and in spite of their sin, still of great value / preciousness to their Creator / Father.

¹⁹Slotki comments that **verses 5-7** depict “the regathering of the scattered exiles.” (P. 206) This is certainly the case, but the regathering is not limited to the exiles in Bab-ylon—rather, it is a world-wide regathering, from east and west, from north and south.

North comments on **verses 5-7** that “After a repeated *Fear not*, Yahweh asserts that He will bring back His exiled family from the four points of the compass...Already in the sixth century B.C.E. the Jews were widely scattered. Some had fled to Egypt (**Jeremiah 43**), taking Jeremiah with them; others had (earlier?) founded a colony at Elephantine, near the first cataract of the Nile...A substantial number from the northern tribes had been deported to Assyria. **Jeremiah 31:1-22** and **Ezekiel 37:15-28** looked for a reunion of all Israelites under a ruler of the house of David. They thought, not of

(continued...)

¹⁹(...continued)

two kingdoms, but of one people of God, and when Deutero-Isaiah speaks of Israel and Jacob in parallelism, as he frequently does, it is this one people ('all the descendants of Israel', **45:25**) he has in mind." (Pp. 120-21)

Oswalt comments on **verses 5-6** that "Once again, God asserts that His people need not fear annihilation, because of His unfailing presence...Whatever may appear to be the case when looking at what the world calls reality, the immanence of God—His presence with us—changes all that for those who will avail themselves of it. The world may say that the people of God are hopelessly scattered, but if God is on their side, they can be drawn together again against all the odds." (P. 141)

Compare **Jeremiah 30:10-11**,

- 10 And now, you shall not be afraid, My servant Jacob—
(it is) a saying of YHWH—
and you shall not be dismayed, Israel,
because look at Me, your Savior from afar—
and your seed / descendants from (the) land of their captivity—
and Jacob shall return,
and he will be quiet, and will be at ease,
and there is no one causing terror!
- 11 Because I (am) with you—(it is) a saying of YHWH—to save / deliver you;
because I will make an end of all the nations where I scattered you,
however of you, I will not make an end;
and I will discipline you for the justice,
and I will certainly not declare you innocent!

Oswalt adds that "In words similar to those of **11:11-12; 27:13; 49:12** and **60:4** [Yes!], the Lord promises to bring Israel's children back from every quarter of the earth. This promise confirms the same promise Moses made in **Deuteronomy 30:3-6**...

"One can understand the promise in perhaps three ways...The first is as hyperbole. The prophet has in view only such limited dispersions as occurred in 721 B.C.E. (Israel) and 587 B.C.E. (Judah), but he is using extravagant language to say that there is no place from which God cannot restore His people...

"The second possibility is that the prophet is speaking of the much greater dispersion after C.E. 70 and 135, in which the Jewish people were indeed scattered to the four corners of the earth and from which they have only begun to be restored in the 20th century...

"The third possibility is that, like the **New Testament**, he is considering the people of God on that larger scale as all who will, like Abraham, accept the revealed God in faith. In a spiritual sense God has been gathering them to Jerusalem for two thousand years and will continue to do so until the end of time." (P. 141)

(continued...)

מִמְזֶרַח אֲבִיא זְרַעְךָ

וּמִמְעַרְב אֶקְבְּצֶךָ:

You shall not be afraid, because I (am) with you!²⁰

¹⁹(...continued)

What do you think? Do you believe that God has a universal plan for all His children, wherever they are? Compare **Isaiah 2:1-4** and **Micah 4:1-4**.

Alexander comments that “The reference of this verse to the restoration of the Jews from Babylon is not only arbitrary and without foundation, but forbidden by the mention of the west as well as the east [and in the following verse, the mention of north and south and the ends of the earth!]. The only interpretation which entirely suits the text and the context, without supplying or assuming anything beyond what is expressed, is that which makes the verse a promise to the church [Alexander uses the noun ‘church’ to include both Israel and the people of Christianity] that she should be completed, that all her scattered members should ultimately be brought together... *Your seed* has reference to Israel of Jacob as the ideal object of address.” (P. 150) We agree. Do you?

²⁰Knight comments on **verse 5** that “the significance of the idea that God would give away all mankind if only He could hold on to Israel is so disturbing that God has to repeat the comforting words ‘Don’t be afraid!’ And then He adds ‘I swear that I am really with you,’ or ‘I Myself am with you,’ in that form of close relationship...(of) covenant loyalty and love...For if God is not with His people, then He can only be against them...”

“It is the peculiar content of the **Old Testament** covenant which is so challenging, strange, and new. For despite the fact that the Northern Kingdom seemed to have been cut to pieces and its people scattered to the winds as much as a century and a half before the destruction of the Southern Kingdom, the prophets were certain that the reality of the covenant still held Israel together as one people in the sight of God.

“This kind of covenant therefore forms the framework of the revelation of God’s unchanging *chesedh* (חֶסֶד), His loyal love. Thus Israel cannot finally perish: God’s people are destined to return home where they belong—all of them, even those who are presently scattered to the ends of the earth. **Jeremiah 40:11** and **41:17** tell us that Israelite exiles had fled to Moab, Edom, and Ammon in the east, and to Egypt in the west [No, these two passages from **Jeremiah** are about the Judean exiles, not the northern Israelites], and many other passages speak of their wide dispersion ever since the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 721 B.C.E. But God is Lord of all the forces that at present militate against the working out of His purpose through Israel for the saving of the world.” (Pp. 63-4)

(continued...)

From (the) rising / east I will bring your descendant(s);
and from (the) west I will gather you!

43:6 אָמַר לְצָפוֹן תִּנְי

וּלְתֵימָן אֶל-תְּכֵלְאִי

הַבָּיְאִי בְנֵי מִרְחֹק

וּבְנוֹתַי מִקְצֵה הָאָרֶץ:

I will say to the north, Give!

And to (the) south, You shall not withhold!

Bring My sons from afar,

and My daughters²¹ from the earth's extremity!²²

²⁰(...continued)

It is disturbing to see such an excellent scholar as Knight making such an error—but warns every biblical student to be very careful about passages that are quoted.

²¹Knight comments that “As His sons and daughters—note how women have an equal place with men in Deutero-Isaiah’s thought—live with the mysterious intimacy of the covenant, their *raison d’être* [reason for being] is to show to all the world the glory of Yahweh their Father, for He created them for this end.” (P. 64)

²²Alexander states that **verse 6** is “a poetical amplification of the promise in the foregoing verse.” (P. 150)

Slotki comments that “Israel as a people is God’s child and the individual members of the nation are His sons and daughters.” (P. 206)

Yes—and in the light of the **Genesis** story of humanity’s creation by God, and in the light of Jesus Christ, we say that all humanity as a people is God’s child and the individual members of all the nations are His sons and daughters—as the ethnocentrism [“Divine nation”, “One Nation under God”, “God’s Own Country”, “God’s Chosen People”, and “God’s Promised Land”] is overcome with the Divine mission that of serving, even willingly dying for all peoples and nations, as depicted in **Isaiah 52:13-53:12** and in Jesus Christ—quite a difference from three African nations being given up / sacrificed for one “chosen nation.”

Oswalt asks, “Who are these people to be brought back from the ends of the earth? What is there about them that qualifies them for such restoration? The qualifying factor is nothing in and of themselves, but rather their particular relation to God. They are called by His name, that is, they belong to Him, they are part of His

(continued...)

43:7 כֹּל הַנִּקְרָא בְשֵׁמִי וְלִכְבוֹדִי בְרָאֲתוֹ

יִצְרֵתִיו אֶף-עָשִׂיתִיו:

Every one, the one called by My name, and²³ to / for My glory²⁴--I created him,
I formed him, indeed I made him!²⁵

4:8²⁶ הוֹצִיא עִם-עוֹר וְעֵינַיִם יֵשׁ

²²(...continued)

family (**Deuteronomy 28:10; Jeremiah 14:9; 15:16; Ezekiel 36:20**). But more than that, they were brought into existence—created...shaped...yes,...made—for one purpose: the glory of God.” (Pp. 141-42)

And we ask, who are people on earth that “brought into existence—created... shaped...yes, made”? Is that not, according to **Genesis 1-11**, all humanity? And is that not the way Jesus treated people, all people? What do you think?

²³Several Hebrew manuscripts plus the Harclean Syriac, Peshitto Syriac and Latin Vulgate omit the conjunction “and.”

²⁴Alexander holds that the phrase “for My glory” is “emphatic. God had not only made them what they were, but He had done it for His Own sake, not for theirs.” (P. 150)

²⁵How will you interpret this intriguing verse? Will you insist that it is ethnocentric, meaning only faithful Israelites scattered abroad?

It says nothing about Abraham and his faith, but only speaks about those called by YHWH’s name, whom He has created for His glory, whom He has formed and made. We think this language points to **Genesis 1-11**, in which all humanity is depicted as God’s creation, His forming, His making—who are called to act as God’s representatives on planet earth—without any mention of Jacob / Israel.

What do you think? Is this reading too much “universalism” into this text? Is the text inherently ethnocentric? How would you interpret this text in the light of **Amos 9:7**? Do you think that the prophet speaking here in **Isaiah 43** had read or had knowledge of Amos’ work?

²⁶North entitles **verses 8-13** “There Is No God Except Yahweh And His People Are His Witnesses.”

He comments that “Yahweh gives the order for His people to be brought into a general assembly of the nations. Has any God ever foretold the future? If so, let Him

(continued...)

וְחַרְשִׁים וְאֵזְנִים לְמוֹ:

Bring forth²⁷ a blind people, and they have eyes;²⁸

²⁶(...continued)

bring evidence that will convince the court. Presumably no witnesses are forthcoming. Yahweh then turns to Israel: ‘You are My witnesses.’ Their very giving of evidence is to strengthen their faith and open their blind eyes to what is obvious. Yahweh is Lord, the only God and Savior, now and for ever.” (Pp. 121-22)

Oswalt entitles **verses 8-13** “You are my witnesses.”

He comments that “This segment continues the theme of the Lord’s intention and ability to deliver begun in **42:10**. It does so with another lawsuit against the Gods (compare **41:21-29**). But an additional feature is added to this one: witnesses. God calls on the idols to present witnesses who can confirm the Deity of the Gods because of their ability to predict the future (**verse 9**). Then, with great daring, God announces that the captive Judeans will be His witnesses. Despite their spiritual blindness, as detailed in **42:18-25**, and again in **43:22-28**, they will still be the living evidence that God has not only predicted salvation but has also fulfilled that salvation in every particular...The theme of witnesses is mentioned again specifically in **44:8** and **9**.” (P. 144)

²⁷The verb here is hiphil imperative, **הוֹצִיא**, “bring forth!”, which is apparently a challenge to the idol-Gods of the nations to produce a nation of blind and deaf people who can serve as witnesses to God’s redemption and which YHWH can use as His servant(s).

Rahfs has “I (YHWH) brought forth,” as does 1QIs^b and the Aramaic Targum. 1QIs^a has “they brought forth.”

As Alexander points out, the verb **הוֹצִיא**, may also be read as 3rd person singular hiphil perfect, “He brought forth,” or as hiphil infinitive construct, “to bring forth.” (Pp. 150-51)

If read as hiphil perfect, the reference may be to YHWH’s having brought forth blind and deaf Israel from Egypt. **Tanakh** translates as an infinitive, “Setting free that people, Blind though it has eyes, And deaf though it has ears.” **King James, New Revised Standard, New International** and **New Jerusalem** all translate as an imperative verb. Oswalt agrees, and thinks the verb should be understood as “addressed to an indefinite hearer, much like the **נַחֲמוּ נַחֲמוּ**, “Comfort! Comfort!” of **Isaiah 40:1**.” (P. 145)

As we understand **verse 8**, the unnamed addressee is being commanded to bring forth blind and deaf Israel.

(continued...)

and deaf people, and they have ears.

43:9²⁹ כֹּל־הַגּוֹיִם נִקְבְּצוּ יַחְדָּו

²⁷(...continued)

North states that it is literally “Bring out,’ the figure being of captives whose sight has been impaired by long confinement in darkness (**52:18-22**). Brought *out* from imprisonment they are now to brought *in* as witnesses.” (P. 122)

Oswalt states that the people of Israel, “although...spiritually blind and deaf, unable to understand the meaning of much of their experience...can still testify to the facts of that experience. The exile had been foretold with a clarity and a precision unmatched in any other culture; likewise, the deliverance from that exile had been foretold, particularly by Isaiah himself, in a way that could be either verified or refuted unmistakably. Here the command is given that they be brought to the place of trial to declare that they know about God’s activity.” (P. 145)

Alexander states that “the most satisfactory interpretation of the verse is that which understands it as descriptive of the change wrought or to be wrought in the condition of mankind by [YHWH], through the agency of His people...*He* (i.e. God, or Israel as His messenger) *has brought out a people (once) blind, and (now) they have eyes, and (once) deaf, and (now) they have ears*, i.e. of course, seeing eyes and hearing ears.” (P. 151)

²⁸Knight comments, “What a tragedy for God that the flesh, the eyes, which should have revealed His glory, were blind! (Compare **Isaiah 42:18-20**)...

“Whom then does God summon here to act for Him? For God’s commands are in the imperative, singular, masculine, and the form of the verb used is unusual. The proph-et himself seems to be the only one who can fit the situation. On the other hand, [1QIs^a] reads Deutero-Isaiah’s verbs in the plural. If the latter is the original reading, then it may be God’s angelic hosts who are here summoned to do God’s bidding once again (com-pare **Isaiah 40:1**).” (P. 64)

²⁹Oswalt comments on **verse 9** that it “describes the gathering of the nations for the trial as a current event...In this scene a large number of nations are already gathered, but more are still coming...Each of the nations and peoples has its God, but *Who among them* (the Gods) *can declare* (foretell) a future like *this?*...One should bear in mind that the trial scene here is imaginary and its purpose is to convince the Judeans that since the Lord is the only God, it is foolish to depend on or fear the Gods of the nations.” (Pp. 145-46)

Knight comments that “Deaf and dumb Israel is to be led into court in the presence of all the nations. The Gods have been given their chance to speak and have failed. Now it is the turn of the nations (see **41:21**). By this means Israel may possibly be shamed into recognizing how deaf and dumb she really is...

(continued...)

וַיֵּאסְפוּ לְאֲמִים
מִי בְהֵם יִגִּיד זֹאת
וְרֵאשֹׁנֹת יִשְׁמִיעֵנוּ
יִתְּנוּ עֲדֵיהֶם וַיִּצְדְּקוּ
וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֱמֶת:

All the nations were gathered together,
and peoples were assembled.

Who among them will declare this,³⁰
and cause first / former things³¹ to be heard?³²

²⁹(...continued)

“God will now ask any nation that volunteers to do so to step forward and recount how Yahweh acted in Israel’s history in the days of Moses, or else explain *this*, the emphatic feminine singular pronoun he uses for the victorious advance of Cyrus over the Near East. Of course none of them will be able to produce any witnesses to these mighty events, for they have no one in their midst to interpret what God has been doing. Their own history has not been Heilsgeschichte, sacred history, nor have they prophets to interpret the meaning of events.”

Perhaps...But **Amos 9:7** insists that YHWH has acted in the history of both the Philistines and the Syrians—with “exoduses” similar to that of Israel. Or, in other words, YHWH insists that the other nations have “sacred histories” just like Israel does. But do they have prophets like Israel, whom YHWH has raised up to interpret those sacred events for them? What do you think? Do you suppose that Second Isaiah had no knowledge of **Amos 9:7**?

³⁰Oswalt remarks that “the indefiniteness of *this* has given rise to a number of interpretations. The most common one is that it refers to the destruction of Babylon and the release of the captives by Cyrus (**41:2-4, 25-26**). While this view seems likely, we should also ask why the author chose the ambiguous demonstrative. Perhaps he had in mind the entire situation of sin and exile and return and reestablishment. In that case, we would do a disservice to the text to limit it too narrowly.” (P. 145)

³¹**Rahlf**s has “the things out of / from first / beginning.” Compare **40:21** and **41:26** where the same translation occurs.

Slotki states that this means “the predictions relating to past events.” (P. 207)

(continued...)

Let them give witnesses, and let them be justified;
and they will hear, and they will speak true-faithfulness!³³

³¹(...continued)

Perhaps--but we think it more likely that it has to do with information concerning the beginning of the universe and humanity, as depicted by YHWH's spokespersons in **Genesis 1-11**. If so, the challenge is, Can your Gods depict the beginning of such things, including all humanity and all nations (see especially **Genesis 10**), as YHWH has done? Or is their story totally limited and ethnocentric? It is an important challenge. The stories told by many are ethnocentric--having to do only with Babylonians (**Enuma Elish**), or Aryans (Hitler's **Mein Kampf**), or black people (**Autobiography of Malcolm X**), or Navajos (**Dine bahane**) or other specific groups, and with limited areas of reality (only their homelands, neglecting all others), while YHWH's stories in **Genesis 1-11** are universal to the core, having to do with all humanity, not even mentioning Jews or Israel or Jerusalem, whereas Near Eastern stories typically have their central temple as the "navel of the earth," and there is no such mention in the **Genesis** stories.

³²Where our Hebrew text has the phrase וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ, "and they heard," or "and let them hear," **Rahfs** has καὶ δικαιοθήτωσαν, "and they will be justified," or "and let them be justified."

³³It is, we think, an imaginary / hypothetical gathering of all the nations with their idol-Gods; it should not be taken as an actual occurrence in the past, even though the niphal perfect verb נִקְבְּצוּ, **niqbetsu**, "they were gathered" is used. Our English translations do not translate as perfect or past tense, having:

King James, "Let all the nations be gathered together";
Tanakh, "All the nations assemble as one";
New Revised Standard, "Let all the nations gather together";
New International, "All the nations gather together";
New Jerusalem, "Let all the nations assemble."
Rahfs, "All the nations gathered together at the same time."

Oswalt states that "One should bear in mind that the trial scene described here is imaginary and that its purpose is to convince the Judeans that since the Lord is the only God, it is foolish to depend on or fear the Gods of the nations. Thus the appeal is continually to ask whether those Gods do what God has undoubtedly done, with the understood answer, 'Of course not.'" (P. 146)

Slotki, translating the verb נִקְבְּצוּ as an imperative, comments that "Israel and the other nations are summoned to a judicial process before God. The nations are challenged to produce evidence of the power and foreknowledge they claim for their Gods, and this they are unable to do. God, thereupon, calls upon His servant Israel, far

(continued...)

³³(...continued)

though he is from perfection, to testify [to] his personal experience of God's omnipotence and omniscience." (P. 207)

We see the text speaking of God's ability to tell what has happened in the past, the "first" or "former" things. In addition, He is able to predict what is going to happen in the future and then fulfill that prediction; but the text does not use religious-philosophical terms such as "omnipotence" and "omniscience."

By such introducing of religious-philosophical terms into a comment, we are reminded of Christians in the third and fourth centuries C.E. who introduced religious-philosophical terms to speak of Jesus the messiah, resulting in deep divisions between the followers of Jesus, and leading to religious wars seeking to eliminate / put to death all those who did not subscribe to views endorsed by the Roman emperor or by councils of bishops. We must keep in mind that the biblical authors were not students of the philosophy of religion, and would probably be surprised at seeing their statements used in this way.

Oswalt comments on **verse 9** that "A new level of disputation is reached when the prophet challenges the idols to bring evidence in the form of witnesses...The very bold-ness of the approach is a testimony to the serene assurance of Isaiah that the God Whom he represents is of an entirely different order of being than the idol-Gods..."

"His hanging everything on God's ability to predict the events and the meaning of the future has profound implications for the claims of the **Book of Isaiah** to have originated with Isaiah of Jerusalem. If it did not, but the later writers and editors sought to make it appear so in order to give its supposed predictions (which were actually after-the-fact reports) credibility, then the insistence that God is not one of the idol-Gods because He can tell the future is not profound theological insight but one of the more brazen lies in history." (P. 146)

But those who hold that **Isaiah 40-55** was written by a devout disciple of Isaiah who lived among the exiles in Babylon, and who began to give his messages a few years before the rise of Cyrus, thus truly predicting the future--should not be charged with claiming the predictions were made "after-the-fact." Oswalt is "painting with a large, dogmatic brush" in making this charge against those who differ with his view of the authorship of these chapters.

³⁴Slotki comments on **verse 10** that "The nations and their Gods being unable to prove their contention, God calls upon Israel, who is described as My witnesses and My servant, to bear testimony to the uniqueness of His Divinity, that there neither was nor ever would be a God like unto Him." (P. 207)

(continued...)

לְמַעַן תִּדְעוּ וְתִאֱמִינוּ לִי וְתִבְיִנּוּ כִּי־אֲנִי הוּא
לְפָנַי לֹא־נֹצֵר אֵל וְאַחֲרַי לֹא יִהְיֶה:

You (are) My witnesses--³⁵a saying of YHWH--and My servant³⁶ whom I chose,

³⁴(...continued)

However, it appears that the verse is speaking about what Israel itself is to know and believe and understand, not what the nation is to witness to.

Oswalt comments that in **verse 10**, “Now God turns to His people, who perhaps thought they would be only interested spectators at the trial, with the shocking news that He will rest His sweeping claims to unique Divinity on their testimony.” (P. 146)

Knight comments on **verse 10** that “God turns dramatically to Israel and exclaims categorically ‘*You are My witnesses*, for you were there when I brought you through the waters of the Red Sea and gave you My covenant by the hand of Moses, and then led you into a land that was not yours to possess but was a gift from Me to My people. This all happened in order that each and all of you (the verb is in the plural) may know Me and *believe Me*, that is, put your trust in Me...Israel has become the one proof of the existence of God that cannot be gainsaid [denied / contradicted] by formal reasoning.” (P. 65)

³⁵For this phrase, “my witnesses,” see: **Isaiah 43:10** (here), **43:12; 44:8**; and in the **New Testament, John 3:28** and **Acts 1:8**.

³⁶Oswalt comments that the designating of Israel as “witnesses” and “My servant” is “significant, because as one expects in synonymous parallelism, the two terms invest each other with meaning. Thus the calling of the servant is made plain: to be living evidence of the unique Saviorhood of God...Why were these people chosen? *In order that* they might know by personal experience that the Lord alone is God...Others are to know, but only after the people of God themselves have come to know Him...So these servants are called to be witnesses, and these witnesses are servants: those who know the truth of God because they have entered into bondage to Him and in that bondage have learned His character.” (Pp. 146-47)

The phrase “my servant,” occurs some 88 times in the **Hebrew Bible**, at:

Genesis 26:24; Leviticus 25:42, 55; Numbers 12:7, 8; 14:24; Joshua 1:2, 7; 1 Samuel 22:8; 2 Samuel 3:18; 7:5, 8; 19:27; 1 Kings 5:20, 23; 11:13, 32, 34, 36, 38; 14:8; 20:6; 22:50; 2 Kings 5:6; 9:7; 17:13; 19:34; 20:6; 21:8;

Isaiah 20:3; 22:20; 37:45; Isaiah 41:8, 9; 42:1, 19; 43:10; 44:1, 2, 21; 45:4; 49:3; 52:13; 53:11; Isaiah 65:8, 9, 13, 13, 14;

Jeremiah 7:25; 25:9; 26:5; 27:6; 29:19; 30:10; 33:21, 22, 26; 35:15; 43:10;

(continued...)

so that you will know and will believe³⁷ in Me; and you will understand that I (am) He. Before Me no God was formed; and after Me, there will not be!³⁸

³⁶(...continued)

44:4; 46:27, 28; Ezekiel 28:25; 34:23, 24; 37:24, 25; 38:17; Haggai 2:23; Zechariah 1:6; 3:8; Malachi 3:22; Psalm 89:4, 21; Job 1:8; 2:3; 19:16; 31:13; 42:7, 8, 8, 8; 1 Chronicles 17:4, 7 and 2:7.

The Syriac translation has “My servants.”

³⁷Knight comments on the verb תִּאֱמַנּוּ (2nd person hiphil masculine plural, ‘believe,’ ‘have trust in’), that “Israel then is to ‘put your trust in Me.’ This verb means ‘to take a stand upon,’ from the original root which meant ‘to be firm’...All that Israel has to do is to place her feet on the Rock which is already there; then she will discover that she too is as ‘sure’...as the Rock beneath her feet. To believe in God is to make the existential discovery that God is faithful and reliable.” (P. 65)

³⁸We would describe the last three lines of **verse 10** through **verses 11-15** as another, longer than usual, “Self-identification” of YHWH: “I am He”—and there was no God before Me, nor will there be a God after Me; I, even I (am) YHWH, and apart from Me there is no Savior! I am the God Who has spoken and saved and caused to hear—with no other involved—making you, Israel, My witnesses. This has been true since time (day) began; and no one can avoid My powerful hand; I make / act, and who can stop Me?...I am the Set-apart One, Creator of Israel, your King!”

Oswalt comments that “The statement *Before Me...after Me* explains the enigmatic *that I am He*: He is the only God. Since no God existed before Him and none will exist after Him, He is evidently Self-existent and Self-determining: He *is*. The allusion to the idol-Gods being shaped is surely an assertion that they were generated from some source, as all the myths freely admit [Yes—see the **Enuma Elish**]. In this way, without getting into philosophical abstractions, God declares His uniqueness. Before the idol-Gods were made, He was, and after all the idol-Gods are gone, He will be... Thus what Israel is called to learn is not merely that God is great or loving or just or powerful, but much more, that He *is*, that there is no other, that He alone is the One with Whom all creation must come to terms.” (P. 147)

Alexander comments that in **verse 10** “The witness to whom God appeals is Israel, His servant, constituted such for the very end that [Israel] might know, and understand, and believe that of which all other nations were entirely ignorant, that is, that [YHWH] was He, i.e. the Being in question, the only wise God, the only infallible Foreteller of futurity...”

“Instead of saying, in a bald prosaic form [straightforward language, lacking poetic beauty], all other Gods are the work of men’s hands, but I am uncreated, and exist from all eternity, He condenses all into the pregnant declaration, there was no God manufactured before Me, i.e. all other God were made, but none of them was made

(continued...)

³⁸(...continued)

before I had a being.” (P. 152)

³⁹Oswalt states concerning **verses 11-13** that “As Muilenburg observes, 12 of the 29 Hebrew words in these three verses are in the first person singular, thus emphasizing monotheism. In a series of dramatic assertions God declares His absolute sovereignty (**verse 13**), His absolute Saviorhood (**verses 11-12**), and His absolute knowledge of the future (**verse 12**)—in short, His absolute unlikeness to any other being in the cosmos. He is unlimited and unyielding but also unfailing. Why should Israel doubt that He would either want to or would be able to deliver them? Their whole experience, if they would just learn from it, would tell them otherwise. They are witnesses, whether they want to be or not, to Who He really is.” (P. 147)

While we basically agree with this comment, we note that in fact there are only four first person singular verbs in the three verses, along with five occurrences of the first person pronoun. We also note that the words “absolute” and “sovereignty” and “unlikeness” and “knowledge of the future” and “unlimited” and “unyielding” and “unfailing” do not occur in these verses. Both Muilenburg and Oswalt are overinterpreting what these verses actually say.

Knight comments on these verses that “Now, no other God ever produced a saving purpose like Yahweh’s, for no God is saving love as such except Yahweh alone. Yahweh is no *parvenu* [a person of obscure origin who has gained wealth, influence or celebrity] barbarian God. And so He says ‘I had but to speak the word: ‘Let there be deliverance from Egypt,’ and there was deliverance...This means that there is no power that can *deliver* or ‘snatch’ you, Israel, out of My hand; there is no power to deflect, far less to *hinder*, or ‘reverse’ My purpose when I have begun to act...

“This is an important passage. It suggests that the ultimate victory of God over all opposition. It declares that God’s essential purpose is that all men should know Him and believe in Him. And it also reveals that Israel will definitely be used by God to this end, since God has chosen her for this purpose and will not change His mind.” (Pp. 65-6)

Oswalt comments that **verse 11** “is the upshot [conclusion of a discussion] of the preceding and is both predictable and unpredictable. It is predictable in its assertion that this God is the Lord [YHWH]. As if to emphasize in the strongest terms that no one else has the right to His personal name, He says, using the independent pronoun twice, I, I am the Lord (Yahweh). Baal is not Yahweh; Marduk is not Yahweh; Ishtar is not Yahweh. In the strongest terms God denies the syncretism [the combining of different, often contradictory beliefs, while blending practices of various schools of thought] that underlay all pagan religions and was to come to the fore during the Persian era. He alone is Yahweh, and as such is like no other so-called God. Israel’s experience should have taught them this.

(continued...)

וְאֵין מִבְּלַעֲדֵי מוֹשִׁיעַ:

I, I (am) YHWH;

and there is none beside Me, a Savior!

43:12⁴⁰ אֲנֹכִי הַגִּדְתִּי וְהוֹשַׁעְתִּי

וְהִשְׁמַעְתִּי וְאֵין בְּכֶם זָר

וְאַתֶּם עַרְי נְאֻם־יְהוָה

וְאֲנִי־אֵל:

I, I declared, and I saved / delivered,

and I cause to hear, and there is not among you people a stranger (God)!⁴¹

³⁹(...continued)

“This much is predictable. But what follows is not so predictable...Here the Lord’s [YHWH’s] Saviorhood is declared to be unique: *apart from Me there is no Savior*...God has insisted that Israel has witnessed the evidence that He alone is God. What had that evidence been? The promise to make Abraham a great nation; the promise to deliver his descendants from Egypt; the promise to give them the land of Canaan; the promise to make the dynasty of David secure on the throne of Jerusalem, and so on. What had the fulfilment of those promises required again and again? Deliverance [salvation], often over impossible odds...What Israel had witnessed and could not escape was the realization that ‘Yahweh’ meant ‘Savior’ [no–YHWH doesn’t ‘mean’ Savior, YHWH is Savior] and that as Yahweh was the only God, He was the only Savior.” (P. 148)

Alexander states that “[YHWH] was able not only to foretell the salvation of His people, but to save them.” (P. 153)

⁴⁰Oswalt comments on **verse 12** that “This truth [just announced in **verse 11**] is made explicit in this verse. In an allusion to the challenge to the idol-Gods, God declares that He alone (again, note the emphatic 1st person pronoun) has declared, or foretold, the future and *made it known*. But between these verbs is the [phrase] וְהוֹשַׁעְתִּי, *and I saved*...God not only foretold the future long ago, but He also brought it to pass. Without this, the foretelling is worse than worthless. What He brought to pass was not merely events, but those events that wrought deliverance for His people.” (P. 148)

⁴¹Oswalt states that “What Israel is a particular witness to is that God performed His saving work on their behalf in the absence of any other Gods. No other Gods offered a heritage to Abraham; no other God delivered them, a group of nobodies [where

(continued...)

And you (plural) (are) My witnesses--a saying of YHWH--
and I (am) El / Supreme God!

43:13⁴² גַּם־מִיּוֹם אֲנִי הוּא וְאֵין מִי־דִי מִצִּיל
אֶפְעַל וּמִי יִשִּׁיבֶנָה:

Also from (the first) day⁴³ I (am) He, and there is no one delivering from My hand!

⁴¹(...continued)

does this language come from?], from Egyptian slavery; no other Gods offered themselves to the Hebrews in exclusive covenant. The Gods of the foreign nations were conspicuous by their absence...The Israelites themselves are the living evidence that their God is the only One.” (P. 149)

Alexander comments that **verse 12** is “a declaration that [YHWH] was the only God Whom they had reason to acknowledge, from their own experience and observation. [The word] זָרָא, which is a common term for stranger, used in reference to men, may be here considered an ellipsis [intentional omission of a word] for the full phrase זָרָא אֵל, [‘stranger Supreme God’].” (P. 153) See **Psalms 44:20** and **81:10** for the full phrase.

⁴²Oswalt comments on **verse 13** that it “forms a fitting climax to the assertions of [verses 11 and 12]...Once again the doctrine of monotheism is expressed not in the abstract language of philosophy but in the concrete terms of experience. Are there other Gods? Not any Who can take out of God’s hand what He wishes to hold. Are there other Divine Beings? Not any Who can frustrate whatever it is the Lord wishes to do...If He calls wicked Babylon to account, Marduk and Nebo can do nothing about it. If He determines that the days of her empire are at an end, Ishtar [the Goddess of love, war, fertility, and sexuality, worshiped in northern Mesopotamia, at the Assyrian cities of Nineveh, Ashur and Arbela] is helpless to prevent it. The Lord is God and there is no other, and Israel’s experience is a testimony to that fact.” (P. 149)

Alexander states that the words of this verse “are...universal, both in the extent of power claimed, and in relation to the time of its execution. Over every object, and in every age, the power of [YHWH] had been clearly proved to be supreme and absolute.” (Pp. 153-54)

⁴³Translations of the phrase מִיּוֹם, “from a day,” vary from “before the day was,” to “ever since day was,” to “from ancient days,” to “from eternity,” to “from a beginning.” Slotki says it means “since the first day of creation.” (P. 208) Oswalt has “from the beginning.”

I will make / act, and who will turn it back?⁴⁴

43:14⁴⁵ כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה יְהוָה גְּאֻלְכֶם קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל

⁴⁴We take the claim attributed to YHWH to mean that He is God Who acts in history from the beginning of time; He, and He alone, is in control of humanity and the universe! No one can overthrow, or prevent His purpose from being accomplished!

What do you think? Do you believe that humanity today owes its existence and its future to a great Creator of the “Big Bang,” and Whose power is the Ultimate controlling Power in both our earth and all of the infinitely numerous star-worlds of space? And do you think it is possible to come to know the purpose that this Ultimate Power intended for our planet, and us as individuals? The biblical materials claim that just such a knowledge is possible.

⁴⁵Slotki comments on **verses 14-21** that they depict “the overthrow of Babylon and the restoration of Israel. These events and the miraculous highway for the returning exil-ees across the desert, with its supplies of water, will far surpass the marvels of the exod-us from Egypt and the former journey of the Israelites through the wilderness.” (P. 208)

North entitles **verses 14-15**, “Babylon In Panic.”

Knight comments on these two verses that “‘Thus the Lord has said,’ as the Hebrew has it. This is a frequently recurring formula. The verb is always found in the ‘past tense,’ or rather, ‘the ‘completed action’ form. Thus it is wrong to translate the phrase by ‘Thus saith the Lord’...

“From an understanding of what God has ‘said,’ and so ‘done’ (for the two actions are one), in the days of Moses and the patriarchs, the prophet can now pronounce what God, since He can only be true to Himself, will do in the future. God’s sending Cyrus to *break down*, or better, to overwhelm the fugitives (rather than the *bars*) from Babylon (**verse 14**), is wholly consonant with what He has already done in overwhelming the chariots of Pharaoh at the Red Sea (**verse 16**). It is for all your sakes (plural), as individual children of God, that God is now acting, because He has already done this very thing for your fathers in Egypt. Thus ‘for all your sakes’ is as much for us today as it was to Israel in 540 B.C.E.” (Pp. 66-67)

Alexander states that “The event, although still future to the writer, is described as past, in reference not only to the purposes of God, but also the perceptions of the Prophet. As presented to his view by the prophetic inspiration, the destruction of Babylon was just as truly a historical event as that of Pharaoh and his host. This is what is meant by the [prophetic perfect]...Interpreters are commonly agreed that the object of the verb is Cyrus, or the Medes and Persians.” (P. 154)

Oswalt entitles these verses “God’s power—then and now.” He comments that this section “emphasizes that God’s claims are based not merely on the past; He will

(continued...)

לְמַעַנְכֶם שְׁלַחְתִּי בְבִלְהָ
וְהוֹרַדְתִּי בְרִיחִים פְּלֶם
וְכַשְׂדִּים בְּאַנְיֹת רִנְתָּם:

In this way YHWH spoke, your Redeemer / Next-of-Kin,⁴⁶ Set-apart One of Israel:⁴⁷

⁴⁵(...continued)

demonstrate His Lordship by doing new works of deliverance...Looked at by itself, **43:8-13** might suggest that the only evidence which one may adduce for God's Saviorhood is from the past (so, **verse 12**). But Isaiah hastens to add (**43:14-21**) that there will be new evidence and that the Israelites should not so concentrate on what God has done

for them in the past that they cannot see the new things He will do on their behalf. What those new things were in the prophet's mind is clear in part but unclear in part...

"On the one hand, it is clear that he had in mind the overthrow of mighty Babylon. But is that all he had in mind?

"What raises the question is the particularly image-laden language of **verses 19-20**. What is he really meaning to convey by the extravagant images he uses? There seem to be three options for understanding what is taking place...

"The first is that the prophet expected literal wonders like these to take place when Israel returned home. That they did not and yet this book was included in the canon causes one to believe that the Jewish readers did not understand the passage, and other like it, in this literal way.

"The second option is that the prophet knew he was speaking figuratively. But the question immediately arises, Why is the imagery so extravagant?...

"A third option [is:] Perhaps Isaiah is considering the whole period of redemption that began with the return from exile and culminated in the formation of the [Christian Church]. Surely that sweep of history was, in its own way, as dramatic as the first exodus had been and offered as many miraculous events. The ultimate redeeming work of Christ in conquering sin was even more earth-shaking than making rivers in the desert would be...

"All in all, this seems to me the most satisfying solution to the question. God would indeed produce evidence far surpassing the exodus that He was the Savior, the only Savior, of the world." (Pp. 151-52)

⁴⁶For the noun "Redeemer" in the **Book of Isaiah**, see: **41:14; 43:14** (here); **44:6, 24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7, 26; 54:5, 8; 59:20; 60:16** and **63:16**. In each of these

(continued...)

For your sake I sent to Babylon,⁴⁸
and I brought down fleeing ones, all of them,
and Chaldeans⁴⁹ in the ships--their ringing cry.⁵⁰

⁴⁶(...continued)

occurrences, it is in the form of the qal participle, that is, “the One Redeeming.” The word does not occur in the first 39 chapters of **Isaiah**.

⁴⁷For the 22 occurrences of this phrase as YHWH’s Self-description in the **Hebrew Bible**, **קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל**, **qedhosh yisra)el**, “Set-apart One of Israel,” see **2 Kings**

19: 22; Psalm 71:22; Isaiah 1:4; 5:19, 24; 10:20; 12:6; 17:7; 30:11, 12, 15; 31:1; 37: 23; 41:14; 43:3, 14; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 54:5; 60:14 and **Jeremiah 50:29**, nineteen of these occurrences are scattered throughout the **Book of Isaiah**.

⁴⁸Where our Hebrew text spells **בְּבָבֶל**, “to Babylon,” 1QIs^a spells **בבבל**, evidently meaning “in Babylon,” or “against Babylon.”

⁴⁹North comments that “For the first time in the prophecy Babylon and the Chaldeans are named...The Chaldeans were a Semitic people who settled in the lower Euphrates valley and after a long struggle wrested Babylon from the Assyrians, by whom it had been conquered, and established the Chaldean or ‘neo-Babylonian’ empire after the fall of Nineveh in 612 B.C.E.” (P. 124)

⁵⁰The last three lines of **verse 14** are given varying translations:

King James, “For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry *is* in the ships.”

Tanakh, “For your sake I send to Babylon; I will bring down all *her* bars, And the Chaldeans shall raise their voice in lamentation.”

New Revised Standard, “For your sake I will send to Babylon and break down all the bars, and the shouting of the Chaldeans will be turned to lamentation.”

New International, “For your sake I will send to Babylon and bring down as fugitives all the Babylonians, in the ships in which they took pride.”

New Jerusalem, “For your sake I have sent to Babylon, I shall knock down all the prison bars, and the Chaldaeans' shouts of joy will change to lamentations.”

Rahlf's, “For your sake I will send forth into Babylon, and I will arouse / stir up all those fleeing; and Chaldeans will be bound in ships.”

North, (tentatively) “For your sakes I send against Babylon, and will drive them all downstream in coracles, the Chaldeans in their proud ships.” (He explains that the “coracle” is “some kind of wide or low craft, ‘vessel’ like the *kuffa*, the circular coracle still used on the Euphrates,” and we add, especially in Wale, India, Vietnam and Tibet—see the Internet)

(continued...)

43:15 אֲנִי יְהוָה קְדוֹשְׁכֶם

בּוֹרֵא יִשְׂרָאֵל

מֶלֶכְכֶם:

I (am) YHWH, your (plural) Set-apart One,
Who creates Israel,
your King!⁵¹

⁵⁰(...continued)

Slotki states that the phrase רִנְתָּם, “their ringing cry,” (his translation is “of their shouting”) “may describe the lamentations of the Babylonian captives while the ships were sailing down the Euphrates. Others render ‘ships of their rejoicing,’ i.e. ships that were formerly used as pleasure boats.” (P. 209)

Where our Hebrew text reads בַּאֲנִיּוֹת רִנְתָּם, “in the ships their ringing cry,” **Rahlfs** has “in ships they shall be bound / confined.”

⁵¹YHWH’s Self-identification continues.

Oswalt comments on **verse 15** that “Once again, God makes plain that the reason for the coming miraculous deliverance is not because of who the Hebrew people are, but Whose they are...It is solely because they belong to God, and because of what sort of a God He is, that these events are coming. The four epithets contained in this verse are an **Old Testament theology** in miniature. If their content were fully plumbed, there would be little more to say. He is the Lord Who revealed Himself preeminently at Sinai, binding Himself to the Hebrews in covenant; he is your Holy One, He Who had shown them how to live in the presence of His holiness without being destroyed and Who had called them to share in that holiness in the way they lived; He is the Creator of Israel, the One Who had called them into existence from nothing; He is your King, the One to Whom they owe absolute allegiance, Who has called them into a whole new kind of kingdom.” (Pp. 153-54)

This is typical of 20th century **Old Testament Theologies**, in their concentration on the revelation of God as made in the **Books of Exodus and Leviticus**, and largely leaving out any mention of the Wisdom literature (**Job, Ecclesiastes, Proverbs**) and the prayer-praise **Book of Psalms**, as well as many other facets of the “Old Testament” –such as the criticism of the sacrificial system of the Mosaic covenant in the Prophets of Israel, and of course hardly mentioning the **Apocrypha** of the Roman Catholic canon. We believe an **Old Testament Theology** worthy of the name has to take into con-

(continued...)

⁵¹(...continued)

sideration a much larger content than is apparent in Oswalt's comment. What do you think?

⁵²Slotki states that **verses 16-17** are "an allusion to the Israelites' crossing of the Red Sea and the destruction of Pharaoh's hosts" (p. 209) in Israel's exodus from Egypt.

Verse 16 by itself could be speaking of YHWH's guidance of ocean-going vessels, but combined with **verse 17** is related to the exodus.

Knight comments on these two verses that "The argument rests upon history. At the period of the former things (**verse 18**), God had revealed Himself to be the Redeemer of Israel. But of course God does not change. Thus He is the eternal Redeemer. What God is now about to do is therefore consonant with the nature of His revealed Self. Our theologian-author here describes this contemporary historical event by means of ecstatic reporting." (P. 67)

North entitles **42:16-21** "The Wonders Of The New Exodus."

He comments that "Yahweh had once made a path through the sea and, as if assuming the command of a hostile army, had engulfed it in the resurging waters. He now announces His intention to do 'a new thing,' in which the elements of water and dry land will be reversed. He will make pathways through the desert waste and supply His people with water. Even the creatures of the wild will honor Him for this.

"The homeward journey through the transformed desert has been described in **41:17-20**, but without explicitly comparing and contrasting it with the exodus. Here that contrast is intentionally drawn." (P. 124)

Oswalt comments on **verses 16-17** that "These two verses give an unusually long introduction to the quotation that begins in **verse 18**. The introduction consists of a series of participial statements identifying the speaker, God, by what He does...The description is obviously related to the exodus...The governing verbs are in the present tense. The use of tenses places the reader or hearer within the events. As a result the exodus is brought of the dim past into the present, and Israel is reminded that their faith is not in these events, real and constitutive as they are, but in the present God Who does those kinds of things." (P. 154)

Westermann comments that "For **Deutero-Isaiah** the most important event in Israel's history was the exodus. The great prominence which he gives it is due to the fact that he himself was involved in a situation similar to it. At the same time, however, this well accords with the place which it occupies in the old historical *credo*, of which it forms the heart (von Rad)." (P. 22) For this "old historical *credo*," see:

(continued...)

⁵²(...continued)

Deuteronomy 6:20-24,

- 20 When your son will ask you tomorrow / in time to come, saying
What (are) the testimonies and the statutes and the commandments
which YHWH our God commanded you people?
- 21 And you shall say to your son,
we were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt;
and YHWH brought us out from Egypt with a strong hand.
- 22 And YHWH gave signs and great wonders and severe ones
in Egypt against Pharaoh and against all his household
in our eyes.
- 23 And He brought us forth from there,
in order to bring us, to give to us,
the land which He swore to our fathers.
- 24 And YHWH commanded us to do all these statutes,
to tremble in awe of / reverence for YHWH our God,
for our good, all the days,
to give us life as (we have) this day.

Deuteronomy 26:5-9, where the Israelite is to come before the priest with a basket of first-fruit in his hands, which the priest will place before the altar;

- 5 And you shall answer, and you shall say before YHWH your God,
A perishing Aramean (was) my father.
And he went down to Egypt,
and he was a temporary resident there, consisting of a few men;
and he grew there into a great nation, mighty and great.
- 6 And the Egyptians did evil to us,
and they humbled us,
and they placed upon us severe labor.
- 7 And we cried out to YHWH, God of our fathers;
and YHWH heard our voice;
and He saw our affliction
and our (severe) labor and our oppression.
- 8 And YHWH brought us forth from Egypt
by a strong hand and by an outstretched arm
and by great terror
and by signs and by wonders.
- 9 And He brought us into this place;
and He gave to us this land,
a land flowing (with) milk and honey.

“Deutero-Isaiah proclaimed the release from Babylon as a second exodus...
There are obvious reminiscences of the exodus from Egypt in the summons to depart
from Babylon in **52:11-12** (‘you shall not go out in haste’), while the proclamations

(continued...)

הַנּוֹתֵן בַּיָּם דֶּרֶךְ

וּבַמַּיִם עֲזִים נְתִיבָה:

In this way YHWH spoke,

the One giving / making a way in the sea,
and in mighty waters a pathway;

43:17 הַמוֹצִיא רֶכֶב־וּסוּסִים חֵיל וְעִזּוֹז

יַחְדָּו יִשְׁכְּבוּ בַל־יִקְוֹמוּ

דָּעֲכוּ כַפְשָׁתָהּ כָּבוֹ:

the One bringing forth⁵³ chariot and horse, army and mighty (man);
together they lie down, they will not arise;
they were extinguished; like the flax-wick they were finished.⁵⁴

⁵²(...continued)

which announce the return through a wilderness miraculously transformed recall the earlier wanderings in the wilderness (43:19-20; 55:12-13; 51:11; 49:9-10)...

“The place which **Deutero-Isaiah** gives to the exodus is so conspicuous that all the other events in Israel’s history recede into the background. An arch which spans the nations’ entire history has as its one pillar the release from Egypt and as its other the new, imminent release from Babylon.” (P. 22)

⁵³North comments that the hiphil participle here is a military term, and “It is as if Yahweh assumes command of the Egyptian host and leads it to destruction.” (P. 125)

⁵⁴Oswalt comments on **verse 17** that “The sweeping nature of the prophet’s faith finds expression in *He leads out chariot and horse*...God, not Pharaoh, is the Leader of the Egyptian army, and He leads it out to destruction. Moreover, that destruction is final. They are gone, as completely and as decisively as is the light of a snuffed out candle.” (P. 154) Compare **Exodus 15:21**,

And Miriam answered them,

Sing to the YHWH, because He has certainly risen up—
horse and its rider He threw into the sea!

This Divine action is the exact opposite of that of YHWH’s chosen servant as

(continued...)

43:18⁵⁵ אֶל-תִּזְכְּרוּ רֵאשִׁוֹנוֹת

וְקַדְמֵינִיּוֹת אֶל-תִּתְבַּנְּנוּ:

You people shall not remember former / first things,
and you shall not meditate on / consider diligently ancient things!⁵⁶

⁵⁴(...continued)

depicted in **Isaiah 42:3**, פִּשְׁתָּה כִּהָה לֹא יִכְבֶּנָה, “a dim(ly burning) flax-wick, he will not extinguish it.” But of course, the difference is that the servant will not wipe out a weak, dying person, and here YHWH is wiping out the proud army of Pharaoh, in order to save / deliver the fleeing people of Israel, the former slaves who have no army.

⁵⁵Alexander comments on **verse 18** that it is “as if he had said, Why should I refer to ancient instances of God’s almighty intervention in behalf of His people, when others equally remarkable are yet to come? Some refer this to the advent of Christ, but most to the fall of Babylon, and the restoration of the Jews from exile.” (P. 156)

Oswalt comments that “Now that the speaker is fully identified, we come to the speech. The word is almost the last one we would expect to hear, given that introduction: Do not remember the former things.” (P. 154)

North comments that on the “former things” that “Whatever the word may mean elsewhere in Deutero-Isaiah, here it must refer to the exodus.” (P. 125)

Knight comments on **verses 18-19** that “The Divine speech begins here, following from ‘has said’ at **verse 16**. What Cyrus is going to do under God is something far greater than the events at the Red Sea of old. And so Act II is now about to open. To emphasize it, Deutero-Isaiah makes God forbid Israel even to think back to those mighty events of old. ‘Look at Me in action now,’ He says. ‘What I am about to do is something which, though new, will not be a surprise, for it will spring organically out of the old, as the butterfly develops from the caterpillar. Thus I am going to lay a route, (*make a way*), not this time in the sea, but over the wilderness that separates Babylonia from Palestine.” (P. 67)

⁵⁶We understand this forbidding of looking at “former things” and considering diligently ancient things is the prophet’s call to Israel to focus on its future rather than its past.

As Slotki comments, “The signs and wonders of the exodus from Egypt, marvelous as they were, will be eclipsed by the new marvels that God will show to His people.” (P. 209)

We say, it is important to never forget our roots, and to acknowledge what God has done for us in the past; but it is even more important to look forward to the future,

(continued...)

⁵⁶(...continued)

believing that God is creating a new and better future for us.

Compare **Jeremiah 3:15-18**, where Jeremiah depicts a blessed future for Israel, once again united, with Jerusalem serving as YHWH's throne, and the past, specifically the ark of the covenant, will no longer be mentioned.

- 15 And I will give to you people shepherds like My heart;
and they will pasture you—(with) knowledge and skill.
- 16 And it will happen when you multiply and are fruitful in the land in those days--
(it is) a saying of YHWH--
you will not say again, Ark / Chest of YHWH's covenant,
and it will not come up in your heart / mind;
and they will not remember it,
and they will not visit (it),
- 17 At that time, they will call Jerusalem Throne of YHWH;
and all the nations will be gathered to it, to YHWH's name, to Jerusalem;
and they will not again walk after their heart's evil stubbornness.
- 18 In those days, Judah's household will come to Israel's household,
and they will come together from (the) north land,
to the land which I caused your fathers to inherit.

Oswalt says that "for Israel, the glorious, saving events of the past with all their details had become a straitjacket into which every other act of God was forced...As a result the Israelites were frequently unable to recognize God's new actions when they came...To all of that Isaiah says, 'Remember God, that He is the sort Who can do all those kinds of things, but forget the ways in which He did them! Why? Because He is the Creator; He does not need to do things the same way twice. He is not an idol, doomed to perform the same activities over and over again as nature does.'" (Pp. 154-55).

Compare in the **New Testament, Mark 9:2-8**,

- 2 And after six days the Jesus takes with Him the Peter and the Jacob and the
John,
and He takes them up into a high mountain by themselves alone.
And He was transformed / changed before them.
- 3 And the clothes of His became exceedingly radiant white,
such as a launderer upon the earth is not able to whiten in this way.
- 4 And Elijah with Moses was appeared to them;
and they were talking together with the Jesus.
- 5 And answering, the Peter says to the Jesus,
Rabbi, it is good (for) us to be here!
And let us make / build three tents,
for You one, and (for) Moses one, and (for) Elijah one!
- 6 For he did not know what he should answer—

(continued...)

43:19 הַנְּנִי עֲשֵׂה חֲדָשָׁה

עֲתָה תִצְמַח

הַלּוֹא תִדְעוּנָהּ

אֵף אֲשִׁים בְּמִדְבַּר הַדֶּרֶךְ

בִּישְׁמוֹן נִהְרֹת:

Look at Me—doing a new thing;⁵⁷

⁵⁶(...continued)

for they became frightened.

7 And a cloud came, overshadowing them,
and a voice came out of the cloud:

This One is the Son of Mine, the beloved One,
Listen to Him!

8 And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone,
but the Jesus alone with them.

John 1:11-12,

11 To the ones belonging to Him He came,
And the ones belonging to Him did not receive Him.

12 But then whoever received Him,
He gave to them authority to become children of God,
to the ones believing in His name.

That means, You've got to quit looking to the past, and be ready to enter into God's new future as it comes to you! Quit saying, This is our tradition; this is the way we've always done it! Start saying, Listen to God's call; follow wherever He leads you!

And today, quit saying We've always considered ourselves superior to the immigrants, to the folks with dark skin color, to the mentally challenged, to the LGBT's, to the people of other religions, to the poor folks on welfare and food stamps; we've always bullied them, and told them to Get back! Start saying, these are our brothers and sisters, fellow children of God; we can learn from them, we can share with them, we can join with them in building a better world! What do you think? What new thing is God doing in our 21st century? Or did God quit doing new things with the coming of Christ?

⁵⁷North comments that the "new thing" is a clear reference to "the new exodus." (P. 125) That is, the reference is to Cyrus' allowing the captive in Babylon to go free, to return to their native homelands, and rebuild their places of worship.

now it will sprout forth.⁵⁸
Will you people not know?⁵⁹

⁵⁸Alexander states that “The figure of germination implies that as yet there was no appearance of the final issue.” (P. 156) Compare **Isaiah 42:9**,

The first things, look—they came / happened.
And the new things I am declaring--
before they sprout forth
I will cause them to be heard by you people!

That is, YHWH is a God Who is planting seeds of the future in the present. As North says, “the verb [spring up], whether in its literal or figurative meaning, is used of the germination (or sprouting) of plants, generally with emphasis on its suddenness.” (P. 125)

It is exciting and hopeful to view what is happening in our day in that light, especially as we see the main-line churches which played such an important role in previous centuries shrinking, and the rise of new, non-denominational movements taking their place, with new insights into biblical teaching, and rejection of past prejudices that have so hampered main-line churches.

Do we dare to believe that the “Arab spring,” and the on-going conflicts between Muslim groups, are the seeds of new movements of reconciliation in Christianity and between world religions, which will mean the coming of “new heavens and earth”? Or do you hold to the view that everything “new” that we can ever hope for came with Jesus Christ, and now nothing more new is to be expected? Has your God quit doing “new things”? And if He is, what are those “new things”?

Alexander adds concerning **verse 19**, that “even supposing an allusion to the literal journey through the desert, what is said of rivers must be figurative, which makes it probable that the whole sentence is of the same description. Thus understood, the Prophet’s language means that God could change the face of nature and control the angry elements in favor of His people; that He had so done in times past, and would again do so in the future.” (P. 156)

⁵⁹Oswalt comments that “For the prophet looking with faith, the new thing (compare also **48:6b**,

I caused you (singular) to hear new things from now on—
and things guarded, and you did not know them.)

seems to be bursting forth before his very eyes, and he is amazed that his hearers do not seem to recognize it.” (P. 155) The prophet asks, “Will you people not know?”

(continued...)

I will surely place in the desert a way,
in a wilderness,⁶⁰ rivers!⁶¹

43:20⁶² תִּכְבְּרֵנִי חַיַּת הַשָּׁדֶה

⁵⁹(...continued)

Slotki answers the question by stating, “The answer is, ‘Of course you shall.’” (P. 209)

Our answer is, “Most likely, you will not!” Israel quickly silenced the voice of Second and Third Isaiah, listening instead to the voice of Ezra and Nehemiah, calling them to build a wall, segregating themselves from foreigners and half-breed Jews, even their own children, and focusing their attention, not on becoming suffering servants and practicing genuine righteousness among the new peoples of the land, but on observing the 613 commandments of the Mosaic *Torah*, keeping themselves ritually “pure,” while refusing to have significant contact with anyone they considered “unclean.”

⁶⁰Knight observes that the phrase here, בְּיֶשִׁמוֹן, “in Yeshimon,” was “the name of an area so completely barren that no sheep could possibly graze on it. **Deuteronomy 32:10**, a verse in the song of Moses which Deutero-Isaiah quotes so frequently, declares that ‘He found him [Israel] in a desert land, and in the howling waste of the wilderness.’ That is both literal fact and at the same time a picture of what life is like without God. Moreover it is what life could become once again for Israel, should she rebel once more against God’s good guidance and stray from the straight and narrow road.

Once again she would be lost in the desert. Yet, as Deutero-Isaiah declares, if this happens, in His grace God will not immediately lift her out of the desert and set her back on the road. He will lay new roads for her in the desert, and open pools of water for her to drink in the desert just as He had done before at that time when He gave Israel water to drink from the rock that Moses struck (**Numbers 20:7-11**). And He will do so in order that, walking beside her as the Good Shepherd, He may gently lead her back to where she belongs.

“Thus Israel will retain her free will even in the desert, for God never forces His people to return home to His care when they do not wish to do so. The whole eschatological picture is virtually theological teaching drawn from an existential situation. Here we have the second or third indication of Deutero-Isaiah’s important thesis still to follow, that is, that God is able to bring salvation to others out of the suffering and even death of His chosen people. We return to this theme at **55:1**.” (Pp. 67-68)

⁶¹Where our Hebrew text has נְהַרְוֹת, “rivers,” 1QIs^a apparently has נְתִיבוֹת, “paths,” but the reading is not clear, and it may be נְתִיבִים, with a masculine plural ending rather than feminine plural. The ancient versions all support our Hebrew text.

⁶²Knight comments on **verses 20-21**, that the Divine voice is saying, “My action

(continued...)

תָּנִים וּבְנֹת יַעֲנָה
 כִּי־נָתַתִּי בַמִּדְבָּר מַיִם
 נְהָרוֹת בְּיַשִּׁימוֹן
 לְהַשְׁקוֹת עַמִּי בְּחִירָי:

They will honor Me, wild animal(s) of the field;
 jackals and young ostriches.

Because I placed in the desert water(s),
 rivers in a wilderness,
 to give drink (to) My people, My chosen—⁶³

43:21 עִם־זוֹ יִצְרָתִי לִי

⁶²(...continued)

is to have cosmic significance; even the brute beasts will cooperate.’ In the wilderness shall waters break out, and rivers in the desert, (35:6). Observe how close our verse is to **Isaiah 35** and other similar passages, one of which we shall meet later at **55:12-13**... Rivers in the desert are of course fundamental for the preservation of any form of life in the wilderness...

“The whole of the above section [**verses 16-21**] is obviously to be understood metaphorically and not literally, even though the declaration is based upon the literal emancipation of the exiles by Cyrus and their literal return to their homeland in Palestine.” (P. 67)

⁶³Oswalt comments that “The figurative nature of this material is made plain in **verse 20**. In fact, the desert-dwelling animals would have little cause to praise God if He turned the deserts into meadows, effectively destroying their homes. But in figure the animals are reacting just as thirsty humans would. The point is that God is Master of the cosmos and can do with it exactly as He wishes to achieve His purposes...God, the true God, can turn wet to dry, or dry to wet, for the sake of His chosen people.” (P. 155)

Compare **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)!

תְּהִלַּתִּי יִסְפְּרוּ:

a people whom I formed for Myself;
they will declare My praise.⁶⁴

⁶⁴This feminine singular noun תְּהִלָּה, “praise,” “song of praise,” in the feminine plural is תְּהִלּוֹת, “praises,” or “songs of praise,” which it seems would be used as a title for the **Book of Psalms**. But strangely, as a title for the **Book of Psalms**, the feminine noun was exchanged for the masculine plural form, תְּהִלִּים, **tehillym** which is the title for the **Book of Psalms** in the **Hebrew Bible**.

Oswalt comments on **verse 21** that “This entire verse is a phrase in apposition to [placed side by side with] the last two words [in Hebrew] of **verse 20** [עַמִּי בְּחִירָיִן, ‘My people, My chosen one’]. It explains the purpose for which the people are chosen. Indeed, they were not only chosen but formed (**43:7**) for the purpose of declaring the *praise* [תְּהִלָּה, **tehillah**] of God...In short, the Israelite people were created, formed, and chosen to be witnesses (**43:10; 44:8**), those who would experience the redeeming love of a holy Creator and could declare that message to a world that had lost the capacity to recognize Him.” (Pp. 155-56)

Compare in the **New Testament**:

Ephesians 1:4-6,

- 4 just as He chose us in Him [Jesus Christ] before earth’s foundation,
(that) we should be set-apart people, and without blemish before Him in
love,
- 5 predetermining us for son-ship through Jesus Christ for Himself,
according to the good pleasure of His will,
- 6 for praise of (the) glory of the grace / favor of His,
with which He favored / graced us in the Beloved One.

1 Peter 2:9,

But then you (plural) (are) a chosen race / family,
a royal / kingly priesthood,
a set-apart nation,
a people for possession [by God],
so that you might proclaim the excellences
of the One having called you out of darkness

(continued...)

⁶⁴(...continued)

into the marvelous light of His!

⁶⁵Knight comments on **verse 22** that “It is Israel that is now in the dock [an enclosed space in a court of law where the accused sits or stands during trial]; both the Gods and the nations have had their turn. How tragic it is that for the fifty long years now that Israel has been in exile she has been blind to this underlying purpose of God... Deutero-Isaiah knew that Israel was not in Babylon by chance. God had put her there to be His servant in that particular situation, in fact, to be the means of offering to the gentiles the full life He wanted them to live. But now the eternal plan and purpose of God had failed. And it had failed through Israel’s growing tired of God.” (P. 68)

Slotki comments on **verses 22-28** that “Israel is unworthy of God’s bounties. He [Israel] did nothing to please Him but, on the contrary, always burdened Him with [its] sins. For His Own sake, however, He will forgive [Israel’s] sins and overlook his iniquities.” (P. 210)

Westermann holds that “Deutero-Isaiah regarded himself as the lineal descendant of the pre-exilic prophets,” and refers to this passage, **43:22-28** as proof, in which “the way in which Deutero-Isaiah ranks himself alongside the pre-exilic prophets of doom is left in no doubt whatsoever.” (P. 7)

“The unique feature of the prophecy of Deutero-Isaiah is this, the hour summoned him to the task of proclaiming salvation, and nothing but salvation to his people; at the same time, however, he wears the mantle of the pre-exilic prophets of doom. He is a prophet of salvation standing in the ranks of the prophets of doom...

“The explanation is quite simple. The fall of Jerusalem meant that the judgment predicted by the eighth- and seventh-century prophets had been fulfilled. Any possibility, therefore, of prophecy’s continuing now depended on its being prophecy of salvation. Another instance of the same change of front within the ranks of the prophets of doom is to be found in Ezekiel. Up to the fall of Jerusalem, his sole theme was the impending judgment. But once the city actually fell, he turned into a prophet of salvation...

“The prophets of doom in their day were commissioned to speak God’s word of judgment to a particular situation for which this was *the* word of God. In just the same way, Deutero-Isaiah in his day had to speak the word appropriate to a different situation. It is quite impossible to dissociate the prophetic word from the time at which it was uttered. Although the God Whose words the prophets proclaimed to His chosen people remained the same, this was not always so of His words. Thus God’s word can never be of the nature of general teaching—perennially valid without reference to its original context. It is a living word, changing with the changing years.” (Pp. 9-10)

Do you agree with Westermann? Or do you believe in a “static” word of God—a word that cannot be changed regardless of the situation? And if you do, please read

(continued...)

⁶⁵(...continued)

and consider once again the **third chapter** of **Ecclesiastes** with its statements “there is a time to kill, and a time to heal, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war, and a time for peace.” One of my beloved professors at Duke, a world renowned expert in Hebrew wisdom literature, called this passage the words of a “traitor”—since it undermined his view of “canon law.” Do you think Jesus believed this teaching? Have you ever thought about the great difference between his teaching in the sermon in **Matthew 5-7** and his teaching in **Matthew 23**? Have you wondered why he, the “Prince of Peace,” told his followers that the time had come for them to purchase swords (**Luke 36-38**) and his earlier statement that he had not come to bring peace, but a sword (**Matthew 10:34**)?

North entitles the passage “Frivolous Sacrifices Betoken A Sinful History.”

He comments that “Yahweh says emphatically that it was not to Him that the Israelites offered their lavish sacrifices. Not that He had demanded such slavish toil from them. On the contrary: it was they who had made a slave of Him with their sins. But it was entirely in keeping with His nature that He should wipe out their sins. Let Him and them together review the past and see whether there was any justification for their conduct. They had been insubordinate ever since they began to be a people. That was why He had brought their state and its institutions to an end...”

“The passage (compare **23b**) cannot be a complaint on Yahweh’s part that the Israelites had not brought Him sacrifices...It is an indictment of Israel from the beginning of her history— ‘your first father sinned.’ There is evidence enough that Israel offered sacrifices on a lavish scale (e.g., **Isaiah 1:11-14; Amos 4:4-5; 5:21-22**). No doubt the sacrifices were offered officially to Yahweh, no doubt also that those who offered them assumed that they were offering them to Yahweh. But Yahweh says plainly that they were not offered to Him, and He seems to say that He did not want them. The passage is not so forthright in its condemnation of sacrifice as are those in **Amos** and **Isaiah 1**, though there is much in it that seems to disparage sacrifice.” (P. 127)

Oswalt entitles these verses “Salvation by grace, not by performance.” He comments that “In the previous segments (**43:8-13; 14-21**) God has declared His intention to deliver His people as a demonstration of His sole Lordship and in fulfillment of His original purpose in choosing them, that they might be witnesses of His glory before the world. But it is apparent from this segment (as well as **42:18-25**) that some among the prophet’s hearers insist that any deliverance which God may give is one that the people would deserve in the light of their ritual obedience of Him. Westermann is almost certainly right when he says that **verse 28** reflects a prior charge against God, ‘It is unjust for you to give Jacob to the ban, and Israel to reviling.’ The result is a dispute between God and His people in which God asserts that He never wanted sacrifices, per se, and that sacrifices as they were giving them did not constitute the obedience that He really wanted (**verses 22-24**)...”

(continued...)

כִּי־יָגַעַת בִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

And⁶⁶ you did not call out to Me, Jacob;

because you grew weary of Me, Israel.^{67, 2}

43:23⁶⁸ לֹא־הִבִּיאתָ לִי שָׁה עַל־תִּיךָ

⁶⁵(...continued)

“Indeed, from the very beginning Israel had been marked by sin, and no one could refute that fact (**verses 26-27**). The deliverance that He undeniably would bring would be an expression of His sheer grace and of His Own character (**verse 25**), not of some obligation to reward their obedience.” (Pp. 157-58)

⁶⁶The conjunction “and” is omitted by a few Hebrew manuscripts, the Syriac and some manuscripts of the Aramaic Targum and Latin Vulgate.

⁶⁷Where our other English translations have “you grew weary of Me,” **New International** has “you have not wearied yourselves for me.” Slotki’s translation is similar, “Neither has thou wearied thyself about Me, O Israel,” and he says this means “troubled thyself,” “Israel did not care for God’s service and neglected the high duties He imposed upon him.” (P. 210) **Rahfs** has “neither to weary you did I make Israel.”

Alexander paraphrases **verse 22** by “It is not I that have been called by you; for so far from manifesting such a preference, you have been wearied and disgusted with the labor which attends My service.” (P. 157)

Oswalt, admitting that there are other interpretations of this verse, states that “most recent treatments...see a continuity between it and the diatribes [harangues, criticisms] of the pre-exilic prophets against the use of the cult as an escape from ethical obedience. God is saying that although they may have thought they were giving Him acceptable worship, they were not, and that this is the reason they find their worship so wearying.” (P. 158)

For related passages concerning Israel’s sacrifices, see our end-note 2.

⁶⁸Knight comments on **verse 23** that “The curtain is here drawn back to reveal the pain in the Father’s heart. For He is united in covenantal bond with this ridiculous people as the Holy-One-of-Israel, a people that chose of its own free will to turn its back on God’s cosmic purpose...Deutero-Isaiah makes God point out that ever since the temple had fallen in 587, Israel in exile had not been able to offer sacrifice. This was a great deprivation for her, for sacrifices were God’s Own choice of the means of grace for Israel.” (Pp. 68-69)

Slotki comments on **verses 23-24** that “Being captive in Babylon, Israel could not

(continued...)

⁶⁸(...continued)

bring sacrifices to the temple in Jerusalem. The purport of the exhortation, therefore, cannot be blame for not doing the impossible, but rather to contrast God's treatment of His people with their behavior towards Him. Israel, being in a foreign land, is indeed no longer expected to bring animals or other material sacrifices to God's temple. He is no longer, so to speak, *burdened* or *wearied* by God (**verses 23, 24a**). Yet Israel has *burdened* God with his sins and *wearied* Him with his iniquities (**verse 24b**). In the absence of sacrifices, Israel should have attuned his mind and heart to the true service of God and acted in the spirit, if not in the letter, of the prescribed sacrificial ritual." (P. 210)

Oswalt comments on these verses that "Using typical terms from the sacrificial system...the author proceeds to say that it was not really these things that the people of Israel had brought to God, but their moral and ethical iniquities. If they are weary of the pointless rituals, how much more is God..."

"What this all speaks to is the symbolic nature of ritual in the **Old Testament**. Without question [? See **Jeremiah 7:22** below!] God had commanded all these rituals, and had commanded them in some detail, with specific punishments for the failure to perform them. But the rituals themselves were not what God wanted, and thus He could say here and elsewhere that He had not commanded them." (P. 159) See:

Amos 5:25-26,

- 25 Was it animal sacrifices and gift(s) you people brought near to Me
in the wilderness for forty years, O family of Israel?
26 You people will also lift up Sikkuth, your King,
and Kiyyun, your images,
and Star, your God, which you have made for yourselves!

Jeremiah 7:21-22,

- 21 In this way YHWH of Armies, of Israel spoke:
Your offerings-up, add to your (animal) sacrifices,
and eat (their) flesh!
22 Because I did not speak to your fathers,
and I did not command them,
on (the) day I brought them from Egypt-land,
concerning matters of offering-up and (animal) sacrifice!

It is my belief that the **Five Books of Moses** were not given all at once by Moses at Mount Sinai. Rather, the basic legislation of the covenant of YHWH with Israel was given there, including probably the **Ten Commandments** and the **Covenant Code**, **Exodus 20:19-23:33**. But then in the centuries that followed, and all sorts of historical developments and changes confronted the nation of Israel, those who came after

(continued...)

וְזָבַחְךָ לֹא כִבַּדְתָּנִי
 לֹא הֵעֲבַדְתִּיךָ בְּמִנְחָה
 וְלֹא הוֹנַעְתִּיךָ בְּלִבְנוֹהַ:

You (singular) did not bring to Me a sheep (for) your offerings-up;⁶⁹

⁶⁸(...continued)

Moses, and “sat in Moses’ seat” (see Jesus’ words in **Matthew 23:1**) applied the laws given by Moses to new situations and needs, gradually and massively adding to that initial legislation.

It was done by such people as the judges appointed to help Moses in his work (**Exodus 18**), and then Aaron, the High Priest, and his descendants, who especially added to legislation concerning sacrifices and offerings, such as are found in the **Book of Leviticus**. There was Joshua (see **Joshua 24:25-26**), who was followed by Judges such as Deborah, and Samuel. And then came the Kings over Israel, such as David and Solomon, with their **Psalms** and **Proverbs**, and other leaders in Israel, especially the writing prophets, who added to the growing body of teaching, that were eventually to become the **Hebrew Bible**.

Where did this demand for a “multitude of sacrifices” come from? YHWH implies in this passage in **Isaiah**, and states clearly in **Jeremiah 7:22**, Not from Me! It’s not

what I desired! From whom then? Our answer is that it came from the growing body of the priesthood in Israel, who made their living off the animal and grain sacrifices, and who sought to enhance their position and their finances through the multiplication of sacrifices, turning Israel’s worship into something never intended by YHWH, but self-serving, profitable to the priesthood.

What do you think? Are you willing to take **Jeremiah 7:22** as the truth, or will you try to change its wording and meaning as many translators and interpreters have done?

⁶⁹Slotki comments that “Two such offerings, one in the morning and the other in the evening, had to be offered daily in the temple in addition to any offerings which individuals might bring during the day.” (P. 210)

That is, according to the teaching of the priestly **Book of Leviticus—1:10; 3:7; 4:32, 35; 5:6**. But here YHWH is depicted as saying that such offerings-up didn’t happen!

How will you explain this? Our explanation holds that the bulk of the Levitical legislation originated with the priests long after the time of Moses, when the temple in

(continued...)

and your (animal) sacrifices⁷⁰ did not honor Me.⁷¹
I did not cause you to serve with offering(s),⁷²
and I did not cause you to labor with sweet-smelling incense.⁷³

⁶⁹(...continued)

Jerusalem had been built, and priests were seeking to legislate concerning worship through animal sacrifices, with an eye to their own enrichment.

⁷⁰Where our Hebrew text has וְזִבְחֵיךָ, “and your (animal) sacrifices,” 1QIs^a has וּבְזִבְחֵיכָה, “and with your (animal) sacrifices.”

⁷¹That is, whatever animal sacrifices Israel may have offered, they didn’t honor YHWH!

⁷²Anyone who reads the **Book of Leviticus** is lead to believe that it was YHWH Who caused Israel to serve Him with all sorts of offerings. See the word מִנְחָה, in **Leviticus 2:1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 13, 14, 14, 15; 5:13; 6:7, 8, 8, 13, 14, 16; 7:9, 10, 37; 9:4, 17; 10:12; 14:10, 20, 21, 31; 23:13, 16, 18 and 23:37.**

And the question inevitably arises, If it was not YHWH Who caused Israel to serve Him with all these offerings, who was it? We say, it was Israel’s priests, who put those demands in the mouth of YHWH.

What do you think? How do you explain this?

⁷³Again, YHWH is depicted as denying having wearied Israel with the demand for the burning of expensive לְבוֹנָה, “frankincense.” See this word in **Leviticus 2:1, 2, 15, 16; 5:11; 6:8 and 24:7.**

And we ask, If YHWH had not caused the Jews to bring offerings-up and sweet smelling incense in their worship, who did cause it? We repeat--it was the priests in Israel who gave legislation concerning these matters of worship, turning YHWH’s “house of prayer for all nations” into a great slaughter-house from which flowed rivers of animal-blood, and required offerings that enriched the priests.

Alexander comments on **verse 23** that its most satisfactory interpretation, and that which best agrees with the context, is “that it has reference not merely to the outward and material [acts of worship], but to [their] moral value and effect. You have not so performed your ceremonial duties as to lay Me under any obligation to protect you. You have not really given Me your cattle, you have not truly honored Me with sacrifices ...I have not succeeded in inducing you to serve Me, I have not prevailed upon you to exert yourselves, much less wearied or exhausted you in ceremonial services.” (P. 158)

(continued...)

⁷³(...continued)

But this view changes the statement attributed to YHWH that He did not cause these things, nor does it take into consideration **Jeremiah 7:22**, which denies that YHWH commanded the offering of sacrifices in the first place. What do you think?

If you believe the entirety of the **Five Books of Moses** were given at one time by Moses, then of course, Jeremiah's statement is mistaken. But if, as I believe, those five books had a long history of growth and expansion across the decades and centuries, with Israel's priests playing a large role in adding to the legislation concerning sacrifices and offerings, then what Jeremiah states can be understood as the truth.

⁷⁴Knight comments on **verse 24** that "Since the exile had put an end to those daily and expensive offerings, the opportunity had arisen for Israel to realize that she could now hold intimate communion with God without the instrumentality of the sacrificial cult. Her prophets had sought to teach her so [see **1 Samuel 15:22; Micah 6:7-8**]. Yet that glorious opportunity, arising out of the discipline of the exile, had been missed ...[And YHWH says,] 'You have made Me the Servant Who bears your sins, you have exhausted Me with (or made Me suffer at the cost of) your iniquities'...

"Israel ought therefore to have been making the discovery that since the principle of sacrifice must still hold, it was she herself who had to become the beast that must now be sacrificed. But Israel had not made that forward step. In fact she had given up her obligations to the covenant when she broke her word to keep it. Yet God had not broken His. In consequence it was He alone Who was now bearing the sacrificial cost of the union...God thus necessarily experienced and bore upon His Own flesh...the pain that Israel had refused to bear, and which was concomitant with being the servant of God in the world. It is God Himself then Who is thus in an ultimate sense the servant that Israel had been called and chosen to be.

"The above words are not theological speculation. No human mind could have invented the thought contained in **verse 24**. These can be no less therefore than revelation, revelation into the very heart of the living and loving God, Who in His condescension has stooped to unite Himself with this intolerably insolent people that He now calls His Own...

"But the above passage is so iconoclastic [characterized by attack on cherished beliefs] of all man's preconceived notions about what is proper for the Divine Being and what is not that it has been passed over in silence by the great majority of scholars. The traditional theological view about God in the works of the fathers of the early Christian centuries, and even at the reformation period, is that God must necessarily be impassible [incapable of feeling or suffering pain]...But the work of Deutero-Isaiah reveals to us the sufferings of a God Who wills to suffer. In His capacity as Creator and Redeemer of His world He sees that His ends can be met only in, and through, and by means of the suffering that the sins of the men He has chosen in love have caused Him ...He knows that in the end He will win the whole world to glad acceptance of His proff-

(continued...)

וְחֶלֶב זְבַחֶיךָ לֹא הִרְוִיתַנִּי
אֶךְ הָעֵבֶרְתַּנִּי בְּחַטָּאוֹתֶיךָ
הוֹגַעְתַּנִּי בְּעֹנֹתֶיךָ:

You did not purchase for Me (aromatic) reed(s)⁷⁵ with the silver;
and (with the) fat of your sacrifices you did not satisfy Me!⁷⁶
Howbeit you caused Me to labor with your sins;
you caused Me to toil with your iniquities.⁷⁷

⁷⁴(...continued)
ered love.” (Pp. 69-70)

This is deep, profound commentary on this passage. We would add to Knight’s words, that it was Second Isaiah’s conviction, as so powerfully expressed in **52:13-53:12**, that YHWH’s “servant” is a suffering servant—who willingly gives his life on behalf of Israel’s and the world’s sins, bearing those sins himself. But this passage shows that in the absence of Israel’s willingness to become such a suffering servant, God Himself will willingly become the Suffering Servant Himself!

⁷⁵Slotki’s translation has “sweet cane,” and Slotki comments that “It was one of the spices used in the preparation of the holy anointing oil (compare **Exodus 30:23**). In the Hebrew, קָנִיתָ, (thou hast bought) and קָנִיָּה, (sweet cane) are a play on words.” (P. 211)

⁷⁶For mentions of חֶלֶב, “fat,” in **Leviticus**, see: **3:3, 3, 4, 9, 9, 9, 10, 14, 14, 15, 16, 17; 4:8, 8, 8, 9, 19, 26, 26, 31, 31, 35, 35; 6:5; 7:3, 3, 4, 23, 24, 24, 25, 30, 31, 33; 8:16, 16, 25, 25, 16; 9:10, 19, 20, 20, 24; 10:15** and **16:25**.

⁷⁷Alexander comments on **verse 24** that “So far from being satisfied or pleased with what they offered [which, we add, **Jeremiah 7:22** claims YHWH had not commanded], God was only vexed with their transgressions and neglects.” (P. 158)

Oswalt states that “Isaiah’s point is that the carefully performed rituals had been as though not done at all, because they had not reflected genuine submission and real changes of heart. Thus the rituals themselves were sinful and iniquitous. Far from being a reason why God would owe special favors to His people, their attempts to use cultic ritual to manipulate God were only one more manifestation of their deeply ingrained inability to surrender themselves, their needs, and their destinies to Him.” (P. 160)

We add, the fact was, according to this passage and **Jeremiah 7:22**, YHWH had not commanded those sacrifices and offerings in the first place! And if not YHWH, then

(continued...)

43:25 אֲנֹכִי אֲנֹכִי הוּא

מַחָה פְּשָׁעֶיךָ לְמַעְנֵי

וְחַטְאֹתֶיךָ לֹא אֶזְכֶּר:

I, I (am) He--⁷⁸

⁷⁷(...continued)

who? Was it the Israelite priests, who furthered their own position and financial interests by the multiplication of sacrifices?

⁷⁸Compare similar statements in:

Isaiah 37:16c, d,

אַתָּה־הוּא

הָאֱלֹהִים לְבַדְּךָ לְכֹל מַמְלְכוֹת הָאָרֶץ

You (are) He--

the God by Yourself / alone for all kingdoms of the earth///

Isaiah 43:25a, b

אֲנֹכִי אֲנֹכִי הוּא

מַחָה פְּשָׁעֶיךָ לְמַעְנֵי

I, I (am) He--

One wiping away your transgressions for My sake...

Isaiah 51:12a,

אֲנֹכִי אֲנֹכִי הוּא

מִנְחַמְכֶם

I, I (am) He--

your (plural) Comforter!...

2 Samuel 7:28a,b,

וְעַתָּה | אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

אַתָּה־הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים

(continued...)

One wiping away your transgressions for My sake;^{79, 3}

⁷⁸(...continued)

And now, my Lord YHWH,
You (are) He, the God!...

Nehemiah 9:6a, b,

אַתָּה־הוּא יְהוָה
לְבַדְּךָ

You (are) He--YHWH
by Yourself! / only You!

⁷⁹That is, not for your sake, but for My Own sake!

Compare **Psalms 23:3b,**

He leads / guides me in tracks of righteousness
for the sake of His name.

(Compare **Psalms 31:4^{Heb} / 3^{Eng}**)

Psalms 25:11,

For the sake of Your name, O YHWH,
and You will forgive to my iniquity,
because it (is) great!

Psalms 106:6-8,

- 6 We sinned with our fathers;
we perverted ourselves; we did wickedness!
- 7 Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Your wondrous works;
they did not remember Your steadfast-loves' greatness;
and they rebelled beside a sea--at (the) Sea of Reeds.
- 8 And He delivered / saved them for His name's sake,
to make known His strength.

We should conclude that this whole business of Divine forgiveness and guidance is for YHWH's Own sake! It is an expression of Who He is.

North comments that "Here Yahweh's wiping out of Israel's transgressions springs from pure grace; He forgives because it is His nature to do so." (P. 130)

See our end-note 3, which asks "What does 'for My name's sake' mean?"

and your missings-of-the mark / sins⁸⁰ I will not remember!⁸¹

⁸⁰Where our Hebrew text has “for My sake, and your sins,” these two phrases are omitted by **Rahlfs**. The Greek translation of **verse 25** is, “I, I am; I, I am, the One wiping out / erasing your lawlessnesses; and I will certainly not remember!”

Knight comments that “‘I, I am He, Who am wiping away...’ is the literal rendering of the Hebrew. The poetic parallelism of the second line [of **verse 25**] then develops this great picture. The living God so forgives that He forgets! It is as if He were saying ‘I do not accept your sins as sins any more. So far as I am concerned they do not even exist. It is the very essence of My nature to do this—for My Own sake.’

“Here is a doctrine that goes beyond anything that even Isaiah or Hosea had declared before the exile. For it opens up the new reality now to be developed, that (1) God’s complete forgiveness is the real moment of Israel’s renewal, and (2) renewal takes place through God Himself becoming the Servant of man.” (P. 71)

What powerful theological statements these are! Do you agree that it is God’s nature to forgive and forget? What about you? Are you willing to try and emulate God’s goodness? Is this the reason that Jesus insists on the necessity of our being willing to forgive others (for example in the “Lord’s Prayer”)? And isn’t it the fact of life that if we are truly willing to forgive others, especially our enemies, we may well become “suffering servants,” just as Jesus did?

And when we take these theological statements seriously, refusing to pass over them as far too many Christian theologians have, will we not be prepared to read the **New Testament** in a whole new light, with a new understanding of Jesus and his ministry, as indeed the embodiment and fulfillment of **Second** and **Third Isaiah’s** teaching?

⁸¹**Verse 25** is an emphatic Self-description by YHWH. Even though Israel has burdened and wearied Him with its transgressions and missings-of-the-mark, YHWH Himself will blot out their transgressions and their missings-of-the-mark He will not remember! That’s unconditional grace! That’s forgiveness without confession and repentance!

Alexander states that “This is the conclusion to which all that goes before was meant to lead, that is, that God’s goodness to His people is gratuitous [given or done free of charge]. If they, instead of choosing God and His service, were averse to both—if, instead of pleasing Him by their attentions, they had grieved Him by their sins, it follows of course that He could still show them favor only by gratuitously blotting out their sins from His remembrance, or, in other words, freely forgiving them.” (P. 158)

Oswalt comments, “But if all this is true, how can God confidently offer hope that Israel will survive the exile and that He will deliver them? God answers with one of the great statements of Scripture...The eternal character of God is expressed through the

(continued...)

43:26 הִזְכִּירֵנִי נִשְׁפָּטָה יַחַד

סַפֵּר אֶתָּה לְמַעַן תִּצְדֵּק:

Cause Me to remember;⁸² let us enter into judgment together!

⁸¹(...continued)

use of a participle [מִחָדָה, 'wiping, blotting out']. His nature is revealed by what He does, and what He does is an expression of Who He is...

“In this instance what He does is to erase from the record every trace of the transgression and sin of His people, not once but continually and forever so that He cannot remember it...He does this as an expression of His Own nature, ‘for My Own sake’ (literally ‘on account of Me’). Nothing Israel has done or can do can qualify them for forgiveness like this. If God did not wish to do it, no court could require Him to do so, and no power could compel Him. It is purely an expression of the gracious character of Him Who is at the center of all things, encompasses all things, and is beyond all things.” (Pp. 160-61)

What do you think? Do you believe that God fully forgave Israel even without the nation’s repentance? Is that the kind of God you believe in? Or do you believe in a God Who always demands His “pound of flesh,” Who could not wipe out rebellious Israel’s sins without their penitence, and without the death of Christ—without fulfilling the demands of “justice”? What this verse says concerning Who YHWH is, is truly “good news.” It is the truth about God that is embodied in Jesus Christ—but that so often is denied even by the followers of Christ!

And if this is indeed God’s nature, what about those of us who claim to love and serve God, and still refuse to forgive those who hurt us? Are we willing to forgive and forget, to blot out forever the hurts done to us, no matter what those who have hurt us do or say?

⁸²Alexander comments on **verse 26** that God “allows them to disprove His allegation, by reminding Him of some forgotten merit on their part. The badness of their case could not have been more strongly or sarcastically stated than in this ironical invitation to plead their own cause and establish their own rights if they could, with a tacit [implied without being stated] condition ...that if they could not justify themselves in this way, they should submit to the righteousness of God and be justified by grace.” (P. 159)

Oswalt states that “If this offer of grace [in **verse 25**] is too humiliating, if the Israelites do not want a forgetful God, He is willing to be reminded of anything in their favor that they think He may have forgotten. The tone here is heavily ironic.” (P. 161) Yes, ironic—for how could YHWH forget? Only if He chose to forget!

You (singular) relate / tell, so that you will be justified!⁸³

⁸³Translations of **verse 26** vary:

King James, “Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified.”

Tanakh, “Help me remember! Let us join in argument, Tell your version, That you may be vindicated.”

New Revised Standard, “Accuse me, let us go to trial; set forth your case, so that you may be proved right.”

New International, “Review the past for me, let us argue the matter together; state the case for your innocence.”

New Jerusalem, “Remind me, and we will judge this together; state your own case and justify yourself.”

Rahfs, “But then you, remember! And let us judge / enter into judgment. You tell your lawlessnesses first, so that you may be justified.”

It is a powerful invitation from YHWH to Israel, to enter into dialogue with Him, to argue / debate with Him, as He invites Israel to state and defend its case. YHWH is anything but an arbitrary, unreasonable Judge Who refuses to listen to those coming into His presence. Rather, He invites His people to come and reason with Him, to remind Him of anything He may have forgotten.

North comments that “It is almost as if Yahweh says: ‘Sue Me if you will; there may be something I have forgotten! Let us argue the matter in court; you shall state your case and endeavor to get a favorable verdict.’” (P. 130)

We are reminded of the invitation of YHWH to His people in **Isaiah 1:18**,

Come now, and let us be reprov'd (by each other)! says YHWH--
if your sins will be like the scarlets,
they will become white like the snow!,
If they will be made red like the scarlet-worm,
they will become like the (white) wool!

Where the offer of forgiveness follows the invitation to dialogue in **1:18**, here in **43:26** the assurance of forgiveness precedes the invitation in **verse 25**—an assurance of Divine forgiveness based on YHWH’s nature—not on Israel’s repentance or dialogue with YHWH!

What do you make of this? Have you heard dogmatic ministers claim that there is a certain “plan of salvation,” in which repentance must precede forgiveness, and that there is no other way? Do you think God subscribes to our dogmatic “plans”?

(continued...)

43:27⁸⁴

אָבִיךָ הִרְאִשׁוֹן חָטָא

וּמְלִיצִיךָ פָּשְׁעוּ בִּי:

Your father, the first one,⁸⁵ sinned;

⁸³(...continued)

Knight comments on **verse 26** that “While God may forget, Israel dare not. For it is when she ‘recalls,’ זָכַר, “remembers” God’s saving acts of old that Israel actualizes them in the present, that is to say, even in the exile, where she does not have the cult to aid her in this act of recall. But when she does this, she can become existentially involved once again in the saving power of God’s redeeming acts, and find that the significance of the chronological moment of long ago is as real now as it was in the days of Moses.” (P. 71)

We think this comment is misleading. The verb זָכַר, “remember,” occurs here in the hiphil imperative, masculine singular, הִזְכִּירֵנִי, “cause Me to remember,” a command of God to Israel to “remind Me,” and has nothing to do with Israel’s remembering God’s saving acts of old. And we think Knight is mistaken in saying that Israel did not have the cult to aid her while she was in exile. As Westermann shows conclusively in his commentary, there is hardly a passage in **Second** or **Third Isaiah** that is not deeply dependent on the **Book of Psalms**—and it seems obvious that Israel’s laments throughout this material are rooted in the **Psalms of lament**. Israel may not have had her temple, with its altar and animal sacrifices while in the exile, but the people could still have met together, to sing the **Psalms**, and to utter its laments. And if this is the case, the **Book of Psalms** is filled with references to, and descriptions of, God’s saving acts of old. Does this mean that we are to think of the exiles having carried biblical scrolls with them into exile? We think that is entirely possible. But even if it were not, many Israelites, who had sung and prayed the **Psalter** throughout their lives, would be able to recall much of it from memory. What do you think?

⁸⁴Knight comments on verse 27 that “Once again...God gives Israel the chance to present her own selfish case, for He is the kind of God Who will not browbeat His blind servant into acquiescence to His will.” (P. 71)

⁸⁵Who is meant by Israel’s “first father”? Slotki suggests, “Adam (**Genesis 3:6, 17ff.**), Abraham (by doubting God’s words, **Genesis 15:8**), or most probably Jacob (compare **Hosea 12:3-4**.)” (P. 211)

North states that Israel’s first father “must be Jacob (compare **Hosea 12:3** [which says nothing concerning Jacob’s being a ‘first father’]), not Abraham. Abraham was the ancestor of Arabs and Edomites, as well as of Israel, Jacob of Israel only.” (P. 130)

(continued...)

and your mediators⁸⁶ transgressed against Me.⁸⁷

⁸⁵(...continued)

Do you agree? We think that even if Jacob's descendants were the nation of Israel only, that does not mean that Abraham was not a more distant relative / grand father of Israel.

Knight comments that "God solemnly reminds Israel that even Abraham was a sinner—recall how he lied to Abimelech (**Genesis 20:2**). Or if we regard Jacob as Israel's *first father*...then the evidence of his despicable nature is stronger still." (P. 71)

⁸⁶The noun here is מְלִיצִיךָ, probably meaning "your interpreters / intermediaries," those who stood between you and YHWH, telling you His word with its demands. It is either a noun, or the hiphil participle of the verb לִיצַן, "scorn / speak indirectly," and in the hiphil as a participle, "interpreter," "intermediary," "ambassador."

The noun / participle occurs some five times in the **Hebrew Bible**, at:

Genesis 42:23, in the story of Joseph and his brothers--

And they did not know that Joseph (was) listening;
because the interpreter / intermediary was between them.

Isaiah 43:27 (here),

Your father, the first one, missed-the-mark / sinned;
and your mediators transgressed against Me.

Job 16:20,

My intermediary (is) my friend;
to Eloah (God), my eye dripped (tears).

Job 33:23,

If there is for him a messenger,
one interpreter / intermediary out of a thousand,
to declare for a man his uprightness;

2 Chronicles 32:31,

And so (it was) with (the) intermediaries / ambassadors / chiefs of Babylon, the
ones who were sent forth to him (to Hezekiah),
to seek / inquire (concerning) the sign which happened in the land.
The God left him (to himself), to test him,

(continued...)

⁸⁶(...continued)

to know everything in his heart.

See the article by C. Barth on the root לִיָּן, in **Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament** VII, pp. 547-52.

Slotki says that the word מְלִיצִיָּה, refers to “the teachers and prophets, the spokesmen of the people. Even these have transgressed the word of the Lord, and much more so the people they led.” (P. 211)

Alexander likewise states that the noun here “denotes all those who, under the Theocracy, acted as organs of communication between God and the people, whether prophets, priests, or rulers. The idea, therefore, is the same as so often expressed elsewhere, that the people, especially their leaders, were unfaithful and rebellious.” (P. 159)

North states that “An interpreter may have been so called because he had every opportunity to deceive both the parties he was engaged to serve.” (P. 131)

Knight comments that “Even the prophets, your interpreters (rather than *mediators*) as they are called here, were sinners all, from Moses to those of the exile (compare **Isaiah 6:5**), for all were involved in the corporate sin of that corporate entity known as the people of Yahweh.” (P. 71)

⁸⁷Oswalt comments on **verse 27** that “Indeed, if Israel chooses the route of self-justification, all is lost. Not only is the present generation sinful, and the one before that, but every one right back to the founder of the nation...

“This is a remarkable feature of the biblical traditions: No matter how prominent or how pious the figure may be, whether Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, David, Solomon, Hezekiah, or Josiah, the **Bible** reports their sins unabashedly. Nor will anything about the telling tend to glorify the fault, as is typical of heroic literature. The stories are sordid and embarrassing, and the sins have deadly consequences...The people do not have the right to make themselves look good in them, because that is not the truth, and they have been laid hold of by the One Who is the Truth.” (Pp. 161-62)

We could easily add names to this list, but insist that Oswalt is overstating the case, as he says “every one” falls into this category. In fact there are biblical heroes concerning whom nothing sordid or embarrassing is said, for example Joseph, or Deborah, or Hannah, or Jonathan. We are reminded of the claims made by Paul that “there are none righteous, no not one,” and the fact that numerous people in the **Bible** are called just that—“righteous,” which can be easily demonstrated by running a word-search on the word. Theologians who hold to the “Tulip” theology of John Knox and John Calvin with the “t” standing for “total depravity” have to overlook or explain away these

(continued...)

43:28 וַאֲחַלֵּל שָׂרֵי קֹדֶשׁ

וַאֲתַנְּה לַחֲרָם יַעֲקֹב

יִשְׂרָאֵל לְגִדּוּפִים:

And I profaned / will profane⁸⁸ princes of a sanctuary;

⁸⁷(...continued)

facts.

⁸⁸Where our Hebrew text has וַאֲחַלֵּל, “and I profaned / will profane,” **Rahlf**s has “and they [the princes / leaders] defiled / stained (the sanctuary).”

Westermann claims that **verses 22-28** “leave no doubt” that “**Deutero-Isaiah** regarded himself as the lineal descendant of the pre-exilic prophets.” (P. 7) The text draws no such conclusion, but it is obvious that **Second Isaiah** has much in common with his predecessors—only the situation has changed drastically. Whereas we can characterize the pre-exilic prophets as “prophets of doom,” threatening Israel and Judah with on-coming destruction because of disobedience and rebellion against YHWH, **Second Isai-ah** is certainly a “prophet of salvation,” who proclaims YHWH’s forgiveness and promises for the future.

We agree with Westermann’s statement that “The unique feature of the prophecy of **Deutero-Isaiah** is this, the hour summoned him to the task of proclaiming salvation, and nothing but salvation, to his people; at the same time, however, he wears the mantle of the pre-exilic prophets of doom. He is a prophet of salvation standing in the ranks of the prophets of doom...

“The fall of Jerusalem meant that the judgment predicted by the eighth- and seventh-century prophets had been fulfilled. Any possibility, therefore, of prophecy’s continuing now depended on its being prophecy of salvation. Another instance of the same change of front within the ranks of the prophets of doom is to be found in **Ezekiel**. Up to the fall of Jerusalem, his sole theme was the impending judgment. But once the city actually fell, he turned into a prophet of salvation...

“The prophets of doom in their day were commissioned to speak God’s word of judgment to a particular situation for which this was *the* word of God. In just the same way, **Deutero-Isaiah** in his day had to speak the word appropriate to a different situation. It is quite impossible to dissociate the prophetic word from the time at which it was uttered... Thus God’s word can never be of the nature of general teaching—perennially valid without reference to its original context. It is a living word, changing with the changing years.” (Pp. 9-10)

(continued...)

and I will give Jacob for the ban / total destruction,⁸⁹

⁸⁸(...continued)

Yes—only we would change this to say, it is a living word, changing with the changing situation of those to whom it was spoken.

⁸⁹Knight asks, “Is it not a blasphemous idea itself that the Holy One should hand over His beloved to utter destruction? The word is put to the ban’ or totally destroy, as Joshua did to Jericho (**Joshua 6:17**)...This reference to ‘extirpation’ [extermination; total destruction] looks even more horrible when we meet the words *princes of the sanctuary*. For while this title covered the whole priestly class, it also included the king, for he was in reality the chief priest and intermediary between Yahweh and Israel...Yet the specially chosen line of David was included in the extirpation order, even though God had promised to uphold it forever [see **2 Samuel 7:14**; **Psalm 89:20-29**]...

“Deutero-Isaiah must have been acquainted with Ezekiel’s great vision in **chapter 37** of the book that bears his name, as it describes in pictorial form his certainty of what God will do with the dry bones of His people Israel. Yet Deutero-Isaiah must have known that even God could not perform this act of resuscitating a corpse—stinking as it was now after almost fifty years, buried as it was said to be in the soil of this strange grave of Babylon...merely by uttering an arbitrary Divine fiat [decree, order] like a powerful dictator...

“God must proceed to this action, which is basic and central in the history of the world, only if that action remains in conformity with His chosen method of Self-giving, and with His promise to be with His people forever [but we are leerie of attempting to put God in a “doctrinal box,” stating what is and is not possible for God, somewhat like the friends of Job who insisted that God could only act according to His principle of retribution]...

“It was manifest by now that one partner in the covenant, Israel, who **had been called to be** the servant [willingly dying for the sins of both Israel and others, Isaiah 52:13-53:12], was not in the position to raise herself out of the state of death she had now reached [as **Ezekiel 37** describes her condition in exile]. Therefore it must be God alone, the other Partner in the covenant, Who would do this thing for her. Accordingly, in the freedom that only perfect love knows and expresses, God Himself stoops to share with this stiff-necked servant people the experience of being damned (*herem*) [or ‘banned’] and dead...

“Since the wages of sin have been death at all times since the fall of Adam, the living God—what an unspeakable paradox—now takes those wages to Himself. In so doing, He Himself becomes the Servant of the people whom He has bound to Himself to love and to cherish in a bond that can never under any circumstances be broken or annulled. In this way He removes from Israel’s heart the curse that she has necessarily brought upon herself, and is able to set her free, helpless as she is to do so herself, from the law of sin and death...

(continued...)

⁸⁹(...continued)

”The promised deliverance from the death of the exile—the theme which Deutero-Isaiah leads up to in a later chapter—is a deliverance whose significance continues to unfold as the years go by in the history of this covenant people. The deliverance is an historical incident which we can date accurately just as we can date the resurrection of Christ. This historical incident becomes the sign and seal of the power of God, that He will be able to act in a like manner when He comes to redeem not only His first-born son (**Exodus 4:22**), but also all His sons of every nation of men...

“Deutero-Isaiah sees that the resurrection of the people of God must follow upon their ‘crucifixion,’ when they suffered under Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B.C.E., and so His mind becomes for us the channel of the revelation of the pattern of God’s redemptive work at all times. We can understand how Paul can use for this decisive moment in the world’s history the words ‘in accordance with the scriptures’ (**1 Corinthians 15:3-4**; see our study of this great chapter), for it is the same God Who acts with infinite compassion and absolute loyalty to His covenant in the days of Deutero-Isaiah as in the days of Christ. Since God is faithful, it is only to be expected that the revelation He gives us of His love and holy purpose in 539 B.C.E. should be one with that which He makes of Himself *eph hapax*, once and for all, when ‘in Christ’ He both reveals Himself and acts to reconcile the world unto Himself (**2 Corinthians 5:19**).” (Pp. 72-4)

(continued...)

and Israel to revilings!

⁸⁹(...continued)

1. Wikipedia Article on Jewish Scholarship in Babylonia

“The rabbi Abba Arika (175–247 C.E.), known as "Rab" due to his status as the highest authority in Judaism, is considered by the Jewish oral tradition the key leader, who along with the whole people in diaspora, maintained Judaism after the destruction of Jerusalem [in 70 C.E.]. After studying in Palestine at the academy of Judah I, Rab quietly returned to his Babylonian home; his arrival, in the year... 219 of the common era, is considered to mark the beginning of a new era for the Jewish people.

“Rab's career is seen as initiating the dominant role that the Babylonian academies played for several centuries, for the first time outmoding Judea and Galilee in the quality of *Torah* study. Most Jews to this day rely on the quality of the work of Babylon during this period over that of the Galilee from the same period. The Jewish community of Babylon was already learned – Rab just focused and organized their study. Leaving an existing Babylonian academy at Nehardea for his colleague Samuel, Rab founded a new academy at Sura, where he and his family already owned property, and which was known as a Jewish city. Rab's move created an environment in which Babylon had two contemporary leading academies that competed with one another, yet were so far removed from one another that they could never interfere with each other's operations. Since Rab and Samuel were acknowledged peers in position and learning, their academies likewise were accounted of equal rank and influence. Their relationship can be compared to that between the Judea Galilee and Iudemea Province academies of the House of Hillel Ha-Zaken and the House of Shammai, albeit Rab and Samuel agreed far more often than did the houses of Hillel and Shammai, who nearly never agreed on the Law.

“Thus both Babylonian rabbinical schools opened this new era for diaspora Judaism well, and the ensuing discussions in their classes furnished the earliest stratum and style of the scholarly material deposited in the Babylonian Talmud. The coexistence for many decades of these two colleges of equal rank, even after the school at Nehardea was moved to Pumbedita (now Fallujah), produced for the first time in Babylonia the phenomenon of dual leadership that, with some slight interruptions, became a permanent fixture and a weighty factor in the development of the Jewish faith as we know it today.

“The key work of these semi-competing academies was the compilation of the **Babylonian Talmud** (the discussions from these two cities), completed by Rav Ashi and Ravina, two successive leaders of the Babylonian Jewish community, around the year 520 C.E., though rougher copies had already been circulated to the Jews of the Byzantine Empire. Editorial work by the *Savoraim* or *Rabbanan Savoraei* (post-Talmudic rabbis), continued on this text's grammar for the next 250 years; much of the text did not reach its "perfected" form until around 600–700 AD. The Mishnah, which had been completed in the early 3rd century AD, and the Babylonian Gemara (the discussions at and around these academies) together form the *Talmud Bavli* (the "Babylonian Talmud").

The three centuries in the course of which the **Babylonian Talmud** was developed in the academies founded by Rab and Samuel were followed by five centuries

during which it was intensely preserved, studied, expounded in the schools, and, through their influence, discipline and work, recognized by the whole diaspora. Sura and Pumbedita were considered the seats of diaspora learning; their heads and sages were the weighty authorities, whose decisions were sought from all sides and were accepted wherever diaspora Jewish communal life existed. They even successfully competed against the learning coming from the Roman provinces of the mythologized "Land of Israel" itself. In the words of the haggadist, "God created these two academies in order that the promise might be fulfilled, that 'the word of God should never depart from Israel's mouth'" (**Isaiah 59: 21**). The periods of Jewish history immediately following the close of the Talmud are designated according to the titles of the teachers at Sura and Pumbedita; thus we have the time of the Geonim and that of the Saboraim. The Saboraim were the scholars whose diligent hands completed the **Talmud** and the first great Talmudic commentaries in the first third of the 6th century C.E. (however earlier commentaries had already been completed in the Galilee, for example by Greek convert Unkoles). The two academies among others, and the Jewish community they lead, lasted until the middle of the 11th century C.E. Pumbedita faded after its chief rabbi was murdered in 1038, and Sura faded soon after. Which ended for centuries the great scholarly reputation given to Babylonian Jews, as the center of Jewish thought."

(2/6/2016)

2. Passages Related to Isaiah 43:22-28 Concerning Israel's Sacrifices

Isaiah 1:11-14,

- 11 For what to Me, your multitude of sacrifices?
YHWH says / asks.
I was filled (with) offerings up of rams, and fat of fatlings,
and blood of young bulls, and lambs and male-goats—I was not delighted
with!
- 12 When you come to see My face,
who sought this from your hand, to trample My courts?
- 13 You shall not continue to bring empty / vain offering(s)--
(sweet smelling) incense,
—it is an abomination to Me!
New moon / month, and day of rest,
to call for a set-apart assembly!,
I cannot (endure) wickedness and assembly!
- 14 Your new moons / months and appointed meetings,
My innermost being hated!
They became upon Me the burden
that I grew weary of carrying!

Isaiah 66:3,

One slaughtering the ox—one striking / killing a man;
one sacrificing the sheep / goat—one breaking a dog's neck;
one offering up a gift—blood of a pig;
one making a memorial offering of incense—one blessing wickedness!
Also these chose their ways,
and with their abominations their innermost-being was delighted!

Jeremiah 7:3-11,

- 3 In this way YHWH of Armies, God of Israel, spoke:
Amend / make good your ways and your deeds,
and I will cause you to dwell in this place!
- 4 You (plural) shall not entrust yourselves to words of falsehood, saying,
YHWH's temple, YHWH's temple, YHWH's temple—these (buildings)!
- 5 Because if you will truly amend / make good your ways and your deeds,
if you will truly do justice between a man and his neighbor;
- 6 temporary resident / immigrant, orphan and widow you will not oppress;
and innocent blood your will not pour out in this place;
and after other Gods your will not walk / follow, for harm to yourselves;
- 7 and I will cause you to dwell in this place,
in the land which I gave to your fathers,
from long-distant past time, and until long-distant future time!
- 8 Look—you people are entrusting yourselves to words of the falsehood,
so as not to profit.

- 9 Will you steal, murder and be sexually immoral,
and swear by the vapor / breath,
and burn incense to the Baal,
and walk after other Gods which you did not know?
- 10 And will you come and will you stand before Me in this house / temple,
which My name was pronounced over it,
and will you say, We have been delivered / saved--
in order to do all these abominations?
- 11 Has this house / temple become a cave of violent people,
which had My name pronounced over it in you eyes / sight?
Also I, look—I saw (it)! (It is) a saying of YHWH.

Jeremiah 7:21-22,

- 21 In this way YHWH of Armies, of Israel spoke:
Your offerings-up, add to your (animal) sacrifices,
and eat (their) flesh!
- 22 Because I did not speak to your fathers,
and I did not command them,
on (the) day I brought them from Egypt-land,
concerning matters of offering-up and (animal) sacrifice!

Hosea 6:6,

Because I delighted in steadfast love, and not slaughter-for-sacrifice;
and knowledge of God, more than offerings up!

Amos 4:4-6,

- 4 Come to House of God / Bethel, and go astray!
(At) the Sacred Circle, multiply your going-astray!
And bring your (animal) sacrifices for the morning (worship);
and your ten-percent (offerings) for the third days!
- 5 And make sacrifices from leavened-bread—a thank-offering!
And proclaim free-will offerings—
cause (your voices) to be heard!
Because you love (it) this way, you Children of Israel!
(It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH!
- 6 And also I, I gave to you people
cleanness of teeth in all your cities,
and lack of bread in all your places;
and you did not return to Me!

Amos 5:21-24,

- 21 I hated, I rejected your pilgrim festivals;

- and I will not smell (the incense of) your assemblies!
22 Because if you offer up to me offerings-up and your gifts, I will not be pleased;
and (the) peace offering of your fat animals, I will not look at!
23 Take away from upon Me your songs' noise;
and I will not listen to your guitar-music!
24 And let justice roll along like the waters,
and right-relationship like a perennial wadi!

Micah 6:3-8,

- 3 My people, what did I do to you?
And how have I wearied you?
Answer against Me!
4 Because I brought you (singular) up from Egypt-land,
and from a house of slaves I ransomed you;
and I sent forth before you Moses, Aaron and Miriam.
5 My people, remember now / please, what Balaq King of Moab counseld against
you,
and what Balaam son of Beor answered him,
from the Shittim to the Gilgal—
in order to know YHWH's righteous deeds!
6 With what shall I come before YHWH,
bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with year-old calves?
7 Will YHWH be pleased with thousands of rams,
with tens of thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I offer my firstborn child as my transgression-offering,
the fruit of my body as my innermost being's missing-of-the-mark offering?
8 He declared to you, O human being, what is good,
and what YHWH is requiring from you--
only to enact justice,
and to fall in love with steadfast love,
and to walk humbly with your God!

3. **What Does “For My Sake,” / “For My Name’s Sake” Mean?**

To begin to answer this question, reference should be made to **Exodus 34:6-7**:

- 6 And YHWH passed by, before his (Moses’) face.
And He called out, YHWH, YHWH—
El / Supreme God, compassionate and merciful / gracious,
slow to anger (literally, long of noses),
and great of / abounding in steadfast-love and true-faithfulness!
- 7 Guarding / keeping steadfast-love for the thousands,
bearing / forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin!
And He will certainly not acquit the guilty,
visiting iniquity of fathers upon sons / children,
and upon their children,
upon third generations and upon fourth generations.

This passage calls for lengthy study and discussion which we will not enter into here. But one thing is absolutely clear—that YHWH’s proclamation of His name defines that name in terms of compassion and mercy, of steadfast-love and true-faithfulness, hundreds if not thousands of times greater than His punishment of the guilty for their iniquity.

In fact, this statement became what we can describe as “Israel’s Creed,” Israel’s basic belief about YHWH God. He is a God of love and forgiveness. This belief rings throughout the **Hebrew Bible**, in passage after passage that makes use of it, often-times quoting portions of it, and gradually dropping off the entire matter of visiting iniquity (but which is the only part of the passage that Nahum quotes!). In essence, we say, YHWH God’s name means Israel can be forgiven of its sin—specifically in **Exodus 32-34**, their sin of building a golden calf, of worshiping another God. If God hadn’t forgiven that sin, Israel would have been destroyed long before entering the promised land!

It is in the light of this—YHWH’s Own statement of what His name means, we believe, that the following passages should be understood:

1 Kings 8:41-42,

- 41 And also to the foreigner who is not from your people Israel,
and he will come from a distant land for the sake of Your name;
- 42 because they will hear of Your great name,
and of your mighty hand and our outstretched arm,
and he will come, and he will pray towards this house / temple.
(When foreigners hear the story of YHWH’s name—His love and forgiveness—and His mighty deeds in history, they will be drawn to His worship.) **2 Chronicles 6:32**, same.

Isaiah 48:9,

For the sake of My name, I will prolong / postpone My anger
and (for the sake of) My praise I will restrain (My anger) for you,
so as not to cause your cutting off.
(Since YHWH's name implies steadfast-love and forgiveness, YHWH states that
He will postpone / restrain His anger, not cutting them off—in spite of Israel's
sinfulness.)

Isaiah 66:5,

Hear YHWH's word, you / the ones trembling at His word!
Speak (to) your brothers, those hating you,
expelling you / casting you out for the sake of My name:
Let him honor YHWH—
and we will see your rejoicing—
and they will be ashamed!
(The passage depicts conflict among the exiles. We think in terms of the move-
ment of Ezra / Nehemiah which demands segregation from foreigners, including
divorce from foreign wives and children--over against those who follow the teach-
ing of **Second Isaiah**, holding that they should love the foreigners, and serve all
people in need, regardless of their race or religion, that is, living by the implica-
tions of YHWH's name, "for the sake of YHWH's name." The followers of the
narrow, Pharisaic party are now excluding those who act on the basis of YHWH's
name, practicing neighbor-love and forgiveness, refusing to build walls of
segrega-tion. Third Isaiah urges this latter group to truly honor YHWH by
continuing to act out of love for neighbor—and the results will be that the narrow
party will be put to shame.)

Jeremiah 14:7, the people of Judah, suffering a painful drought, call upon YHWH:

If our iniquities answer / testify against us, O YHWH,
act for the sake of Your name!
Because our back-slidings were multiplied / many;
we sinned against You!
(It seems clear that in the light of YHWH's Own explanation of what His name
means or implies, this community lament / prayer means "forgive us for our many
back-slidings and sins!")

Jeremiah 14:20-21, again it is a lament / prayer, begging for mercy for a sinful people:

20 We knew / acknowledged, O YHWH, our wickedness,
our fathers' iniquity—
that we sinned against You.
21 Do not spurn / disdain, for the sake of Your name!
Do not dishonor (the) throne of Your glory!
Remember, do not break Your covenant with us!
(The request is based on YHWH's name—which means steadfast-love and

abundant forgiveness—and because of Who YHWH is, asks that He not act in a contrary way, but rather, act with compassion and forgiveness!)

Ezekiel 20:9, where Ezekiel depicts YHWH as saying that in spite of Israel’s rebellion and idolatry, deserving His wrath,

And I acted for the sake of My name,
so as not to profane (it) in (the) eyes of the nations in whose midst they
were;

to whom I was made known in their eyes
by bringing them forth from Egypt-land!

(Which means, instead of coming against the Israelites in wrath, He acted in compassion and steadfast love and forgiveness, bringing them forth from Egypt in the eyes of the Egyptians. To have done otherwise would not have been in accordance with His “name”!) **Ezekiel 20:14**, **Ezekiel 20:22**, closely identical;

Ezekiel 20:44, when all of Israel has been restored to their native land, they will remember and be ashamed of all their evil deeds which have led to their exile;

And you (plural) shall know that I (am) YHWH,
when I act with you for the sake of My name--
not according to your evil ways,
and according to your corrupted deeds, O House of Israel!

(It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH.

(Instead of destroying Israel for its evil ways and deeds, YHWH will act “for the sake of His name,” which means what He explained in **Exodus 34**—acting in compassion and mercy, with steadfast-love and forgiveness, not in wrath and punishment.)

Psalms 23:3b,

He leads / guides me in tracks of righteousness,
for the sake of His name.

(Tracks of righteousness are tracks of steadfast-love, forgiveness, and compassion—see **Isaiah 58**--all of which exemplify YHWH’s name rather than dishonoring His name.) **Psalms 31:4**^{Heb} / **3**^{Eng}, closely similar.

Psalms 25:10-11,

10 All of YHWH’s paths (are) steadfast-love and true-faithfulness,
to those guarding / keeping His covenant and His testimonies.

11 For the sake of Your name, O YHWH--
and forgive my iniquity,

because it is great!

(Again, forgiveness is pleaded for, on the basis of YHWH’s name—as revealed by YHWH in **Exodus 34**.)

Psalm 79:8-9, a community lament and prayer for forgiveness following the fall of Jerusalem:

- 8 Do not remember against us former iniquities!
Speedily let Your compassions meet us!
Because we hang exceedingly low!
- 9 Help us, O God of our salvation / deliverance,
because of Your name's glory;
and deliver us and cover over our sins, for the sake of Your name!
(It is a plea for forgiveness based on YHWH's name as revealed in **Exodus 34**.)

Psalm 106:8, in spite of Israel's rebellion at the Sea of Reeds,

And / yet He saved / delivered them for the sake of His name,
to make known His greatness!
(YHWH's greatness is made known through His salvation / deliverance—in
accordance with His name as He has revealed its connotations in **Exodus 34**!)

Psalm 109:21, an imprecatory psalm calling for YHWH's wrath to be poured out upon the individual's enemies who have falsely accused him, seeking his death; but for himself, the psalmist asks:

And / but You, O YHWH my Lord, do / act with me for the sake of Your name!
Because Your steadfast-love (is) good, deliver me!
(It is on the basis of the steadfast-love of YHWH, revealed in His name
according to **Exodus 34**, that the suffering psalmist pleads for deliverance.)

Psalm 143:11-12, It is a cry for Divine deliverance by the suffering, oppressed psalmist (David):

- 11 For the sake of Your name, O YHWH, preserve my life!
In Your righteousness, bring forth my innermost-being from trouble!
- 12 And in Your steadfast-love, You will annihilate my enemy;
and You will destroy all my innermost-being's adversaries,
because I (am) Your servant!
(YHWH's name has been revealed in **Exodus 34**—and on that basis of Who
YHWH is, he prays for the preservation of his life.)

Also, the following passages should be understood in this same light:

2 Kings 19:34, the prophet Isaiah tells Hezekiah what YHWH has promised concerning the Assyrian marauders who are threatening Jerusalem:

And I will defend this city, to save / deliver it,
for My sake, and for David My servant's sake! **2 Kings 20:6**, same;
Isaiah 37:35, same;

Isaiah 43:25,

I, I (am) He Who wipes away your transgression for My sake;,
and your missings-of-the mark / sins I will not remember!

Isaiah 48:11 (where the phrase occurs twice),

For My sake, for My sake I do (it),
because how would it be profaned?
And My glory, I will not give to another!

