

Isaiah Chapter 46, Hebrew Text with Translation and Footnotes

46:1' פָּרַע בִּלְ קָרְס נְבוּ

¹North entitles **chapter 47** “Gods Impotent And The Lord God Omnipotent.”

He comments that “This chapter is best treated as a unity, notwithstanding that **verses 5-7 (8)** are somewhat loosely related to their context...

“The first theme (**verses 1-4**) is the contrast between Yahweh Who carries His people, and the Babylonian Gods Which are lifeless blocks [of wood and metal] needing to be carried about by their distraught worshipers [see our end-note 2 on **chapter 45** for the Babylonian Akitu Festival]. The classic exposition of it is in Sir George Adam Smith (p. 198): ‘The truth is this: it makes all the difference to a man how he conceives his religion—whether as something he has to carry, or as something that will carry him.’ **Verses 9-12** revert to the theme of the fulfilment of prophecy and the role of Cyrus, and end with the assurance that Yahweh’s victory and the deliverance of His people will not be long delayed.” (Pp. 162-63)

Slotki comments on **verses 1-4** that “the impotence of the Gods of Babylon is contrasted with the supreme power of the God of Israel. The former are *carried* away from their country into exile, while the God of Israel *carries* His people from captivity into freedom.” (P. 226)

Alexander comments on **chapter 46** that “Interpreters are strangely divided in opinion as to the connection of this chapter with the context. The arbitrary and precarious nature of their judgments may be gathered from the fact, that Ewald separates the first two verses from the body of the chapter and connects them with the one before it, while Hendewerk, on the other hand, commences a new “cycle” with the first verse of this chapter and Knobel dogmatically represents it as an isolated composition, unconnected either with what goes before or follows. Even the older writers, who maintain the continuity of the discourse, appear to look upon the order of its parts as being not so much an organic articulation as a mere mechanical juxtaposition. They are therefore obliged to assume abrupt transitions, which, instead of explaining anything else, need to be explained themselves.

“All this confusion is the fruit of the erroneous exegetical hypothesis, that the main subject and occasion of these later prophecies is the Babylonish exile and the liberation from it, and that with these the other topics must be violently brought into connection by assuming a sufficiency of types and double senses, or by charging the whole discourse with incoherence. Equally false, but far less extensive in its influence, is the assumption that the whole relates to Christ and to the new dispensation, so that even what is said of Babylon and Cyrus must be metaphorically understood. Common to both hypotheses is the arbitrary and exclusive application of the most comprehensive language to a part of what it really expresses, and a distorted view of the Prophet’s themes considered in their mutual relations and connections...

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“The whole becomes perspicuous, continuous, and orderly, as soon as we admit what has been already proved to be the true hypothesis, that is, that the great theme of these prophecies is God’s designs and dealings with the church [Alexander means the Jewish church, the true believers in YHWH, which would become the ‘spiritual Israel, church’ of the followers of Jesus] and with the world, and that the specific predictions which are introduced as parts or as illustrations of this one great argument. By thus reversing the preposterous relation of the principal elements of the discourse, and restoring each to its legitimate position, the connection becomes clear and the arrangement easy.

“In confirmation of the general threats and promises with which **chapter 45** is wound up, the Prophet now exhibits the particular case of the Babylonian idols, as a single instance chosen from the whole range of past and future history. They are described as fallen and gone into captivity, wholly unable to protect their worshipers or save themselves (**verses 1, 2**). With these he then contrasts [YHWH’s] constant care of Israel in time past and in time to come (**verses 3, 4**). The contrast is carried out by another description of the origin and impotence of idols (**verses 5-7**), and another assertion of [YHWH’s] sole Divinity, as proved by His knowledge and control of the future, and by the raising up of Cyrus in particular (**verses 8-11**). This brings him back to the same solemn warning of approaching judgments, and the same alternative of life or death, with which the foregoing chapter closes (**verses 12, 13**).” (Pp. 189-90)

Alexander wrote in the 1800's before the discovery of the Cyrus Cylinder in 1879, which reveals the fact that not only Israel’s exiles were freed to return to their homeland, with financial assistance for the rebuilding of YHWH’s temple, but the same thing was true of the many other exiles from other nations, with their Gods and their idols, who were likewise freed from Babylon to return to their homelands, with the Persian Government helping them to rebuild the temples of their idol-Gods. See footnote 1 on **chapter 45**.

Knight comments on **verses 1-2**: “In the city of Babylon Deutero-Isaiah and his countrymen watched each year at the Akitu festival the annual procession of Gods through the streets to the great E-Sagila shrine...Marduk was the most important of these Gods. He was known also by the name of *Bel*, which is just the Hebrew *Baal*, a generic title for any God (compare **Jeremiah 50:2**). *Marduk* was the tutelary [serving as a protector, guardian, or patron] God of the city of Babylon. *Nebo* is from the same root as the Hebrew נְבִיא, *nabhiy*, a prophet. Nebo was Bel’s son, and was known as the speaker of the Gods, like Mercury or Hermes in later centuries (**Acts 14:12**). Nebo was worshiped at Borsippa in a magnificent temple called E-Zida. Many kings were called by his name, such as Nebuchadrezzar (Nabu-protect-the-boundary). Nebo was Babylon’s savior God.

“The conversation overheard in this verse is almost certainly apocryphal [meaning of doubtful authenticity, although widely circulated as being true]. Here is my trans-

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הִיָּו עֲצִבֵיהֶם לַחִיָּה וְלִבְהֵמָה
 נִשְׂאֲתֵיכֶם עֲמוּסוֹת מִשָּׂא לְעִיפָה:

Bel bowed down; Nebo² is stooping;³

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lation of it:

- 1 'Bel's knees are giving way!' 'Nebo's toppling over!' 'They've actually put their graven images on beasts and cattle!'
 'What loads your bundles are!' "They're only burdens for weary beasts!"
- 2 'The men have stumbled and their knees have given way too!'
 'They can't rescue their load!'
 '(The Gods) themselves have gone off into exile!'

No displaced persons, aliens, foreigners would dare make sarcastic remarks such as these as they elbowed their way on the sidewalk when the procession of Gods was going by. The Israelites would more probably have been numbed by the magnificence of Babylon's Gods, and would keep recalling how their own God had been defeated fifty years before. Even more certainly they would be numbed by the magnificence of the city of Babylon as their thoughts strayed to the heap of ruins on Zion's hill. But Deutero-Isaiah at least kept his sense of humor, as we see here. First it is the Gods who are nearly 'toppling' as the cart carrying them hits a cobblestone...

"Then Deutero-Isaiah's sarcasm swings to the human beings as they stumble and try to rescue their precious load. For effect he reverses the order of the verbs, identical as they are, which he uses for tottering Gods and stumbling men. And then a ludicrous thought strikes him: the Gods are fleeing the city. Cyrus is at the gate! All that those poor human beings are trying to save are their Gods' shells; the Gods themselves have already fled and are in exile from their home-city. And Nebo was the savior God! Yet he couldn't save himself...

"When Cyrus did actually enter Babylon, he took the city by surprise, and the Gods did not have time to escape. However, Cyrus respected the beliefs of the Babylonians and at once offered worship to the ancient Gods he had conquered...

"But Deutero-Isaiah's purpose here is to preach, and this he does by means of sarcasm. He is not concerned to try to be a foreteller of the future like a Babylonian star-gazer. He knows that that is not what a prophet of the Lord is called to do." (Pp. 101-02)

²Slotki comments that בֵּל, **bel** is "a contraction of **baal**, the Canaanite God... here a name for Marduk or Merodach, the Babylonian God of light." (P. 226)

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From **Wikipedia** we quote: “Bel from Akkadian *bēlu*), signifying "lord" or "master", is a title rather than a genuine name, applied to various Gods in the Mesopotamian religion of Akkad, Assyria and Babylonia. The feminine form is *Belit* 'Lady, Mistress.' Bel is represented in Greek as *Belos* and in Latin as *Belus*. Linguistically Bel is an East Semitic form cognate with Northwest Semitic Baal with the same meaning...

“Bel became especially used of the Babylonian God Marduk and when found in Assyrian and neo-Babylonian personal names; or, mentioned in inscriptions in a Mesopotamian context, it can usually be taken as referring to Marduk and no other God. Similarly *Belit*...mostly refers to Bel Marduk's spouse Sarpanit.” (6-20-2015)

Alexander refers to Gesenius' 30 page appendix in which “he connects Bel etymologically with the Hebrew **בַּעַל**, **ba(al**, and Nebo with **נְבִיא**, **nb**) and **נְבִיא**, **nabhi**), ‘prophet,’ the two corresponding to...Zeus [God of the sky and ruler of the Olympian Gods] and Hermes [Messenger of the Gods, Guide to the underworld] of Greek mythology, or rather to the planets Jupiter and Mercury. The dignity of these two imaginary Deities among the Babylonians may be learned from the extent to which these names enter into the composition of the names of men, both in sacred and profane history. Such are Belshazzar, Belteshazzar, Belesys, Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuzaradan, Nabopolassar, Nabonned, Nabonidus, etc...The names are simply used [here in **Isaiah 46:1**] to represent the Babylonian Gods collectively.” (P. 190)

What do you think? In your **Bible** study, have you ever connected the Canaanite God Baal with the Mesopotamian God Marduk? This is new to me, and I am very thankful to learn this.

Oswalt states that “*Bel* and *Nebo* are two of the chief Gods of Babylon. Bel, or ‘lord,’ was a title originally given to Enlil, the so-called Father of the Gods Whose center was at Nippur. But Marduk, the city God of Babylon and hero of *Enuma Elish* (the Babylonian creation epic), eventually became the chief God of southern Mesopotamia, and the title became his (see **Jeremiah 50:2**; also **51:44**). Marduk’s son *Nebo* (or Nabu), the God of the scribe and of intellectual pursuits, had his seat at Borsippa, some 10 miles south of Babylon. In view of the prominence of Nabu in the names of the key figures in the Neo-Babylonian Empire (Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar, Nabonidus), it is likely that Nabu was the titular [one holding a title] God of that empire and its rulers.

“They were not only the most prominent of the Babylonian Gods but also especially appropriate for the prophet’s diatribe [verbal attack] because their images were carried in the annual New Year’s Festival procession in Babylon. This picture of the worshipers carrying their Gods would fit in well with the point the prophet is trying to make in this section.” (P. 228)

Where our Hebrew text has **נְבִיא**, Nebo, **Rahlf**s has **Dagon**.

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their idols were for / belonged to the beast and for the cattle--⁴
your burdens (are) being loaded--a burden (synonym) for the weary.

46:2 קָרְסוּ בָרְעוּ יַחֲדוּ

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“Dagon was originally an East Semitic Mesopotamian (Akkadian, Assyrian, Babylonian) fertility God who evolved into a major Northwest Semitic God, reportedly of grain (as symbol of fertility) and fish and / or fishing (as symbol of multiplying). He was worshiped by the early Amorites and by the inhabitants of the cities of Ebla (modern Tell Mardikh, Syria) and Ugarit (modern Ras Shamra, Syria). He was also a major member, or perhaps head, of the pantheon of the Philistines.” (Wikipedia, 8/14/2015)

³Where as the first verb is a qal perfect, בָּלַע, “Bel bowed down,” the second verb is a qal active participle, קָרְסוּ, Nebo is bending / stooping.” The ancient versions translated by finite verbs, rather than the timeless, active participle. For example, **Rahfs** has “was shattered to pieces.” In **verse 2**, this same verb occurs in the qal perfect.

⁴Slotki states that this means the idols of Bel and Nebo were “being carried off for safety on the approach of the invaders.” (P. 226) We think the picture is that of Bel and Nebo being loaded onto carts, to be pulled by animals.

Oswalt comments that the author’s “main point is that these beautiful images, so recently paraded with reverent pomp, are now a matter for ox-carts and donkeys. What a decline—how the mighty Gods are humiliated and ashamed...The point that the prophet is making is that any God Who is so much a part of creation that Its representation has to be carried by humans is going to be of no help when those humans are herded off into captivity...

“Indications here that the author does distinguish between the images and the Gods themselves [are that] in **verse 1** *their images parallel the things you carry...*’Their’ must refer to the Gods, while ‘you’ refers to the worshipers. This is further confirmed in **verse 2**, which states that *they* (the Gods) *are unable to deliver the burden* (the images), but must *themselves* (Hebrew נַפְשָׁם [‘their innermost-being’] go into captivity... Thus Isaiah does not naively believe that the image and the Deity are identical when he stresses the foolishness of idol making.” (P. 229)

This last paragraph is a continuation of Oswalt’s continuing argument with those who claim that the author of the **Book of Isaiah** had no real understanding of idolatry.

North comments that “The pack animals are the custodians of the effigies [sculptures]; indeed, it is as if the effigies, and *ipso facto* [‘by that very fact’], the Gods Themselves, have become their property!” (P. 163)

לֹא יָכְלוּ מִלֵּט מִשָּׂא

וְנַפְשָׁם בְּשִׁבֵי הַלְכָה:

They stooped, they bowed down together;⁵
they were not able to deliver a burden;⁶
and their innermost-being / selves went into captivity.⁷

⁵Alexander comments that this first line “may mean that they are now *both* fallen; or *together* may have reference to the other Gods of Babylon, so as to mean that not only Bel and Nebo, but all the rest are fallen.” (P. 191)

North translates by *They crumple up completely*, and comments that “This is no description of a festival procession but of panic flight”... *They cannot carry their burden to safety*. “The grammatical subject is Bel and Nebo, since the verb is masculine. The logical subject is the pack-animals, which are feminine collective...What the text describes is a confusion of idols, Gods, and exhausted animals...”

“That the passage...is predictive, not a description after the event, is clear from the fact that there was no stampede to evacuate Babylon of its Gods before it fell to Cyrus. Nor did Cyrus banish the Gods from their temples; instead he ‘restored the Gods of Sumer and Akkad, which Nabonidus had brought into Babylon, unharmed to their own shrines’ (Cyrus Cylinder, lines 33-34), and besought them all to ask Bel and Nabu to grant long life to him and to Cambyses his son (*ibid.*, lines 34-35).” (P. 164)

⁶Alexander mentions differing interpretations of the “load” or “burden”: “Some understand by it the Babylonian state or empire, which ought to have been borne by the tutelary [serving as protectors] Gods. But the most satisfactory interpretation...applies it to the images with which the beasts were charged or laden...Bel and Nebo are unable to rescue their own images. This agrees well with the remainder of the sentence, *themselves are gone* (or literally *their self is gone*) *into captivity*.” (P. 191)

As a matter of historical fact, what becomes clear from the Cyrus Cylinder, which was only found after Alexander’s commentary was completed, is that Cyrus kept the Babylonian Gods in their Babylonian temples, and they were not carried into captivity. Neither were the idol-Gods of the other nations, which like Israel, were returned to their homelands and given financial assistance for the rebuilding of their shrines / temples.

And, because of this fact, it becomes obvious that **Second Isaiah** was not written after the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus, but before it occurred.

⁷The idol-Gods could stoop and bow down, but the Gods they represented couldn’t carry off or deliver the burden of their images; the images had to be carried off in carts pulled by animals.

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Slotki comments that “Idol-worshippers believed that the images they worshiped were animate Gods; but the prophet sarcastically remarks that not only were the Gods powerless to enable the burden (the images) to escape, but they themselves are gone into captivity.” (P. 227)

How do you imagine a worshiper of Bel-Marduk would respond to the prophet’s sarcasm? Would he not say that whereas Israel’s God YHWH was unable to deliver His captive subjects from Babylonian captivity, Cyrus, the worshiper of Bel-Marduk could—by Marduk’s power! Marduk hadn’t gone off into captivity, but was actively at work through His new subject Cyrus, conquering Babylon, and freeing the Israelite and other captives, enabling them to return home and rebuild their temples.

What do you think? Who would get the better of this argument?

We are reminded of the religious conflicts we grew up in—in the **Bible** belt of America—where Catholic versus Protestant, Christian versus Jew, and Mormon versus Gentile played such a prominent role. Which ones represented true religion? Catholics pointed proudly to their unequalled record of charitable works throughout the world, building hospitals, orphanages, schools and colleges, etc. etc., with their priests forgiving sins; while Protestants touted their loyalty to the **Bible**, and both Catholics and Protestants condemned the Jewish religion as feeble and misguided, while Jews gloried in their adherence to **Torah**, and Mormons touted their superior new revelation in the **Book of Mormon**.

I, for one, soon grew tired of those arguments, and longed for a better day, when the proud claims would be quietened down, and Catholic, Protestant, Mormon and Jew would come together to worship, and reason amiably with one another, to learn from one another, and join together in caring for the poor and suffering of our world.

We still wonder the same thing. Instead of claiming our God is better than the God of the Mesopotamians or the Canaanites or the Muslims or the Hindus, and instead of fighting to the death with those who differ from us, how much better it would be to acknowledge one another as human beings, as fellow-creatures of God, and reason together as brothers and sisters, admitting that none of us knows everything, or has all the answers. I do not mean to give up our love for and loyalty to our traditions and beliefs, but I do mean to quit the arrogance and the condemnation, which have gotten us nowhere but into hatred and isolation and murderous wars.

I ask the young committed Christian today, What will you do? Are you willing to learn Hebrew and study the **Jewish Bible / Mishnah / Talmud**, and enter into open, honest dialogue with Jews? Are you willing to learn Greek and Latin, and study with Roman Catholics, to share in their long history of scholarship? Are you willing to welcome Muslims into your life, and read their sacred **Quran** with an open mind, even learning Arabic to enable your understanding? Are you willing to enter into in-depth **Bible** study, being open to learning from the great Protestant and Catholic teachers of

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the past and present? Are you willing to read the **Bhagavad-Gita**, and enter into dialogue with the Hindus that are moving into your community, trying to understand what they mean by *Hare Krishna*, and their many idols? Are you willing to listen patiently to atheists, responding lovingly to their criticisms, showing by your life the importance of the religious community, and the reasonableness of your faith?

If not, why not? Are you afraid? Are you unwilling to make such a demanding commitment? Do you not believe that God can carry you through such a pilgrimage, teaching and guiding you, helping you to make a genuine contribution to peace and good will in this broken world? Or will you insist on sitting in your sacred corner, basking in your and Jack Horner's belief of "what a good boy / girl am I"?

⁸Knight comments on **verse 3** that "What Deutero-Isaiah does is to make the procession an object lesson. He addresses the exiles by the title of שְׂאֲרֵית, *remnant*, for that is a description of Israel which conveyed to them overtones of love and compassion. The pre-exilic prophets had used it (**Amos 5:15**; **Micah 2:12**, and **Jeremiah** with reference to Judah when the Northern Kingdom fell. Deutero-Isaiah's hero [the historical] Isaiah (**37:32**) had used the term for the survivors of the exile. This overtone of love is now carried forward by the figure of mother love and of the word *womb*, which has the same consonants as the verb meaning to show compassion. There go the Gods, carried by their devotees. But you have been borne by your God ever since your birth, as a mother carries her child (compare **Deuteronomy 1:31**; **Isaiah 63:9**)." (P. 102)

Oswalt comments on **verses 3-4** that "God now turns the tables. With a solemn call to pay attention, He addresses the people as *house of Jacob* and *house of Israel*, attempting to bring to their minds the whole long story that established their identity. When in all that time had they ever carried their God? Never! [But we ask, what is the story in **1 Samuel 5-6** about the awesome 'ark of God' being carried on a cart about? It is certainly depicted as laden with terrifying power, and was understood at least as a symbol of God's presence!]...

"From the very beginning of their existence as a nation, from the hour of their birth as a nation, God had been carrying them! At least three different images [not hand-made idols, but pictorial images!] are involved here, as other references show: a father carrying a child (**Deuteronomy 1:31**), a shepherd carrying a lamb (**Psalms 28:9**), and an eagle carrying its eaglets [or, 'griffon-vulture' carrying its chicks] (**Exodus 19:4**; **Deuteronomy 32:11**)...Far from a Deity Who is continuous with creation requiring to be carried in ritual procession [but of course, the Israelites had their processions in and around their temple, carrying the symbols of their worship; Oswalt has just argued that Isaiah recognized the distinction between the God itself and its idols], the Lord is the One Who, precisely because He is not part of creation (**Isaiah 40:21-23**), has been able to carry Israel throughout her historical experience." (P. 230)

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Alexander comments that “The carrying meant is that of children by the nurse or parent. The same comparison is frequent elsewhere.” (P. 192) See:

Numbers 11:12, where Moses complains to YHWH,

Did I conceive all this people?
Or (did) I give it birth?
Because You said to me, Carry it in your embrace,
just like the foster-parent carries the sucking infant,
upon / to the ground / land which You swore to its fathers!

Deuteronomy 1:31, where Moses reminds the people of Israel how YHWH had cared for them:

and in the wilderness which you saw,
when YHWH your God carried you,
just as a man carries his son,
on all the way which you walked / went,
until your coming as far as this place!

Exodus 19:4, where YHWH tells Israel,

You (plural) saw what I did to Egypt;
and I lifted / carried you upon wings of griffon-vultures / eagles;
and I brought you to Myself.

Isaiah 63:9,

In all their distress, (it was) His distress;
and (the) messenger of His presence saved / delivered them.
In His love and in His mercy He redeemed / acted as Next-of-kin for them,
and He lifted them up and He carried them all (the) days of long-time!

Deuteronomy 32:11-12,

- 11 Like a griffon vulture / eagle will stir up its nest,
over its young birds it will hover,
it will spread out its wings, it will lift it / them up,
it will bear it / them upon its feathered-wings.
- 12 YHWH alone will lead / guide him--
and there is no One with Him, a foreign God.

Hosea 11:3,

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הַעֲמָסִים מִנִּי-בֶטֶן

הַנְּשָׂאִים מִנִּי-רֶחֶם:

Listen to Me, House of Jacob, and all (the) remnant of Israel's house,⁹
the ones burdening [Me] from (the) womb,

⁸(...continued)

And I, I taught Ephraim to walk
–He took them upon His arms--
and they didn't know that I healed them.

Isaiah 40:11, in a description of YHWH–

Like a shepherd shepherds his flock,
in His arm(s) he will gather lambs,
and in His grasp he will carry (them);
those giving suck He will lead.

What beautiful images of a Shepherd / Parent God Who cares for / carries His people!

⁹YHWH is depicted as speaking to a double audience, the house of Jacob and the remnant of the house of Israel. Is that just poetic parallelism, or does the house of Jacob mean the southern kingdom of Judah, and the remnant of Israel mean the northern kingdom, which has been carried into Assyrian captivity to Kir, but of which a (small) remnant still remains?

Slotki holds that “all the remnant” is referring to “some of the exiles from the Northern Kingdom [who] managed to reach Judea, [while] others had still not lost their identity in the Assyrian captivity [or remained in the areas overrun by the Assyrians].” (P. 229)

Alexander mentions that “Kimchi understands the remains of the ten tribes who were in exile.” (P. 192)

What do you think? Have you believed the story that the “Ten Tribes” simply disappeared, and that in fact there was no longer any “remnant” of Northern Israel left for the prophet to address?

North translates by *family* (literally ‘house’) of *Jacob* and comments that “This would include those who traced their descent from the former Northern Israel... *Remnant*, שְׂאֲרִית, from the root meaning ‘be left over’...generally conveys a suggestion of pitiful smallness.” (P. 164)

the ones carried [by Me] from (the) womb (synonym):¹⁰

46:4¹¹ וְעַד־זְקָנָה אֲנִי הוּא

וְעַד־שִׁיבָה אֲנִי אֶסְבֵּל

אֲנִי עָשִׂיתִי וְאֲנִי אִשָּׂא

וְאֲנִי אֶסְבֵּל וְאֶמְלֹט:

And as far as old age I (am) He;

and as far as white hair,¹² I will bear a load.¹³

¹⁰Whereas the idol-Gods had to be carried by animals, YHWH had carried Israel “from the womb,” from its earliest beginnings as a nation. The two synonyms for “womb” are בֶּטֶן, **beten**, “belly / body / womb” and רֶחֶם, **racham / rechem**, “womb.”

Oswalt recognizes that this passage can well be understood of YHWH as Divine Mother Who carries Her children in Her womb, but rejects any such understanding. He states that “While the picture of a mother carrying her children in her arms [why not ‘in her womb’?] is not automatically excluded, it is not part of the **Old Testament** imagery ...God may give form to persons in the womb (**Psalm 139:13; Isaiah 44:2; 49:5**), but it is not His womb, nor is it a womb that He has impregnated. It is only after birth that God enters the picture as the One Who carries (see **Psalm 22:11^{Heb} / 10^{Eng}**). This situation is almost certainly intentional, to distance God from the fertility rites of pagan religion with their sexualizing of Deity.” (P. 230)

But Oswalt is mistaken. See **Isaiah 42:14; Psalm 90:1** and **Deuteronomy 32:18** (as quoted in footnote 43 on **Psalm 45**). **Psalm 139** and **Jeremiah 1** show convincingly that it is not “only after birth that God enters the picture”! Such dogmatism is out of place in biblical study!

¹¹Alexander comments that “The figure of an infant and its nurse was not sufficient to express the whole extent of God’s fidelity and tenderness to Israel. The first of these relations is necessarily restricted to the earliest period of life, but God’s protection is continued without limit.” (P. 192) Yes—this is exactly what is being affirmed in the next verse.

¹²**Codex Leningradensis** does not distinguish here between the letters *sin* and *shin*. A large number of Hebrew manuscripts and editions of the **Hebrew Bible** read the letter *sin*. We think this is the only way the word can be pointed to make any sense of the passage.

¹³The verb אֶסְבֵּל which occurs in this second line of **verse 4**, and then again in

(continued...)

I, I made,¹⁴ and I, I will carry;

and I will bear a load, and I will deliver!¹⁵

46:5¹⁶ לְמִי תִדְמִיוֹנִי וְתִשׁוּרִי

¹³(...continued)

the fourth line, is always, according to North, “used of carrying a heavy load: compare **Isaiah 43:4, 11; Genesis 49:15; Lamentations 5:7.**” (P. 164) See also the related noun סְבִלָּת, “burdens” which is used for the burdens placed upon the shoulders of the Israelites by the Egyptians when they were reduced to slaves by the **Egyptians– Exodus 1:11, 2:11; 1 Kings 11:28**, etc.

¹⁴North translates the qal perfect verb עָשִׂיתִי, “I made,” by “I have made a beginning,” and goes on to ask what this refers to, suggesting either I made a beginning in the exodus of Israel from Egypt, or I have made a beginning with reference to the career of Cyrus. (P. 165)

We see no reason for translating by “I have made a beginning,” and think the verb refers to the fact that YHWH “made” or “created” Israel, both its people individually and the nation as a whole, and has carried them since their birth.

¹⁵Using the metaphor of a person who grows from infancy to old age, YHWH is depicted as promising that just as He has carried Israel from its infancy / birth / emergence from the womb, so He will continue to carry Israel when it has grown old, when its hair has grown white.

Alexander states that “The general analogy between the life of individuals and that of nations is sufficiently obvious, and is finely expressed by Florus in his division of the Roman History into the periods of childhood, youth, manhood and old age.” (P. 192) He is referring to Lucius Annaeus Florus, a Roman historian, who lived from 74 to 130 C.E., in the time of Trajan and Hadrian.

Knight comments on **verse 4** that “What is true of the past [YHWH’s carrying His people] is therefore certain to be true in the future. Yahweh will continue to carry Israel all her days. This is because God will never change. He will still be ‘I am He.’ Here are set down two great affirmations of our biblical faith: (1) Man-made religions are a burden to those who hold them, but the God of the **Bible** upholds those who trust in Him. (2) One need use only the present tense when speaking of Israel’s God, for in both the past and the infinite future, God is always the same: ‘I am.’” (P. 102)

But, we say, the text not only uses the present tense, it also uses the future tense, “I will...”, and the name YHWH is in fact a future verb, “He will be” or “He will cause to be.”

¹⁶Slotki comments on **verses 5-7** that they depict “the absurdity of idolatry.” (P. 227)

(continued...)

וְתִמְשְׁלוּנִי וְנִדְמָה:

To whom will you (plural) liken Me, and they will be alike?

And will you compare Me, and we will be alike?¹⁷

46:6¹⁸ הַזֵּלִים זֶהָב מְכִיס

וְכֶסֶף בְּקִנְיָה יִשְׁקְלוּ

יִשְׁכְּרוּ צוּרָף וַיַּעֲשֶׂהוּ אֵל

יִסְגְּרוּ אֶף־יִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ:

The ones lavishing gold from a purse,

¹⁶(...continued)

Oswalt comments on these verses that “The logical conclusion of the contrast between God and the Gods in **verses 1-4** is that there is no comparison between them. This is exactly the direction in which the writer moves, echoing the language of **40:18** in the opening statement (**verse 5**). To which of the idol-Gods can the Lord be compared? They are the creation of humans [not according to their mythology, such as in the **Enuma Elish**, where the Gods are created out of the blood of the slain Monster-Goddess Tiamat, and humans are later creations designed to serve the Gods’ needs. It is the idols / images of the Gods that are the creations of humans!] and are subject to all the limitations of time and space. He is the Creator of humans—and all else—and is limited by nothing.” (P. 231)

Knight comments on **verses 5-7** that “Surely the exiles could now see with their own eyes what heathen Gods looked like. There was an aura of mystery about Bel and Nebo so long as they remained hidden in a gaudy temple...But here they were on the street, and anyone could see they were merely gilt-covered dolls. More of his sarcasm follows as he points out to the exiles ‘Fancy when they set it down, it stands!’ But Nebo, the savior is no savior, for he cannot rescue you from any kind of trouble when you cry to him.” (P. 103)

¹⁷For **verse 5**, compare **40:18, 25**,

18 And to whom will you (plural) liken El?

And what likeness, will you arrange / set in order for Him?

25 And to whom will you (plural) liken Me, and I will be alike?

Says Set-apart One.

¹⁸Slotki comments on **verses 6-7** that the readers should compare “the similar description of idolatry in **44:9-20**.” (P. 227)

and silver with the measuring reed / scale¹⁹ they weigh out;
they hire a craftsman, and they make a God,²⁰
they prostrate themselves, also they worship.

46:7 יִשְׂאֵהוּ עַל־כִּתְף יִסְבֵּלֶהוּ
וַיִּנְיחֵהוּ תַחְתּוֹ וַיַּעֲמֵד
מִמְקוֹמוֹ לֹא יִמִּישׁ
אֶף־יִצְעַק אֵלָיו וְלֹא יַעֲנֶה
מִצָּרָתוֹ לֹא יוֹשִׁיעֵנּוּ:

They carry it upon a shoulder, they bear it as a load;
and they cause it to rest (on) its bottom and it stands.
From its place it will not depart.
Also he will cry out to it, and it will not answer;
from his distresses it will not save / deliver him!²¹

46:8²² זָכְרוּ־זֹאת וְהִתְאַשְׁשׁוּ

¹⁹The Hebrew phrase is בִּקְנָה, which means “with the stalk / reed.” But how can you measure the heavy metal silver with a “stalk” or with a “reed”? Evidently the meaning is a very heavy, thick stalk or reed that could be used as a “balance” or “scale” for weighing lighter amounts of silver. Alexander states that it is “properly a reed, then any rod or bar, such as the shaft of a candlestick (**Exodus 25:31**), and here the beam of a balance...The verse has reference to the wealthier class of idol-worshippers.” (P. 193)

²⁰Oswalt is at pains to point out how Isaiah knew the distinction between the idols and the Gods themselves. But here the prophet identified the idol with the God, and Oswalt says nothing about it.

²¹Alexander comments that “The idol is not only the work of man’s hands, but entirely dependent on him for the slightest motion. No wonder, therefore, that he cannot hear the prayers of his worshipers, much less grant them the deliverance and protection they need.” (P. 193)

²²Knight comments on **verse 8** that “The moral of all this follows naturally. Not to believe in Yahweh’s providential care is in reality to rebel...against the covenant relationship binding Israel to her God. Not to believe in Yahweh’s plan means to have lost

(continued...)

²²(...continued)

one's footing. Israel's God is her Rock, as Deutero-Isaiah has quoted before from **Deuteronomy 32:15.**" (P. 103)

Slotki comments on **verses 8-11** that in them "The prophet appeals to the transgressors to recall past events which demonstrate that only God is omnipotent and omniscient, and that He alone is able to carry His promises and plans to full realization." (P. 228)

Once again, Slotki is reading religious-philosophical terms—omnipotence and omniscience—into the text. The text does depict YHWH as knowing the end from the beginning, and it depicts YHWH as being able to bring His promises to fulfilment. But such philosophical descriptions await the much later development of philosophical theology. The thought process is: If YHWH knows the end from the beginning, He must know everything in between; if He knows this much, He must know everything... and everything therefore must be predetermined. If YHWH can bring His promises to fulfilment, He must be able to do anything and everything...and therefore nothing is impossible for YHWH. But before such conclusions are drawn, many passages of scripture must be considered, which seem to teach freedom of will, and depict YHWH as having to learn from what happens in order to know what His reaction will be. And other passages of scripture must be considered which depict YHWH / Jesus Christ as unable to do some things, for example work miracles where there is no faith (**Mark 6:5**), or force people to love Him.

Are the biblical writers philosophical theologians? Is it fair to draw religious-philosophical conclusions from their statements? We think that all too often, religious-philosophical conclusions are read into the texts, rather than being genuinely expressed in them. What do you think?

And we wonder what it would be like if the biblical authors could be brought to life, and enabled to see how many of their statements are used as "proof-texts" in religious argument and debate. We think they would be amazed, even perhaps amused, at the way their writings are used.

Oswalt entitles **verses 8-13** "God's righteous purpose in Cyrus." He comments that "This section is in many ways a summing up of the argument not only of **44:23-46:7** but also of **40:1-46:7**. The Israel that feels itself both helpless and hopeless is called to remember that there is only one God—theirs. He has demonstrated the truth of this proposition in their history, not only by what He has done but also by His ability through the prophets to announce what He would do in advance...

"Now He proposes to act in yet another confirmation of a prophetic word, this time through the coming of Cyrus. The only real question is: Given the stupendous nature of His claims and the unprecedented nature of this particular promise, will Israel believe God? Or will they remain stubborn and rebellious, able to focus only on the reality of their terrible misfortune? This issue is **chapters 40-46** in a nutshell." (P. 234)

(continued...)

הָשִׁיבוּ פֹשְׁעִים עַל-לֵב:

Remember this,²³ and show yourselves firm!

Return (it), transgressors,²⁴ to (your) heart!²⁵

²²(...continued)

This is too dogmatic. This question is indeed a real question, but it is not the only real question. There are numerous other real questions raised in the study of **Isaiah 40-46**, and over-simplification such as this does not, in our opinion, lead to genuine understanding.

²³Oswalt observes that “Commentators are almost evenly divided whether the *this* that the hearers are to remember points to the previous verses or the following...

“[The call to remember] is the same theme found in **Deuteronomy**. What is the antidote to unbelief? Memory. God is not to be known in the endlessly recurring cycles of nature, mind numbing in their glorious repetitions, but in His stark, unrepeatably intrusions into history. Remember those moments, say Moses and all the prophets, for as you do, you will see reality. You will see God as He really is and know that you can entrust yourself to Him.” (P. 234)

But this is another of Oswalt’s overstatements, as he claims that God is not to be known in nature. We should remember YHWH’s speeches to Job in **Job 38-41**, as in those speeches, YHWH gives Job an extended lesson in zoology, which enables Job to attain to a new and deeper understanding of God. And we should also remember such passages as **Psalms 19** which claims that the glory of God can be understood from nature, along with Paul’s statement in **Romans 1:20** that God’s power and Divine nature have been clearly perceived since the creation of the world in the things God has made.

And we wonder—What causes Oswalt to make such statements as this?

²⁴North translates פֹּשְׁעִים by “rebels” (our “transgressors”). He comments that “The address is to the Prophet’s own people, not to Gentiles.” (P. 166)

²⁵**Verse 8** is a call to remember what the prophet is saying, and in its light to stand strong against the temptation to worship the idol-Gods. It is a call to return this teaching to their hearts.

For the last two lines, **Rahfs** has:

Repent / rethink (it) the / you people who have gone astray!
Turn back in the (your) heart!
(That is, it is a call to repentance.)

46:9²⁶ זְכֹרוּ רֵאשִׁוֹנוֹת מֵעוֹלָם

כִּי אֲנֹכִי אֵל וְאֵין עוֹד אֱלֹהִים

וְאִפְסֵם כְּמוֹנֵי:

Remember first / former things from long-lasting time,²⁷

²⁶Alexander comments on **verses 9-10** that the prophet, speaking for YHWH, “calls upon them to consider the proofs of His exclusive Deity, afforded not only by the nullity [worthlessness] of all conflicting claims, but by the fact of His infallible foreknowledge, as attested by the actual prediction of events long before their occurrence.” (P. 194)

²⁷For this call to remember the first / former things, contrast **Isaiah 43:18**,

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

But here just the opposite is said—Do remember the former things! How do you explain this? Is Second Isaiah contradicting himself?

Oswalt comments that “Specifically, the prophet wants his people to reflect on all that they know of God as far back as they can go—from *eternity*...It is all the *former things* that have been recorded for Israel’s memory, including creation and the flood, the patriarchs, the exodus, the conquest, the judges, David and Solomon, and on and on. Remember these things, because their testimony is unanimous: only the Being Who did all that has the right to be called God; *there is no other*.” (P. 235)

Yes...but the phrase “from eternity” is not in the text, especially because there is no word in Hebrew for “eternity.” The two phrases that occurs in these verses are מֵעוֹלָם, “from long-distant-time,” “antiquity,” and מִזְקֵנָה, “from ancient time.”

Alexander holds that declaring the end from the beginning “means declaring the whole series of events included between these extremes. אַחֲרֵיתָא does not strictly mean the end as opposed to the beginning, but the latter part of anything as opposed to the preceding part. Hence it often means futurity.” (P. 194) We agree!

North thinks that “the most likely reference is to the exodus, as in **43:18**.” (P. 166) But **43:18** does not mention the exodus.

And we wonder, if this means to not remember the exodus, why is it that there

(continued...)

That I (am) El / God, and there is not again a God,
and an ending / cessation like Me!²⁸

46:10²⁹ מִגִּיד מֵרֵאשִׁית אַחֲרֵית

²⁷(...continued)

are so many allusions to the exodus throughout **Second Isaiah**? See, for example, **Isaiah 41:18, 15-20; 43:14-21; 44:27; 48:21; 50:2-3; 51:10; 52:6, 12.**

²⁸**Verse 9** is another Self-description of YHWH. Looking back to the former things, He is seen to be the sole Creator of the universes, with no other God at His side in the beginning. Then this is followed by another claim to exclusive monotheism—not only is He the only God present at the first, He is also the only God Who brings history to a goal / end (see **verse 10**, lines 1 and 2), and Who is able to describe that goal / end.

Which causes us to ask, Did Baal Marduk have an “eschatology”? Did He teach His followers concerning “afterwards,” or “the end”? Are there records of any of the ancient Near-Eastern Gods predicting or describing the “end-times”? Followers of YHWH were led to constantly speak of the goal of history—of the destruction of evil, and the blessed future that awaits the righteous. But we know of no evidence for any such “eschatology” attributed to those other Gods of the ancient Near-East.

²⁹Knight comments on **verse 10** that “Deutero-Isaiah goes on to declare that the exodus revelation was only the first of God’s mighty acts...The meaning of all events, [he] declares, God will therefore undoubtedly reveal in the end. Then the eyes of believing men will see how everything that has happened has fitted into the plan or purpose which has been working out all the time to its final solution.” (P. 103)

Oswalt comments on **verses 10-11** that “There follow in these two verses a series of three participles that both substantiate the claim to uniqueness and, at the same time, flow from that claim...They identify God by what He is constantly doing in all times and places...Here the three participles all have to do with speaking, declaring, saying, calling...[and they] make a direct link between predictive prophecy (declaring the outcome at the start) and Divine intervention in history (calling from the east a bird of prey)...The plain sense of this passage and the others like it is surely that not only the exile but also the deliverance had been specifically predicted long before the events themselves...

“The third participle speaks of the specific call of Cyrus for this particular moment in God’s will. Although Cyrus is not named here, the reference to *from the east a bird of prey* can hardly be to anyone else. *Man of His counsel* confirms this identification...The

author is simply saying that when the destruction of Babylon comes, it will come with all the suddenness of a hawk falling on a rabbit.” (Pp. 236-37)

North states that the two phrases which he translates by “My purpose” and “My

(continued...)

וּמִקֶּדֶם אֲשֶׁר לֹא-נַעֲשׂוּ

אָמַר עֲצָתִי תִקּוּם

וְכָל-חֲפֵצֵי אֶעֱשֶׂה:

One declaring an end from (the) beginning,

and from long ago those things that have not been done,³⁰

Who says, My counsel shall stand,

and every desire / purpose of Mine I will do / create--³¹

46:11 קָרָא מִמִּזְרַח עֵיט

מֵאֶרֶץ מִרְחָק אִישׁ (עֲצָתוֹ) [עֲצָתִי]

אֶף-דִּבְרֹתַי אֶף-אֲבִיאָנָהּ

יִצְרֹתַי אֶף-אֶעֱשֶׂנָהּ:

²⁹(...continued)

will” are “exactly the same as in the Cyrus context **Isaiah 44:26-28.**” (P. 166)

³⁰For these first two lines in **verse 10**, see Oswalt’s comment in the preceding footnote.

Slotki comments that “When a period in history is just beginning God declares how it will end.” (P. 228) Here, we think, the reference is to the end of the Babylonian captivity of the Judeans, and their return to their ancestral homes.

Of course, there are many questions that can be raised concerning the clarity and accuracy of biblical descriptions of the “end-times,” but there can no question that followers of YHWH were constantly led to speak of them and attempt to describe them. But prophetic descriptions of the future were always subject to YHWH’s statement to Moses in **Numbers 12:1-9**, that prophets, in distinction from Moses, would see things in an “enigma,” in visions and dreams, not in a direct, face to face sort of way—a statement taken up by the Apostle Paul in **1 Corinthians 13:12**, where he states concerning his own gift of prophecy that it is enigmatic—oftentimes translated into English by “seeing through a mirror darkly.” Those who claim the prophets and apostles “knew everything” with perfect clarity need to reconsider that view.

³¹Where our Hebrew text has the 1st person qal imperfect / future, אֶעֱשֶׂה, “I will do / make,” 1QIs^a has יַעֲשֶׂה, the 3rd person qal imperfect, “He will do / make.”

calling from (the) east a bird of prey,³²

from a land far away, a man of My counsel.³³

Also I spoke, also I will bring it (to pass);

I formed, also I will do it!³⁴

46:12³⁵ שִׁמְעוּ אֵלַי אֲבִירֵי לֵב

³²Slotki holds that this “bird of prey” means Cyrus, “so described from the rapidity of his movements or from the irresistible force of his attacks.” (P. 228) For his description as being from the east, compare **41:2, 25**.

North translates by “a falcon,” which “with its ‘stooping’ flight [high speed dive] would suit Cyrus well. Falconry was practiced in the East as far back as 1200 B.C.E.” (P. 166) “Falconry” is the hunting of wild quarry in its natural state and habitat by means of a trained bird of prey.

What is this metaphor supposed to mean? We take it that YHWH is the Falconer, and Cyrus is the falcon, sent by YHWH to rapidly bring His exiled people home to Israel. Do you agree?

³³The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” עֲצָתוֹ, “His counsel,” and the second, the *qere*, “to be read,” עֲצָתִי, “My counsel.”

Slotki states that “man of My counsel” means that YHWH had chosen him to execute His plan. (P. 228)

North states that “Obviously, no man ‘counsels’ Yahweh (compare **40:13** [‘and what man made known His counsel to Him?’]): He decides His Own counsel.” (P. 166)

³⁴The **Rahlf**s translation of **verse 11** is “calling from risings / easts a bird, and from a land far away, concerning whom I have purposed, I have spoken, and I led—I created and I made, I led him and I prospered his way.”

³⁵Knight comments on **verse 12** that “After Israel had seen with her own eyes how ‘in everything God works for good with those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose (**Romans 8:28**), that she should express unbelief at this point was rebellion indeed. She was in fact a ‘stubborn-minded people.’ No wonder she was not conducting herself with love to others (*tsedaqah*)...”

“The argument at **Romans 10:3** has been built up from words contained in this verse and could be regarded as a comment on it.” (P. 104)

Oswalt comments on **verses 12-13** that “These two verses represent a call to accept the conclusions that the preceding arguments lead to: that God can and will

(continued...)

הַרְחֹקִים מִצְדָּקָה:

Listen to me, mighty ones of heart / mind,³⁶
the ones far away from righteousness!³⁷

46:13 קִרְבֹּתַי צְדָקָתִי

לֹא תִרְחָק

³⁵(...continued)

deliver His people. To continue to question this is no longer an absence of faith but a willful refusal to believe. It is to manifest that *hard-hearted* attitude that produced the disaster at Kadesh-barnea (**Numbers 14:1-10**)...

“Here the unbelief seems to be focused in three questions: Is God really strong enough to wrest His people from the Gods of Babylon? Would He want to save them at all, since their sin will have been so grievous? Is the conquest of Babylon by another pagan, Cyrus, really an acceptable mode of deliverance?...

“Finally, almost all of **chapter 48** is a denunciation of those who have heard and heard, yet never heard, the truth about themselves and God (compare **Isaiah 6:9-10**). God is patient and slow to anger, but there is an end even to that, as the generation in the wilderness and the destruction of Jerusalem should tell us.” (Pp. 237-38)

³⁶Where our Hebrew text has אַבְיָרֵי לֵב, “strong / mighty ones of heart,” **Rahfs** has “the ones having ruined / destroyed the heart,” reflecting a Hebrew text with אַבְיָרֵי לֵב, “serants of heart.”

Slotki’s translation is “stout-hearted,” and he says that here it has the meaning “perversely obstinate.” (P. 229) Alexander similarly states that “Strength of heart implies, though it does not directly signify, stubbornness or obstinacy, and a settled opposition to the will of God.” (P. 195)

³⁷Slotki states that line 2 of **verse 12** is explained by some as meaning “‘that they were far from enjoying the fruit of God’s righteousness,’ God having delayed their deliverance; but probably ‘righteousness’ in this and the next verse, as often in this section of the **Book [of Isaiah]**, signifies ‘victory,’ and the phrase means ‘far from believing in the possibility of a victory by God over the Babylonians.’” (P. 229)

Though it is often claimed that biblical “righteousness” means “victory,” we are not convinced. Righteousness is a requirement for achieving victory in the biblical story, but, we think, it is hardly means victory. We think it means “doing what is right,” especially in terms of “right in relationships.” See the powerful description of righteousness in **Isaiah 58**. We believe that just such “righteousness” will win the victory in fulfilling the purpose of God for His servant-people.

וּתְשׁוּעָתִי לֹא תֵאָחֵר

וְנִתְּתִי בְּצִיּוֹן תְּשׁוּעָה

לְיִשְׂרָאֵל תְּפָאֲרָתִי:

I brought near My righteousness;

it will not be far away;

and My salvation / deliverance will not tarry / linger,

and I will place salvation / deliverance in Zion,³⁸

for Israel, My beauty.³⁹

³⁸North translates this line by “I will give in Zion My gift of salvation.” He states that “The thought is that of salvation as a permanent endowment or ‘planting.’” (Pp. 166-67)

³⁹We take **verse 13** to mean that Israel, captive in Babylon, is precious to YHWH; she is His “beauty” or “glory.” Now He is determined to do what His righteousness demands—He will save or deliver Israel from captivity. Even though Israel has had to wait for more than half a century, the Divine righteousness is drawing near, and that means Israel, His “beauty,” will return to Zion / Jerusalem!

Compare **Isaiah 62:1-3**,

- 1 For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent,
and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not be quiet,
until her righteousness goes forth like the brightness,
and her deliverance / salvation burns like a torch!
- 2 And nations will see your righteousness,
and all kings your glory;
and a name will be called for you, a new name
which YHWH’s mouth will designate.
- 3 And you will be a crown of beauty in YHWH’s hand,
and a turban of royalty in your God’s hand.

Jeremiah 33:9,

And it [the city of Jerusalem] will be / become Mine for a name of rejoicing,
for praise and for beauty to all nations of the earth,
who shall hear of all the good which I am doing with them;
and they shall be in dread and shall shake over all the good,
and over all the peace which I am doing to / for her!

(continued...)

³⁹(...continued)

Knight comments that “God has now to act at this juncture in history despite His people Israel, and not with her cooperation, as He would have wished. He says ‘That is why I am bringing you My creative love’—for of course Cyrus was daily drawing nearer and nearer to the gates of Babylon. Finally we meet a surprising statement. It is the simple yet profound declaration that God is now about to set His new creative way of life (*tsedaqah*)...within Israel, for Israel obviously cannot take even one step forward alone in her unbelief. When He does this thing, it will certainly not be with Israel’s consent and cooperation, since she thinks herself wiser than God. God’s action must therefore be one of grace alone...

“In poetic parallelism with the word for creative love [*tsedaqah*], there now follows a new and significant term, the word glory [תְּפִאֲרֹתַי, ‘My beauty / glory’]. It is possible to translate the second half of this line in two ways: either by

‘I will put saving, creative love in Zion, for Israel My glory [beauty],’ or

‘by giving My glory [beauty] to Israel.’

Whichever way we take it, the statement comes to us as a great surprise. For it contains a dogmatic announcement which Deutero-Isaiah will develop only later in his argument. His statement is no less than this, that the glory [beauty] of the Creator of the ends of the earth, the visible form of the invisible God, will be made manifest precisely through Israel’s resistance to God’s will, and through her rejection of God’s plan, even as it was then working out in contemporary events and in the coming of Cyrus.” (Pp. 104-05)