

## Isaiah Chapter 45, Hebrew Text with Translation and Footnotes

45:1<sup>1</sup> כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה לְמַשִּׁיחוֹ לְכוּרֶשׁ

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<sup>1</sup>Slotki comments that **verses 1-7** contain “God’s address to Cyrus, who is promised easy victories and given the reason and purpose of his mission.” (P. 219)

North entitles **45:1-7** “Cyrus Yahweh’s Anointed Prince.”

He comments that “Cyrus is addressed as Yahweh’s anointed prince, whom He has summoned by name. Yahweh declares that He will go before him in person, break down all opposition of armies and fortifications, and give him access to vast hidden wealth. He will do this because of Israel, and that the world may know that He is the sole God and the Determiner of weal [prosperity, happiness] and woe.

“The passage is to all appearance a direct address to Cyrus...Cyrus was not so far away and the Prophet must have known that his ‘word of the Lord’ might be reported to him. That was probably his intention...

“We may picture Deutero-Isaiah much as Ezekiel describes himself (**Ezekiel 8:1; 14:1-2; 20:1-3; 33:30**). The elders would visit him and he would deliver Yahweh’s pronouncements to them as occasion arose. But what he said in then name of Yahweh to Cyrus was intended as much for them as it was for Cyrus.” (Pp. 148-49)

Oswalt entitles **45:1-13** “God’s choice of a deliverer,” and entitles **45:1-8** “God’s promise to Cyrus.”

He comments that **verses 1-8** are “an oracle addressed to Cyrus. Most form critics identify it as an enthronement oracle and compare it to **Psalms 2** and **Psalms 110**...The Cyrus Cylinder which many commentators especially compare with this segment, had clearly nothing to do with Cyrus’s enthronement, but is a propaganda piece celebrating his conquest of Babylon.

“Above all, the oracle is not really addressed to Cyrus, but to the despairing Israelites who cannot see how the glowing promises of restoration can possibly be kept. This is made clear by the segments that precede and follow this one. The great issue is convincing God’s Own people [but is not Cyrus also considered as belonging to YHWH? What does ‘His / My messiah’ mean?] that He can deliver, and in His own way. As G. A. Smith points out, one of the dramatic differences from the Cyrus Cylinder is that whereas there Cyrus’s virtues, strength, and leadership skills are put forward as the reasons for Marduk’s choosing him, here they do not even enter into the picture. The three reasons given (**verses 3, 4, 6**) have solely to do with the nature and character of God. It is not human perfectability on which the world’s hope rests, but the grace and the providence of God.” (Pp. 199-200)

Cyrus Sorat, in his article on the Internet describes the Cyrus Cylinder:

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“The Cyrus cylinder was discovered in 1878 C.E. at the site of Babylon. It is inscribed in Akkadian cuneiform. Now housed in the British Museum, it includes a detailed account by Cyrus of his conquest of Babylon in 539 B.C.E. and his subsequent humane treatment of his conquered subjects.

“It has been hailed as the world's first declaration of human rights. The (incomplete) inscription on the cylinder starts by describing the criminal deeds of the Babylonian king Nabonidus; as well as how Marduk, the Babylonian God, had looked for a new king and chosen Cyrus. It continues with the famous: ‘I am Cyrus, king of the world, the great king, the powerful king, king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four quarters of the world.’

“After a description of Cyrus' ancestry and of royal protocol, it goes on to explain how Cyrus established peace and abolished forced labor: ‘The people of Babylon...the shameful yoke was removed from them.’ The inscription continues by detailing reparative building activities in Babylon as well as asking for prayers for Cyrus. It makes specific reference to the Jews, who have been brought to Babylon--and who Cyrus supported in leaving for their homeland. Further demonstrating his religious tolerance, Cyrus restored the local cults by allowing the Gods to return to their shrines. The cylinder describes the Great King not as a conqueror, but as a liberator and the legitimate successor to the crown of Mesopotamia.

“The same text has also been found, in a more complete version, in an inscription discovered in the ancient city of Ur, in Mesopotamia. Both documents corroborate many of the details in **Ezra 1:1-5** describing Cyrus supporting the Jews in returning to Judea from captivity to rebuild the temple in 537 B.C.E. **Isaiah 45:1-13** also backs up the idea of Cyrus as a benign and chosen ruler.

“Before the discovery of the cylinder, many skeptical historians believed that the idea of a Zoroastrian emperor like Cyrus the Great allowing a conquered people like the Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild their temple was simply not credible and could only be Persian propaganda. Nevertheless, the Cyrus Cylinder, alongside the biblical and other historical statements, seems to substantiate the idea that Cyrus not only allowed many of the nations he conquered to practice their various religious beliefs--an unprecedented tolerance--but that he even actively assisted captive peoples, including the Jews, to return to their lands of origin. This support was not only political but even financial--as he gave grants both from the Imperial treasury and also from his own personal fortune.

“The Cylinder has especial resonance for the Iranian peoples and is an integral part of Iran's cultural heritage and national identity. Antedating the 1789 French *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* by more than two millennia, it can also be considered as a world treasure--and the first international declaration of human rights. The text was translated into all the United Nations' official languages in 1971.”

(1/21/2015)

(continued...)

אֲשֶׁר־הִחַזְקֹתִי בְיָמֵינוּ  
לְרַד־לְפָנָיו גִּזְוִים  
וּמִתְנִי מַלְכִים אֶפְתַּח  
לְפִתַּח לְפָנָיו דְּלֹתַיִם וְשַׁעֲרִים  
לֹא יִסְגְּרוּ:

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

See James B. Pritchard's **Ancient Near Eastern Texts**, pp. 314-16, for Nabonidus' statements concerning Cyrus, and Cyrus' own statements from the cylinder / clay barrel. We think that it is because of the Persian Cyrus' actions in freeing captives, and allowing freedom of religion throughout his empire, that YHWH designates Cyrus as "My messiah" in **Isaiah 45:1**.

North states that in the Cyrus Cylinder, "in line 12 Cyrus has it that 'He (Marduk) pronounced the name of Cyrus...pronounced his name to be ruler of all the world': compare *Who summon you by name...I address you by name*, (**Isaiah 45:3b, 4b**). In line 22 Cyrus boasts that Bel and Nabu love his *rule*; in **Isaiah 48:14** he himself [Cyrus] is described as 'whom Yahweh loves'...The most striking correspondence is that between *whose right hand I grasp* and, as it is usually translated, 'He (Marduk) sought out a righteous prince, after His own heart, whom He might take by the hand (line 12)...In **Deutero-Isaiah** Yahweh says to Cyrus I Myself will go before you (**Isaiah 45:2**)...In the cylinder Cyrus speaks of Marduk 'going at his side like a friend and helper' (line 15)." (P. 149)

Alexander states that "The great theme of the prophecy is still the relation of Israel to God as His chosen people, and to the nations as a source or medium of saving knowledge...As a particular prospective exhibition both of power and foreknowledge, we have still before us the conquests of Cyrus, which are specifically foretold and explicitly connected with the favor of [YHWH] as their procuring cause, and with the liberation of His people and the demonstration of His Deity, as their designed effect..."

"The chapter opens, in direct continuation of the **forty-fourth**, with a further prophecy of Cyrus and of his successes (**verses 1-3**). These are then referred to the power of God and His design of mercy towards His people, so that all misgivings or distrust must be irrational and impious (**verses 4-13**). Then leaving Cyrus out of view, the Prophet turns his eyes to the nations, and declares that they must be subdued, but only in order to be blessed and saved, which is declared to have been the Divine purpose, and revealed as such from the beginning (**verses 14-25**)." (P. 177)

In this way YHWH spoke to His anointed one,<sup>2</sup> to Cyrus,<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>North comments “That Yahweh should call a non-Israelite king so [‘messiah,’ ‘anointed one’] must have been shocking to the Prophet’s contemporaries...

“What the word implies is that [Cyrus] is Yahweh’s vicegerent [a person exercising delegated power on behalf of a sovereign or ruler, here, a person regarded as an earthly representative of God—in Roman Catholicism, the Pope]. The nearest approach to such a title of a non-Israelite king is in **Jeremiah 25:9, 37:6, 43:10**, where Nebuchadrezzar is called ‘My servant,’ a word used of David (**2 Samuel 7:5** and some thirty times) in his capacity as king.” (P. 150)

The phrase here is לְמָשִׁיחוֹ לְכוֹרֶשׁ, “to His anointed one / His messiah, to Cyrus.” **Rahlf’s** translation of this phrase is “to the christ / anointed one of Mine, to Cyrus.” Students of the **Hebrew Bible** with its Greek translation soon become accustomed to its use of messiah / christ, as it is used for Israelite kings, for high priests, for the Persian Cyrus (here in **Isaiah 45:1**), of the patriarchs (**Psalms 105:15; 1 Chronicles 16:22**), and of a future “Messianic prince,” i.e., a new David (**Daniel 9:25-26**).

<sup>3</sup>Cyrus, the Persian, may have been a follower of Zoroaster, a religious philosopher who taught the worship of the one God, Ahura Mazda (“Illuminating Wisdom”), and who simplified the pantheon of early Iranian Gods into two opposing forces: Spenta Mainyu (“Progressive Mentality”) and Angra Mainyu (“Destructive Mentality”) both of Whom were under Ahura Mazda. Zoroaster’s ideas led to a formal religion bearing his name shortly before the time of Cyrus in the sixth century B.C.E. (Adapted from Wikipedia 11/25/2014.)

If this article is correct, our previous understanding of Zoroastrianism has been mistaken, as we have held that Zoroastrianism is not monotheistic, but dualistic, teaching a God of Light and a God of Darkness. If Ahura Mazda is viewed as the one true God, Who has both light and darkness under His control, the only difference between Zoroastrianism and YHWH as depicted in this text is that it insists YHWH / not Ahura Mazda is the only God, Who is the Creator of both light and darkness, the Giver of both prosperity and disaster.

Here, the prophet depicts YHWH as claiming Cyrus as His messiah / anointed one, whom He grasps with His right hand, and uses to accomplish His purposes, going before him, giving him victory. While this article holds that Cyrus was a worshiper of Ahura-Mazda, our reading of the Cyrus Cylinder convinces us that Cyrus was in fact a worshiper of Marduk, the patron Deity of Babylon. Perhaps Cyrus was a true syncretist, who worshiped all the Gods, especially the God of the most powerful cities he conquered.

Alexander comments that “Most writers understand [*anointed / messiah*] here as a synonym of king, derived from Jewish usages, and not intended to indicate anything

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whom I have taken hold of by his right hand,<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>(...continued)

peculiar in the royalty of Cyrus, except that he was raised up by [YHWH] for a special purpose.” (P. 177)

Oswalt comments that “If Isaiah’s hearers were shocked at Cyrus’s being called God’s shepherd (**44:28**), they must have been even more so at his now being called *His anointed*. This title had previously been reserved for priests, prophets, and kings of Israel (See **Leviticus 4:3**; **1 Samuel 1:10**; **16:6**; **24:6**; **26:9, 11, 23**; **2 Samuel 19:21**; **Psalm 18:51**<sup>Heb</sup> / **50**<sup>Eng</sup>; **1 Chronicles 16:22** and **Habakkuk 3:13**)...

“Surely God could only use persons from His Own elect people to accomplish His purposes! But that is exactly the point that Isaiah has been trying to make: God is not the Lord of Israel alone; He is the God of the whole world. Israel’s election is not for itself, and thus neither is its deliverance necessarily to be effected by itself. It is this sense in which *anointed* is used here: Cyrus has been especially chosen and empowered to carry out the purposes of God. In this sense he typifies the messiah: he is God’s chosen instrument through whom God’s gracious purposes will be accomplished, especially as through him God is revealed to the world.” (Pp. 200-01)

<sup>4</sup>Oswalt comments that “To take *hold of by the right hand* is an expression of choosing and of intimate fellowship (compare **42:6** and **Psalm 73:23**)...It says with ‘anointed’ that Cyrus’s conquests were neither a matter of historical chance nor a matter of Cyrus’s sterling qualities, but the result of the specific providence of Israel’s God.” (P. 201)

Knight likewise points out that “God grasps the right hand of His pagan servant Cyrus in the same manner as He grasps the right hand of His chosen servant Israel (**41:13**; **42:1**).” (P. 87) The word “pagan” is Knight’s, and is not found in the text.

Knight adds that “God is able to weave that tyrant’s wickedness and follies into the grand unfolding purpose which He has continually in mind.” (P. 88)

And we wonder: should we say that “God is able to weave Hitler’s and Stalin’s and Chairman Mao’s and the Muslim Jihadist’s wickedness and follies into the grand unfolding purpose which He has continually in mind”? What do you think? Is human history a “tale told by an idiot, signifying nothing” (Shakespeare’s tragedy **Macbeth**), or is it the long tale of YHWH God, Who is working out His grand purpose in the midst of, and through the wickedness and follies of us humans? Dare we believe that this earthly life is only a minor step in a much longer journey that leads to eternal life in God’s “City,” and that all of those who die will ultimately share together there, forgiven and cleansed by God’s “holy fire”?

to subdue nations before him;<sup>5</sup>  
and the loins of kings I will loose,<sup>6</sup>  
to open before him doors and gates—  
they will not be shut:<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Alexander comments that “The treading down [subduing] of nations is a trait peculiarly appropriate in this case, as the Greek historians give long catalogues of distinct nations subjugated by Cyrus, such as the Medes, Hyrcanians, Assyrians, Arabians, Cappadocians, Phrygians, Lydians, Carians, Babylonians, etc.” (P. 177)

<sup>6</sup>Slotki explains that this means “to deprive of strength, to weaken. Its opposite, ‘to gird up the loins,’ implies the undertaking of an active task.” We think loosening the loins means “to disarm.”

Oswalt comments that “In terms similar to those of **41:2-4**, God asserts that He is the reason for Cyrus’s enemies being unmanned through fear (to *loosen the loins* is to be stripped of one’s weapons’ belt, which in turns leaves the robe hanging down freely where it can entangle the legs).” (P. 201)

Alexander mentions that “Luther, Clericus, and J. D. Michaelis suppose an allusion to the removal of the sword-belt, as the ancient method of disarming or dismissing from active service...The words at least include a reference to the ordinary use of the girdle as a part of oriental dress, on which the activity of the wearer and his exercise of strength are in a great degree dependent, as it gathers up and tightens the flowing garments which would otherwise impede his movements.” (P. 178)

<sup>7</sup>This means that YHWH will be working on behalf of Cyrus, removing obstacles such as shut doors and city-gates that might hinder his progress. As Oswalt states, “it is because of God’s activity that every city will be powerless to shut him out.” (P. 201)

Alexander states that “The dual **דְּלַתַיִם**, **delathayim**, is the proper Hebrew term for valves, folding-doors, or two-leaved gates...It is specifically and remarkably appropriate to the taking of Babylon. It can scarcely be considered a fortuitous coincidence, that Herodotus speaks of the gates which led to the river as having been left open on the night of the attack; and Xenophon says the doors of the palace itself having been unguardedly opened, the invaders took possession of it almost without resistance.” (P. 178)

**Herodotus 1:178-79** includes descriptive statements of Babylon at the time of Cyrus, including the following:

The city stands on a broad plain, and is an exact square, a hundred and twenty furlongs in length each way [a furlong = 1/8 of a mile; 120 furlongs = 15 miles], so that the entire circuit is four hundred and eighty furlongs [a circuit 60 miles in length]. While such is its size, in magnificence there is no other city that appro-

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45:2<sup>8</sup> אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ אֵלֶיךָ וְהַדְּוָרִים (אוֹשֶׁר) [אִישֶׁר]

בְּלִתּוֹת נְחוֹשָׁה אֲשַׁבֵּר וּבְרִיחַי בְּרִזְלִי אֲגַדְעֶ:

Before you I, I will go, and swollen places / mountains<sup>9</sup> I will level;<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup>(...continued)

ches to it. It is surrounded, in the first place, by a broad and deep moat, full of water, behind which rises a wall fifty royal cubits in width, and two hundred in height [more than 75 feet, or 25 yards in width, more than 300 feet, or over 100 yards in height; we wonder how exact these figures are]...In the circuit of the wall are a hundred gates, all of brass, with brazen lintels [load-bearing building components, placed over the gates] and side-posts.

<sup>8</sup>Slotki comments that **verses 2-3** contain “direct address to Cyrus.” (P. 220) In fact, **verse 2** tells Cyrus the same things that YHWH has said He is going to do in **verse 1**.

Oswalt comments on **verses 2-3** that “God’s activity is further stressed: it is God Who will go before the conqueror and prepare the way for him. When Cyrus arrives at the city by the smooth road God has prepared, he will find the mightiest defenses already

broken open for him, with their carefully hoarded and concealed treasures his for the taking...It is tempting to find in these lines very specific references to Cyrus’s conquests as reported by Herodotus and Xenophon. Babylon was supposedly guarded by hundreds of bronze gates that were thrown open to the conqueror as he came. Both authors make much of the endless fortunes that Cyrus captured from Croesus in Lydia and again in Babylon.” (P. 201).

Knight comments on **verse 2** that “Now follows a still more vivid Eastern hyperbole. Deutero-Isaiah says God is about to level the mountains before the feet of Cyrus just as He is about to do for Israel (**40:4**). He will do so, of course, because Cyrus is God’s instrument; in fact he is actually God’s ‘anointed.’ But the Babylonian king was also the anointed of Marduk. ‘Whose right hand I, Marduk have grasped’ are words to found on [the Cyrus Cylinder]...”

“Deutero-Isaiah was obviously a man of education. We have seen before that he knew court etiquette and the liturgical language of his captors. But what is amazing is that he dared to seize upon expressions embedded in an alien mythology and a pagan ritual and apply them to the God Who repeatedly declares ‘Apart from Me there is no other God.’” (P. 87)

<sup>9</sup>The Hebrew word הַדְּוָרִים, means the “swollen places.” Translations vary from “crooked places,” to “hills that loom up,” to “the mountains,” to “the heights.” 1QIs<sup>a</sup> and **Rahlf**s have ‘mountains.’ The Aramaic Targum has “walls.” 1QIs<sup>a</sup> spells הַרְרִים,

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doors of bronze I will shatter, and gate-bars of iron I will cut through!<sup>11</sup>

45:3 וְנָתַתִּי לְךָ אוֹצְרוֹת חֹשֶׁךְ וּמִטְמֵנֵי מִסְתָּרִים  
לְמַעַן תִּדְרַע כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה הַקּוֹרֵא בְּשֵׁמֶךְ  
אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

And I will give to you treasures of darkness, and hidden treasures of secret places,<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>(...continued)

and 1QIs<sup>b</sup> spells הַרְרִים. Both of these are probably alternative ways of spelling “mountains.”

<sup>10</sup>The Masoretes offer two readings: the first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” אֹשֶׁר, hiphil imperfect, “I will make straight / even,” and the second, the *qere*, “to be read,” אִישֶׁר, piel imperfect, with the same meaning.

<sup>11</sup>Slotki notes that “Babylon, according to Herodotus [Alexander adds the historian Abydenus], had a hundred gates of brass. But the phrase may be figurative, as in **Psalm 107:16**.” (P. 220)

**Psalm 107:16**, where it is said in a general way that YHWH “shattered doors of bronze, and (gate-)bars of iron He cut (in two).”

Obviously, here in **Isaiah 45:2** the reference is to the bronze doors in the massive walls of Babylon.

<sup>12</sup>Slotki comments that the text is referring to “treasures which are hidden in dark vaults for safety.” (P. 220)

The phrase אוֹצְרוֹת חֹשֶׁךְ וּמִטְמֵנֵי מִסְתָּרִים is literally “treasures / treasuries of darkness and hidden treasures of secret places.” North states that the root טָמַן, “hide,” “generally conveys the sense ‘hide in the earth.’ Compare **Genesis 35:4**; **Joshua 7:21-22**; **Jeremiah 13:4-7** [hidden in a rock-cleft]. For the fabulous wealth of Babylon compare **Jeremiah 50:37**; **51:13** [nothing concerning ‘fabulous’]. (P. 150)

We are reminded of Hitler’s hiding the treasures he had stolen from all over Europe in deep caverns and salt mines in the earth.

Alexander observes that “It is thought by some eminent writers that no conquests have ever been attended with such acquisitions of wealth as those of Cyrus.” (P. 178)

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in order that<sup>13</sup> you may know that I (am) YHWH,  
the One Who calls by your name--<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>(...continued)

As Herodotus explains in detail, Croesus, the imminently rich king of Lydia who had enriched the oracles of Greece and Libya, was the first of his conquests in the west; and now, Cyrus was on the verge of conquering Babylon, with all of its riches.

Knight comments that “Cyrus had by now looted the vaults of...Croesus at Lydian Sardis, and these contained ‘treasures of darkness,’ indeed ‘hidden treasures of mammon.’” (P. 88)

<sup>13</sup>Oswalt comments that “In language reminiscent of **Exodus (6:7, etc.), verse 3** introduces the first of three reasons (each introduced by לְמַעַן, ‘so that,’ ‘for the sake of’) why God has chosen to use Cyrus.” (P. 201)

Knight states that:

“The first occurrence runs: *that you may know that it is I, the Lord...Who call you by name.* It is doubtful whether Cyrus ever did come to acknowledge Yahweh. In fact we’re almost sure that he never did [if he did, we have no record of it]. Implicitly, from Deutero-Isaiah’s point of view, Cyrus did in fact acknowledge Yahweh later on when he encouraged the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple.” (P. 88) Perhaps, from Second Isaiah’s view. But from Cyrus’s view, the return of Israel to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the temple was only one instance among many others, of people who were returned by Cyrus to their native lands, and encouraged to rebuild their centers of worship to their Gods...

“The second לְמַעַן [verse 4] reads: *For the sake of My servant Jacob, and Israel My chosen, I call you by your name...*The emphasis here is that it is God Who chooses Israel for his Own and not Israel who chooses God. This means that God’s action in election and adoption is one of grace alone [we suspect Knight is reading his theology into this phrase, which says nothing concerning ‘grace alone’]... (P. 89)

“The third לְמַעַן [verse 6] says in effect: ‘So that men—all men everywhere—might realize that Yahweh alone is God’...These actions of Yahweh are evidently not just ends in themselves. Both of them are means to the end that the whole world should know Yahweh as God. Election for Deutero-Isaiah is therefore election *for* an end beyond itself.” (P. 89)

<sup>14</sup>Compare the third line of the next verse. Slotki holds that YHWH’s calling Cyrus by name means commissioning him. (P. 220). Compare **Exodus 31:2**, where YHWH says He has called Bezalel the artist by name to work in the building of the moveable sanctuary.

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

This verse contains another of YHWH's "Self-designations."

Oswalt comments that "The verse does not predict conversion. It speaks of Cyrus's knowing Who had called him. Thus, just as the pharaoh came to recognize that the God of Israel is the Lord without ever coming to faith in Him, so Cyrus could well acknowledge that he had been commissioned by the God of Israel (as, according to **Ezra 1:2-4**, he did), without surrendering himself to the exclusive worship of the Lord. Josephus (**Antiquities 11:1.2-3**) reports that Cyrus had read the prophecy about himself in the **Book of Isaiah**." (Pp. 200-01)

In **Antiquities 11**, Josephus states that God "stirred up the spirit of Cyrus and caused him to write throughout all Asia / all his kingdom, 'Thus says King Cyrus. Since the Most High God has appointed me king of the habitable world, I am persuaded that He is the God Whom the Israelite nation worships, for He foretold that I should build His temple in Jerusalem in the land of Judea.

"These things Cyrus knew from reading the book of prophecy which Isaiah had left behind two hundred and ten years earlier. For this prophet had said that God told him in secret, 'It is My will that Cyrus, whom I shall have appointed king of many great nations, shall send My people to their own land and build my temple.' Isaiah prophesied these things one hundred and forty years before the temple was demolished. And so, when Cyrus read them, he wondered at the Divine power and was seized by a strong desire and ambition to do what had been written; and, summoning the most distinguished of the Jews in Babylon, he told them that he gave them leave to journey to their native land and to rebuild both the city of Jerusalem and the temple of God, for God, he said, would be their Ally and he himself would write to his own governors and satraps who were in the neighborhood of their country to give them contributions of gold and silver for the building of the temple, and, in addition, animals for the sacrifices."

Of course, there is a great difference between the Pharaoh of the exodus, and Cyrus—since Pharaoh was Israel's and YHWH's arch enemy, fighting against YHWH's purposes, and Cyrus was YHWH's messiah, accomplishing YHWH's purposes in freeing the Israelites from Babylon, and enabling them to return home and rebuild their temple.

<sup>15</sup>Does the God of Israel know the Israelites "by name"? Yes, and He likewise knows the Zoroastrian Iranian Persian ruler, Cyrus by name. Is YHWH not the God of all nations and peoples? Does He work in the history of Israel? Yes. But He also works in the histories of all nations and people, as Amos states in **Amos 9:7**:

Are you people not like the people of Ethiopia to Me, O people of Israel?

—It is a saying of YHWH!

Did I not bring up Israel from the Land of Egypt--

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45:4 לְמַעַן עַבְדֵי יַעֲקֹב וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל בְּחִירֵי

וַאֲקִרָא לְךָ בְּשִׁמְךָ

אֲכַנְךָ וְלֹא יִדְעַתְנִי:

for the sake of<sup>16</sup> My servant Jacob,<sup>17</sup> and Israel, My chosen one.

And I called<sup>18</sup> to you by your name—<sup>19</sup>

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

and the Philistines from Crete,  
and Syria from Qir?

<sup>16</sup>Oswalt comments on **verse 4** that it gives “the second reason for God’s using and blessing Cyrus.” It is “for the sake of God’s elect, His chosen people...God may call Cyrus by his name, just as he had Jacob (**43:1**), but Cyrus’s calling is solely that God may keep His saving promises to Israel ...It is not necessary for the Creator to have the permission of someone’s faith before that person can be given a front-rank position in God’s plans. He is the Lord, and we will serve Him, either with our glad comprehension (compare **44:5**, where the persons joyously title themselves), or in spite of our sullen rebellion or placid ignorance.” (P. 202)

Oswalt’s comment centers on what Cyrus meant for Israel. But the Cyrus Cylinder reveals that Israel was not at the center, certainly not at an exclusive center of Cyrus’ freeing of conquered peoples and allowing them to return home to rebuild their centers of worship. Israel was only one nation among many others that Cyrus freed from bondage, giving them freedom both politically and religiously. And if all of this was YHWH’s plan / purpose, YHWH is indeed the God of all the earth, Who is at work not only in Israel, but in all the nations of earth. What do you think?

<sup>17</sup>Jacob (another name for Israel) is acknowledged by YHWH as His “servant.” So the passage depicts Cyrus as one who is serving YHWH on behalf of “Jacob / Israel” His “servant.”

Would you say that Cyrus the Persian is just as much YHWH’s “servant” as is Israel, even though he is not given that title?

<sup>18</sup>We are translating the phrase וַאֲקִרָא by “and I called,” taking the waw as conversive; others take it as consecutive, “and I will call,” for example **Rahfs**: “I will call you.”

<sup>19</sup>Whereas this is said of Cyrus the Persian, compare earlier, **Isaiah 43:1**, where the same thing is said of Israel:

(continued...)

I will give you a title,<sup>20</sup> and you did not know Me.<sup>21</sup>

45:5<sup>22</sup> אֲנִי יְהוָה וְאֵין עֹד

וּלְתִי אֵין אֱלֹהִים

אֶצְרֶךָ וְלֹא יִדְעַתְנִי:

I (am) YHWH, and there is none besides;  
other than Me, there is no God.<sup>23</sup>

I will gird you (with armor / strength),<sup>24</sup> even though you did not know Me.<sup>25</sup>

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

43:1 And now, in this way YHWH spoke,  
your Creator, Jacob, and your Former, Israel:  
You shall not be afraid, became I redeemed you,  
I called you by your name;  
You belong to Me!

<sup>20</sup>Oswalt notes that “Both [the Greek translation] and [the Aramaic] Targum seem to struggle with this concept. [Rahlf’s] has ‘will accept,’ and the Targum has ‘have fashioned.’” (P. 198) The “titles” mentioned in this passage are “My shepherd,” and “My Anointed One / Messiah.”

<sup>21</sup>Oswalt notes that “The perfect aspect of this particular verb may have a present punctiliar sense [relating to a point of time] (do not know) or a past sense (did not know).” (P. 198)

Alexander states that “The verb expresses past time not in reference to the date of the prediction, but to that of the fulfillment.” (P. 179)

<sup>22</sup>North comments on **verses 5-6** that “In these verses Yahweh’s dealings with Cyrus merge into assertions of Yahweh’s sole Deity, with which compare **Isaiah 41:4** and **43:10-11**.” (P. 151)

<sup>23</sup>These first two lines of **verse 5** constitute another of YHWH’s “Self-designations,” with its claim to YHWH’s being the one and only God—a claim to radical monotheism.

<sup>24</sup>Compare the similar statement in **verse 1** about “girding the loins.” Here, Alexander states, the girding means “investing him with royal dignity or personally strengthening him; both may be included.”

<sup>25</sup>Cyrus may not know YHWH, but YHWH knows Cyrus!

(continued...)

45:6 לְמַעַן יֵדְעוּ מִמְּזֶרְחַת-שֶׁמֶשׁ וּמִמַּעַרְבָּהּ

כִּי־אֵפֶס בְּלִעְדֵי

אֲנִי יְהוָה וְאֵין עוֹד:

In order that they may know, from sun's rising, and from (its) setting,<sup>26</sup>

that besides Me--<sup>27</sup>

I (am) YHWH--and there is no other.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>(...continued)

Slotki comments that “When he entered upon his career, Cyrus had not yet acknowledged the sovereignty of God. His selection was not due to his merits, but to the Divine mission with which he had been entrusted.

This comment implies that later in his life, Cyrus would acknowledge the sovereignty of YHWH. But if that was the case, the only evidence there is for it is found in the **Jewish Bible's** depictions of Cyrus such as found in **Ezra 1:2**. But in the **Cyrus Cylinder**, written long after his conquering of Babylon, Cyrus gives credit for his successes not to YHWH, but to En-lil Who called him to be His “shepherd,” and to Marduk, who took his hand and walked with him as “friend and companion” into Babylon! He states that his reign was loved by Bel, Marduk and Nabu. This hardly sounds like a convert to, or a worshiper of YHWH! What do you think?

<sup>26</sup>Where our Hebrew text has **וּמִמַּעַרְבָּהּ**, “and from its west,” **Rahlfs** has literally “and the ones from settings / west.”

This is obviously an expression of YHWH's desire to be made known to all humanity—from east to west. And what He wants to be known is the contents of His “Self-designation” given in the next two lines of this verse.

<sup>27</sup>This line, **כִּי־אֵפֶס בְּלִעְדֵי**, is literally “because a ceasing apart from Me,” which we take to mean all the other claims to Deity apart from YHWH should cease, since He, and He alone, is God! **Rahlfs** translates by “because there is not beside / except Me.” Alexander translates by “that there is none without Me.”

<sup>28</sup>That is, what YHWH wants to be known throughout the earth (from east to west) is the fact of His being God—the only God! Besides Him, there is no other! This is another of YHWH's claims to exclusive monotheism. Compare **Isaiah 37:20** and **42:8**.

**Verse 6** opens with the third **לְמַעַן**, “so that,” “for the sake of” (see footnote 465).

(continued...)

<sup>28</sup>(...continued)

Oswalt comments that “Here comes God’s third reason for choosing and empowering Cyrus: that the whole world might know the Lord, the only God. There is an evident progression in the three reasons given. The first is that Cyrus might know (**verse 3**), the second is that Israel might know (**verse 4** [although the verb ‘know’ is not used specifically here, it is obvious in the larger context—**40:28; 43:10; 48:8**—that Israel does not really know God, and that the return, like the exodus long before, has as its basic purpose a revelation of God to Israel]), and the third is that the world might know (**verse 6**).” (P. 203)

We do not disagree—but note that Oswalt is having to defend his view of the progress of this passage, which is not obvious in its language.

<sup>29</sup>North comments on **verse 7** that it “definitely excludes any dualistic [dualism is a teaching that the universe is under the dominion of two opposing principles or Deities, one of which is good and the other evil] interpretation of reality such as characterizes Zoroastrianism. But it is unlikely that it was directed against Zoroastrianism as such or against the faith of Cyrus in particular. We have no reason to assume that Cyrus was a Zoroastrian...

“The verse is a variation of the theme, ‘There is no God but Yahweh.’ Monotheism is not a faith that encounters no moral difficulties. To say, as the **Old Testament** does, that all happenings in nature are due to the personal agency of God creates a problem for the modern mind.” (P. 151)

**Wikipedia’s** article on Cyrus the Great, his religion and philosophy (2/15/2016) states that “Though it is generally believed that Zarathushtra's teachings maintained influence on Cyrus's acts and policies, so far no clear evidence has been found to indicate that Cyrus practiced a specific religion. Pierre Briant wrote that given the poor information we have, "it seems quite reckless to try to reconstruct what the religion of Cyrus might have been." His liberal and tolerant views towards other religions have made some scholars consider Cyrus a Zoroastrian king. His views are believed expressed in the content of the Cylinder:

Pray daily before Bêl and Nabu for long life for me, and may they speak a gracious word for me and say to Marduk, my lord, "May Cyrus, the king who worships you, and Cambyses, his son." (Cyrus Cylinder, line 35)

Knight comments on **verse 7** that “Finally, to crown the whole climactic expression of God’s purpose, Deutero-Isaiah makes use of the finest religious concepts that Cyrus’ Persian world had ever produced. The controversy has not yet ended as to whether King Cyrus was a Zoroastrian by faith or not. Probably he was not, for Zoroaster seems to have been born after Cyrus’ day. But Zoroaster did not introduce into Persia a wholly new set of concepts: what he did was to develop the dualism native to the early Persian theology...Zoroaster took over the ideas that were native to the

(continued...)

עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם וּבֹרָא רָע

אֲנִי יְהוָה עֲשֵׂה כֹל-אֱלֹהִים:

One Who fashions light, and Who creates darkness,  
Who makes peace / prosperity,<sup>30</sup> and creates evil—  
I (am) YHWH, One Who does all these (things)!<sup>31</sup>

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

Persian view of reality. He deified the concepts of both light and darkness. Ormuzd, the God of light, he designated the apotheosis [the elevation of someone or something to Divine status] of the good, and Ahriman he called the God of evil. Man sees that the two powers are obviously always struggling with each other for mastery in this mysterious universe. The important addition that Zoroaster made to this basic view of things, however, was to assure his followers that the good would in the end prevail over the evil.

“But to Deutero-Isaiah any form of dualism is merely ridiculous, in the light of Yahweh’s continued declaration that He alone is God and that apart from Him ‘there is nothing else’ (**verse 6**). So now he makes one of the great categorical [unqualified, unconditional] declarations of the Bible. He says of Yahweh: ‘*I form Light, and create Darkness.*’ In both the **Old** and **New Testaments** light is regularly employed as a symbol of God’s creative and saving purpose...Equally, darkness is symbolic of all that is negative and contrary to the Divine will...Throughout the **Old Testament**, however, God is in control of darkness even as He is in control of light...Both light and darkness are therefore instruments of His will...

“God uses evil to subserve His total plans so that it can work out to its triumphant conclusion. Without darkness the concept of light is unthinkable. Without evil, the goodness of God is incomprehensible...Deutero-Isaiah understands goodness in terms of God’s actively creative, saving love. He sees it in terms of concern, of compassion, and of the pouring out of the self that others may be saved...*Shalom* [peace, welfare] speaks of that perfect harmony, wholesomeness, wholeness of being, which is present as the norm in God’s loving purpose for man and for His universe.” (Pp. 89-91)

<sup>30</sup>Where our Hebrew text has שְׁלוֹם, “peace / welfare,” 1QIs<sup>a</sup> has טוֹב, “good,” “goodness,” which is a common parallel for רָע, “evil.”

<sup>31</sup>YHWH is depicted as identifying Himself as engaged in a continuing creation (using five present participles: forming, creating, making, creating, making).

Oswalt comments that “What Isaiah asserts is that God, as Creator, is ultimately responsible for everything in nature, from light to dark, and for everything in history,

(continued...)

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<sup>31</sup>(...continued)

from good fortune to misfortune. No other beings or forces are responsible for anything.

“Without question such a sweeping assertion raises some serious problems, especially as we try to puzzle out issues of justice and fairness...The point is that everything that exists, whether positive or negative from our perspective, does so because of the creative will of God.” (P. 204)

As Brueggemann states, “Israel is clear that Yahweh governs darkness as well as light, that God can make use of [but He says nothing of ‘making use of’—only creating and making!] either to effect Yahweh’s purpose. This central conviction in Israel works against our ‘Enlightened,’ bourgeois [‘capitalist’] theology, which imagines that God is singularly and everywhere light and love. Not so the God of Moses, the God of the **Bible**...

“This God works [or, better, ‘creates’!] ‘the darkness’ as well as ‘the light’...At the core of this...affirmation is the assertion ‘I am Yahweh.’ The incomparability of Yahweh is as One Who presides over heaven and earth, over life and death, over chaos and creation. This same God dispatches both darkness and light, decrees [**shalom**, peace] and evil...

“This view of God, to be sure, is a scandal to a religious culture that wants to associate only the ‘good things’ with God. But such a cleaned up version of God is faithful neither to our experience nor to the witness of Scripture itself. (**New Interpreter’s Bible, Exodus**, pp. 767-68)

Westermann holds that these words in **Isaiah 45:7** teach that “each and every thing created, each and every event that happens, light and darkness, weal and woe, are attributable to Him alone...

[Westermann asks,] “If God’s action reaches so far beyond His chosen people, if He calls, equips, accompanies and bestows honor so far beyond [Israel] itself, and if a worshiper of foreign Gods can be given the approval, help and guidance of the God of Israel, where can it all end?...

[His answer is,] “We can only tremble and fall silent as we contemplate [these statements]...This oracle of **Deutero-Isaiah** says, for the one and only time in the **Bible** and in direct opposition to **Genesis 1** and **3**, that God created the darkness as He did the light [we disagree, holding that **Genesis 1** and **3** clearly teach that God created the darkness and death just as well as the light and life, and also disagree that this is the only time in the **Bible** such a statement is made], God brings about woe (the Hebrew word embraces both woe and evil), just as He brings about salvation...

(continued...)

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<sup>31</sup>(...continued)

“This shuts the door firmly on any dualism—if the Creator of evil and woe is God, there is no room left for a devil [except, we insist, as one of YHWH’s creatures, only able to do what YHWH permits, as in the **Book of Job**—certainly not a ‘second or rival God’!]. But what kind of God is this Who created evil as well as good, woe as well as weal? In His action upon Cyrus and through him God does a thing which really goes far beyond what He had said to His chosen people about Himself and His workings [we disagree— this is exactly what YHWH is depicted as saying concerning Himself in **Deuteronomy 32:39**—see below]. For this reason the final words of the Cyrus oracle indicate that God’s Divinity transcends the limits imposed on human speech or thought about Him— which means the limit imposed on all theology.” (**Isaiah 40-66, A Commentary**, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1969, pp. 161-62)

We think Westermann is mistaken, both in his interpretation of **Genesis 1** and **3**, and in his view that theology cannot speak concerning the One God Who creates both light and darkness. We insist that theologians must learn anew to speak of YHWH God in terms of radical monotheism, rejecting any dualism [such as some Christian claims concerning God and the Devil do, attributing everything good to God, and attributing everything evil to the Devil], just as **Isaiah 45:7** does, completely rejecting dualism.

If what modern scholars of Zoroastrianism are saying about Ahura Mazda being the one and only God, Who is in control of the two opposing forces of light and darkness, then we must view **Isaiah 45:7** as affirming the same thing about YHWH, Israel’s God!

Even though Isaiah’s “radical monotheism” (“one God, and only one God, Creator of light and darkness, of good and evil”) forces those who agree with it into the difficult problem of the origin of evil, still the prophet in this passage will not accept dualism—the belief in two Gods, the God of light and the God of darkness. He would much rather have to struggle with the question of how the good God can be responsible for all the evil in the world (as is struggled with in the **Book of Job**), than to turn to a dualistic explanation of two different Gods. For the other passages that say this same thing, see: **Deuteronomy 32:39**:

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

No, such teaching did not begin with **Isaiah 45:7**! YHWH, speaking through His spokes-person Moses, proclaims that He is the only God—Who both puts to death and brings to life; Who strikes, but Who also heals. We hold that this is exactly what **Genesis 1** and **3** teach, in spite of the scholars who attempt to deflect this teaching. It is certainly taught here in **Deuteronomy 32:39**! It is in the light of this kind of affirmation

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<sup>31</sup>(...continued)

of “radical monotheism” that the **Hebrew Bible** depicts YHWH as Creator of the universe, with both its light and darkness, with both its chaos and order, with both life and death.

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

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

A number of Jewish and Christian interpreters have done their best to eliminate the creation of chaos and darkness from the teaching of **Genesis 1** (including Westermann and Brueggemann, as reflected in our quotations), but unsuccessfully in our opinion, having to give unique meanings to its language.

It is in the light of this affirmation of “radical monotheism” that the **Hebrew Bible** depicts YHWH as the One calling Assyria and Babylonia to the task of destroying both northern Israel and Judah, including Israel’s places of worship, and multitudes of men, women and children.

Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah all unite their prophetic voices to affirm that it is YHWH Who is attacking and destroying Israel. The mourning voice that we hear in **Lamentations** confesses that Jerusalem has been attacked and destroyed by YHWH, not by some second God, whether the devil or satan or anti-Christ.

Such a view of God has been deeply problematic for philosophical theologians; but it is part and parcel of the **Hebrew Bible’s** view of YHWH God, and of any truly Biblical Theology in which the death of Jesus Christ is attributed not only to the Jewish and Roman authorities and powers, but also to YHWH God! What do you think? See in addition: **Exodus 4:11**

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

The Divine answer to Moses is classic--"Who gave human beings a mouth? Who causes deafness, as well as enabling human eyes to see? Am I not able to do these things? Then what makes you think I will send you to pharaoh and not enable you to speak My message?"

What an answer, and what an encouragement to any person who feels the Divine call to mission! Can not the Creator God supply all of our deficiencies, and enable us to accomplish the task He gives us? Why do we stubbornly draw back in doubt and fear? YHWH tells Moses to quit stalling--to go--"And I, I will be [it is the

(continued...)

<sup>31</sup>(...continued)

Divine name אֱהִיָּה, 'I Will Be,' hidden in this promise!] with your mouth; and I will teach you what you will say!" How can Moses answer that response to his objection?

Driver comments that "God gives man all his faculties; and therefore, it is implied, can give Moses fluency. The words are spoken in a tone of reproof." (P. 28) We agree— but note that it is impossible to be sure about "tones of voice" in a written document.

Slotki comments on **verse 7** that "Some commentators have detected in this verse, in which God is declared to be the universal Creator of both light and darkness, peace and evil, a direct allusion to, and intentional contradiction of, the Persian belief in dualism according to which the world is ruled by two antagonistic Gods, Ahura Mazda, the God of light and goodness, and Ahriman, the God of darkness and evil. More modern exegetes doubt the allusion and understand the declaration as a general denial of all polytheistic systems." (P. 221)

Oswalt similarly notes that "Older commentators had no question that the opposites were chosen here to contradict Persian dualism (for example, Adam Clarke, my father, Dewey Darnell's favorite **Old Testament** commentator). But later research has suggested that prior to the Sassanid dynasty (3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.E.) Persian religion was no more purely dualistic than any of the other Near Eastern religions." (P. 204)

Oswalt adds that "What the prophet is saying is that if bad conditions exist in my life, they are not there because some evil God has thwarted the good intentions of a kindly but ineffectual grandfather-God, Who would like me to have good conditions but cannot bring them about. They are there solely as a factor of my relations to the one God. They may be there because by their means I can become more like Him, or they may be there for reasons that He cannot explain to me. But they are not there in spite of God. He is the only uncaused cause in the universe." (P. 205)

These are problems that are struggled with in the **Book of Job**, and we think the **Book of Job** depicts the evils that YHWH allowed to come upon Job were a "testing" of Job. This may not be the total answer to the "problem of evil," but it is, we think, certainly an important component of it! At least, it is our experience from a life-time of Christian ministry, that life is in fact a test—and for many, an extremely difficult and excruciating test. What do you think?

<sup>32</sup>Slotki states that **verse 8** is "a short lyrical poem on the happy state that will follow the liberation of Israel by Cyrus and the establishment of a reign of righteousness and salvation." (P. 221)

North entitles this verse "Victory and Salvation."

(continued...)

תַּפְתַּח-אָרֶץ וַיִּפְרוּ-יֵשַׁע  
וַצְדָּקָה תִצְמַיֵחַ יַחַד  
אֲנִי יְהוָה בְּרֵאתִיו:

Drizzle, O heavens, from above; and clouds, drip rightness!  
Open,<sup>33</sup> O earth, and bring forth<sup>34</sup> salvation;  
and righteousness,<sup>35</sup> spring forth<sup>36</sup> together!

<sup>32</sup>(...continued)

He comments that “This verse may be an independent piece or it may be a hymnic conclusion to **verses 1-7**. Whichever it is, it is a perfect miniature in verse. The issue of this ‘marriage’ of heaven and earth is to be *prosperity* and *salvation*. The idea had erotic associations in Baal religion, but here it has been sublimated into what is now pure metaphor.” (P. 152)

<sup>33</sup>Where our Hebrew text has the third person feminine qal imperfect תַּפְתַּח, “(earth) will open,” **Rahfs** has “let the earth spring forth / rise up (with) mercy!”

<sup>34</sup>Where our Hebrew text has the plural וַיִּפְרוּ, “and let them sprout / bear fruit,” **Rahfs** has the singular “let it spring forth / rise up.” 1QIs<sup>a</sup> has וַיִּפְרוּ, “and let it fly.”

<sup>35</sup>Oswalt comments that “What this **verse [8]** tells us is that if **45:7** leaves us with some difficult questions by its rather cool assertions that God is ultimately responsible for everything, we must never forget that all of His actions are governed by the absolute right(eous)ness with which He treats every person, and by His determination to deliver every person from the consequences of his or her own sin, if only he or she will let Him. This is cause for song, for just as the sky that God has created cannot help but pour forth rain, and the earth that God has created cannot help but bring forth plants, so God the Creator can only pour out on His people right dealing and mighty deliverance in all His relations with them.” (P. 206)

This sounds good. But the fact is that the sky not only pours forth rain, but also pours forth tornadoes and hurricanes and tsunamis and lightning-strikes; and the earth brings forth weeds and poisonous reptiles as well as plants.

I heard a famous minister on television telling believers that they all had “God’s mark” on them, that they had been called by God to be His special people. He went on to claim that when plagues come, they will not come on them—they will only come on their “unmarked” neighbors. The swarms of flies will come into their neighbor’s house, but will not enter theirs; the water will be turned to blood for all the “unmarked people,” but their water will remain pure, etc. etc.

(continued...)

I, YHWH, I created it!<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>(...continued)

I thought, Please tell that to Job! Tell it to the German Jews in the 1930's and 40's! Tell it to the multitudes of faithful Christian believers who have died of the plague, or polio, or been beheaded by Muslim jihadists, or who have suffered the ravages of tornadoes / hurricanes / earthquakes! Tell it to Jesus, as He went to the cross!

Knight comments on the words צִדְקָה, *tsedeq* and חַסְדֵּי, *tsedaqah* [both of which we translate by 'righteousness'] that "Israel had learned to use this masculine word *tsedeq* to express the idea of a general world order, one that realized itself in the various fields of wisdom ...When God's *tsedeq* reaches Israel, 'rained down from above' as it is, Israel thereby receives the power to do what God does. Israel discovers 'saving love' springing up within her own heart, a love which, through the covenant, is now aimed at the people of the earth. This secondary, human activity is expressed by the feminine form of the word *tsedaqah*...

"This distinction between the masculine and the feminine forms of this noun reveals a deep unity of thought throughout the whole **Book of Isaiah**. *Tsedeq*, to describe God's action, occurs 25 times from **chapter 1** to **chapter 66**. *Tsedaqah*, the feminine, occurs 22 times to describe man's response. Again, when God gives *My tsedaqah* to Israel, as He does 10 times in **chapters 46-66**, one senses that God's initial act, and Israel's response are included together. It would seem that Paul, steeped as he is in the thought of these chapters, puts *tsedeq* and *tsedaqah* together in the one word δικαιοσύνη ['righteousness']...even as it is at **Isaiah 46:13**. In a word, *tsedaqah* does not describe the state of 'having been saved.' Rather, once Israel has begun sharing the Divine activity through the covenant, it describes the power that Israel has received to do what God does, viz., seek in love to save the pagan world. It is not of herself: *I the Lord have created it.*" (Pp. 92-3)

<sup>36</sup>Where our Hebrew text has תִּצְמַיֵחַ, "will cause to grow," **Rahlfs** has ἀνατειλᾶτω, "let it spring forth / rise up."

<sup>37</sup>Oswalt comments on **verse 8** that "If Israel is in the darkness and trouble (עֲרִיעָר) of exile, it is solely because of the Lord. Therefore it is to the Lord alone that Israel should look in order for the darkness to be turned to light and the trouble to well-being (שְׁלוֹם)." (P. 205)

We think this is overstatement, with its word "solely." The **Book of Isaiah** will not let Israel off the hook for its own responsibility for the exile! Yes, YHWH sent Israel into exile; but He did so because of Israel's rebellion and sinful deeds!

<sup>38</sup>Slotki comments on **verses 9-13** that they are “an address apparently directed to those who questioned the propriety of the selection of Cyrus rather than a descendant of the House of David as the liberator of Israel.” He states that in **verses 9-10**, “the objectors to God’s selection are compared with a potsherd questioning the wisdom of the potter, or a son daring to criticize his parent.” (P. 222)

Oswalt entitles these verses “God’s right to use whom He chooses.” He comments that ‘When we put ourselves into the position of the Hebrew people, it is not hard to realize what a dissonant note this prophecy of Cyrus would sound. When they think of return from the Babylonian exile, they think of a second exodus, with manna from heaven, water from rocks, and another [Hebrew / Jewish] Moses. How shocking for them to hear that their deliverer [messiah] would be a pagan who did not even know the Lord, Yahweh (**45:5**)...This turn of events is one more example of the ‘new things’ that manifest the creative sovereignty of God (**43:19; 48:6**; etc.)...

“This disputation serves to highlight an emerging feature of **chapters 40-48**: the people’s unbelief...It is against this backdrop that Isaiah’s calls to belief become more and more pointed, culminating in the strident challenges of **chapter 48**.

“Here the issue is stated in terms of the right of the Creator to develop His creation in the way He chooses. The creation is in no position to dictate the terms or conditions of its development. So long as God does what is consistent with His Own character and His stated purpose for creation, no successful challenge to His dominion can be mounted.” (P. 208)

But what will we do when we read the biblical stories, told by the ancient Israelites, stories depicting God as wiping out an entire world of human beings (mass genocide), saving only six people; or depicting God as commanding the extermination of entire nations / people, men women and children, such as the Canaanites and the Amalekites; or commanding the death penalty for gays and rebellious children; or commanding the exclusion of certain people from His assembly (such as in **Deuteronomy 23:1-6**), do you think those biblical depictions are “consistent with His Own character and His stated purpose for creation”? We do not.

But when we read biblical statements concerning God’s call of women (such as Deborah in **Judges 4**, or Ruth the Moabitess in the **Book of Ruth**), and non-Jews such as Cyrus to be His messiah (as here in **Isaiah 45**), and His loving forgiveness for sinners completely apart from repentance on their part (such as is expressed in **Isaiah 43:25**), or the depiction of what it means to be His “servant”—being willing to bear the sins of others, even to the extent of dying for them (**Isaiah 52:13-53:12**), and when we see the love of Jesus Christ for prostitutes, Roman soldiers, tax-collectors, and the mentally ill, our heart is touched with the conviction that this is consistent with the Divine character.

(continued...)

חַרֵּשׁ אֶת־חַרְשֵׁי אֶדְמָה

הֵיאֹמֵר חֲמֹר לִיצְרוֹ

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

Do you think we are guilty of “picking and choosing”? How will you deal with these things? Will you believe in a God Who calls His people to both murder and love their children?

**Alexander** translates **verse 9** by “Woe to (or alas for) him striving with his Maker—a potsherd with potsherds of earth. Shall clay say to its former, What art thou doing? And thy work, He has no hands?” He comments that “The absurdity consists in the thing made denying the existence of the hands by which it was itself produced...The creature (is) denying the power or skill of its Creator.” (P. 181) Compare with this **Rahifs’** translation:

What better did I prepare, like clay of a potter?  
Will the one ploughing plough the ground the whole day?  
Will the clay say to the potter, What are you making?  
Because you don’t work, nor have hands?

We do not understand the meaning of the first two lines, and wonder what Hebrew text lies behind them. But the third line is understandable, and has probably influenced Alexander’s translation.

North entitles **verses 9-13** “The Disposer Supreme Of Nature And History.”

He comments that “It is as unthinkable that any man should argue with Yahweh as that potter’s clay should argue with the potter! Yahweh, Who shapes the course of history, repeats that He created heaven and earth, and mankind, and that He has roused ‘him’—obviously Cyrus—to action for a saving purpose, that of rebuilding Jerusalem ‘My city’ and setting His exiled people free.

“The passage is the only piece of invective [abusive, highly critical language] in **chapters 40-55**. It is generally agreed that it is directed against those of Deutero-Isaiah’s compatriots who were scandalized by His making Yahweh assert that He would carry out His purposes through the agency of a ‘shepherd’ and ‘anointed prince’ who was not one of His Own ‘children.’ Evidently He has other ‘children’ (literally ‘sons’) than Israelites.” (P. 154)

Knight comments on **verse 9** that “Deutero-Isaiah now shows a degree of anger and impatience with the exiles who are so slow to believe his good news...To all of them Deutero-Isaiah offers the one reply: ‘We and our little plans and preoccupations do not count at all. It is to God and His plan alone that we must hearken and obey, and nothing else.’” (P. 93)

## מִהַתְּעִשָּׂה

וּפְעֻלָּךְ אֵין־יָדִים לּוֹ:

How sad / woe<sup>39</sup> (to) one quarreling with / contending against<sup>40</sup> his Potter / Fashioner,  
a clay vessel, along with clay vessels of (the) ground!<sup>41</sup>

Will (the) clay say to its potter / fashioner,

What will you make?

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<sup>39</sup>Oswalt states that the Hebrew word הוֹי, **hoy**, “Woe,” is “a funeral cry,” emphasizing “the seriousness of what is taking place here (compare **chapters 5** and **28-33**). To disagree with God’s ordering of one’s life or one’s world is not merely a matter of preference or outlook. At bottom, it is a refusal to let God be God, a reversal of roles, in which the creature tries to make the Creator a servant to carry out the creature’s plan. To be sure, not every question of God’s work or ways constitutes such a rebellion. Job’s questioning is considered less severely than is the faulty justification of those ways attempted by his so-called comforters. Nevertheless, a persistent refusal to allow God to be God, to establish the terms of our relationship with Him, as in **Genesis 3**, will result in a funeral—our own.” (P. 208)

But Oswalt is mistaken in stating that Job’s questioning is “considered less severely...” It is not considered severely at all. Instead, in the close of the **Book of Job**, YHWH approves of what Job has said in his arguments and in his radical questioning and sharp criticisms of YHWH, while disapproving of what the three “friends” have said. See **Job 42:7**. Job has honestly and forth-rightly stated his questions, and has said some very harsh things about and directly to YHWH. But then he has been willing to listen humbly to YHWH’s speeches, and in their light has recognized how limited and ignorant he truly is. Job’s questioning of YHWH does not result in his funeral, but in his restoration to life and prosperity.

What do you think? Is Job a good example of one who responds to YHWH’s invitation to “come, let us reason together”? We think it is.

<sup>40</sup>The Hebrew present active participle is בָּרַח, “one striving with,” “one contending with.” North translates by “cavil at,” and comments that “The Hebrew verb is בָּרַח...A translation ‘bring an action against’ would be permissible, but nothing quite so formal is intended here.” (P. 154)

<sup>41</sup>Oswalt translates by “a pot among earthen pots,” and comments that “If this reading is correct, it connotes the extreme limitedness of human beings. On what basis do I, just one of a myriad of creatures like myself, made of the most common material, challenge the Potter?” (P. 208) Compare **Isaiah 29:16**.

and Your work has no handles / hands?<sup>42</sup>

45:10 הוֹי אָמַר לְאָב מִה־תּוֹלִיד

וּלְאִשָּׁה מִה־תְּחִילִין:

How sad / woe (to)–one saying to a father, What will you give birth to?

And to a woman, What will you bring forth through labor-pains?<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Where our Hebrew text has וּפְעָלָךְ אֵין־יָדַיִם לוֹ, “and your work—there are no hands / handles to it,” **Rahfs** has “neither do you have hands!”

Oswalt suggests that perhaps “the prophet is turning to those who question God and asking if their own work has ever charged them with having no ability, or skill (compare **Deuteronomy 16:17**, etc.), as they have charged God.” (P. 209)

<sup>43</sup>Oswalt comments on **verse 10** that it “continues the argument, but now on the human plane. God is not merely the Maker of a material universe; He is also the Father of the human world. Commentators have questioned why woman is used in the second bi-colon instead of the expected parallel, ‘mother.’ The solutions offered have generally been inconclusive, but this may be another example of the **Bible’s** careful refusal to give even the appearance of labeling God as Mother.” (P. 209)

And we wonder how such a scholar as Oswalt can say this. Consider the following passages where God is described in feminine terms:

**Isaiah 42:14,**

I kept silent from long-distant time;  
I would keep silent, I would restrain myself;  
like a woman giving birth I would groan,  
I would pant and I would gasp (all) at once!

**Psalm 90:1,**

My Lord, you were a dwelling-place for us, in generation and generation!  
Before mountains were given birth,  
or with labor-pains you gave birth to earth and world,  
even from long-lasting time to long-lasting time, you (are) God!

**Deuteronomy 32:18,**

Rock (a Divine name for YHWH) gave you birth—you (singular) forget;  
and you forgot God, who birthed you with labor pains!

(continued...)

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

These passages do not give the appearance of “careful refusal to give even the appearance of labeling God as Mother.” In both of these passages the verbs are masculine singular, but they are referring to the labor-pains suffered by females in giving birth.

Alexander comments that the questions asked of a father or a mother are meant to describe “impious absurdity.” He holds that “The writer’s main design...is to represent the doubt and discontent of men in reference to God’s future dealings with them as no less monstrous than the supposition of a child’s objection to its own birth.” (P. 181)

Knight states that “The insolence of Israel’s attitude toward God is borne out by such questions as ‘What right have You to beget children?’...It represents a display of that ultimate lack of faith which, almost identifiable with the sin against the Holy [Spirit] of the **New Testament**, is a form of virtual suicide. Not to accept life as God has decreed it is in a sense to take one’s own life. If Israel persists in this attitude, then she is sinning to a far greater degree than the Babylonians.” (P. 93)

<sup>44</sup>Oswalt comments on **verses 11-13** that “After the graphic introduction in **verses 9-10**, these next three verses seem to be an exposition of the figures in that introduction. As is typical of **Isaiah** (see **1:24; 3:1; 10:16, 33**), he piles up appellatives [titles] to make God’s authority unmistakable: He is Israel’s *Lord*; He is Israel’s *Holy One*; He is Israel’s *Creator*. By what token, then, is Israel in a position to question the Lord’s promises concerning Israel?” (Pp. 209-10)

He comments on **verse 11** that “Israel’s Maker is in a position to say certain things about the future of His people, and who dares to question Him about that future, or command Him to do things differently? If ask should be taken in the imperative mood, then the sense would probably be ironic: ‘Go ahead and question Me concerning the things to come; command Me concerning My children and the works of My hands.’ The listeners are hardly in a position to do either.” (P. 210)

Alexander thinks the meaning of **verse 11** is “You may ask Me concerning things to come, for I am able to inform you; you may trust My children to My care, for I am abundantly able to protect them.” (P. 182)

Knight claims that “The text of this verse is obscure. We might translate it by ‘Do you have the presumption to question the paternity of My children, or to give Me orders about what I make and do with My hands?’ For of course, Israel is ‘My son’ (**Exodus 4:22**); and God’s hands had rescued Israel out of Egypt.” (P. 93)

Compare the following translations of the last half of **verse 11**:

**King James**, “Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me.”

(continued...)

הַאֲתִיּוֹת שְׂאֵלֹנִי

עַל-בְּנֵי וְעַל-פְּעַל יְדֵי תְצַוֵּנִי:

In this way YHWH spoke, (the) Set-apart One of Israel, and its Fashioner,  
The things to come—ask Me!

Concerning my children, and concerning (the) work of my hands,  
will you command Me?

45:12 אַנְכִי עֲשִׂיתִי אֶרֶץ

וְאָדָם עָלֶיהָ בְּרֵאתִי

אֲנִי יְדֵי נָטוּ שָׁמַיִם

וְכָל-צְבָאָם צִוִּיתִי:

I, I made (the) earth,  
and humanity upon it, I created;<sup>45</sup>  
I, My hands stretched out (the) heavens,

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

**Tanakh**, “Will you question Me on the destiny of My children, Will you instruct Me about the work of My hands?”

**New Revised Standard**, “Will you question me about my children, or command me concerning the work of my hands?”

**New International**, “Concerning things to come, do you question me about my children, or give me orders about the work of my hands?”

**New Jerusalem**, “I am asked for signs regarding my sons, I am given orders about the work I do.

**Rahfs**, ἐρωτήσατέ με περὶ τῶν υἱῶν μου καὶ περὶ τῶν θυγατέρων μου καὶ περὶ τῶν ἔργων τῶν χειρῶν μου ἐντείλασθέ μοι, “Question Me concerning the sons of Mine and concerning the daughter of Mine and concerning the works of the hands of Mine, command Me!”

<sup>45</sup>Alexander comments that “the reason why He could be trusted to protect His people...(is) because He (is) almighty, and had proved Himself to be so in creation.” (P. 182)

Knight comments that the statement “draws attention to the fact that God the Almighty has total rights over His creature man.” (P. 94)

and all their (heavenly) army I commanded.<sup>46</sup>

45:13<sup>47</sup> אֲנֹכִי הֵעִירְתִּיהֶן בְּצַדִּיק

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<sup>46</sup>Oswalt comments that **verse 12** “continues the emphasis on God’s right to do as He wishes with what He has created...Who on earth is in a position to command Him concerning the work of His hands? Note the contrast here with **44:9-20**, where the hands of human craftsmen make the Gods. Here the hand of God make humans.” (P. 210)

And how can a human being call the Creator of the universes into question, challenging the rightness of what He has done?

<sup>47</sup>Alexander comments on **verse 13** that “From the general proof of Divine power afforded by creation, He descends to the particular exercise of His omnipotence and wisdom in the raising up of Cyrus...and the Prophet simply takes up the thread which he had dropped at the close of the fifth verse, or perhaps of the seventh.” (P. 182) Alexander thinks there is a change of speakers in this verse, changing from YHWH to the prophet.

Oswalt comments on **verse 13** that “This verse gives us the concluding argument in the light of the previous statements...Cyrus did not arise by accident, or by his own choice. He rose up because I [YHWH] called him. This emphasis is continued throughout the verse. History is solely in the hands of the Creator. The great Persian emperor, like the earth and the stars, exists and comes forth at the command of God alone.” (P. 210)

But surely this is overstatement. Cyrus is God’s creature, created in His image and likeness, according to **Genesis 1**. And Cyrus, like every other human being, lives under the Divine command to be like a little God, taking charge of and caring for his God-given home. Humans are given responsibility for history by their Creator. And so, history is not “solely in the hands of the Creator.” God’s human creatures share with God in that history. There is a striking difference between the earth and the stars, over against human beings who bear the Divine image. They are subject to God’s command, but they also have the freedom to disobey and follow their own will, rather than God’s.

Oswalt adds that “God says that His decision to use the pagan king in order to accomplish His larger creation and election purposes is absolutely the right one in the light of all the circumstances, and that Israel, the object of those purposes, is in no position to challenge the decision.” (P. 211) What do you think?

Knight likewise comments, “So then which of His creatures dares question Almighty God about His use of Cyrus?...God has the right to smooth the path of Israel. God says, ‘I have raised (Cyrus) up in My plan of salvation’ [it is the noun *tsedeq*, our ‘righteousness’], even as He has long since raised up Israel also for such an end. Which of the exiles without the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit would ever have

(continued...)

וְכָל־דַּרְכָּיו אֵישׁר׃  
 הוּא־יִבְנֶה עִירִי וְגִלּוּתִי יִשְׁלַח  
 לֹא בַמַּחִיר וְלֹא בַשָּׂחַד  
 אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת׃

I, I aroused him [Cyrus] in righteousness,<sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup>(...continued)

thought of that startling question? For on the face of it, and in view of Israel's knowledge to date of the ways of God, the equation sounds little less than blasphemy...[But in fact], in the year 587 B.C.E...Cyrus issued his famous decree, which included permission for all displaced persons to return to their homes. As the **Book of Ezra** informs us, permission was also granted to the Hebrew exiles to rebuild their ruined city of Jerusalem, and this they actually did with the aid of a grant from the royal treasury. These things happened just a couple of years or so after Deutero-Isaiah spoke these words...

“A miracle, the impossible, did in fact happen. Cyrus enabled the rebuilding of Jerusalem, yet neither for payment...nor reward; for that enlightened monarch knew nothing of the significance of the moment that he was living through in the sacred history of Israel.

“The significance here of Deutero-Isaiah's understanding of God's ways with Israel must not be passed over. He believes that God, as Creator, is always creating. Thus the recreation of Jerusalem cannot be the last word in God's ongoing plan. Just as God's primary activities in saving Israel from the hand of Pharaoh at the time of the exodus were a pointer to Cyrus' messianic activity in 538 B.C.E., so the latter is also a pointer to a further redemptive act not yet foreseen when God will use still another messianic figure. ‘I the Lord have created it.’ God has now spoken in a fact of history, ‘When I speak and act, who can reverse it?’” (Pp. 94-3) Compare **43:13**,

Also from (the first) day I (am) He, and there is no one delivering from My hand!  
I will make / act, and who will turn it back?

<sup>48</sup>Alexander states that there is no need to insist “upon the moral excellence of Cyrus, who...was just as really a consecrated instrument of the Divine righteousness, as the Medes and Persians generally, who are so described in **Isaiah 13:3**.” (P. 183)

But for Persians and Iranians, Cyrus is perhaps their greatest national hero of the past—embodying the rights of universal humanity. They think of Cyrus as Americans think of Abraham Lincoln, or Martin Luther King Jr. Cyrus is for the Babylonian exiles of Israel certainly a great hero of righteousness. See **Isaiah 58**,

(continued...)

and I will make straight all his ways.  
He will build My city, and My exiles<sup>49</sup> he will send forth—  
not for a price, and not for a bribe!<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>(...continued)

where genuine righteousness is depicted as “loosening the bonds” that tie human beings down. This is exactly what Cyr-us was about to do for the Jewish exiles in Babylon, giving them the freedom to return to their homeland, as well as furnishing them with financial aid in the rebuilding of their tem-ple.

<sup>49</sup>Where our Hebrew text has וְגֵלוֹתַי, “and My exiles,” **Rahlf**s has “and the captivity of the people of Mine.” There is no doubt that the Jewish exiles had been sent into Babylon as captives, because of their rebellion against YHWH. But rebels or not, they are still YHWH’s—they are “His exiles,” they are still “His people”!

<sup>50</sup>Without doubt, much of the political world operates on the basis of מְחִיר, “price / hire” and שֶׁחָדַר, “present / bribe,” and it would probably be in the mind of many that if YHWH used Cyrus as His “messiah,” to free the exiled Israelites, He must have paid a “price” to Cyrus, or enticed him to act by means of a “bribe.” But according to this text, YHWH Himself denies that any such thing took place. Can you imagine the Creator of the universe having to pay or bribe someone to do His will?

This kind of thinking lay behind the “ransom theory of the atonement,” according to which God had to “pay the price of redemption” to the Devil in order to conquer sin and give forgiveness to the world. “Essentially, this theory claimed that Adam and Eve sold humanity over to the Devil at the time of the Fall; hence, justice required that God pay the Devil a ransom to free us from the Devil's clutches. God, however, tricked the Devil into accepting Christ's death as a ransom, for the Devil did not realize that Christ could not be held in the bonds of death. Once the Devil accepted Christ's death as a ransom, this theory concluded, justice was satisfied and God was able to free us from Satan's grip.” (Robin Collins, *Understanding Atonement: A New and Orthodox Theory*) (Taken from the Internet, 8/9/2015.)

North comments on this statement in **verse 13** that “It is difficult to reconcile what Yahweh says here with what He says in **Isaiah 43:3-4**.” (P. 155)

- 43:3 Because I (am) YHWH your God, Set-apart One of Israel, your Savior.  
I gave (as) your price of a life / ransom Egypt, Cush / Ethiopia and Seba in  
place of / instead of you.
- 43:4 Because you were precious in My eyes, you were honored; and I, I loved you!  
And I will give humanity in exchange for you,  
and peoples in exchange for your innermost-being / life!

(continued...)

–said YHWH of Armies!

45:14<sup>51</sup> כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה

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<sup>50</sup>(...continued)

But here, in **chapter 43**, YHWH is depicted as saying that Cyrus is going to free the exiles in Babylon “not for a price, and not for a bribe!”

North states that “We must either suppose that the Prophet was not concerned to be consistent, or that he was capable of ‘nodding’ occasionally. All attempts to resolve the inconsistency are forced and we must conclude that the fundamental truths of prophecy are not dependent on precision in matters of detail.” (P. 155)

Do you agree with North? Do you see this as a contradiction?

Certainly YHWH did not have to “bribe” Cyrus to do what he was going to do for the exiles. And as a matter of fact, Cyrus never received Egypt, Cush / Ethiopia or Seba in his lifetime as a payment for what he had done. It was his son who later conquered these African nations. Would you say this was a Divine reward to Persia for Cyrus’ freeing of the exiles? It was certainly not something that had to take place before Cyrus acted.

<sup>51</sup>Slotki comments on **verses 14-17** that “The nations conquered by Cyrus will pay homage to Israel and acknowledge the omnipresence and omnipotence of God.” (P. 223)

We think this is another attempt by Slotki to read religious-philosophical language into the **Book of Isaiah**, which does not use such language. Further, we do not understand these verses as teaching any such thing. The verses claim that YHWH will bring Africans to the Israelites, to belong to them, acknowledging that God is in their midst. They teach that God, the Savior of Israel hides Himself. They claim that the makers of idols will be ashamed, while the Israelites will not be ashamed, but will be saved by YHWH with a long-lasting salvation. Where is the teaching of omnipresence or omnipotence to be found in these statements?

Slotki states that in **verse 14** YHWH addresses Israel, and that the three people he mentions, Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sabeans “are the nations mentioned in **43:3** as the ransom God is giving to Persia for the release of Israel. Here they are described as becoming ultimately the possession of Israel.” Then he goes on to comment that “The possession need not necessarily imply physical domination. It may simply be an expression of acknowledgment by these nations of the power and Divinity of the God of Israel.” (P. 223)

This appears to be an attempt to justify the passage in the light of its failure of fulfillment. We say that the passage certainly teaches that these three African peoples will become the possession of Israel, and it is an attempt to avoid the fact that this never happened by claiming that it means something other than that.

(continued...)

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<sup>51</sup>(...continued)

What do you think? Do you think that every prediction in the **Bible** reached fulfillment? We believe that there are remarkable biblical prophecies that have been fulfilled, showing their truth—for example, the prediction of Judah’s fall to Babylon, and its consequent return from Babylon, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, although the fulfillment was not nearly as grand as those reading **Isaiah 40-66** might have supposed. But the prediction of **Isaiah 45:14** was not fulfilled.

Alexander holds that the passage predicts a “spiritual subjection of the nations.” He states, “That a literal conquest of Ethiopia and Egypt by the Jews themselves is here predicted, none can maintain but those who wish to fasten on Isaiah the charge of ignorance or gross imposture...The most natural interpretation of the passage is the common one which makes it a prophecy of moral and spiritual conquests, to be wrought by the church [meaning Christianity] over the nations, and, as one illustrious example, by the Jews’ religion over the heathenism of many countries, not excepting Ethiopia, as we learn from **Acts 8:27.**” (P. 184)

I do not have any wish to fasten on Isaiah the charge of ignorance or gross imposture. I love the **Book of Isaiah** and its teaching. But that does not mean that I have to go the extreme that Slotki and Alexander do, claiming that it means something other than what it says. Can not prophets and apostles and authors of scripture make mistakes? Are they so Divinely inspired that any and everything they say or write is to be considered infallible? Such claims are simply, in our opinion, indefensible, and untrue to the biblical text.

Oswalt entitles **45:14-46:13** “God’s superiority over the idols.” He entitles **45:14-19** “The Creator is the Savior.”

He comments that **45:14-17** argues that “the idol-making nations will come to Israel in submission, admitting that, as mysterious as it seems, Israel’s God is the only Savior. How can this be? **Verses 18-19** answer that it is because Israel’s God is the sole Creator, Who has created the world with a good purpose, and Who has revealed His purposes through Jacob’s descendants. Thus He alone can be the Savior. It is at this point that **verse 19** seems to be a direct comment on **verse 15**. If God is hidden in His transcendence, He is anything but hidden in His salvific purpose.” (P. 214)

What do you think? Does it make sense to you that God is hidden in His transcendence, but known in His saving purpose? Isn’t it the transcendent God Who saves? We take Oswalt to mean that we limited human beings can experience God’s transforming power in our lives, but cannot through that know all about God, Who is so much greater than us.

North entitles **verses 14-25** “From Heathenism To Israel And To God.”

(continued...)

יְגִיעַ מִצְרַיִם וּסְחָר־כּוּשׁ וְסַבְאִים אֲנָשֵׁי מִדָּה׃  
 עָלֶיךָ יַעֲבֹרוּ וְלָךְ יִהְיוּ  
 אַחֲרֶיךָ יֵלְכוּ בַּזִּקִּים יַעֲבֹרוּ  
 וְאַלֶיךָ יִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ אֵלֶיךָ יִתְפַּלְּלוּ  
 אַךְ בְּךָ אֵל וְאֵין עוֹד אַפְסֵי אֱלֹהִים׃

In this way YHWH spoke:

Produce of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia, and Sabeans, men of size,<sup>52</sup>

<sup>51</sup>(...continued)

He comments that “In these verses the introductory ‘Thus says Yahweh’ occurs at **verse 14** and again at **verse 18**. In **verses 14-17** Yahweh announces that the people of the Nile Valley are to come bearing tribute to ‘thee.’ They are to come with a deference approaching worship, and confess that God is with ‘thee’ only and that there is no other God. Although God is *Savior* He is nevertheless a *God Who conceals Himself*. In **verses 18-19** Yahweh, the purposive and sole Creator of heaven and earth, asserts that He has never been inaccessible, or ambiguous in His declarations to Israel. There follows (**verses 20-21**) a reiterated summons to the *survivors of the nations to assemble and come* to a judicial inquiry. Who was it that announced ‘this’ long ago? Yahweh asserts that it was He. The climax is reached in **verses 22-25**, in which Yahweh bids all the ends of the earth turn to Him and be saved. He declares on oath, upon His Own assurances—*by Myself*—that every knee shall bend and every tongue swear fealty [fidelity, allegiance] to Him.” (P. 156)

And we ask, If YHWH assures that every knee shall bend and every tongue swear allegiance to Him, does that not mean universal salvation? And, since so many human beings have died never having done such, does that not mean that such a universal bending of the knee and swearing of allegiance imply that it can only happen after death?

<sup>52</sup>See **Herodotus 3:20**, which tells of an embassy sent to the Ethiopians by Cambyses, Cyrus’ son and successor:

The Ethiopians to whom the embassy was sent are said to be the tallest and handsomest men in the whole world. In their customs they differ greatly from the rest of mankind, and particularly in the way they choose their kings; for they find out the man who is the tallest of all the citizens, and of strength equal to his height, and appoint him to rule over them.

**Herodotus 114,**

(continued...)

unto you will cross over, and they will belong to you;<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>(...continued)

Where the south declines towards the setting sun lies the country of Ethiopia, the last inhabited land in that direction. There gold is obtained in great plenty, huge elephants abound, with wild trees of all sorts, and ebony; and the men are taller, handsomer, and longer lived than anywhere else.

**Isaiah 18:1-2,**

1 Alas, land of whirring wings,  
which (is) beyond Ethiopia's rivers--  
2 the one sending forth envoys on the sea,  
and in vessels of papyrus upon (the) water's surface.  
Go swift messengers to a nation drawn-out and tall,  
to a people more fearsome than he, and further,  
a nation far and near, and down-treading / all-subduing,  
whose country rivers cut through.

**Isaiah 18:7,**

At that time,  
a gift will be brought to the YHWH of Armies--  
(by) a people tall and smooth,  
and from a people feared than he and further--  
a mighty (?) nation and down-treading,  
whose land rivers cut through / divide--  
to (the) place of YHWH of Armies' name,  
Mount Zion.

Knight comments that "The tall Sabeans were probably the black-skinned handsome negro peoples to the south. These three names thus cover all that was known of the African continent south and east of the Sahara desert." (P. 95)

<sup>53</sup>Oswalt states that "At first glance the reader would be justified in thinking that Cyrus is being addressed here, on the basis of **43:3**, which states that Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba will be given to the conqueror in exchange for Israel [but **43:3** says nothing about the conqueror or Cyrus!]. That idea is quickly laid to rest, however, by the remain-der of the verse. It is impossible that the nations could be worshipping the God of Cyrus as the only God, particularly when it has been said just a few verses previously that Cyrus does not know the Lord (**45:5**). Furthermore, the pronouns are all feminine, which clearly rules out Cyrus. Since the nation of Israel is commonly referred to with masculine pronouns--for example, **43:14**--there is some question who is being referred to here. Perhaps the best solution is Jerusalem (compare **40:9**)." (P. 214)

(continued...)

they will come behind you; in the fetters / chains / manacles they will cross over.<sup>54</sup>  
And they will bow down to you, they will make intercession, (saying)  
Surely God is with you, and there is no other besides God!<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>(...continued)

There are six pronominal suffixes in **verse 14**, and all six of them are 2<sup>nd</sup> person feminine singular. We agree with Oswalt that they should all be understood as referring to the city of Jerusalem. North holds that the feminine pronouns refer to “Zion-Jerusalem rather than Israel.” (P. 158)

<sup>54</sup>This second occurrence of the verb יַעֲבֹרֻּ, “they will cross over” in this verse, is omitted by **Rahfs**.

North translates this verb by “shall make pilgrimage,” and states, “For the expectation that all peoples would one day come as pilgrims to Zion compare **Isaiah 2:2-4; 66:18-23; Zechariah 14:16**; and for their bringing of lavish gifts **Isaiah 60**.” (Pp. 157-58)

Knight comments on **verse 14** that “Now comes the question: is it Cyrus the conqueror of the known world that these peoples are to pass before, as at a later Roman triumph? Many expositors think that this is the case. But the pronoun—or suffix in *Hebrew*—you occurs in the feminine singular and is repeated as such five times in this short and self-contained strophe. *You* must therefore refer to Jerusalem, the mother of Israel, the feminine city that has been referred to already in **verse 13**...

“Again, are these peoples regarded as coming in fetters, as conquered nations, as transports of prisoners of war? Surely not, for this is not a historical statement that is presented to us, but rather a vision. It thus conforms with the hopes of the many other prophets, both before and after Deutero-Isaiah’s day, who believed that the whole world of men will come eventually and bow down before Israel, bringing their gifts with them (compare **49:23; 60:9, 10, 14, 16; Zechariah 6:15; Revelation 21:26**). Notice that it is not before God that they are to bow, as **Isaiah 2:1-5** and other passages declare. It is to be before that Israel whom God has already addressed as a worm, or louse...

“Such a reading of this verse is corrected by its last words. Note that these are uttered by the heathen nations who stand and watch: ‘Indubitably the Divine Being is in you’...Thus from the lips of the heathen world comes virtually the dramatic statement: ‘God was in Israel, reconciling the world unto Himself,’ as we paraphrase...**2 Corinthians 5:19**...Israel in herself is nothing but a worm, a louse. How then could the nations bow down before her in adoration? But if God is *in* her, that makes all the difference. It is God Who is all in all.” (Pp. 95-6)

<sup>55</sup>Oswalt comments that “These nations appear to be used as typical representatives of such things as the ends of the earth, great wealth, physical beauty, and so on.” See:

(continued...)

45:15 אֲכַן אֶתָּה אֵל מְסֻתֶּתֶר

אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מוֹשִׁיעַ:

Truly You (are) a God Who hides Himself,<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>(...continued)

**Psalm 68:32**<sup>Heb</sup> / **31**<sup>Eng</sup>,

Let them come, ambassadors from Egypt!  
let Ethiopia bring its hands quickly to God!

**Psalm 72:10**,

May kings of Tarshish and (the) coastlands return offering(s),  
kings of Sheba and Seba bring near gift(s)!

<sup>56</sup>What do you make of this statement--אֲכַן אֶתָּה אֵל מְסֻתֶּתֶר, “Truly You (are) a God Who hides / conceals Himself”? Do you believe that is the truth about God? And who is making this statement? Is it **Deutero-Isaiah’s** statement? Or is it the statement of the foreigners who are coming to realize that God has purposely “hidden Himself” in Israel? And if God is a God Who hides Himself, how then can He rebuke, especially come in destructive judgment upon those who do not know Him?

Or do you believe that God is clearly seen, and obvious to human sight, that anyone with eyes to see can see God? Do you believe that human beings, can see God, and know all about Him, with no mystery, no hidden facts that are unknown to them?

Surely the **Book of Job** has exploded forever such a simplistic view of God, the view espoused by Job’s three friends, that God and His laws governing human actions can be known fully and clearly. No, says the **Book of Job**, YHWH is the God Who, unknown to Job and his three friends, is at work “behind the scenes,” in areas of reality not taken into account by Job or his friends, working out purposes of trial and testing in the midst of tragedy and human evil. He is not only the God of human beings, but also God of the wild, untamed jungles, with their law of survival of the fittest. He is God of the exploding stars and the “Big Bang”! At the close of the **Book of Job**, both Job and his three friends could have spoken these words of **Isaiah 45:15**! YHWH is truly God—but not the God of their dogmatic theologies—a God Whose being and purposes were hidden to them, but nonetheless a Savior God.

Knight explains that “Taken out of its context and [placed in isolation as a theological truism], the verse speaks of the **Deus Absconditus**, the Hidden God, of Whom much has been written in semi-philosophical terms...Theologians have discussed God as if He were an abstraction, as we sometimes blame the Greek element in our heritage for teaching us to do. But this verse obviously follows directly from the

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<sup>56</sup>(...continued)

previous line. There we read that the God Who is in Israel hides Himself as the *God of Israel*, and as such He is Israel's Savior. But that reality does not leap to the eyes of men without the help of faith. In fact, to say that Yahweh is *in* Israel, reconciling, might appear to be merely another scandal, stumbling block or even blasphemy, when one sees her lying helpless in the darkness of Babylon [but where in the **Hebrew Bible**, is Israel depicted as 'lying helpless in the darkness of Babylon? We think of Jeremiah's letter to the exiles in Babylon in **Jeremiah 29**, urging the exiles to build houses and plant gardens, building their families and seeking the welfare of Babylon. And we remember how when the offer came from Cyrus for the exiles to return home, only a small minority of the exiles accepted the offer, choosing rather to stay in Babylon!]...

"For God is light and power; He is the Creator of the ends of the earth; how ridiculous even to suggest that He is even now *in* Israel. If He is indeed *in* her, then He is hidden by that ridiculous situation rather than revealed to the eyes of men. Yet **Deutero-Isaiah** makes the lips of the heathen witness to the reality that God is truly present in His Self-emptying, when He is in a people that is both louse [and 'worm'] and prisoner in the dark. In such an Israel He hides Himself, yet that act of hiding is His revelation of Himself. For it is just such an incarnational act that reveals Him to be no less than Savior." (P. 96)

Would it not have been just such a stumbling-block to suggest to Job and his three friends that God was present with Job on the ash-heap, with all his complaints, working out His purposes in Job's life? Nonetheless, the **Book of Job** says, that is the truth. God, though hidden to Job's and his friends' eyes, was present in the midst of the evil, in the midst of Job's suffering; and in the long-run, would prove to be Job's Savior / Deliverer.

North may be one of the theologians Knight is criticizing. He states that "It is arguable that *Who conceals Himself* is incongruous with Savior; but **verse 19**, 'I have never spoken in secrecy...seems to refer back to [*conceals Himself*] here and to confirm the traditional interpretation of the word. The paradox *a God Who conceals Himself... Savior* is forceful and in the last resort true.

There is in God, some say,  
A deep but dazzling darkness  
(Boethius, quoted by Helen Waddell in **The Wandering Scholars**, Pelican Books, p. 27)

which explains the fascination of the mystics' quest. Nowhere in the **Old Testament** is the thought of the 'hidden' God, the *deus absconditus* of theology, so plainly stated as here. At first sight it is so un-Hebrew that some scholars, on very slight textual evidence...would emend to 'with thee (Israel) God hides Himself...and put the words into the mouths of the Sabeans...

(continued...)

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<sup>56</sup>(...continued)

“But the thought of God as ‘hidden,’ notwithstanding that He is Revealer and Savior, is not unfamiliar in the **Old Testament**. Compare **Psalms 97:2**,

Cloud and heavy cloud surround Him;  
righteousness and justice, (the) foundation of His throne.

“And [see] the story of Yahweh’s placing Moses in the cleft of the rock and covering him with His hand to shield him from the untempered rays of the Divine glory, **Exodus 33:17-23**:

- 17 And YHWH said to Moses,  
Also, this word / thing that you spoke, I will do—  
because you found favor in My eyes,  
and I knew You by name.
- 18 And he said, Show me, please,  
Your glorious radiance!
- 19 And He said, I,  
I will cause to pass by all My goodness before your face;  
and I will cry out in YHWH’s name before you;  
and I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy;  
and I will show compassion to whomever I will show compassion.
- 20 And He said,  
You will not be able to see My face;  
because the human being will not see Me and live!
- 21 And YHWH said, Look—  
a place with Me—  
and you will stand upon the rock.
- 22 And it will happen as My glorious radiance passes by,  
and I will place you in a crevice of the rock;  
and I will cover My hand over you  
until My passing by.
- 23 And I will take away My hand;  
and you shall see My back;  
and My face will not be seen.

“It is implicit in the name Yahweh / Ehyeh [‘He will be / cause to be’; ‘I will be / cause to be’]...which by all the rules is a bad definition, since it puts into the definition the thing to be defined. Yet what would we have? That God is *deus absconditus* is a corollary of any doctrine of Divine transcendence. Compare **Romans 11:33**, [where Paul says, having finished the theology of his **book**:

O depth of riches and of wisdom and of knowledge of God!  
How unsearchable the judgments of His,  
and incomprehensible the ways of His!

(continued...)

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<sup>56</sup>(...continued)

Also compare **1 Timothy 6:15b-16**,

- 15 The blessed and only sovereign / ruler,  
the King of those ruling as kings  
and Lord of those exercising lordship;
- 16 The only one having immortality,  
dwelling (in) unapproachable light,  
Whom no one of (the) people saw,  
neither is able to see—  
to Whom (belongs) honor and might everlasting. Amen!

“There is a sense in which nature, with its mingled revelation and mystery, is a necessary barrier between God and ourselves, lest we should be blinded by excess of light.” (Pp. 158-59)

Slotki comments on **verse 15** that “God had hitherto hidden His glory and never manifested His power in His dealings with Israel during the captivity...Now He has shown Himself to be the God of Israel and the Savior of His suffering people.” (P. 223)

But we must ask, What about God’s manifestation of Himself to Ezekiel while among the exiles in Babylonia, with His many puzzling visions? What about God’s presence with Daniel and his friends while in exile? What about His providential working in the life of Esther and Mordecai in Persia?

What do you think? Do you believe that God “hides Himself”? And if this is the truth about God, why do you think He hides Himself? Do you think He wants human beings to search for Him?

Blaise Pascal certainly believed this scripture to be the truth. In his **Pensees 194**, he states:

Let them at least learn the nature of the religion they are attacking, before they attack it. If this religion boasted of having a clear vision of God, and of possessing Him plain and unveiled, then to say that nothing we see in the world reveals Him with this degree of clarity would indeed be to attack it. But it says, on the contrary, that man is in darkness and far from God, that He has hidden Himself from man’s knowledge, and that the name He has given Himself in the Scriptures is in fact The Hidden God (**Isaiah 45:15**)...

Therefore if it seeks to establish these two facts: that God has in the church erected visible signs by which those who sincerely seek Him may recognize Him, and that he has nevertheless so concealed them that He will only be perceived by those who seek Him with all their hearts, what advantage can the attackers gain when, while admitting that they neglect to seek for the truth, they yet cry that

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<sup>56</sup>(...continued)

nothing reveals it? For the very darkness in which they lie, and for which they blame the Church, establishes one of her two claims, without invalidating the other, and also, far from destroying her doctrine, confirms it.

What do you think? Is Pascal right in understanding **Isaiah 45:15** as a “Self-identification” by YHWH Himself? We say No, it is a statement made by someone else concerning YHWH, perhaps the foreigners coming to Israel, or the Prophet himself.

And is Pascal right in claiming that those outside the church are “neglecting to seek for the truth”? We think that is a false accusation, and that many who rejected the Catholic Church’s claims did so in their search for the truth. Pascal himself was a “Jan-senist” catholic, and according to the Jesuits, he himself was rejecting the truth.

For anyone familiar with the history of Christianity, it should be obvious that while God reveals Himself to those seeking Him, He still remains hidden and largely unknown, as becomes apparent from the many differences and divisions and religious wars within those who acknowledge Him and His Christ as Lord. What do you think?

Oswalt states that “The precise function of **verse 15** has been a source of considerable controversy, particularly in view of **verse 19** [‘I did not speak in secret, in a land of darkness’], which seems at least on the surface to contradict it directly. Is the statement of God’s hiddenness to be understood as a mistaken view of Israel, the nations, or the prophet that stands in need of correction? Or is it a parenthetical gloss by a later commentator? Or is it in some sense true, whoever it is spoken by, and as such, an integral part of the argument of this passage?

“Duhm argued that these are words spoken by the nations, and this seems to be the position supported by the context. The nations were the speakers in the previous verse and there is no indication of a change...By contrast, if **verse 15** is understood to continue the speech of the nations, then **verses 14-17** present just two thoughts that flow together well: the nations’ observations about God, the unexpected Savior, and the prophet’s comments about the failure of the idols and the efficacy of God.

“But accepting that the statement is from the nations, how are we to regard it? Is it a mistaken statement by those who have rejected revelation? Is it an observation about the surprising fact that the Savior should come from little, insignificant Israel? Or is it in some sense an expression of theological truth?...

“I suspect that it is a combination of all three. **Romans 1** and **Psalm 19:2-7**<sup>Heb</sup> / **1-6**<sup>Eng</sup> make plain that there is enough revelation in nature that all of us who do not seek God on His terms are without excuse. Nevertheless, it is evident that nature alone is never enough so that the unaided human intellect can attain to an understanding of God (**Romans 11:23**; **Proverbs 25:2** [neither of these passages says anything about the ‘unaided human intellect! Paul makes this statement after having done his utmost

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<sup>56</sup>(...continued)

to explain the ways of God which he has learned by revelation]). Furthermore, God's insistence on using the weak and foolish things of this world by which to reveal Himself (compare **1 Corinthians 1:21, 25-29**) is, at the least, unexpected. Finally, there are times when, because of human unbelief, God does hide Himself until frustration brings us to our knees and to a willingness to believe (**Isaiah 8:17; 54:8**)...

“Thus if we say that there is no compelling evidence for the existence of a just God to Whom we owe obedience, we are surely wrong. By contrast, if we admit that neither God's ways nor His thoughts are ours (**55:8**), and that unless He bridges the gulf between us we are forever lost, we speak nothing but the truth. Thus the nations are speaking at once of the ineffable transcendence of God, a God Who hides Himself (אל מִסְתַּתֵּר), and of His revealed presence as Savior of the world, God of Israel, Savior (אלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מוֹשִׁיעַ).” (Pp. 216-17)

What do you think? We say that God can act in saving deliverance of His people, and still remain hidden, with His ways “inscrutable.” What do you say? If you accept everything the **Bible** says about God, and have absolute faith that it is true, do you then know all about God? Does not God remain largely hidden and unknown, even if you walk by faith in Him and in His Self-revelation? Can we not know God as Savior and Lord, but still acknowledge the extreme limitations of our knowledge, as Paul does in **Romans 11**?

Alexander takes **verse 15** as an “apostrophe,” meaning “breaking off discourse to address some absent person or thing”—here, breaking off the thought in the preceding verses in order to address God. It expresses “the Prophet's own strong feelings in contrasting what God had done and would yet do, the darkness of the present with the brightness of the future. If these things are to be hereafter, then, O Thou Savior of Thy people, Thou art indeed a God that hides Himself, that is say, conceals His purposes of mercy under the darkness of His present dispensations.” (Pp. 184-85)

But we see nothing in the passage that indicates a contrast between the present and the future, and we ask, when the Divine mercy is revealed in the future, does that mean that God will no longer be hidden, mysterious? See **1 Corinthians 13:12**, where Paul, the believing, committed Christian, humbly confesses his present “seeing through a mirror darkly / in an enigma,” but also expresses his belief that in the future he will know even as he has been fully known. What do you think? Do you believe God “hides Himself”?

<sup>57</sup>What an affirmation! The hidden God is hiddenly, secretly at work, bringing salvation / deliverance to humanity! Do you believe that? And if you do, how will it effect your life, and your outlook towards the future? If we believe it, I suspect we will be much more careful and humble in our search for God, and in our treatment of other

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<sup>57</sup>(...continued)

religions, especially in our claims to knowing all the truth, and in our seeking to “put God in a box of our doctrinal statements”! The true and living God is also the hidden God—and we are foolish to try and put limitations on Him like the friends of Job did!

<sup>58</sup>Slotki comments on **verses 16-17** that ‘the prophet contrasts the confusion and shame of the idol-makers with the eternal salvation of God’s people.’ (P. 224)

Oswalt comments on these verses that they “are a comment on the previous statements. Given the profusion of idols around the world, and given the greatness of the nations and cultures that have worshiped them, it is surprising that God is not be found in any of them. That He is not is shown by the fact that none of those idol-Gods can save those who have made them. They are not God at all. This inability of the idols to save their worshipers means that the worshipers will be constantly ashamed and humiliated because of the failure of that in which they had trusted.

“In contrast, although Israel is one little nation that is all alone in worshiping a God unlike all the others, she will not be ashamed nor humiliated (**verse 17**)...Isaiah’s promises are here put in the most absolutistic terms: it is an eternal salvation; Israel will not be humiliated forever and ever...

“On the one hand, Isaiah is maintaining that God’s trustworthiness [we say, His saving / delivering] is of an eternal variety. There will never come a time when the God of Israel will suddenly cease to be trustworthy [we say, cease to be a Savior]. On the other hand, the prophet is insisting that whatever may happen along the way, however we may suffer or be troubled, God will in the end deliver us—for all eternity.” (P. 217)

Knight comments on these two verses that “There is nothing that the unbelieving nations can do when the truth of this extraordinary reality is made manifest but hide their faces in shame for even imagining that Divinity in any form could ever be found in an idol. But once Israel herself becomes the flesh in which God Almighty hides His Godhead [Divine nature], she becomes caught up herself in God’s everlasting salvation (עוֹלָמִים is here used for the first time in the **Old Testament** to represent endless time or eternity).” (Pp. 96-7)

But where is anything said in this text concerning God’s “hiding His Godhead”? If that means “His Divine nature,” we might accept the statement. But it is puzzling at best, and is apparently a theological term being imported into the text. And we doubt if עוֹלָמִים means “everlasting.” It is literally “long-lasting times,” or “ages.” **Brown-Driver-Briggs** defines the plural noun as an “intensive plural,” meaning “everlastingness” or “eternity,” as Knight defines it. But see our end-note 1 for all of the occurrences of this plural noun in the **Hebrew Bible**, which give us no reason for defining it by “eternity” or “everlastingness.” Christians love the **23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm**, with its final promise “I

(continued...)

יִחְדּוּ הַלְכוּ בְּכִלְמָה

חֲרָשֵׁי צִירִים:

They were ashamed, and also they were humiliated, all of them;  
together they went into the humiliation–  
makers of idolatrous images.<sup>59</sup>

45:17 יִשְׂרָאֵל נִוְשַׁע בְּיְהוָה

תְּשׁוּעַת עוֹלָמִים

לֹא-תִבְשׁוּ וְלֹא-תִכְלָמוּ

עַד-עוֹלָמֵי עַד:

Israel was saved by the YHWH;  
a salvation / deliverance of long-lasting times--<sup>60</sup>  
they will not be ashamed, and they will not be humiliated

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<sup>58</sup>(...continued)

shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever”—as Christian **Bibles** translate it. But in fact, the Hebrew text is: וְשִׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית-יְהוָה לְאָרְךָ יָמִים, “and I shall dwell in YHWH’s house to length of days,” and the Greek translation has καὶ τὸ κατοικεῖν με ἐν οἴκῳ κυρίου εἰς μακρότητα ἡμερῶν, “and my dwelling in (the) house of (the) Lord into length of days.”

<sup>59</sup>Alexander comments on **verse 16** that “the sentence closes with a general expression, which has already been referred to as a proof that the war in question is a spiritual war, and that the enemies to be subdued are not certain nations in them selves considered, but the heathen world, the vast mixed multitude who worship idols. These are described as the carvers or artificers of images, which strengthens the conclusion... that the smith and carpenter, and cook and baker, and cultivator of **chapter 44:12-16**, are one the same person, that is, the idolatrous devotee himself.” (P. 185)

<sup>60</sup>Christians who claim there is no salvation in the **Old Testament / Hebrew Bible**, need to consider this statement, along with many others, that show how ridiculous such a claim is! The verb is perfect / past tense: נִוְשַׁע, **nosha**(, niph'al perfect, “(Israel) was saved / delivered,” and this is followed by the additional phrase that it is “a salvation of long-lasting-times.”

until ages of long-lasting times.<sup>61, 1</sup>

45:18<sup>62</sup> כִּי כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה בּוֹרֵא הַשָּׁמַיִם

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<sup>61</sup>This last phrase is עַד-עוֹלָמֵי עֵד, “until long-lasting-times of advancing time.”

Alexander comments that “This is the counterpart and contrast to the threatening in the preceding verse, upon which it throws some light by showing that the shame and confusion which awaits the idolater is not mere wounded pride or sense of disappointment, but the loss and opposite of that salvation which is promised to God’s people, or in other words, eternal perdition [the text does not state this—it is a conclusion Alexander has drawn from the text]...

“Israel is saved already, that is, his salvation is secured not merely *through* the Lord but *in* Him, i.e. by virtue of an intimate and vital union with Him, as genuine and living members of His body. The general form of this solemn declaration, and the eternity [our ‘long-lasting-times of advancing time’] again and again predicated of the salvation promised, seem to show that the Israel of this text and of others like it, is not the Jewish people, considered simply as an ancient nation, but the Jewish people considered as the church of God, a body which has never ceased and never will cease to exist and claim the promises.” (P. 185)

We doubt that Alexander would have drawn this conclusion if it were not for the influence of Paul, with his teaching concerning the church as the “body of Christ,” but the language does lead to such a conclusion. And we also note that the passage is not describing “promises of salvation,” but claiming the present reality of salvation, long before the coming of Jesus.

North comments that “On the whole, **verses 15-17** are best understood as an utterance of the Prophet, who marvels at the wondrous ways of Yahweh.” (P. 157)

<sup>62</sup>Slotki comments on **verses 18-25** that “God is the sole Power of the world which He created for [humanity] to dwell in and not for confusion. He does not hide in darkness but reveals Himself in justice and righteousness. Idolatry is sheer folly, and real help can come from Him only. All who acknowledge His sovereignty shall find salvation.” (P. 224)

But we ask, where in the passage does YHWH claim to be the “sole power of the world?” He claims to be exclusive Creator, but “sole power”? Does not the text show that YHWH has given great power to Cyrus, the Persian emperor? And we also ask, Does YHWH here renounce what was said of Him by the nations in **verse 15**, that He is a God that hides Himself? He is depicted as saying He did not speak in secret, but does this mean He Himself is not hidden? Cannot a hidden God’s voice be heard, but the God remains hidden?

(continued...)

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<sup>62</sup>(...continued)

**Verse 18** is another Self-identification of YHWH, but in a somewhat different way. The main part of the identification is given by the prophet in the third person, but attributing the identification to YHWH. Then at the close of the verse, YHWH's voice in the first person is heard, claiming the statement as a Self-identification, with the addition of a phrase claiming exclusive monotheism for Himself.

Oswalt asks, "What explains the failure of the idols and the eternal trustworthiness of God (**verses 16-17**)? It is the nature and character of God, a God Who longs to reveal Himself to His people. In **verses 18-19** verbs for speaking occur four times. This is of utmost importance. How do we know the ineffably [inexpressibly] transcendent God? In only one way: if He communicates Himself to us in ways that are intelligible to us...

"These verses show a rather profound understanding of paganism. Because paganism refuses to admit of a God Who stands outside the cosmos, it must posit that the beginning of all things was matter in chaos. Out of this chaos the Gods emerged [but in the Enuma Elish, the highest God, Marduk, who killed the Monster Tiamat did not emerge from the chaos; Oswalt is overstating the case]. The ordering of the chaos was something of an afterthought on the part of the Gods to protect themselves from the ever-present danger of its re-emergence. Humans are even more of an afterthought, created primarily to take care of the Gods. Since the Gods have no commitment to and accept no responsibility for humans, they have no interest in communicating with them. If humans wish to divine the future, they must resort to mediums, wizards, and necromancers (compare **Isaiah 8:19**). To all of this, Isaiah says a resounding No!" (P. 218)

Oswalt is overstating the Near-Eastern story of human origins. In that story, a high-God such as Marduk overcomes the chaos-monster, and then leads to an orderly cosmos, just as in the biblical story God creates the world filled with chaos, and then brings about an orderly cosmos. But instead of creating lesser Gods out of the blood of the monster of chaos, for the biblical story it is human beings who are created by God, "in His image and likeness." It is easy to overstate the differences—and pin labels such as "heathen" and "pagan" on the other stories of human origins.

All of the Near-Eastern stories / myths that depict the origin of the universe and humanity agree in one thing—the universe and humanity have been created by a High-God, they have not always existed. We take the biblical story of "In the beginning" to be the **Hebrew Bible's** corrected version of the Near-Eastern stories that surrounded Israel, which transforms those polytheistic stories into a story of monotheism. What do you think?

Alexander comments on **verse 18** that it "assigns a reason for believing in the threatening and the promise of the two preceding verses, that is, that He Who uttered them not only made the heavens and the earth, but made them for a certain purpose

(continued...)

תֹּוֹא הַאֱלֹהִים יִצֵּר הָאָרֶץ וְעָשָׂה

הוּא כוֹנֵן לֹא־תְהוּ בְרֵאָה

לְשַׁבַּת יִצְרָה

אֲנִי יְהוָה וְאֵין עוֹד:

Because in this way YHWH spoke, One creating the heavens–

He is the God, One forming the earth and making it,

He, the One making it firm—not a confusion / emptiness / chaos He created it,<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>(...continued)

which must be accomplished.” (P. 185) And, we add, the text affirms that the Divine purpose is for the earth to be a place suited for human habitation.

North describes **verse 18** as a “hymnic introduction,” one that is “even more than usually elaborate.” (P. 159)

Knight comments that “There now follow three ‘words’ of revelation, at **verses 18, 20** and **22**. The first of the three words bears upon it the Divine signature...It is that whether we call Him Creator or Potter, God will not rest till His world becomes once again what it was created to be. It was not created to be chaos, that is to say, for the continuance of the reign of sin, disease, and war. It was created *to be inhabited*, that is, for civilized life, literally ‘for dwelling.’ We saw at **verse 7** that the opposite of evil is order or peace (*shalom*). *Shalom* includes *inter alia* [among other things] the concept of orderly community life. But it does so only when men who possess *shalom* in their hearts put it into effect in their community life...Once this peace is given, man is able to know God intimately (**Jeremiah 31:34**), and will want to love his neighbor as himself.” (P. 97) See Knight’s comments on **verses 20** and **22** for the second and third words.

<sup>63</sup>Alexander comments that “The common version of..the clause, *He created it not in vain* [**King James**], is admissible, but less expressive than the more specific render-ing, *He created it not (to be) a waste (or empty)*...The earth, and the Holy Land, as part of it, was made to be inhabited, not empty.” (P. 186)

Oswalt comments that “Chaos did not exist before God, and God did not bring a meaningless chaos into existence. [But where did chaos come from? **Genesis one** depicts God as creating the heavens and the earth, and states that the earth God created was chaotic--**וְנִבְהוּ וְהָאָרֶץ הִיְתָה תְהוּ**, ‘and the earth was (or perhaps, ‘became’) confusion and emptiness / in a chaotic condition. We take the **Genesis** text as teaching that God Himself created the chaotic condition of matter, and then brought order out of the chaos, turning it into a habitable cosmos]. Rather, the preexistent God

(continued...)

for dwelling He formed it–

I (am) YHWH, and there is no other!

45:19<sup>64</sup>      לֹא בַסֵּתֶר דִּבַּרְתִּי בַמְּקוֹם אֲרֶץ חֹשֶׁךְ

לֹא אִמַּרְתִּי לְזָרַע יַעֲקֹב תִּהְיוּ בַקְּשׁוֹנֵי

אֲנִי יְהוָה דְּבַר צֶדֶק מִגִּיד מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל:

Not in the secrecy did I speak, in a place (within) a land of darkness,<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>(...continued)

created the cosmos specifically for human habitation...Since the universe was created for the purpose of human habitation, it is incumbent on God to reveal that purpose to humans, and that is precisely what He has done. Israel (Jacob) did not discover God through manipulation of the spirits in secret places of darkness. Rather, God has initiated the conversation, speaking clearly in ways that can be clearly verified...

“Life is not a groping in the dark for we know not what; rather, it is a process of bringing our wills into line with His revealed will and of discovering that God is not only all-powerful but also all-merciful. The ringing pronouncements of **Deuteronomy 10:12-21** are those of a person who knows the same truths that Isaiah here proclaims.” (Pp. 218-19)

We wonder where Oswalt obtained the information that this revelation of His will “is incumbent on God,” and are reminded of Job’s friends who knew that it was incumbent on God to keep their “law of retribution.” Is there some higher law concerning the revelation of His will to humanity which God must keep? Shouldn’t we say instead that the revelation of His will to humanity is a matter of Divine choice, a matter of grace and love—by our Creator, Who didn’t “have to,” but Who chose to design this habitable earth to be our dwelling-place, and also chose to reveal His will to His creatures?

<sup>64</sup>Knight comments on **verse 19**: “Now, this word that Deutero-Isaiah mentions is neither new nor unexpected; it was not suddenly revealed as an afterthought on God’s part, nor was it once uttered long ago and then kept secret...”

God’s purpose cannot...remain hidden in darkness, nor can it remain a mere unspoken word. For His word has in fact been uttered long ago and is now hidden in Israel. To begin with, God had acted *for* Israel; now, once His acted word has gone forth, He is also working *in* Israel. That word is now becoming flesh, or event.” (Pp. 97-8) Compare **Isaiah chapter 55**.

<sup>65</sup>Slotki comments that “God did not speak in darkness like the dubious oracles obtained by magical acts which can be twisted or denied [is Slotki thinking of the Oracle of Delphi, or other similar earlier oracles? He later says this is ‘perhaps an allusion to

(continued...)

I did not say to Jacob's descendant(s), (in) chaos / confusion, seek Me.

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<sup>65</sup>(...continued)

dark caves in which soothsayers were consulted']. He spoke in the full light of day, and when He invited Israel to seek Him, He meant to respond to [Israel's] prayers." (P. 224)

But this is overstatement. Much of the biblical revelation came through visions in the night, or personal experiences which were not made public. There is not a great difference between a dark cave and Moses hidden in the clouds on Mount Sinai in private communication with YHWH for forty days. What do you think?

North comments, "Not only is Yahweh's creation orderly but His word is clear. He has never spoken in secrecy (compare **Isaiah 48:16**,

Draw near to Me; listen to / hear this!  
From (the) first I did not speak in the secrecy.  
From (the) time of its happening / becoming, there I (am)!  
And now, my Lord YHWH sent me forth, and His Spirit.)

in some place in the land of darkness...Here also reference may be made to **Genesis 1:2**, where darkness is said to have been upon the original 'deep.' That Yahweh has never spoken in secrecy is no contradiction of **verse 15**, that He is a God Who conceals Himself...

"Any doctrine of revelation assumes that God is unknown and unknowable except in so far as He chooses to reveal Himself, that man cannot by searching find out God (**Job 11:7-8**, literally,

Will you find out the searching of Eloah?  
Or as far as Shaddai's end / limit will you find?  
Heights of heavens—what will you do?  
Deeper than (the) grave / underworld—what will you know?)

What is meant is that God does not make Himself deliberately obscure, so that men are driven to seek...Him by superstitious, or occult, or orgiastic means." (P. 159)

Has North cleared up the problem by this comment?

We think that God is hidden—not because He chose to hide Himself, but because of the nature of His infinite greatness that would blind us if we were able to see Him. This unthinkably great, mysterious God comes through His Self-revealing word to humanity, to tell of His love for us, His longing for us to know Him and live by His guidance. But even though, in all our seeking and searching we can never overcome the hiddenness and mystery of His Being, we can hear His voice, and respond as His beloved creatures / children in obedience, and find our lives blessed and guided by doing so.

I (am) YHWH, One speaking righteousness, declaring upright things.<sup>66</sup>

45:20<sup>67</sup> הַקְּבִצוּ וּבְאוּ הַתְּנַנְשׁוּ יַחְדָּו פְּלִיטֵי הַגּוֹיִם

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<sup>66</sup>The biblical story of the results of YHWH, the hidden God's Self-revelation through Moses to Israel is the writing of the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone, which could be seen and read, and which could be proclaimed to everyone, providing them with ethical and religious guidance for life, enabling them to live orderly and productive lives, in harmony with God and human beings, rather than living in chaotic confusion.

In addition, the messages of the writing prophets of Israel, are public knowledge, available for all to read.

Likewise, the message of Jesus of Nazareth was spoken openly before the masses, and His ministry is a matter of public knowledge—which can be seen today by reading of the four **Gospels**.

We see nothing comparable in the other religions of the Ancient Near East, including the **Sybylline Oracles** (See James H. Charlesworth, **The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha**, Volume I, pp. 317-472) with their mystical, puzzling statements, which reveal great knowledge of the politics of the ancient world, but offer little original, trustworthy ethical guidance comparable to the Ten Commandments, or the Covenant Code, or the message of Israel's writing prophets, or the Sermon on the Mount, or the ethical teaching of the disciples of Jesus.

<sup>67</sup>Slotki comments on **verses 20-21** that “the remnants of the nations, those that escaped the judgment, are summoned together to consider God's predictions and fulfillment concerning Cyrus, and to compare His power with the futility and total incapacity of their false Gods.” (Pp. 224-25)

Oswalt entitles **verses 20-25** “God saves, not the idols.” He comments that “The segment begins with a call to a disputation (**verse 20**), the irrefutable case of the Lord is presented in **verse 21**. This leads to the somewhat surprising call to the defeated to accept the salvation of the Lord (**verses 22-23**). This call results in praise to God, both from the world and Israel (**verses 24-25**). Most of the themes presented here are expanded on in **46:1-7** and **8-13**.” (P. 221)

Oswalt comments on **verse 20** that “In language reminiscent of **41:1, 21**, and **43:8-9**, God calls the peoples of the world to come together to dispute the true identity of Deity...

“Israel's captivity, the result of false trust in the temple (compare **Jeremiah 7:3-15**), among other things, became an opportunity to demonstrate the superiority of God to the idols of Babylon.” (P. 221)

(continued...)

לֹא יִדְעוּ הַנְּשָׂאִים אֶת־עֵץ פְּסָלִים  
וּמִתְפַּלְלִים אֶל־אֵל לֹא יוֹשִׁיעַ:

Gather together and come, draw near together,<sup>68</sup> escapees (from) the nations!<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>(...continued)

What does Oswalt mean by “among other things”? We would include trust in animal sacrifices, which YHWH is depicted in **Jeremiah 7:22** as saying that He did not command. Instead of the Levitical sacrificial system, which seemed so important to Israel’s priests, Jeremiah joins his voice with that of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah, holding that the important thing in Israel’s relationship with YHWH is social justice, with care for the widow and orphan, the poor and the immigrant—a teaching that lay at the heart of Jesus’ ministry and His criticism of first-century Judaism, leading to His death (notice Jesus’ quotation of **Jeremiah 7:11** in **Mark 11:15-18**).

Knight holds that **verse 20** gives the “second” word of YHWH (see footnote 62). “The second word is a command. It is based upon the first word which is one of revelation. Assemble yourselves and come (close) Israel, for mighty things are just about to happen...If God has now said the word ‘escape,’ then escape they shall.” (P. 98)

<sup>68</sup>Where our Hebrew text reads יַחְדָּו, “together,” 1QIs<sup>a</sup> has וּאָתִיו, “and let them come.”

<sup>69</sup>YHWH issues an invitation to peoples of the nations, specifically to those who have escaped the ravages of war, to assemble together and come to Him, calling for theological dialogue, for reasoning about Divine reality. We are reminded of the great Divine invitation to sinful Israel in **Isaiah 1:16-18**. In YHWH there is solid truth to replace the emptiness of idolatry; there is salvation / deliverance and there is righteousness; there is a worship that can unite all humanity! So come!

Oswalt comments that *refugees of the nations* seems to look forward to the time when the judgments associated with Cyrus (**45:1-3, 14, 16**) have already occurred. Those who remain after the destruction are invited to reflect on what all this means.” (P. 221)

Alexander comments that “*Escaped of the nations* has been variously explained to mean the Jews who had escaped from the oppression of the Gentiles, and the Gentiles who had escaped from the dominion of idolatry...On the whole, it seems most natural to understand the nations who survived the judgments sent by God upon them... that supposes the idolaters still left (that is, neither converted nor destroyed) to be the object of address. If there are any still absurd enough to carry about a wooden God, and pray to One Who cannot save, let them assemble and draw near.” (P. 187)

They did not know, the ones bearing their wooden idol,<sup>70</sup>  
and making intercession to a God (Who) will not save.<sup>71, 2</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>Alexander states that this means “They do not know it, or, they do not know what they are doing, they are not conscious of their own impiety and folly.” (P. 187)

<sup>71</sup>The wooden idols cannot move, and have to be carried by their worshipers; they cannot save / deliver. They are worthless!

Oswalt comments that “These persons are depicted as carrying sacred pieces of wood from place to place and praying to these ‘Deities’ even when all the evidence suggests that the pieces of wood are useless. Little wonder that the prophet uses *know* in an absolute way, without an object. They do not know. These people lack basic understanding. This is similar to the thought of **44:9**.” (P. 221)

Those who mold an idol, all of them—chaos / confusion!  
And the things they delight in / treasure will not profit,  
and their witnesses--they do not see (anything),  
and they did not know (anything), so that they are ashamed!

Alexander states that “The verse contains two indirect reflections on the idols: first, that they are wooden; then, that they are lifeless and dependent on their worshipers for locomotion.” (P. 187)

Knight states that “One important result of their escape, one element in the total redemption that is about to come, will be the sounding of the death knell of heathenism. The reference in **verse 20b** is probably to the annual New Year festival in Babylon when the Gods were carried in procession through the streets [see our end-note 2]. But in total contrast to that sorry rite, Yahweh, declares Deutero-Isaiah, is about to carry Israel away.” (P. 98)

For this matter of YHWH’s “carrying” His people Israel, compare:

**Isaiah 40:11,**

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

**Isaiah 63:9,**

In all their distress, it was distress to Him;  
and His face’s messenger / angel saved / delivered them.  
In His love and in His mercy He redeemed / ransomed them.  
And He lifted them up and He carried them all (the) days of long-ago.

45:21 הַגִּידוּ וְהַגִּישׁוּ אֶף יוֹעֲצוּ יַחְדָּו

מִי הַשְּׁמִיעַ זֹאת מִקֶּדֶם מֵאִזְ הַגִּידָה  
הֲלוֹא אֲנִי יְהוָה וְאִין-עוֹד אֱלֹהִים מִבְּלַעֲדִי  
אֶל-צַדִּיק וּמוֹשִׁיעַ אִין זוֹלָתִי:

Make a declaration! And bring forward! Surely, let them take counsel together!<sup>72</sup>

Who caused this to be heard from (long) before, from past time declared it?<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>North translates by “*advance your arguments, by all means let them (the Gods) confer together.*” (P. 160)

This is YHWH’s challenge to debate, made to the worshipers of idols, or with the idols themselves. Oswalt states that “Here the prophet recommends that the fleeing refugees should work together to present the strongest possible case.” (P. 221)

Again we are reminded of the opening challenge of the **Book of Isaiah, 1:18**,

Come now, and let us be reproved (by each other)!,  
says YHWH--  
if your missings-of-the-mark 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!

See also **Isaiah 43:25-26**,

- 25 I, I (am) He Who wipes away your transgression for My sake;,  
and your missings-of-the mark / sins I will not remember!  
26 Cause Me to remember; let us enter into judgment together!  
You (singular) relate / tell, so that you will be justified!

<sup>73</sup>Slotki holds that the word “this” refers to “the rise of Cyrus and the consequences for Israel.” (P. 225) Oswalt agrees, stating that if it is the specific prophecy of Cyrus and the Babylonian overthrow, “when was the prophecy given? On the one hand, North’s hypothesis that ‘Deutero-Isaiah’ had made an unrecorded prediction at some earlier time during the exile can hardly accord with מִקֶּדֶם, *from ancient times*...If the words were first spoken by Isaiah about 700 B.C.E. and only came to fulfillment in 539 B.C.E., then they certainly were from of old by the time they were fulfilled.” (P. 222)

Compare **Isaiah 46:10-11**, which North states “give the clue to the meaning (of the text here in **Isaiah 45**: the reference is to the exploits of Cyrus.” (P. 160),

(continued...)

Was it not I, YHWH? And there is not another God besides Me,<sup>74</sup>

a rightly-related God, and One Who saves—there is none except Me!<sup>75</sup>

45:22<sup>76</sup> פְּנוּ-אֱלֹהֵי וְהוֹשְׁעוּ כָל-אֲפִסֵי-אֲרִיץ

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<sup>73</sup>(...continued)

46:10 One declaring an end from (the) beginning,  
and from long ago those things that have not been done;  
Who says, My counsel shall stand,  
and every desire / purpose of Mine I will do / create--  
11 calling from (the) east a bird of prey,  
from a land far away, a man of My counsel.  
Also I spoke, also I will bring it (to pass);  
I formed, also I will do it!

If the prediction is not that specific, then the reference may be to the predictions of Israel's / Judah's downfall, going into exile, and return from exile made by prophets in Israel such as **Hosea** and the **Book of Deuteronomy**, depicted as an ancient document found in the temple in the time of Josiah, which would well fit this description.

<sup>74</sup>Oswalt remarks on “the audacity of Isaiah. Faced with all the mighty Gods of the ancient world, Gods whose clients strode across the world from one conquest to another without apparent end [we think especially of Cyrus, who attributed all of his conquests to Marduk], the prophet still follows his logic with relentless vigor...There is none apart from Him! For Isaiah, both the logic and the evidence are irrefutable.” (P. 223)

What do you think? What other God, other than YHWH of the **Hebrew Bible**, interacts with human history, predicting the rise and fall of His Own chosen people, based on their obedience to an unequaled ethical code? Does the unknown God / Force of the “Big Bang” exploding from a black hole do such? Does Allah of the Muslims? Does Lord Vishnu of the Hindus?

<sup>75</sup>The last four lines of **verse 21** are another Self-identification of YHWH, with a claim to exclusive monotheism.

<sup>76</sup>Slotki comments on **verses 22-25** that “All mankind will ultimately find salvation in God unto Whom every knee shall bow. He is the only Source of strength and victory, and even His enemies will come back to Him. Then Israel will be vindicated and exult in the glory of the Lord.” (P. 225)

Do you agree with Slotki? Does the **Bible** teach “universal salvation”? Is not this verse simply YHWH's invitation to the nations to come and be saved, but not a prediction of universal salvation? It is clear that this verse depicts YHWH as wanting and inviting the nations, including His enemies, to come to Him—but does it imply that they will ultimately respond to His invitation and come back to Him? We say, hardly.

(continued...)

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<sup>76</sup>(...continued)

What about Paul's quotation of this passage from its Greek translation in **Romans 14:11**, as part of his warning against being judgmental, and also his use of a portion of it in **Philippians 2:10-11**? We think that **Isaiah 25:6-9** certainly envisions universal salvation.

North comments on **verses 22-25** that "The summons becomes a universal appeal, though the verbs are still in the imperative mood, as indeed they are in the 'Come unto Me, all who...' of Jesus (**Matthew 11:28**), which, like the present passage, follows a self-predication." (P. 161)

Oswalt comments on **verse 22** that "Surely the ringing affirmations of the previous verses should now give rise to a scornful call to the idolatrous world to prepare for destruction...But instead, there is a call to experience the same salvation that the Israelites have experienced..."

"The point here is that salvation is not the sole preserve of the Israelites whose God the Lord is. Isaiah's logic is also inexorable [relentless] here. If the Lord is the sole God of the whole world and if He is a Savior (**verse 21**), then He must be the Savior of the whole world as well..."

"This understanding has run through the **book** from start to finish. **Chapter 2** looks forward to the day when all the world will come to Jerusalem to learn the **torah** of God. Likewise, **66:18-19** speaks of a day when representatives of all nations and tongues will come to Jerusalem to see the glory of God and go out to the ends of the earth to declare that glory." (P. 223)

Alexander similarly comments that "From the preceding declarations, it might seem to follow that the Gentile world had nothing to expect but the perdition [eternal punishment and damnation] threatened in **verse 15**. But now the Prophet brings to view a gracious alternative, inviting them to choose between destruction and submission, and showing that the drift of the foregoing argument was not to drive the heathen to despair, but to shut them up to the necessity of seeking safety in the favor of the one true God." (P. 187)

Knight comments on **verse 22**, holding that it contains what he has entitled the "third" Divine word (see footnote 62): "On the basis of God's saving nature, and of His uniqueness as God alone, the third word becomes one of loving invitation. '*Turn to Me and be saved.*' For it is the good will and blessed purpose of the One and only God that *all ends of the earth should be saved.*" (P. 98)

Turn to Me, and be saved, all earth's ends!<sup>77</sup>

Because I (am) God, and there is not another!<sup>78</sup>

45:23 בִּי נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי

יֵצֵא מִפִּי צְדָקָה

דְּבַר וְלֹא יָשׁוּב

כִּי-לִי תִכְרַע כָּל-בְּרִיָּה

תִּשָּׁבַע כָּל-לִשׁוֹן:

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<sup>77</sup>There can be no doubt that this is a universal invitation; and there can be no doubt that it is a Divine invitation to salvation / deliverance. It is not an invitation that could only be given more than half a millennium later, following the coming of Jesus Christ; but it is an invitation that is embodied and fulfilled in Jesus Christ and His ministry that invites and welcomes all comers.

Narrowness and segregation and lists of requirements have no part in such an invitation—such as religionists throughout the centuries have weighed it down with—such as “if you will keep the 613 commandments,” or “if you will only confess Jesus Christ as Lord and be immersed and follow the example of the early church in worship, etc. etc.”

North calls this invitation “one of the high peaks of **Old Testament** religion.” (P. 161) See:

**Isaiah 52:10,**

YHWH made bare His set-apart arm,  
to (the) eyes of all the nations;  
and all ends of (the) earth will see  
our God's salvation / deliverance!

**Psalm 22:27<sup>Heb</sup> / 28<sup>Eng</sup>,**

27/28 They will remember and return to YHWH,  
all the ends of the earth!  
And they will worship before you, [YHWH],  
all races of peoples!  
28/29 For the Kingdom belongs to YHWH,  
and he rules over the peoples!

<sup>78</sup>This is another Self-identification by YHWH, and is also a claim to exclusive monotheism.

By Myself I have sworn;  
    righteousness has gone forth from My mouth,  
a word—and it will not return--  
    that to Me every knee will bend;  
every tongue will swear!<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup>It is a Divine oath attributed to YHWH, one that will never be rescinded or taken back—that to Him every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear (allegiance to Him).”

What do you think? Is this a declaration of eventual universal salvation? Can people bow to YHWH, and swear to or by Him, without being saved / delivered? How can that be? And how can there be such a universal salvation / deliverance unless there is a “second chance” after death?

In the **New Testament**, see **Philippians 2:5-11**, where this verse in **Isaiah 45:23** is alluded to in **verses 10-11**, making the salvation / deliverance dependent on confessing that Jesus is the Christ, and claiming that this will be true for those “in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth.” Do you think that “under the earth” means those in sheol / hades, and that this means a “second chance after death”?

Can this be what **1 Peter 3-4** is talking about, when it depicts Jesus, upon dying, going to those who were disobedient in the days of Noah (and if to them, why not to others?), offering them salvation?

Alexander responds to the question whether or not this means universal salvation, stating that “It does not necessarily predict that all shall be converted to Him, since the terms are such as to include both a voluntary and a compulsory submission, and in one of these ways all, without exception, shall yet recognize Him as their rightful Sovereign.” (P. 188)

But is not bowing to YHWH and swearing to or by Him a depiction of conversion from rebellion against YHWH? Is Alexander trying to get around what the text predicts? And what can the “swearing to or by YHWH” mean other than swearing allegiance to Him?

Alexander himself states that “The kneeling and swearing in the last clause are acts of homage, fealty [fidelity, faithfulness] or allegiance, which usually went together... and involved a solemn recognition of the sovereignty of him to whom they were tendered.” (**ibid.**)

Knight states that the truth of universal salvation “is expressed now in clear and vivid terms prefaced once again by God’s Own signature, one that He has actually made on oath...Here God does this very thing [takes an oath]. Moreover His oath precedes a word of universalistic hope.” (Pp. 98-9)

45:24<sup>80</sup> אָךְ בִּיהוָה לִי אָמַר צְדָקוֹת וְעֹז  
 עֲדָיו יְבוֹא וַיִּבְשׂוּ  
 כָּל הַנְּחָרִים בּוֹ:

Surely by the YHWH, he spoke to me<sup>81</sup> (of) deeds of righteousness<sup>82</sup> and strength,

<sup>80</sup>Oswalt comments on **verses 24-25** that “both these verses focus on the Lord as the source of both hope and vindication...After the strong opening assertion of **verse 24**, *Moreover*, or ‘surely, only, truly,’ both verses begin in the same way: *in the Lord*... The only hope for Israel and the world is in the Lord. It is not in the religion of Israel, nor in the might and glory of the nations; it is in the Lord.” (Pp. 224-25)

North states that “**Revised Standard Version** takes these verses as an utterance of Yahweh. But would Yahweh refer to Himself as ‘Yahweh’ and ‘Him’? **Revised Standard Version** has not understood [the phrase] לִי אָמַר [‘to Me he said’], which it renders ‘it shall be said of Me (Yahweh).’ The verses, like **verses 15-17**, are best understood as words of the Prophet. Even so, some ambiguities remain.” (P. 161)

<sup>81</sup>Where our Hebrew text has לִי אָמַר, “to me he spoke,” **Rahlf's** has λέγων, “saying,” evidently translating a Hebrew text with לֵאמֹר (but with a different word-order). 1QIs<sup>a</sup> has לִיא יֵאמַר, “to me he will speak or it will be spoken.”

We are puzzled by this statement. Who is meant by “he,” and “me”? Does it mean YHWH spoke to the prophet? Or does it mean the prophet spoke to the individual refugee coming to YHWH? And what does “by the YHWH” mean?

Alexander states that interpreters “differ very much among themselves...as to the meaning of the words לִי אָמַר, “to me he spoke.” Vitranga, Ewald, and some others render the phrase *said to me*, but without satisfactorily showing its relation to the context. The most usual construction is, *one says to me*, which is grammatical, but seems to make the clause unmeaning, or at least superfluous. Perhaps the best construction is De Dieu’s, who insulates [isolates?] אָמַר, and understands it to mean *says one* or *says he*, while he connects the following words with לִי, as meaning *are to me*, the only Heb-rew phrase corresponding to *I have*.” (Pp. 188-89) None of this makes sense of the passage to me—and I think the best recourse is simply to admit the words are puzzling.

(continued...)

to Him he will come;<sup>83</sup> and they will be ashamed--  
all those burning with anger against Him.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>(...continued)

What do you think? Do you take this to be an indication of the verbal infallibility of the **Bible**?

<sup>82</sup>North translates the plural noun צְדָקוֹת [our 'righteousnesses'] by the single word "victory." He states that it "may be taken as an intensive plural...or the reference may be to Yahweh's 'saving / victorious / righteous deeds' of redemption." (P. 161) We choose to translate by "deeds of righteousness."

Knight comments that "It is *only in the Lord* (note the vital preposition 'in' again) that Israel will acknowledge she has found righteousness (the feminine plural for of the noun *tsedaqah*, thus meaning 'creative loving acts to others'), and *strength* [עֲזָרָה], a word normally used of God alone..."

"Thus Yahweh's strength is to accomplish this, His declared will. Therefore in his turn man becomes real man—not merely man's philosophical idea of what a man should be—when he lives by that strength and expresses it towards his fellows in the way that God expresses it to him, in the form of compassionate, loving activity.

"Thus Deutero-Isaiah sums up this section of his argument by declaring that the saving acts, which Israel is to deploy when as the servant she seeks to win the gentiles, are fused into the strength that God alone supplies." (Pp. 99-100)

<sup>83</sup>Where our Hebrew text has the 3<sup>rd</sup> masculine singular יְבוֹא, "it (strength) will come," 1QIs<sup>a</sup> has the plural יְבוֹאוּ, "they (strength and rightness) will come." As a Masoretic note states, a large number of Hebrew manuscripts as well as the Greek, Syriac and Latin Vulgate also read the plural.

What does "come to YHWH" mean? Does it not mean "conversion," turning away from rebellion and rejection of YHWH, to draw near to Him in obedience and worship, recognizing in Him the Source of righteousness and strength?

<sup>84</sup>Translations of **verse 24** vary:

**King James**, "Surely, shall *one* say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: *even* to him shall *men* come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed."

**Tanakh**, "They shall say: "Only through the LORD Can I find victory and might. When people trust in Him, All their adversaries are put to shame."

**New American Standard**, "Only in the LORD, it shall be said of me, are righteousness and strength; all who were incensed against him shall come to him and be

(continued...)

45:25 בִּיהוָה יִצְדָּקוּ

וַיִּתְהַלְלוּ כָּל־זֶרַע יִשְׂרָאֵל:

By the YHWH they will be righteous,

and all Israel's descendant(s) will praise (YHWH).<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup>(...continued)  
ashamed.”

**New International**, “They will say of me, 'In the LORD alone are righteousness and strength.' “All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame.”

**New Jerusalem**, “saying, 'In Yahweh alone are saving justice and strength,' until all those who used to rage at him come to him in shame.”

**Rahlfs**, λέγων δικαιοσύνη καὶ δόξα πρὸς αὐτὸν ἴξουσιν καὶ αἰσχυνθήσονται πάντες οἱ ἀφορίζοντες ἑαυτούς, “saying, righteousness and glory shall come to Him; and all those separating themselves shall be ashamed.”

**Alexander**, “Only in Jehovah have I, says he, righteousness and strength; unto him shall he come, and all that were incensed (or inflamed) at him shall be ashamed.”

<sup>85</sup>Translations of **verse 25** vary:

**King James**, “In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.”

**Tanakh**, “It is through the LORD that all the offspring of Israel Have vindication and glory.”

**New American Standard**, “In the LORD all the offspring of Israel shall triumph and glory.”

**New International**, “But all the descendants of Israel will find deliverance in the LORD and will make their boast in him.”

**New Jerusalem**, “In Yahweh the whole race of Israel finds justice and glory.”

**Rahlfs**, “From (the) Lord they shall be justified, and in the God they shall be glorified, all the seed of the sons / children of Israel.”

**Alexander**, “In Jehovah shall be justified and boast themselves (or glory) all the seed of Israel.”

Alexander comments that the verse “is really intended to wind up the previous addresses to the Gentiles with a solemn declaration of their true relation to the chosen people, as composed of those who really believed and feared God, whether Jews or Gentiles. This principle was recognized in every admission of a proselyte to the communion of the ancient church, and at the change of dispensations it is clearly and repeatedly asserted as a fundamental law of Christ's kingdom under every variety of form. (See **Romans 10:12; Galatians 3:28-29; Colossians 3:11.**)” (P. 189)

1. Occurrences of the plural noun עוֹלָמִים in the Hebrew Bible

1 Kings 8:13,

בָּנָה בְּנִיתִי בַיִת זָבֵל לָךְ  
מִכּוֹן לְשִׁבְתֶּךָ עוֹלָמִים:

I have certainly built an exalted house for You,  
a foundation / fixed place for Your dwelling (for) long-lasting times.  
(What do you think? Was Solomon thinking that he could build an “everlasting”  
temple / house for YHWH, where He would dwell “forever”? We doubt that.)

Isaiah 26:4,

בְּטַחֲוּ בִיהוָה עַד־יְעַד  
כִּי בַיִת יִהְיֶה צוּר עוֹלָמִים:

Trust (plural imperative) in the YHWH as far as as far as,  
because in Yah--YHWH (is) a Rock of long ages!

Isaiah 45:17, (twice)

יִשְׂרָאֵל נִוְשַׁע בִּיהוָה תְּשׁוּעַת עוֹלָמִים  
לֹא־תִבְשׁוּ וְלֹא־תִכְלְמוּ עַד־עוֹלָמִי עַד:

Israel was saved by the YHWH--a salvation / deliverance of long-lasting times--  
they will not be ashamed, and they will not be humiliated until long-lasting  
times of until / a continuing future.

(The last three words contain the word עַד twice, and it is puzzling to determine  
the meaning of the second occurrence. Does it mean “until” again? Or does it

mean something like “a continuing future” as Holladay says some suggest? The  
fact is, biblical Hebrew does not have a word for “forever” or “eternity,” even  
though lexicographers attempt to find it in words like עוֹלָמִים and עַד.)

Isaiah 51:9,

Raise up! Raise up! / Awake! Awake!  
Dress (yourself with) strength, arm of YHWH!  
Awake as (in) days of old / ancient time,  
(in) generations of long-lasting (past) times!  
Are You not She,  
the One cutting Rahab in pieces,  
piercing a Dragon?

(The Hebrew of the third and fourth lines is:

עוֹרֵי כִּימֵי קֶדֶם

דִּרְוֹת עוֹלָמִים, literally:

Awake like days of front / east / former,  
generations of long-lasting-times!

Of course the Hebrews did not believe their generations had existed “forever”!)

**Psalm 61:5<sup>Heb</sup> / 4<sup>Eng</sup>**

אֲנֹרָה בְּאֹהֶלְךָ עוֹלָמִים  
אֲחֹסָה בְּסֹתֵר כְּנַפְיֶךָ סֵלָה:

I would dwell temporarily in Your tent of long-lasting-times;

I would take refuge / shelter in Your wings' covering / secrecy! Selah.

(YHWH's tent endures for long-lasting-times, but the king can only dwell there as a temporary resident or “sojourner”, since his life is so temporary, limited.)

**Psalm 77:6<sup>Heb</sup> / 5<sup>Eng</sup>**

חֲשַׁבְתִּי יָמִים מִקֶּדֶם  
שָׁנוֹת עוֹלָמִים:

I thought about / considered days of old,,  
years of long-lasting times (in the past).

**Psalm 77:8<sup>Heb</sup> / 7<sup>Eng</sup>**

הֲלִעוֹלָמִים יִזְנַח אֲדֹנָי  
וְלֹא־יִסְיַף לְרִצּוֹת עוֹד:

Will my Lord to long-lasting times reject (us)?  
And will He not again be pleased?

**Psalm 145:13,**

מַלְכוּתְךָ מַלְכוּת כָּל־עוֹלָמִים  
וּמִמְשַׁלְתְּךָ בְּכָל־דּוֹר וָדוֹר:

Your Kingdom is a Kingdom for all long-lasting times;  
and Your reign is over every generation and generation!

**Ecclesiastes 1:10,**

יֵשׁ דְּבַר שֶׁיֹּאמַר רֵאֵה־זֶה חֲדָשׁ הוּא  
כִּבְרֹה הִיָּה לְעוֹלָמִים אֲשֶׁר הִיָּה מִלְּפָנָיו:

There is a matter which he will say, See this? It is new!  
It already was, for long-lasting times which was (sic.) before us!

**Daniel 9:24,**

שְׁבַעִים שָׁבָעִים נְחָתָךְ עַל-עַמּוֹךְ | וְעַל-עִיר קְדֻשְׁךָ  
לְכֵלֵא הַפֶּשַׁע (וּלְחַתָּם) [וּלְהַתָּם] (חַטָּאוֹת) [חַטָּאת] וּלְכַפֵּר עוֹן  
וּלְהַבִּיא צְדָק עַל־מִים  
וּלְחַתָּם חֲזוֹן וְנָבִיא  
וּלְמַשֵּׁחַ קֹדֶשׁ קְדָשִׁים:

Seventy periods of seven was (sic.) determined over / for your people, and over /  
for (the) city of your set-apartness / holiness,  
to complete / finish the transgression and to seal / finish sin / sins / sin-  
offering / sin-offerings,  
and to cover over / atone for iniquity,  
and to bring in righteousness of / for long-lasting-times;  
and to seal vision and prophet,  
and to anoint a set-apart (place) of set-apart (places).

**2 Chronicles 6:2,**

6:2 וָאֲנִי בִנִיתִי בַּיִת-זָבֹל לָךְ  
וּמְכוֹן לְשִׁבְתְּךָ עוֹלָמִים:

And I, I built an exalted house for You,  
and a place for Your dwelling for long-lasting-times.  
(Compare **1 Kings 8:13** above.)

2.

## The Babylonian Akitu Festival

The Babylonian festival traditionally started on 21 Adar - 1 Nisannu.

### First to third Day

The priest of Esagila (Marduk's house) would recite sad prayers with the other priests and the people would answer with equally sad prayers which expressed humanity's fear of the unknown. This fear of the unknown explains why the high priest would head to the Esagila every day asking for Marduk's forgiveness, begging him to protect Babylon, his holy city, and asking him to have favor on the city. This prayer was called "The Secret Of Esagila." It reads as follows: "Lord without peer in thy wrath, Lord, gracious king, lord of the lands, Who made salvation for the great gods, Lord, who throwest down the strong by his glance, Lord of kings, light of men, who dost apportion destinies, O Lord, Babylon is thy seat, Borsippa thy crown. The wide heavens are thy body...Within thine arms thou takest the strong...Within thy glance thou grantest them grace, Makest them see light so that they proclaim thy power. Lord of the lands, light of the Igigi, who pronouncest blessings; Who would not proclaim thy, yea, thy power? Would not speak of thy majesty, praise thy dominion? Lord of the lands, who livest in Eudul, who takest the fallen by the hand; Have pity upon thy city, Babylon Turn thy face towards Esagila, thy temple! Give freedom to them that dwell in Babylon, thy wards!"

On the third day special craftsmen would create two puppets made of wood, gold, and precious stones and dress them in red. These puppets were set aside and would be used on the sixth day.

### Fourth Day

The same rituals would be followed as in the previous three days. Before the sunrise the priests looked for the sacred stars "Acre." During the day the Epic of Creation *Enuma Elish* would be recited. The *Enuma Elish*, is most likely the oldest story concerning the birth of the Gods and the creation of the universe and human beings. It then explains how all the Gods united in the God Marduk, following his victory over Tiamat. The recitation of this Epic was considered the beginning of preparations for the submission of the King of Babylon before Marduk on the fifth day of Akitu. During the night a drama was performed that praised Marduk as well.

### Fifth Day

The submission of the king of Babylon before Marduk. The king would enter to the Esagila accompanied by the priests, they would approach all together the altar where the high priest of the Esagila impersonates Marduk then he approaches the king, begins to strip him of his jewelry, scepter and even his crown. Then he would slap him hard while he knelt before the altar, and begins to pray asking for Marduk's forgiveness and submitting to him saying: "I have not sinned O Lord of the universe, and I haven't neglected your heavenly might at all"... Then the priest in the role of Marduk says: "Don't be afraid of what Marduk has to say, for he will hear your prayers, extend your power, and increase the greatness of your reign". The removal of all worldly

possessions was a symbol of the submission the king gives to Marduk. After this the king would stand up and the priest would give him back his jewelry, scepter and crown, then slap him hard again, hoping for the king to shed tears, because that would express more the submission to Marduk and respect to his power. When the priest returned the crown to the king, it meant his power was renewed by Marduk. Thus April would be considered not only the revival of nature and life but also revival to the State as well. Thus, these ceremonies would make the greatest and most feared personalities of that time submit to the greatest God, and live a humbling moment with all the population, sharing prayers to prove their faith before the might of God. Following his presence in his earthly home Babylon and renewing its king's power, the God Marduk stayed in the Etemenanki (a ziggurat or tower composed of seven floors, known in the **Torah** as the "Tower of Babylon") where Marduk's dwelling was, or in the temple Esagila (in the **Torah** God would dwell on a "mountain" **Psalms 74:2**). During this day according to the tradition of Akitu, Marduk would enter his dwelling and would be surprised by the evil Gods who would fight him. Then he would be taken prisoner by Tiamat, the chaos monster and Goddess of the ocean, and would there await the arrival of his son God Nabu, who would save him from "Nought" and restore his glory.

#### Sixth Day

Before the Gods arrived, the day would be filled with commotion. The puppets that were made on the third day would be burned and mock battle would be taking place as well. This commotion signified that without Marduk, the city would be in constant chaos. The arrival of the God Nabu in boats accompanied by his assistants of brave Gods coming from Nippur, Uruk, Kish, and Eridu (cities of ancient Babylonia) would be represented by statues mounted on boats made especially for the occasion. Here the people in huge numbers would begin their walk behind their king towards the Esagila where Marduk is held prisoner, chanting the following: "Here's he who's coming from afar to restore the glory of our imprisoned father."

#### Seventh Day

On the third day of his imprisonment Nabu freed Marduk. The evil Gods had closed a huge gate behind him when he entered his dwelling. Marduk would be fighting till Nabu's arrival, when he would break in the huge gate and a battle would go on between the two groups, until Nabu came out victorious and freed Marduk.

#### Eighth Day

When Marduk was set free, the statues of the Gods would be gathered in the Destinies Hall "Ubshu-Ukkina," to deliberate his destiny, there it is decided to join all the forces of the Gods and bestow them upon Marduk. Here, the king would implore all the Gods to support and honor Marduk, and this tradition was an indication that Marduk received submission from all the Gods and was unique in his position.

#### Ninth Day

The victory procession to the "House of Akitu" where Marduk's victory in the beginning of Creation over the dragon Tiamat (Goddess of the nether waters) would be celebrated. The House of Akitu which the Assyrians of Nineveh called "Bet Ekribi" ("House of Prayers" in old Assyrian language), was about 200 meters outside the city's walls, where there were wonderful trees decorated and watered carefully out of respect to the God who was considered the one to grant nature its life. The victory procession was the population's way to express its joy at Marduk's renewal of power and the destruction of evil forces which almost controlled life in the beginning.

#### Tenth Day

Arriving at "Bet Akitu", the God Marduk would begin to celebrate with both the upper and nether world Gods (the statues of Gods were arranged around a huge table such as in a feast). Then Marduk would return to the city at night celebrating his marriage to the Goddess "Ishtar," symbolizing earth and heaven are united, and as the Gods unite so is this union arranged on earth. Thus the king personifies this union by playing the role of marrying the highest priestess of the Esagila where they would both sit at the throne before the population and they would recite special poems for the occasion. This love is going to bring forth life in spring.

#### Eleventh Day

The Gods would return, accompanied by their Lord Marduk to meet again in the Destinies Hall "Upshu Ukkina," where they met for the first time on the eighth day. This time they would decide the fate of the people of Marduk. In ancient Assyrian philosophy Creation in general was considered as a covenant between heaven and earth. As long as a human served the Gods till his death, therefore, the Gods' happiness would not be complete unless the humans were happy as well. Thus a human's destiny would be given happiness on the condition that he served the Gods. So Marduk and the Gods would renew their covenant with Babylon, by promising the city another cycle of seasons. After the fate of mankind was decided, Marduk would return back to the heavens.

#### Twelfth Day

The last day of Akitu. The Gods would return to Marduk's temple (the statues to the temple) and daily life would resume in Babylon, Nineveh, and the rest of the Assyrian cities. The people would begin to plow and prepare for another cycle of seasons.

—copied and edited from **Wikipedia**, 4/27/2016

