

Isaiah Chapter 52, Hebrew Text with Translation and Footnotes

52:1¹ עִירֵי עִירֵי לְבַשְׂי עֵדָן צִיּוֹן

¹Slotki comments on **verses 1-6**, “Let Jerusalem break off the chains of her captivity and array herself in festal garments. No longer will God endure the desecration of His name through the enslavement of His people by rulers who fail to understand that it was He Who had for a time delivered Israel into their hands. They have no claim whatsoever upon Israel who will, therefore, be redeemed without money but at the will of God.” (P. 257)

North entitles these verses “Zion, Awake!”

He comments that **verses 1-2** “are an urgent summons to Zion-Jerusalem to put on her festal garments in anticipation of her near-approaching deliverance. Her sacred ground is no longer to be defiled by the presence of ‘uncircumcised and unclean’ foreigners. She is to shake herself from the dust in which she has lain prostrate (**51:23**), and free herself from her neck-fetters...

“**Verses 7-10** would be a fitting sequel to **verses 1-2**, but the intermediate **verses 3-6** are more ragged than anything in the prophecy [**chapters 40-55**].” (Pp. 218-19)

Oswalt comments that in **verses 1-12**, “God dramatically calls the people to prepare to receive their salvation. Their salvation is not a matter of God’s willingness (**51:9-16**), nor of the severity of their punishment (**51:17-23**). It is a matter of their faith. Will they rise from their apathetic lethargy and lay hold of what is theirs?...The call is founded on God’s attitudes toward Jerusalem / Zion and His promises concerning her (**verses 3-6**)...**Verses 7-12** express in highly lyrical form a series of images that convey the reality of what God is about to do. This is another example of Isaiah’s penchant [fondness, tendency] for concluding a teaching segment with concrete images.” (P. 359)

He adds that “The opening words duplicate almost precisely those of **51:9**, which is the opening of this section. There they were a call by the people for God to awake and utilize His strength for their deliverance. But God has shown them (**51:9-23**) that there is no question concerning either His activity or His attentiveness. The problem is not with Him; He is ready to deliver them at the earliest moment when they are willing to exercise faith in Him. It is they who must awake and put on strength, not He. This has been a recurring theme from **chapter 40** onward, and although it comes to something of a climax here, it is not finished here...

“This is the same point being made here, and its recurrence in the materials addressed to the post-exilic setting shows that the significance of the theme here (**51:9-52:12**) is not to be restricted to deliverance from the Babylonian exile. If Zion is to be restored to her God, then she must move from blaming Him for her separation from Him, and from believing that the situation is hopeless, to the kind of joyous faith and

(continued...)

לְבַשְׂיָו בְּגָדֵי תְפָאֲרָתְךָ יְרוּשָׁלַם עִיר הַקֹּדֶשׁ
 כִּי לֹא יוֹסִיף יְבֹאֲבֶךָ עוֹד עַרְל וְטָמֵא:

Awake! Awake!² Dress with your³ strength,⁴ Zion!⁵

¹(...continued)

anticipation that will allow His power to be unleashed. While she has no strength to deliver herself, she does have strength to lay hold of God's promises and must exercise that strength if deliverance is to be realized. This is a principle of Divine-human relations that is the same in all circumstances." (P. 360)

And we wonder. Is Oswalt doing the same thing that Job's friends did, assuming that he can state the principles on which Divine-human relations are based, and cannot be varied? Job's friends assumed the principle of "retribution" as the basis of all Divine-human relations, but the **Book of Job** demolishes their assumption. We should learn that Divine-human relations are not subject to our theological assumptions, claiming that God acts in this way, and this way only! The true and living God is much too hidden, too deep, too great for such assumptions!

Knight states that in **chapter 52** "The poem continues. God has to call upon Israel a second time to wake up from the sleep of death, from the intoxication resulting from drinking the cup. Deutero-Isaiah's words are now clearly a theological interpretation of contemporary events, for they do not contain a prescription to the exiles of what they are to do when Babylon falls.

"The poem is written in plain contrast with that to be found at **47:1ff**. There the queen of Babylon is doomed to destruction, for she is the personification of sinful pride. But here it is Zion that is addressed. She is Yahweh's bride, and because of that she is to put on her wedding gown. She is to do this before she is rescued! This gown is not of course her own, for the gown is part of the dowry that the husband supplies to his bride. Zion's is a clean and beautiful gown; as such it is symbolic of purity and of sins forgiven...But what actually is this gown? It is nothing less than Yahweh's Own strength." (P. 161)

²Ortlund notes that with the words "Awake, awake!" "God turns the cry of His people [51:9,

Awake! Awake!
 Dress (Yourself with) strength, arm of YHWH!
 Awake as (in) days of old / ancient time,
 (in) generations of long-lasting (past) times!
 Are You not She,
 the One Who cut Rahab in pieces (feminine participle),
 Who pierced (feminine participle) (the) Dragon?]

(continued...)

²(...continued)

back on them. God has prepared a bright future, to be entered into by faith.” (P. 1336)

But, we ask, where in this text is anything said about “entering by faith”? The text commands Zion / Jerusalem to put on beautiful garments, to shake off the dust, to arise and be seated, and to loose the bonds from her neck—but not a word about faith. The Christian commentator is reading his personal faith ideas into the ancient text rather than interpreting what it actually says.

Compare the similar call to Deborah in **Judges 5:12a**,

Awake! Awake, Deborah!

Awake! Awake—Speak / Utter a song!

(The Hebrew word for “Speak! / Utter” has a similar sound to “Deborah,” i.e., **dabberiy.**)

As Slotki observes, “Zion is called upon to throw off the stupor which is the effect of drinking the cup of God’s wrath.” (P. 257) See **Isaiah 51:17**,

Rouse yourself, rouse yourself!

Get up, Jerusalem--

who drank from YHWH’s hand

(the) cup of His rage,

(the) goblet (?) cup (synonym) of the reeling / staggering you drank, you drained
(it) out (completely)!

³1QIs^a omits the pronominal suffix “your,” and the Syriac translation omits the entire phrase “dress with your strength.”

⁴Where our Hebrew text has עֲזָתְךָ, “your strength,” 1QIsa has עֲזָה, “strength,” “might.”

Knight comments that “Put on your strength, O Zion does not refer to anything Zion herself possesses. Her strength is God Himself.” (P. 161) Compare

Psalm 21:1^{Eng},

YHWH, in Your strength a king will be glad;

and in Your salvation / deliverance, how he will exceedingly rejoice!

Psalm 27:1,

O YHWH, my Light, and my Salvation / Deliverance--
of whom shall I be afraid?

(continued...)

Dress with garments of your beauty—⁶, ¹ Jerusalem, the set-apart City!
Because he will not again enter into you, an uncircumcised person and an unclean
person!⁷

⁴(...continued)

O YHWH, Stronghold of my life--
of whom shall I be fearful?

Psalm 28:7,

YHWH—my Strength and my Shield--
in Him my heart trusted, and I was helped;
and my heart exulted.
And with my song I will praise Him!

Psalm 46:2^{Heb} / 1^{Eng},

God (is) for us a Refuge and Strength,
a Help, found especially in troubles.

⁵See **Isaiah 51:9**. Slotki comments that “Zion is called upon to throw off the stupor which is the effect of drinking the cup of God’s wrath.” (P. 257) Again, compare **Isaiah 51:17** (quoted in footnote 2).

⁶For this noun תְּפִאֲרָה, “beauty” in the **Book of Isaiah**, see our end-note 1. The passages given there contrast the emptiness of human attempts at manufactured beauty, with the true beauty that comes from God and His work in human history. See **Isaiah 3:18-22** for a lengthy description of fine dress of haughty women in ancient Jerusalem.

⁷Oswalt notes that the Hebrew adjective טָמֵא, which means “‘unclean, abominable,’ occurs only 7 times in the **Book of Isaiah**, but all the occurrences are in significant places: **6:5** (twice); **30:22**; **35:8**; **52:1, 11**; **64:5**. In particular, they speak of the incompatibility of the unclean with the blessing of God.” (P. 357)

He comments that “The promise that the uncircumcised and unclean will no longer come in to the city continues the theme of **4:2-6**. The greatest hope for Zion is not that she will be rich, famous, and mighty, but that she will be the city of God, sharing His character (so also **35:8**:

And a highway and the way will be there;
and it will be called Way of the Set-Apartness.
An unclean person will not pass over it.
And he who is walking (the) way
and foolish people will not go astray.

(continued...)

⁷(...continued)

Oswalt continues: “The uncircumcised are not only among the foreigners; they are also among the circumcised Israelites, because uncleanness is finally a matter of the spirit, not of the flesh. Here again it is evident that Israel’s problem, the problem from which the arm of the Lord will deliver them, is much more than Babylonian captivity. If they are to be the people of God, living in the holy city, something must happen to cure them of their rebellion and their uncleanness (**Revelation 21:27**, [which states concerning the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem:

And anything unclean shall not enter into it,
and [the one] doing / making an abomination and falsehood—
only those having been written in the scroll / book of the life of the Little Lamb!

This text in **Isaiah 52:1** contains the Divine promise that following Jerusalem’s / Zion’s renewal, no one unclean or uncircumcised will ever again enter into her, as the Babylonians had done. But if we understand this to mean following the return of the exiles from Babylon, the history of Israel shows that this promise was not fulfilled, as in 70 C.E., the uncircumcised Roman armies conquered the city of Jerusalem and demolished the Jewish temple.

North comments that “Israelite antipathy to peoples uncircumcised, amounting to abhorrence and even contempt, was of long standing...and becomes increasingly pronounced in **Ezekiel** [mentioned over ten times]. Even Deutero-Isaiah shared it, and the first major crisis in the Christian Church was over the question whether Gentiles should be admitted uncircumcised into its fellowship (**Acts 10-11; Galatians 2**).” (P. 219)

Knight comments that “Two things will result: (1) She will move from the prison dungeon of Babylon into freedom, and so find herself moving from the death of the exile into the life of God. (2) She will become holy, even as God Himself is holy, for all those who associate with Him partake of His holiness (compare Exodus 19:6; Isaiah 48:2). That is why neither the uncircumcised nor the unclean will ever enter you again.” (P. 161) Compare **Revelation 21:27**,

καὶ οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθῃ εἰς αὐτὴν πᾶν κοινὸν
καὶ [ὁ] ποιῶν βδέλυγμα καὶ ψεῦδος
εἰ μὴ οἱ γεγραμμένοι ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τῆς ζωῆς τοῦ ἀρνίου.
And anything / anyone common / unclean will not enter into her (Zion, the
heavenly city)
and / or [the] one making a detestable thing and a falsehood—
only those having been written in the book of the life of the Little Lamb!

What do you think? We have been impressed with the “universalism” of **Second Isaiah**, but this language reminds us of the exclusiveness of Ezra / Nehemiah and their descendants, the Pharisees. Does this sound like the author of **Isaiah 56** (Third

(continued...)

52:2 הַתְּנַעֲרִי מֵעָפָר

קוּמִי שְׁבִי יְרוּשָׁלַם

(הַתְּפַתְּחִי) [הַתְּפַתְּחִי] מוֹסְרֵי צִוְאֶרְךָ

שְׁבִיָה בַת־צִיּוֹן:

Shake yourself free from dust,

arise,⁸ take your seat,⁹ Jerusalem!¹⁰

⁷(...continued)

Isaiah)? Does Second Isaiah only use such language here in terms of the murderous Babylonian conquerors of Jerusalem?

⁸Obviously, Jerusalem / Zion is depicted as a woman sitting in the dust, symbolic of her suffering, even perhaps of her mourning. But whereas in **chapter 47** the virgin daughter Babylon is called to “come down and sit in the dust, where she will work as a slave,” here Jerusalem / Zion is called to get up, to shake off the dust in which she has been sitting, and to get rid of any signs of her former slavery.

Knight comments, “Qumi [קוּמִי], ‘get up,’ *daughter of Zion*,’ says Yahweh to this poor girl bride who is now sitting in the dust into which Queen Babylon is about to descend [47:1].

“(When Jesus said ‘κουμ’ [several manuscripts and editions of the **Greek New Testament** have varied readings, κούμ, κοῦμ, κουμί, the Mesopotamian form of the imperative קוּם, for which Palestinian Aramaic has קוּמִי] to Jairus’ daughter [Mark 5:41], it is clear that he saw her too as a daughter of Zion.) For dust represents all that is unclean, and one must *shake* it off before the clean new garment is put on. Yet Israel cannot raise herself any more than can Jairus’ daughter. Only if she uses her Divine Husband’s strength will she be able to strike from her neck the *bonds* or fetters of servitude.” (P. 161)

⁹The Hebrew text has שְׁבִי, with a *dagesh* in the *shin*. Without the *dagesh*, שְׁבִי, **shebhiy** can mean “captive,” a masculine singular noun, which is hardly appropriate in a statement being made to Jerusalem / Zion, both of which are feminine. שְׁבִיָה Is the feminine singular noun for “captive.” But שְׁבִי can also be read as the feminine singular imperative of the verb יִשֵּׁב, meaning “sit!,” or “take a seat,” which we take to be the best translation here. Knight thinks the translation “captive” is best, and comments that “Captive...looks like a masculine form of the word...Probably Deutero-

(continued...)

Loosen¹¹ (the) bonds / chains from your neck,¹²
captive daughter of Zion!¹³

⁹(...continued)

Isaiah is referring to the idea of the captivity⁷ of an Israel that is both servant (masculine) and bride (feminine) at the same time.” (P. 162)

North translates by “sit down,” and comments that the phrase “‘sit down,’ reads oddly after ‘stand up.’” (P. 218)

We disagree. The command to stand up, or arise, probably means to get up out of the humiliating condition of a slave, or a conquered city lying in ruins, while the command to “sit down,” or ‘take your seat,’ implies Jerusalem’s taking her former seat as a queen, ruling over a freed people.

¹⁰Oswalt comments that “Instead of being called to sit down in the dust, as Babylon was (47:1...), the daughter of Zion is called to rise from it. *Sit* suggests the image of someone prostrate in the dust who picks himself up to sit on a seat of some sort. The Aramaic Targum reading ‘sit on a throne of glory’ probably catches the sense of what is intended. Babylon will have to go down from the throne (47:1) to sit in the dust, but Jerusalem will rise from the dust to sit on the throne. This is the way it always is with human attempts to exalt ourselves in contrast to God’s plan to raise us up and share His glory with us.” (P. 361)

¹¹The Masoretes offer two possible readings: first, the *kethibh*, what is written, הַתְּפִתְחוּ, hithpael masculine plural imperative, “loosen yourselves,” obviously meaning the people of Jerusalem, and second, the *qere*, to be read, הַתְּפִתְחִי, hithpael feminine singular imperative, obviously meaning the city of Jerusalem. The various ancient versions follow the *qere*, for example the Greek with its ἔκδυσαι, aorist imperative, 2nd person singular, “take off.”

¹²North translates by “neck-fetters,” and comments that “It was usual for captives to be tied neck to neck by a single long rope.” (P. 219) There are a number of pictures of captives in the ancient Near East being led away with rope tied to their necks—see the Internet, “Captives in the Ancient Near East.”

¹³Oswalt comments that “Although Zion’s deliverance is wholly the work of God and not her own, she is not merely a passive recipient of God’s work. Those whom God calls must exercise their own will and effort in response to what He has done on their behalf. This verse makes that plain...”

“Jerusalem is not merely lifted from the dust, but is called to get up and shake off the dust. Likewise she must remove the chains from her neck for herself. We cannot break the chains that bind us; only God can do that. But when the chains are broken, we must remove them, and only we can do that. This is a critical moment in any

(continued...)

52:3¹⁴ כִּי־כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה

תָּנֻם נִמְכַרְתֶּם

וְלֹא בְכֶסֶף תִּגְאָלוּ:

Because in this way YHWH spoke:

¹³(...continued)

recovery: the moment when we cease thinking of ourselves as a *captive*, that is, as a victim, a helpless chip in the current, and begin to realize that God has placed an opportunity before us that we may seize, if we will.” (P. 361)

We agree with Oswalt on this, and think that Knight in his commentary overplays the “helpless” condition of Jerusalem / Israel, saying again and again that “only God” can help. Yes, Jerusalem cannot help herself without God’s initiating help; but God calls on Jerusalem to do her part!

¹⁴Knight comments on **verses 3-5** that “Till now Israel has been a useless servant and a fruitless bride [this is overstatement on Knight’s part, since as Israel’s history shows, there were at least some times in the past, when Israel had been a fruitful bride, and an obedient servant to YHWH. But still, Israel’s history shows how all too often she became useless and fruitless—leading to her Babylonian exile]. That is the essence of the rather obscure verses that follow. What Deutero-Isaiah is saying, as he looks back into the past, is that God’s handling of His people till this time has been of no effect [again, overstatement!]...

“The individuals who comprise Israel (the verbs are now second person plural) had learned nothing from Israel’s stay in Egypt; and the Northern Kingdom had learned *nothing* from being overwhelmed by *the Assyrian* in 721 B.C.E. So God Himself now explains why the exile that began in 587 B.C.E. has been necessary. The pain and suffering following upon the fall of Jerusalem have not been a pointless experience. Even, when their Babylonian masters are mocking at the exiles in their bullying manner, and God’s *name is despised*, God can weave all that into His plan. Even though Israel had been sold into Babylon’s power *for nothing* (**verse 3**), that is, without effect, yet God of His Own free sovereign grace will now redeem her *for nothing* too; but now the phrase means ‘freely,’ ‘without payment,’ ‘from grace alone.’” (P. 162)

And we wonder—where in the text is it said Israel learned nothing from her stay in Egypt? Where does it mention the Northern Kingdom’s being overwhelmed by the Assyrian? Perhaps that is what the mention of “the Assyrian” implies, but the text does not make it clear. And does the phrase “for nothing” in **verse 3** mean “without effect”? And is not Knight reading into the text his Christian doctrine of “sovereign grace” and “grace alone”? We think the phrase “for nothing” has to do with YHWH’s actions as being based on completely other considerations than His “making a profit,” or “financial considerations.”

For nothing¹⁵ you were sold,
and not for money will you be redeemed.¹⁶

¹⁵North comments that while the Hebrew **בְּלֹא**...can mean “for no reason”...the meaning here, as the parallel shows, must be “for no money payment.” He compares **Genesis 29:15**, where Laban asks Jacob, “Should you serve me for nothing?” “Jerusalem had indeed been ‘sold,’ but for her iniquities, not for money.” (P. 219) Compare **Isaiah 50:1**.

In this way YHWH spoke:

Where (is) this certificate of divorce of your (plural) mother, with which I
sent her away?

Or who (is it) from among My creditors to whom I sold you people?

Look—by / for the iniquities of yours you were sold;
and by / for your transgressions your mother was sent away!

¹⁶The voice of God, according to the prophet, tells Jerusalem that it was not a commercial transaction that caused their captivity, or that caused their release from captivity. Cynical people might quote **Ecclesiastes / Qoheleth 10:19**,

For laughter they are making bread;
and wine gladdens life.

And the silver / money answers the whole!

(Or, as translated by some, “money answers everything.”)

But YHWH says No! Jerusalem’s fall and her return were not based on financial considerations! There are some things that money can’t buy!

Oswalt comments that “Since God had not been forced to hand over Judah to satisfy some creditor, nor had He sold her in order to get cash to pay His debts, but purely on His Own volition, then on His Own volition He could *redeem* her, bring her back. There is no impediment whatsoever to His restoring her to Himself. There is no third party involved; it is strictly a matter between Him and His people [and it all depends on their willingness to seek and accept His salvation!]....

“Paul makes a similar point in the **New Testament** when he says that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself (**2 Corinthians 5:19**). There is no barrier to our relationship with God in the world; the only barrier is in the offended justice of God [this phrase, ‘the offended justice of God’ is not found in the text here—or elsewhere in the **Bible**—it comes from the orthodox theory of the atonement, that play such a powerful role in Christian interpretation, even though it is non-biblical! We say, the only barrier to our relationship with God is in ourselves, in our refusal to repent, to turn back to God]. If a way can be found to break that barrier down, nothing can keep His salvation from flowing to us. The only thing that remains is for us to rise from the dust and receive it.” (Pp. 361-62)

(continued...)

52:4 כִּי כֹה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

מִצְרַיִם יִרְדּוּ-עַמִּי בְּרֵאשִׁיטָה לְגוֹר שָׁם

וְאֲשׁוּר בְּאַפְסֵי עֶשְׂקוֹ:

Because in this way my Lord¹⁷ YHWH spoke:

(Into) Egypt My people descended at the first,¹⁸

¹⁶(...continued)

What do you think? Is the “offended justice of God” a barrier between God and His people? Where in the **Bible** is such taught? Cannot God break down any barrier on His Own? Is it “offended justice,” or “failure to repent” that stands between us and our deliverance / salvation?

¹⁷The Divine name אֲדֹנָי, “my Lord,” is omitted by 1QIs^a, and also by the Greek translation, but is present in the other ancient versions. It was this Divine name that the Greek translators of the Hebrew Bible used as a replacement for the Hebrew YHWH, using its vowel points, or the vowels points of אֱלֹהִים, on the Divine name YHWH, thereby causing readers to pronounce “my Lord,” or “God,” instead of saying “Yahweh.”

¹⁸The word רֵאשִׁיטָה, “at the first” or “beginning” occurs some 19 times in **Isaiah**, at:

- 1:26** (I will restore your (Jerusalem’s) judges as at the first; parallel to תְּחִלָּה, at the beginning); **8:23**^{Heb}
- 9:1**^{Eng} (the former time, when YHWH brought the land of Zebulun and Naphtali into contempt);
- 41:4** (YHWH has called the generations from the first / beginning),
- 41:22** (YHWH challenges the idol-Gods to tell about the first / former things, in contrast to the things to come),
- 41:27** (YHWH has been the first to proclaim to Zion);
- 42:9** (the former / first things that YHWH declared have happened);
- 43:9** (the idol-Gods of the nations are challenged to reveal the first / former things),
- 43:18** (remember not the former things, the things of old),
- 43:27** (Israel’s first father—who is that? Adam?; Abraham?; Jacob?)
- 44:6** (YHWH is the first and the last),
- 46:9** (remember the former / first things; contrast **43:18**);
- 48:3** (YHWH declared the former things in old times),
- 48:12** (YHWH is the first and the last);

(continued...)

to live as temporary residents there;¹⁹
and Assyria, in (the) end, oppressed him.²⁰

¹⁸(...continued)

- 52:4** (here; Israel went down into Egypt at the first; meaning in the days of Jacob and Joseph);
60:9 (the ships of Tarshish will be the first to bring Israel's children back);
61:4 (in the good times coming, the Israelites will build up the former devastations, that is, those of the Babylonians);
65:7 (YHWH will repay the former sinful deeds of the Israelites);
65:16 (in the good times coming the former troubles will be forgotten);
65:17 (in the new heavens and new earth the former things will be forgotten).

The conclusion we draw is that the phrase “at the first / beginning” can refer to many differing times—from the beginning of the world, to the beginning of Israel, to the earlier time when Israel went down in to Egypt, all but one of them prior to the time when the statement is being made.

¹⁹North comments that the Hebrew infinitive לָגַר, “to sojourn,” or “to live as a resident alien,” “can carry more or less the suggestion of receiving hospitality...Jacob and his family at first received generous hospitality in Egypt (**Genesis 47:4-12**), but the sequel was grim enough. That may be the allusion here.” (P. 220)

Compare **Psalms 105:23-25**,

- 23 And Israel came / entered Egypt,
and Jacob lived as a temporary resident in Cham's land.
24 And He made His people exceedingly fruitful;
and He made them stronger than His (people's) foes.
25 He changed their heart to hate His people,
to deal craftily with His servants.

²⁰Translations of **verse 4** vary:

King James, “For thus saith the Lord GOD, My people went down aforetime into Egypt to sojourn there; and the Assyrian oppressed them without cause.”

Tanakh, “For thus said the Lord GOD: Of old, My people went down To Egypt to sojourn there; But Assyria has robbed them, Giving nothing in return.”

New Revised Standard, “For thus says the Lord GOD: Long ago, my people went down into Egypt to reside there as aliens; the Assyrian, too, has oppressed them without cause.”

New International, “For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: ‘At first my people went down to Egypt to live; lately, Assyria has oppressed them.’”

New Jerusalem, “For the Lord Yahweh says this, ‘Long ago my people went to Egypt and settled there as aliens; finally Assyria oppressed them for no reason.’”

(continued...)

52:5²¹ וְעַתָּה (מִי־לִי) [מֵה־לִּי] פֹּה

נְאֻם־יְהוָה

כִּי־לָקַח עַמִּי חֲנָם

(מִשְׁלוֹ) [מִשְׁלִי] יְהִלִּילוּ

נְאֻם־יְהוָה

וְתָמִיד כָּל־הַיּוֹם שָׁמַי מִנְאֻץ:

²⁰(...continued)

Rahfs, “In this way Lord says / speaks: My people went down into Egypt to live as temporary residents there; and they were taken into Assyria violently.”

Oswalt comments that “The general sense is that Israel had gone to Egypt of its own free will, but that Assyria had taken them away by force, with the sad results depicted in **verse 5**...If in the beginning of Israel’s history God delivered them from Egypt when they had gone there of their own choice, how much more is He likely to deliver them now in the end from Assyria / Babylonia, where they had been taken against their will.” (Pp. 362-63)

Perhaps...But the mention of Assyria seems out of place, and we expect “Egypt” or “Pharaoh” to be named instead. Is this a slip of memory on the part of the author? Or should we read into the text the disjunctive waw (“but...”), or the words “too”? Is Oswalt right in reading Babylonia into the text? Why wouldn’t Second Isaiah say Babylonia instead of Assyria? Is it possible that the two names were easily interchanged in the ancient Near East? We think it is possible—but the text here is still puzzling.

²¹Slotki comments on **verse 5** that ‘In Babylon, God was, so to speak, in captivity together with His people, and the oppressor has now become so degrading and unendurable that both the safety of Israel and the honor of [Israel’s] God demanded [Israel’s] immediate deliverance from the exile. Egypt and Assyria were humbled in the past; Babylon will suffer a similar fate now.’ (P. 258)

And we wonder what Slotki means by “so to speak.” Is there any way that the Creator of the universe can realistically be considered “a captive in Babylon”? Perhaps we could say that when God’s people suffer, God shares their sufferings, or cares deeply for what is happening to them. But “in captivity together with His people”?

And now, what is there for Me²² here?²³

(It is) a saying of YHWH–

that My people was taken for nothing,²⁴

his rulers howl?²⁵

²²The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “it is written,” מִי־לִי, literally “who to / for Me?” Or, “who do I have?”, and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” מִה־לִי, literally, “what to / for Me?” Or, “what do I have?” 1QIsa has the *qere*.

North comments that “Whatever the precise content of the words, the general sense must be, ‘Here is an impossible situation; something must be done about it!’” (P. 220)

²³North notes that the word פֹּה, “here,” presumably means Babylon, not Egypt or Assyria. (P. 220)

²⁴The substantive used as an adverb, חִנָּם, **chinnam**, is commonly translated by “for nothing,” and here obviously means “for no reason,” “without cause.” But of course, we can hardly think that this is what YHWH is saying about the Babylonian captivity, which came upon Israel—not “for no reason,” or “without cause,” but precisely because of Israel’s rebellion against YHWH. Therefore, we must understand the statement as being a quotation of what Israel’s rulers howl—in their failure to understand the cause of their exile in Babylon.

We understand חִנָּם, **chinnam** as coming from the noun חֵן, “favor,” or “grace,” with the suffixed ם, used with substantives to make them adverbs—for example, יוֹמָם, “daily,” from יוֹם, “day,” or הַיּוֹמָם, “silently,” from הַיּוֹמָה, “silence,” or רֵיקָם, “emptily,” “vainly,” from רֵיק, “empty,” “vain.” חִנָּם, **chinnam** is used to mean “from favor,” “freely,” “for nothing,” “without cause,” “undeservedly.”

²⁵Again the Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” מִשְׁלוֹ, “his ruler,” and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” מִשְׁלֵיו, “his rulers.”

Oswalt notes that “The versions translate this phrase in a variety of ways, indicating at the least that those translators found the phrase difficult to understand. [Rahlfs] has ‘Because My people are taken away for nothing, wonder and wail’; the [Aramaic] Targum has ‘the nations that ruled over them boast’; the Syriac translation has ‘their rulers make them wail’; the Latin Vulgate has ‘their rulers treat them unjustly’...

(continued...)

(It is) a saying of YHWH—²⁶

²⁵(...continued)

“As the Masoretic Text has it, the verb is a hiphil imperfect of לל, ‘utter a howl’... 1QIs^a has ווללוהו, which apparently [means] ‘to make a fool of,’ which might underlie the Latin Vulgate reading...

“The decision concerning the correct root is complicated by the identification of the ‘rulers.’ Normal syntax would indicate that ‘its’ refers to Israel and that the rulers are either native or foreign. Most commentators...assume that Israel had no native rulers during the exile and that the rulers are thus foreign. But לל, ‘howl,’ as used elsewhere in the **Book of Isaiah** (13:6; 14:31; 15:2, 3; 16:7 twice; 23:1, 6, 14; 65:14) and in the [rest of the] **Old Testament** refers to howls of distress and grief, and this hardly seems appropriate for the foreign conquerors. For this reason, [some translations] have opted for the 1QIs^a reading...

“Given the diversity of readings and the viability of the Masoretic Text reading, it seems best to remain with the Masoretic Text.” (P. 358)

Slotki suggests that “howl” may mean “boast, exult.” (P. 258)

Translations vary:

King James, “that my people is taken away for nought? they that rule over them make them to howl”;

Tanakh, “For My people has been carried off for nothing, Their mockers howl”;

New Revised Standard, “seeing that my people are taken away without cause? Their rulers howl”;

New International, “For my people have been taken away for nothing, and those who rule them mock”;

New Jerusalem, “since my people have been carried off for nothing, their masters howl in triumph”;

Rahfs, “Because the people of Mine were taken for nothing, you (plural) marvel and howl!”

North, “My people have been taken away for nothing; those who domineer over them are braggarts.”

²⁶1QIs^a omits YHWH here, having only נאם “a saying.” This is 1QIs^a’s normal way of spelling the Hebrew נאם, i.e., some 20 times out of 25 in the entire **Book of Isaiah**. In some 5 occurrences, it has נאום, perhaps an inadvertent spelling, or possibly an indication of another copyist.

And constantly, all day long, My name is scorned!²⁷

52:6 לְכֵן יִדַע עַמִּי שְׁמִי

לְכֵן בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא

כִּי־אֲנִי־הוּא

הַמְדַבֵּר הַנִּנְי:

Therefore My people will know My name,²⁸

therefore²⁹ in that day--³⁰

²⁷Oswalt comments that “The situation that God finds is threefold: God’s people have been *taken for nothing*. That is, God was not forced to give them up. The people’s rulers wail in the shame and anguish of defeat, and there is contempt for God’s name.” (P. 363)

“God’s name is held in contempt because it appears to the watching world that Israel’s belief in God was false. He had been forced by the superior power of the Gods [of Babylon] to surrender His people...The seriousness of this contempt is underlined by its continual nature: *continually, all day long*. But in fact, the allegations were all untrue; God had not failed His people; their anguish was not the result of His inability to deliver them; He had not been forced to sell them. Hence the opening question of the verse: What is God to do in this situation?” (Pp. 363-64)

For this matter of YHWH’s name being scorned or put to shame, compare **Ezekiel 36:16-32**, and see the “blasphemy” of Assyria in **Isaiah 37:23-24**.

Slotki comments that here “the degradation and affliction of Israel are attributed by his [Israel’s] enemies to the weakness and helplessness of [Israel’s] God.” (P. 258)

²⁸Slotki comments that Israel’s knowing the Divine name means “They will appreciate its significance. The wonders of the redemption which God will reveal to His people will enable them to *know* the power and greatness that name imports.” (P. 258)

²⁹Oswalt notes that “This second לְכֵן, ‘therefore,’ is not represented in [**Rahlfs**], the Syriac translation, the Latin Vulgate, or in 1QIs^a. It does appear in the Aramaic Targum, as well as in the Greek translations of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotian. This suggests that its absence in the versions is a matter of style and in 1QIs^a an error.” (Pp. 358-59)

³⁰North observes that the phrase “on that day” is “frequent in eschatological prophecy (e.g., **Isaiah 7:18, 20-21, 23** [passages that speak of the coming of the

(continued...)

³⁰(...continued)

Assyrians against Northern Israel!]), but nowhere else in Deutero-Isaiah, who always speaks as if the fulfilment of his expectations is to be in the near future.” (P. 220)

We think it is misleading to describe some prophecy as “eschatological,” in contrast to other prophecy that expects God’s saving acts to occur in the near future. The passages that North mentions are not by any means depicting the “end of the world,” but rather, that depicted the coming of the Assyrians against Israel, which was not far off at the time the historical Isaiah made the prediction!

The word “eschatological” seems to many to connote “the end of the world,” or “the end of time.” We think that is mistaken, and that the biblical prophecies of the future all predict a glorious future for Israel, or for this renewed world and its inhabitants. Many times that future is accompanied by depictions of massive punishment and earth-shaking Divine actions; but the outcome is uniformly for the salvation and good of God’s people, sometimes defined explicitly as “all nations and peoples.” And whether the prophets conceive of that future as far distant or near makes little difference—it is their deep conviction that God is working out a future for His people! Compare the **New Testament’s** depictions of the kingdom of God as both present and coming.

In fact, the phrase “on that day” can be understood as either “far off” or “near.” It is non-committal as to the time involved.

Knight comments that “Till now Israel has been only an empty shell of a servant, has not even had the form of a servant. But *in that day* the form will take on new content, for the name of God, God’s very Self, will dwell within that form. Remember that to *know My name* meant for Deutero-Isaiah’s hearers to know His essential being. Thus to know God meant vastly more for Deutero-Isaiah than merely to know about Him. It signified virtually that oneness of almost physical union that can produce new life (compare **Genesis 4:1**—new life, אֶת־יְהוָה, from or by means of Yahweh [perhaps, but the phrase is difficult]). That is what Yahweh now promises, His actual presence, *Here am I* (compare **Exodus 3:12**). Yet the ultimate union of God and Israel was not to coincide with the return to Jerusalem of the exiles rescued from the prisons of Babylon. It was to happen only *in that day*. This is the phrase used by the prophets to refer to the final outcome of the chain reaction that had been set in motion by God at the historical moment of which they are witnesses.” (P. 162)

But we ask, where is it said that “God’s very Self will dwell within that form,” as meaning something different from YHWH’s constant promise to be “with His people,” through thick or thin? See the following passages in **Isaiah 42**:

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

(continued...)

that I (am) He,

the one saying Look at Me!³¹

52:7³² מֵה־נְאוֹוֹ עַל־הַהָרִים רַגְלֵי מְבַשֵּׂר

³⁰(...continued)

- 5, You shall not be afraid, because I (am) with you!
From (the) rising / east I will bring your descendant(s);
and from (the) west I will gather you!

Are we to understand this as meaning something less than “God’s very Self”?

³¹Oswalt comments on **verse 6** that “God’s answer to that question [in **verse 5**] is expressed in two statements of consequence, each prefaced with *therefore*. The first is a complete sentence, while the second is elliptical [having a word or words omitted], the subject and verb from the first [statement] being assumed...

“In words reminiscent of the exodus, God promises: *My people will know My name*. This means that He will manifest His power in the face of the enemy in such a manner that the truth of His character and nature will be unmistakable...

“The second *therefore* makes the point more specific. In what particular way will God defend the honor of His name? By showing that He does what He has said He would do. This has been the central argument of the **book** since **41:21**...God has spoken, revealing His purposes and plans long in advance, ‘from the first’...Isaiah insists that God has spoken and that Israel’s experience is the unshakable proof of that fact.” (P. 364)

Slotki comments that the phrase הִנְנִי, **hinneniy**, “look at Me,” or as he translates, “Here I am,” means that God is present “to fulfil the promise made.” (P. 258)

³²North entitles **verses 7-10** “How Beauteous Are Their Feet...!”

He comments that “This is a lyric poem of extraordinary vividness...Yahweh has achieved His victory over Babylon, and the Prophet sees in imagination a runner coming over the hills and approaching Jerusalem with the news that the King himself is on his way, soon to make his entrance ...The watchmen on the towers of the city are the first to catch sight of the oncoming messenger, and as they do so they raise a simultaneous shout of joy. Even the ruins of the city are to come alive and join in the acclamation...

“What has been dead is to live again. Yahweh’s victory is to be ‘seen’ by ‘all the ends of the earth.’ Nowhere does the combination of nationalism and universalism so characteristic of **Deutero-Isaiah** come to clearer expression than here.” (Pp. 220-21)
All of this is said by the prophet while still in exile, announcing the coming release as an event that has already happened!

(continued...)

מִשְׁמִיעַ שְׁלוֹם
 מִבְּשָׂר טוֹב
 מִשְׁמִיעַ יְשׁוּעָה
 אָמַר לְצִיּוֹן
 מֶלֶךְ אֱלֹהֶיךָ:

How beautiful³³ upon the mountains (are the) feet of one announcing good news!³⁴

³²(...continued)

Ortlund comments on this passage that “God turns the wailing of His people and the despising of His name (as in **verse 5**) into rejoicing as the gospel of God’s sovereign grace spreads over the world.” (P. 1337)

But **verses 7-10** are about good news (“gospel”) being brought to the Jewish exiles in Babylon, comforting them with the message that they are going forth from captivity, to return to their native home—that they are saved / delivered from captivity--the story of which will be heard throughout the earth, showing what YHWH has done for His people. There is nothing said in this passage about “sovereign grace spreading over the world.” It is about good news being announced to Zion.

Slotki comments on **verses 7-12** that they describe “The leisurely return to Zion of the exiles under the leadership of God, heralded by messengers announcing peace and salvation. They will be received with exultation, and even the waste places are invited to join in joyful song because because God’s people is comforted, Jerusalem is redeemed and the power and the salvation of the Lord are made known to the uttermost ends of the earth.” (P. 258)

He comments on **verse 7** that “The triumphal procession of the returning exiles is preceded by a messenger hastening over the mountains to bring the good news to Zion.” (Pp. 258-59)

We think Ortlund’s comment is an example of a Christian commentator reading his theological ideas into the text, rather than commenting on what it actually says. What do you think?

³³Oswalt notes that **Rahlfs** “combines the **הִנְנִי** [‘look at Me!’] from the end of the previous verse and has ‘I am present as a season of beauty [springtime],’ prompting some commentators (e.g. Alexander) to see the sense of the verb as ‘timely’...But all the versions have the sense of ‘beauty.’” (P. 365)

(continued...)

One causing Peace! to be heard,
one announcing good news of good!³⁵

³³(...continued)

The Greek text, combining the last phrase of **verse 6** with **verse 7** is: “I, I am He, the One speaking; I am present like an hour / time upon the mountains, like feet announcing good news, a message heard of peace; like One proclaiming good news—good things—because I will cause to be heard your salvation, saying (to) Zion, The God of yours will reign!” (Changing the perfect tense of the Hebrew for a future tense.)

North translates by “How welcome is the runner,” stating “But feet are hardly beautiful, or, even of a runner, ‘comely.’” (P. 221)

What do you think? If you think feet are “ugly,” does that give you the right to change what the text says? We deeply respect North’s long-time work on **Second Isaiah**, but think the translator of an ancient text should respect that text more than this.

North adds, “The watchers in Jerusalem would have their first sight of the runner as he appeared on the Mount of Olives. But his journey would begin in Babylonia and the Prophet’s imagination pictures him as he makes his way direct across the Syrian Desert, over hills and across ravines (**Isaiah 40:3-4**), a distance of more than 500 miles. A Marathon-race indeed!” (P. 221)

³⁴Oswalt comments that “Although some commentators (e.g., North) struggle with the imagery of *beautiful* feet, it does not take a great deal of imagination to understand the point. How is the glorious news reaching us [we say, reaching the captives in Babylon]? Through the feet of this runner. What beautiful feet! There may be some intentional irony since the feet are often considered the least beautiful parts of the body. If that is intended, the point would be that this news is so wonderful that even the most common and ordinary means by which it arrives is touched by its splendor. But it is not necessary to think irony is involved. Any feet that bring this kind of news are truly beautiful!” (Pp. 367-68)

³⁵Ortlund refers to **2 Samuel 18:24-27**:

- 24 And David (was) sitting between the two gates;
and the watchman went (up) to the gate’s roof, to the wall.
And he lifted up his eyes, and he saw;
and look—a man running by himself.
- 25 And the watchman cried out, and he declared to the king;
and the king said, If (he is) alone, (there is) news [בְּשׂוֹרָה] in his mouth.
And he kept coming, and he drew near.
- 26 And the watchman saw another man running,
and the watchman cried out to the gate-keeper.

(continued...)

One causing salvation / deliverance to be heard,³⁶
one saying to Zion,
Your God reigned!^{37, 2}

³⁵(...continued)

And he said, Look—a man running by himself!

And the king said, This one also is a bearer of news [participle, מְבַשֵּׂר].

27 And the watchman said, I am seeing the first one running,
like (the) running of Achimaats, son of Tsadoq.

And the king said, This (is) a good man;

and for good news [בְּשׂוֹרָה טוֹבָה] he comes.

(The runner announced the good news of victory; but he also told David of the death of his son Absalom, which was tragically bad news for David.)

³⁶Our Hebrew text has מְבַשֵּׂר מְשֻׁמֵּעַ שְׁלוֹם מְבַשֵּׂר טוֹב מְשֻׁמֵּעַ

יְשׁוּעָה, “one announcing good news, causing peace to be heard, one announcing good news (of) good, causing salvation / deliverance to be heard.” 1QIs^a reads מְבַשֵּׂר מְשֻׁמֵּעַ שְׁלוֹם מְבַשֵּׂר טוֹב מְשֻׁמֵּעַ יְשׁוּעָה, “one announcing good news, causing peace to be heard, one announcing good news, causing good to be heard, causing salvation / deliverance to be heard.” Q1Is^b reads the same as our Hebrew text.

³⁷Translations of this last line of **verse 7** vary from “your God reigns!” to “your God is King!” to βασιλεύσει σου ὁ θεός, “your God will reign / will be King.” The Hebrew verb is qal perfect, i.e., “past tense”: מָלַךְ אֱלֹהֶיךָ, “your God reigned.” For this affirmation of God’s / YHWH’s “reign as King” see the passages that are quoted in our end-note 2.

What we should conclude from all these passages concerning God’s / YHWH’s reign as King is that His reign is eternal. It is a reign described as being in the past; it is also described as being in the future. It is a mistake to think God’s / YHWH’s reign is depicted as being only in the future in the **Hebrew Bible!** We should say that God / YHWH has always been, is in every present, and always will be King! He has reigned, He reigns, and He will reign!

Also notice from these passages how this announcement that “God reigned” is a prominent part of the **Psalter**, the Jewish hymn-book / prayer-book—in **Psalms 96, 97, and 99**. As Westermann observes in his commentary on **Isaiah 40-66**, while the Jewish exiles in Babylon had lost their temple with its animal sacrifices, they had not lost their **Psalter** with its hymns of individual and national lament, written in their memories, and with its hymns declaring that “YHWH reigned!” Much of the content of **Second Isaiah** is rooted in the **Psalms**.

(continued...)

³⁷(...continued)

North comments that “For Yahweh as ‘King’ (of Israel) see **Isaiah 41:21, 43:15, 44:6**. This (**52:7**) is the only text in **Deutero-Isaiah** where Yahweh is said to ‘reign’ and His kingship is universal, as in the Enthronement Psalms.” (P. 222)

Oswalt comments on **verses 7-12** that “As is typical in this part of the **book**, a major segment dealing with redemption ends with a hymn (compare **42:10-12; 44:23; 49:13; 54:1ff.**). The reality of what God is about to do [or, if the past tense is used, what God has done] bursts in on the hearers, and they are called to celebrate the glory and the joy of it. As wonderful as creation was, and as true as Divine providence is, it is redemption that is earth’s great song. The world is caught in the bondage of sin and destruction; creation is fatally marred and providence makes the bondage only bearable. But if it is possible to be delivered from human sin and its effects, then creation may yet see its children and providence may yet lead us to the Father’s house. That is cause for joy, not for humans alone, but for the whole cosmos...Just as nature has suffered the effects of sin, so one day it will share the benefits of God’s redemption and that is cause for song.” (Pp. 366-67)

But Isaiah has affirmed again and again that God’s redemption has already been experienced; and we think that Oswalt’s attempt to make all of this future, or claim that the perfect verbs are “prophetic perfect verbs” (p. 370) is simply mistaken. The announcement of “redemption” here, as in the **Book of Ruth**, probably has little if anything to do with redemption from sin. Rather, it has to do with YHWH God’s being Israel’s [and humanity’s] Next-of-Kin, Who has acted to insure the inheritance of His people, rescuing them from Babylonian exile, restoring them to their home-land.

See our end-note 3 for the passages in Isaiah that depict YHWH’s redemption as having already occurred.

Oswalt continues, stating that “All that needs to be said about redemption has now been said. God’s power in history has been affirmed through the predictions of Cyrus and the judgments pronounced on Babylon; His absolute superiority over the world’s Gods has been shown through His ability to predict the future and to raise up and preserve His people against all odds; His endless compassion has been shown through the declarations that He will not abandon His ancient promises just because the people have sinned; and His power to accomplish His purposes through the humility of His servant has been announced. Thus, helpless, besieged Israel, and the world, wait. Has God won the final victory over the forces of evil and hate, oppression and cruelty? Have we been redeemed from that bondage which has held up captive to that which is worst and basest in us?” (P. 367)

Oswalt is obviously intent on making all of this future, because he wants to interpret **52:13-53:12** in future terms of Jesus Christ, and to insist that all redemption is tied up in Him. But in order to do this, he has to change past tense verbs to future tense, or claim that the perfect verbs are “prophetic perfect verbs.” We think this is wrong. God’s victory over Babylon has been proclaimed again and again; God’s redemption of

(continued...)

³⁷(...continued)

His people has been proclaimed again and again. That God will continue to act in powerful, redemptive ways in the future is not at all to be denied. But in order to affirm that, the text does not need to be changed as Oswalt has done.

Oswalt continues: “Once again, Isaiah caps his argument with a graphic image. How shall he pronounce that resounding ‘yes’ that God’s great work demands? He pictures a besieged city breathlessly awaiting the news of the outcome of a decisive conflict. If the news is victory, they are delivered; if the news is defeat, all is lost. Suddenly, on a distant hill a runner is seen. What is the news? As he comes nearer it can be seen that he is waving a victory palm and not so much running as dancing [The account of the city of Athens receiving the news of the Greek victory over the Persians (in the 490 B.C.E. battle) at Marathon is strikingly similar.] The Lord has won! Let the singing begin!...In a sense everything from **40:1** to **52:12** is about the anticipated return of God to His people. Now it is about to be realized.” (Pp. 366-67)

We say, God’s victory, already accomplished, is being announced by the runner. It is not just being anticipated. God has acted in saving, redeeming power—and that is what the runner is depicted as announcing. See **40:1-2**, which announces the good news to the exiles that their sins have been forgiven, that their debt has been paid—not that centuries in the future it will be done!

We say, the God Who will redeem His people through His servant, Jesus Christ, is the same God Who in the **Book of Isaiah** is described as having redeemed His people from their Babylonian captivity. Their redemption from Babylon or from their own sinfulness is not depicted as being dependent on the coming of the Servant, Jesus Christ. It is something that YHWH God has done by His free choice! What do you think?

Knight comments on **verse 7**: “How thrilling it is to discover that, unimportant as man is in himself, he is a link in the great Divine chain reaction. *In that day* an extraordinary thing is going to happen (**verse 6**). Yet that eventuality is dependent on Deutero-Isaiah’s contemporary hearers as at this juncture they take their place in the evolution of the cosmic plan. Till now the exiles in Babylon had been utterly depressed, because the mainspring of their existence had gone. No man possesses any vital spark within him if he has lost purpose in life; in consequence he sees no reason to continue living. But he who learns that he is needed, that he has a necessary place in a mighty campaign whose outcome, if he is faithful, is assured (for God has spoken it)—that man gains an exhilaration of spirit that the world can never understand...

“So Deutero-Isaiah pictures this exhilaration in a form similar to a **New Testament** parable. He sees an exile who has been raised from the death of meaninglessness, of *tohu* [chaos], of negation, in the dungeon of Babylon, now bursting with the joy of one who has found that God is alive and that He cares. Naturally this exile cannot keep the news of this new birth to himself. So he speeds over the intervening mount-

(continued...)

52:8³⁸ קול צפיד

נשא קול

יחדו ירננו

³⁷(...continued)

ains to poor, ruined Jerusalem with this song in his heart. ‘God is not dead after all: He is reigning still, despite all appearance to the contrary.’” (Pp. 162-63)

Compare **Romans 10:15**, where Paul quotes a portion of this verse:

πῶς δὲ κηρύξωσιν ἐὰν μὴ ἀποσταλῶσιν;

καθὼς γέγραπται·

ὡς ὥραῖοι οἱ πόδες τῶν εὐαγγελιζομένων [τὰ] ἀγαθὰ.

But then how shall they preach / proclaim unless that should be sent forth?

Even as it has been written:

How beautiful (are) the feet of those announcing good news of (the) good things!

(Here Paul is not quoting **Rahlf's**, but translating from the Hebrew. **Rahlf's**: ὡς ὥρα ἐπὶ τῶν ὄρεων ὡς πόδες εὐαγγελιζομένου ἀκοῆν εἰρήνης ὡς εὐαγγελιζόμενος ἀγαθὰ, “How timely , like an hour upon the mountains, like feet of one announcing good news, a report of peace, as announcing good news (of) good things!”

But is this a parable concerning what is going to happen half a millennium later when Jesus Christ, the suffering servant comes? We say no. This is a picture of Second Isaiah himself in his role of announcing the good news of YHWH's salvation / deliverance of His exiled people from Babylon—a message that rings with joy in the hearts of its hearers. What do you think?

³⁸Ortlund notes on **52:8-9** that “As the lone messenger approaches the city of God, the watchmen on the wall shout the good news that the King is returning.” (P. 1337) Or, perhaps the text means that the good news is that YHWH is returning His people to Jerusalem, i.e., ‘returning Zion.’”

Knight comments on **verse 8** that “The excitement spreads. The watchmen on the ruined walls are the first to see this herald and so they catch the infection of his spirit themselves. The whole city as one man is moved to accept the news that is announced as the opposite of *tohu* [chaos], viz., *shalom* [peace], fullness of being, salvation, the new creative life, the victory of the living God over *tohu* [chaos] in all its forms, whether the latter is experienced as black despair in the human heart, or appears as the darkness of the prison cell that is symbolic of the Babylonian exile. Yahweh is of course present in His word; so the people of God who are still living within the ruins now stand up ‘all eyes,’ as the phrase seems to mean, and watch for the very presence of God Himself.” (P. 163)

כִּי עֵין בְּעֵין יִרְאוּ

בְּשׁוֹב יְהוָה צִיּוֹן:

A voice of your³⁹ watchmen—⁴⁰
they lifted up a voice--⁴¹
together they will ring out;
because eye to eye⁴² they see,
as YHWH returns (to) Zion!⁴³

³⁹The pronominal suffix “your” is feminine singular, referring to Zion, the City of Jerusalem.

⁴⁰Slotki comments that Zion’s watchmen, “being posted on the towers and city walls...are the first to see and report the approach of the procession.” (P. 259)

⁴¹Oswalt notes that the Masoretic Hebrew text is literally “The voice of your watchmen, they lift the voice,” and he adds that “the versions are evidently hard put to know exactly what that means, for they show considerable diversity in their translations. The Aramaic Targum, the Syriac translation, the Latin Vulgate, and 1QIs^a read “their voice” at the end; [Rahlf] and 1QIs^b support the Masoretic text...The Masoretic text is preferable as the harder reading.” (P. 365) We agree--copyists tend to improve the text, making it easier to read, not making it more difficult.

⁴²Slotki translates the phrase עֵין בְּעֵין, literally “eye on / in eye,” by “eye to eye,” and comments that this means “clearly and distinctly, as when one looks straight into the eyes of another.” (P. 259)

Oswalt translates by “right before their eyes,” stating that this is “the English equivalent of the Hebrew idiom...For this same idiom used to speak of the incontrovertible evidence of God’s presence, see **Numbers 14:14**.” (P. 365)

And they will say to one dwelling in this land,
they heard that You, YHWH, (are) in (the) midst of this land,
Who eye in / to eye was seen—You, YHWH;
and your cloud (was) standing over them,
and in a pillar of cloud You (were) walking before them by day,
and in a pillar of fire by night!

Knight translates by “all eyes.” See footnote 38.

⁴³1QIs^a interpolates the phrase בְּרַחֲמִים, “in compassions,” at the end of **verse 8**. 1QIs^b and the various ancient versions, except for **Rahlf**, support the Masoretic

(continued...)

⁴³(...continued)

Text. **Rahlfs** has ἡνίκα ἂν ἐλεήσῃ κύριος τὴν Σιών, “whenever Lord may have mercy to Zion.”

Oswalt observes that commentators have been divided over the correct reading of **בְּשׁוּב יְהוָה צִיּוֹן**, whether it should be translated “when YHWH returns (to) Zion,” or “when YHWH returns Zion.” He states that “The phrase ‘returning of the Lord’ can be taken as either an objective or a subjective genitive: the Lord’s returning of Zion, or the Lord’s return to Zion. The versions unanimously support the former...That God is returning His exiled people to Zion, finds support in both the immediate and extended contexts...But the idea that God is Himself returning to Zion after His estrangement from her also finds support...It also seems to fit into the imagery here somewhat better...This is the advent of God that is the cause of this outpouring of joy. God is with us, and we need not be afraid any longer.” (P. 369)

⁴⁴For **verse 9**, with its call to rejoicing in YHWH, compare:

Isaiah 44:23,

Cry aloud, heavens! Because YHWH did (it) / acted!
 Raise a shout, lowest parts of earth!
 Break forth, mountains, (with) a ringing cry—forest, and every tree in it!
 Because YHWH redeemed / acted as Next-of-Kin to Jacob,
 and in Israel He will be glorified / glorify Himself.

Isaiah 49:13,

Shout, heavens, and rejoice, earth!
 break forth, mountains, a ringing cry!
 For YHWH comforted His people
 and will have compassion on His afflicted.

Isaiah 51:3,

Because YHWH comforted Zion,
 He comforted all her desolations;
 and He made her desert like Eden,
 and her Arabah / desert-plain like YHWH’s garden,
 rejoicing and gladness will be found in her;
 thanksgiving and a voice of melody / song.

Already, before it has actually happened, the people of YHWH are called to break forth into glad rejoicing over YHWH’s comforting and acting as Next-of-Kin for His people!

(continued...)

חֲרָבוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם
כִּי־נִתְחַם יְהוָה עִמּוֹ
נִאֵל יְרוּשָׁלַם:

Break forth! Shout for joy⁴⁵ together,
ruins of Jerusalem!
Because YHWH comforted His people,
He redeemed / acted as Next-of-Kin to Jerusalem!⁴⁶

⁴⁴(...continued)

Knight comments that “Deutero-Isaiah’s parable continues. Since the uttered word of God bears within itself the power to fulfil itself, Deutero-Isaiah sees that it can inspire even the inanimate stones of the city to burst into song.” (P. 163)

⁴⁵Where our Hebrew text has the piel second person plural imperative רִנְנִי, “you people shout for joy,” 1QIs^a has רִוְנָה, evidently a 2nd person singular, but we are uncertain as to its meaning.

⁴⁶The last two lines of **verse 9**, with their qal perfect verbs נִחַם, “He comforted,” and נִאֵל, “He redeemed / acted as Next of Kin” are translated by the past tense, “has comforted,” and “has redeemed” by **King James, New Revised Standard, New International, New Jerusalem**, and **Rahlf’s**. Only **Tanakh** among our chosen translations translates by the future, “will comfort” and “will redeem.”

Oswalt comments on **verse 9** that “The waste places of Jerusalem are called on to join the watchmen and the messenger in shouts of joy. Nothing is to be held back. The wonderful victory of God is a cause for all the pent-up emotions to break forth...

“Again, it will not do to be too literal in interpretation. Someone could ask how a ruined Jerusalem, as implied in *waste places*, could have any walls for watchmen to stand on. But the point is that the besieged city is an image, not the literal Jerusalem. The Zion to which Isaiah is speaking is a waste, both physically and spiritually, and he calls that broken-down city to participate in the joy of the Lord’s return, just as the inhabitants of a besieged city would rejoice at the good news of their king’s defeat of the enemy.” (Pp. 369-70)

We think this comment reflects a misunderstanding of what conquered walled-cities would look like—that is, with all their walls flattened to the ground. That is not what happened when cities were conquered. Walls were only breached at one or more places, and much of the enormous walls would be left standing, still allowing places for

(continued...)

⁴⁶(...continued)

watchmen to stand. Anyone who has visited the Old City of Jerusalem with its massive stone walls, can only imagine the months and months—extending into years—for all of those walls to be demolished to the ground without the aid of modern heavy equipment. And for what purpose? All the conqueror needed was for one of the massive gates to be broken through, and the conquerors could enter the city with all their forces. We are reminded of the statement in **Nehemiah 6:15** that the rebuilding of Jerusalem’s wall was finished in 52 days—which would mean that only the damaged / burned gates were rebuilt, and minor breaches / damages along the various sections of the wall. What do you think?

C. F. Keil states that “the amount of the work itself, which must not be regarded as the rebuilding of the whole wall, but only as the restoration of those portions that had been destroyed, the repair of the breaches (**Nehemiah 1:3, 2:13, 6:1**), and of the ruined gates—a large portion of wall and at least one gate having remained uninjured” (**The Book of Nehemiah**, p. 222). Joseph Blenkinsopp likewise states (**Ezra-Nehemiah**, pp. 272-73) that “The work of rebuilding the walls was completed in the astonishingly short time of fifty-two days and in the hottest season of the year...Much of the wall, especially to the south and west, only needed repairing, and there was no shortage of labor. We may compare the rather similar circumstances under which the Athenians made short work of rebuilding the city wall destroyed by the Persians (**Thucydides 1.89-93**).”

Oswalt adds that “As Calvin comments, all this rejoicing is in anticipation. The evidence points to the victory of God. The signs show that He has defeated the enemy and is coming to set them free. But as of this moment, He is not yet here. Nevertheless, the people are called to participate in the hymn of thanksgiving and praise. Why? This is the faith and belief about which the prophet has been speaking throughout the **book**...To give thanks in advance is the highest form of faith. The person praising God for what he or she does not yet possess is the person who truly believes the promises of God.” (P. 370)

Both Oswalt and Calvin believe that the actual victory being referred to, and only symbolized by the fall of Babylon, is the victory of the servant messiah of **52:13-53:12**, and that it would only occur centuries later in the death of Jesus Christ.

Do you understand the voice of the messenger announcing YHWH’s victory as future, as not having yet occurred? When the messenger came to Athens announcing victory over the Persians in the battle at Marathon, was that a future prediction that a victory was coming? We think not; and we think it is not here either.

Slotki holds that these past tense verbs are “prophetic perfects,” calling them “perfects of certainty; it is certain that God will comfort His people and redeem the holy city.” (P. 259) We say, Yes, prophetic perfects, speaking of the near future. But not prophecies of something to happen centuries in the future!

לְעֵינֵי כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם
וְרָאוּ כָּל־אַפְסֵי־אֲרֶץ
אֵת יְשׁוּעַת אֱלֹהֵינוּ:

YHWH made bare His set-apart arm,⁴⁷
to / in (the) eyes of all the nations;
and all ends of (the) earth⁴⁸ will see
our God's salvation / deliverance!⁴⁹

⁴⁷North comments that “To ‘bare’ the arm was to draw it out of the breastfold in preparation for action.” (P. 222) We are not sure what “breastfold” means, and suggest taking off any garments such as robes that could impede quick and decisive action, thereby baring the arm.

Compare **Psalm 74:10**,

For what reason will You hold back Your hand and Your right hand?
From (the) midst of Your breast / chest—destroy!

⁴⁸For “the ends of the earth,” compare **Isaiah 45:22**, with its universal invitation:

Turn to Me, and be saved,
all earth's ends!
Because I (am) God,
and there is not another!

⁴⁹While the first two lines of **verse 10** are set in the past tense (qal perfect)—YHWH bared His arm, the last two lines are set in the future (qal imperfect)—all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

Commentators like Oswalt and Calvin think it is referring to the preaching of the gospel by Christian missionaries in the centuries following the death and resurrection of the servant messiah Jesus Christ. We take it to mean that the deliverance of the Jewish captives from Babylon, accomplished by the “bared” arm of YHWH, will be heralded throughout the world, enabling the ends of the earth to see and understand what God has done for His people—His salvation / deliverance of the Jewish captives from Babylon.

Oswalt states that YHWH, “like the warrior preparing for battle...has shrugged off His cloak and His powerful arm is *bared* for battle”—but the battle is in the future. So the proclamation of victory is only a prediction of a future victory. What do you think?

(continued...)

⁴⁹(...continued)

Knight comments on **verse 10** that “If the Lord has bared His holy arm, and the strength of that arm has in fact become visible before the eyes of all the nations, then this can have reality only if the invisible God reveals Himself in His actions in and through the very visible and tangible agency known to us as the empirical people of God.” (P. 164) Or, we think Second Isaiah would add, And through the very visible and tangible agency known to us as the Persian King Cyrus.

⁵⁰North entitles **verses 11-12** “From Babylon Away!”

He comments that “This spirited lyric recalls **48:20-21**,

- 20 Go forth from Babylon! Flee from (the) Chaldeans!
 With a sound of a ringing-cry make this heard--
 cause it to go forth to the earth's end--
 say, YHWH redeemed / acted as Next-of-Kin to His servant Jacob!
- 21 And they did not thirst in the waste-lands (where) He led them.
 Water from a rock He caused to flow for them;
 and He split a rock, and waters bubbled forth!

though the emphasis is different. There it is on the external circumstances of the exodus from Babylon, here it is on the deportment of the liberated exiles...

“The passage is a summons to the exiles to go out from ‘there.’ The verb ‘go out’ (סָרָוּ) occurs three times...There are obvious reminiscences of the exodus from Egypt, but this second exodus is to be without its anxieties and perils...

“The passage is of some importance as showing that the Prophet was not indifferent to the externals of religion (compare also **Isaiah 52:1**). He was concerned about the proper handling of the temple vessels. Notwithstanding his critical attitude toward animal sacrifices (see **Isaiah 43:22-28**), religion was not for him pure disembodied spirit, without external observances. He was enthusiastic for the rebuilding of the temple (**Isaiah 44:28**). Of all the prophets, Jeremiah comes nearest to saying that the externals of religion are of no concern (**Jeremiah 7:21-23, 31:31-34**). Yet even he spoke of a return to the homeland, with all that that implied for the re-institution of the temple cultus...

“The religious life needs more for its full culture than repentance and prayer. There is a place in it for common prayer, for disciplined observance, for a sacred place with hallowed associations. There is need for festival and ritual where soul quickens soul in mutual self-dedication, where the past helps the present to realize the life which has helped and guided all the generations...If it was an exaggeration to make sacrifice an essential, it may be an equal exaggeration to demand its total abolition in the inter-

(continued...)

⁵⁰(...continued)

ests of purity of worship.” (P. 223) North is quoting A.C. Welch, **Jeremiah: His Time and His Work**, 1951, pp. 239-40).

North adds, “In Christianity the sacrificial system has been consummated and, in its cruder forms, abolished (**Hebrews 8-10**). But Christianity, no less than Judaism, must have its cultic expressions (**Hebrews 10:25** [do not forsake assembling together]), its body as well as its soul.” (Pp. 223-24)

Oswalt comments on these verses that “The final movement in this climactic segment is the command to *depart*. As is consistently true throughout **chapters 49-55**, the Babylonian exile is always in the background as the example of bondage and deliverance. It provides the basic frame-work of thought. But at the same time, it would be wrong to limit the reference of what is being said to that experience alone. That is especially true in this segment...Yes, the day would come when trembling Jews would be called on to hope for a new life and to leave familiar Babylon behind in the daring belief that God had something better for them in the unknown homeland.” (P. 371)

Oswalt reads his distant future orientation into this text, where in fact it is not found. The command to depart means that YHWH's bared arm has in terms of the “prophetic perfect” accomplished the victory of Cyrus over Babylon, and the captive Jews have been freed from their captivity by imperial command. They are free to leave, and the voice that is speaking commands them to do so immediately. It is not at all about a day in the distant future when trembling Jews would be called to leave Babylon. They are being called to leave Babylon now! We think Oswalt is reading his ideas into the text when he claims that it talking about more than the coming exodus from Babylon. What do you think?

Knight comments on **verse 11** that “This empirical people is faced with an existential decision: whether or not to get out of Babylon when the city falls; whether to decide for freedom from servitude to a pagan empire and so to enter that service to Yahweh which alone is perfect freedom, or whether to remain in Babylon and thus to reveal more concern about mammon than about obedience...

“Yet here again the situation goes far beyond the moment of Israel's decision. For the Lord's vessels are primarily the implements used in the temple worship at Jerusalem, but which Nebuchadrezzar had stolen and which were still preserved in Babylon. As a matter of history, it was only many months after Deutero-Isaiah had told the exiles to *depart, depart, 'get out of there'*—his use of ‘there,’ not ‘here,’ shows he is not in the city itself but in some village nearby—that Cyrus finally gave orders to have the temple vessels restored (**Ezra 1:7-8**). Deutero-Isaiah could not be sure at the time of speaking whether Cyrus would do this or not. *The Lord's vessels*—the word is simply ‘things’—could therefore refer also to any of the Israelites' possessions that were to be restored to Yahweh's holy city. All Israel had originally been called to be a ‘kingdom of priests’ to Yahweh (**Exodus 19:6**) [but priests were assigned to teach the people, and

(continued...)

צֵאוּ מִשָּׁם
 טָמְאָה אֶל-תַּנְעוּר
 צֵאוּ מִתּוֹכָהּ
 הִבְרֹוּ נִשְׂאֵי כָלִי יְהוָה:

Depart! Depart!⁵¹

⁵⁰(...continued)

lead them in their sacrificial worship], even though there were in Israel men specially set apart to fulfil the office of priest. Thus it is that all the exiles who are addressed here, and who are summoned to recognize their special calling to be ‘a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’” (P. 164)

⁵¹North states that “The strophe begins with a repeated סִוְרוּ סִוְרוּ. ‘Away! Away!’ (P. 224) Compare:

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?

Isaiah 51:17,

Rouse yourself, rouse yourself!
 Get up, Jerusalem--
 who drank from YHWH’s hand
 (the) cup of His rage,
 (the) goblet (?) cup (synonym) of the reeling / staggering you drank, you drained
 (it) out (completely)!

Isaiah 52:1,

Awake! Awake!
 Dress with your strength, Zion!

(continued...)

Go forth from there!⁵²

You (plural) shall not touch (anything) unclean!⁵³

Go forth from her midst!⁵⁴

Purify yourselves,⁵⁵

⁵¹(...continued)

Dress with garments of your beauty--
Jerusalem, the set-apart City!
Because he will not again enter into you,
an uncircumcised person and an unclean person!

We think the doubling of the imperatives is an indication of urgency—it is time to act!

⁵²North comments that the word “there” obviously refers to Babylon. “By some the ‘there’ has been taken to imply that the prophecy was composed outside Babylon ...The simplest explanation is that the summons to leave Babylon is issued (ideally) from Jerusalem.” (P. 224) Compare Knight’s statement in footnote 50.

⁵³Where our Hebrew text reads **טִמְאָה אֶל-תִּגְעוּ**, “an unclean (thing) you people shall not touch,” 1QIs^a prefixes a **ב**, “on an unclean (thing) you people shall not touch.” As Oswalt notes, the verb **נָגַע**, “touch,” regularly has a **ב** prefixed to its object. This appears, Oswalt thinks, to be an instance of 1QIs^a correcting a Hebrew text without it.

North says that “unclean” means “ritually and ceremonially. For the briefest summary of ‘unclean’ objects see **Leviticus 5:2-3; Numbers 19:11-16**...Uncleanness (like holiness) was a quasi [apparently but not really]-physical property. To have contact with it was to contract it, and it was more contagious than holiness (**Haggai 2:11-12**). Idolatry was an especially potent source of it (**Ezekiel 20:30-31**). Babylon was an ‘unclean’ land (compare **Hosea 9:3; Amos 7:17**); uncircumcised foreigners were unclean (**Isaiah 52:1**) and it must have been difficult to avoid all contact with them.” (P. 224)

⁵⁴This line is omitted by 1QIs^b, but it is present in 1QIs^a and the various ancient versions. North translates the line by “march right away from her.”

⁵⁵North translates by “rid yourselves of all impurity,” and comments that “the implied impurity, like uncleanness, was ceremonial. The normal method of removing it was by ceremonial washings, followed by a longer or shorter period of quarantine...This is not to say that Deutero-Isaiah was only, or even primarily, concerned with ritual cleansings. For him, as for his great predecessor (**Isaiah 6:5**), holiness and uncleanness had acquired a strongly ethical content.” (P. 224)

bearers of YHWH's vessels!⁵⁶

52:12 כִּי לֹא בְחֶפְזוֹן תֵּצְאוּ
וּבְמְנוּסָה לֹא תֵלְכוּן
כִּי־הַלֵּךְ לְפָנֵיכֶם יְהוָה
וּמֵאִסְפְּכֶם אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Because you (plural) will not go forth in hurried flight,⁵⁷

⁵⁶Oswalt notes that the Aramaic targum interpolates the phrase “of the sanctuary” at this point in the text. He comments that the addition of this phrase “would make plain that sacred vessels are being talked about.” (P. 366)

Slotki likewise states that the vessels are “the vessels of the sanctuary which were taken to Babylon when the temple was destroyed and brought back (compare **Ezra 1:7ff.**) by the returning exiles.” (P. 260)

North says that the bearers of the vessels are “the priests, probably ‘the priests the Levites’ (i.e. the Levitical priests) of **Deuteronomy**, not the priests *and* Levites of the post-exilic economy.” (P. 224)

For a statement concerning the vessels that were returned with the first group of returning exiles, see **Ezra 1:7-11**. Also see **2 Chronicles 36:7, 10, 18-19; Daniel 1:2; 5:2-3**.

⁵⁷The phrase בְּחֶפְזוֹן evidently means “in hurried flight.” There are two other occurrences of this noun in the **Hebrew Bible**:

Exodus 12:11, where it is said concerning the Israelites eating the passover as they leave Egypt:

And in this manner you (plural) shall eat it:
your garments tied up around your waists;
sandals on your feet;
and your walking-staffs in you hands.
And you shall eat it in hurried flight.
It is a passover for the YHWH!

Deuteronomy 16:3, which is also speaking of the passover eaten as Israel left Egypt:

In flight you went forth from Egypt-land--
so that you will remember (the) day of your going forth from Egypt-land,

(continued...)

and in flight⁵⁸ you will not go / walk.
Because going / walking before you people (is) YHWH,
and (the) One gathering you / acting as rear-guard⁵⁹ (is) Israel's God!^{60, 3}

⁵⁷(...continued)
all (the) days of your life.

The use of this term here indicates the desire of the author to depict the Jewish captives' departure from Babylon as a sort of "new exodus." But here he differentiates between the "old exodus" and the "new." That one was "in hurried flight." This one will not be. There, they were running away, escaping from their captors. Here they have been given orders to leave by the conqueror of Babylon, Cyrus.

Slotki comments that "The departure from Babylon, unlike that from Egypt which was in haste...will be leisurely. For God will be the Leader of the redeemed exiles in the vanguard [the group leading the way] and also their Protector from pursuers in the rear." (P. 260)

Knight comments that "This second exodus is to be completed at leisure, for no one will prevent them from leaving." (P. 164)

⁵⁸Here, another phrase, synonymous to **בְּחַפְזוֹן** is used: **בְּמְנוּסָה**, "in flight," which only occurs in one other passage in the **Hebrew Bible, Leviticus 26:36**, which is depicting the curses that will come upon Israel for disobedience:

And the ones left remaining among you people--
and I will bring weakness into their heart(s) in (the) lands of their enemies;
and a voice / sound of a driven leaf will pursue them,
and they shall flee, a flight from (the) sword, and they will fall,
and there is no one pursuing.

There will no such flight as the former Jewish captives leave Babylon. They are not running away in fear of their enemies' swords, but are going forth with the blessing of Cyrus, who has conquered Babylon, as well as with the commandment, accompaniment and protection of their God, carrying the temple-vessels in their hands!

North comments that "In **Old Testament** battles one side would usually turn tail at the onset of the other. There was little hand-to-hand fighting and most casualties were suffered during the headlong flight." (P. 225)

But do we in fact know enough about battles depicted in the **Hebrew Bible** to make generalizations such as this?

⁵⁹Oswalt notes that the versions are unanimous in reading **מְאַסְפֶּכֶם**, "one gathering you / one acting as rearguard" literally, "the One Who gathers together." "But
(continued...)

⁵⁹(...continued)

occurrences such as **55:8**; **Numbers 10:25**; and **Joshua 6:9, 13** seem to indicate that the term has the technical military sense, ‘rearguard.’” (P. 366)

Slotki notes that the purpose of such a rearguard would be “to collect the stragglers and to provide protection from pursuing enemies.” (P. 260)

⁶⁰1QIs^a interpolates at the end of **verse 12** the phrase “God of all the earth He will be called.” Oswalt notes that “This is evidently conflated from **Isaiah 54:5**, where the same phrase occurs at the end of the verse. No other Hebrew manuscripts support this variant.” (P. 366)

He comments that “Whenever Isaiah or any other Hebrew prophet begins to talk about deliverance, it is the exodus to which their minds turn sooner or later, and that is the case here. As has been true elsewhere (**43:16-19**), that earlier deliverance is both like and unlike the one being predicted. Like the exodus, God will be present, both before and behind His people. In front, He will lead, and behind, He will gather up the stragglers and be sure that they do not fall prey to probing thrusts of their pursuers...

“But unlike that former deliverance, this one will not be in the middle of the night, scurrying away from potential pursuers. Again, it is apparent that the Babylonian exile provides the base. Set free by an imperial decree, the returnees would have the leisure to plan their departure, and when they went would not fear any recriminations. They would even be able to take back some of the golden vessels of the sanctuary (see **Ezra 1:7**).” (P. 372)

“But,” Oswalt adds, “much more than the return from Babylon is being dealt with here. As is true from **49:1** on, it is restoration to God that is in view. The great question is: How can sinful Israel become the servants of the Lord that God has said they will be? It is not enough that they be restored to their land. What about the sin that drove them from the land in the first place?” (*ibid.*)

We respond to Oswalt: YHWH Himself has already dealt with the problem of Israel’s sin, by forgiving it. He has declared that Israel has paid adequately for her sin. See **Isaiah 40:2**, where YHWH states that Israel’s iniquity has been pardoned. In addition, see our end-note 2 for statements in **Isaiah 40-55**, declaring Israel’s forgiveness / redemption / salvation.

We wonder how Oswalt (and numerous others) can overlook these declarations, or turn them into predictions of the future. Oswalt entitles the next section, **Isaiah 52:13-53:12** “Proclamation of Salvation.” But the fact of the text is that Israel’s salvation has already been proclaimed, loudly and clearly on the mountain-tops!

We suspect that the reason behind all of this is the conviction that there is no real forgiveness or salvation in the **Hebrew Bible**, and that whatever seeming forgive-

(continued...)

⁶⁰(...continued)

ness or salvation is mentioned, it was only partial or temporary, awaiting completion through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.

I was taught this while in attendance at Christian Colleges; but my reading of the **Hebrew Bible** has convinced me otherwise. One need only look at all the occurrences of the root **יָשַׁע** and its many derivatives to be convinced. Salvation, redemption, complete forgiveness, the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit are all there in the **Hebrew Bible**, over and over again. They didn't begin with Jesus Christ, but were embodied in Him!

What do you think?

North comments on **verse 12** that “For Deutero-Isaiah there is no circumlocutory [using many words in a deliberate attempt to be vague or evasive] shunning of anthropomorphism [the attribution of human characteristics to God]: literally, ‘(He Who) goes before you is Yahweh’...According to **Exodus 14:19** ‘the Angel of God’ and ‘the pillar of cloud’ moved from the vanguard [a group of people leading the way] to the rear of the Israelites as they came to the Red Sea, to shield them from their pursuers. The meaning of **12b**, therefore, is that Yahweh Himself is to be both Guide and Protector of His people.” (P. 226)

Knight states that “Going both before and behind He [YHWH] will lose no stragglers on the way, but like the Good Shepherd, will finally bring home all its ewes and lambs to the fold of the holy city.” (P. 164) Compare **Isaiah 40:10-11**,

- 10 Look—my Lord YHWH with strength will come--
and His arm is reigning for Him!,
Look—His reward, (is) with Him,
and His recompense / reward (is) before Him!
- 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).

1. **Occurrences of the Noun תְּפִאֲרָה, “Beauty” in the Book of Isaiah**

Isaiah 3:18,

On that day my Lord will turn aside (the) beauty of the ankle-ornaments,
and the head-bands and the crescent (jewelry)
(**Verses 3:16-4:1** describe the fancy clothing and adornments of Jerusalem’s
ladies.)

Isaiah 4:2,

On that day YHWH’s branch (Messiah?) will be for beauty / honor and for glory;
and the land’s fruit for exaltation and for beauty (synonym) for Israel’s
escaped ones.
(YHWH will supply His people with true beauty through His messiah! **Verses 2-5**
depict the true and lasting beauty of Jerusalem / Zion when YHWH has cleansed
her.)

Isaiah 10:12,

And it will happen when my Lord will finish all His work
in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem,
I will visit (with punishment) upon (the) fruit of greatness of heart—Assyria’s king,
and upon (the) beauty of his eyes’ haughtiness!

Isaiah 13:19,

And Babylon, (the) honor of kingdoms,
(the) beautiful pride of Chaldeans, will be
like God’s overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah!

Isaiah 20:5,

And they will be dismayed and ashamed,
from / because of Ethiopia their confidence / expectation,
and from / because of Egypt, their beauty / glory!

Isaiah 28:1,

Ah! (The) crown of majesty of Ephraim’s drunken ones,
and (the) withering blossom of its beauty’s honor
which (is) upon (the) head of a valley of rich fatness,
of those struck down by wine!

Isaiah 28:4,

And it will happen--(the) withering blossom of its beauty's honor
which (is) upon (the) head of (the) valley of rich fatness,
like a first-ripe fig before summer,
which the one looking will see--
while it is still in his hand, he will swallow it!

Isaiah 44:13, describing one who makes idols for human worship:

He carved trees;
he stretched out a line;
he traces out (its figure) with a stylus / marking tool.
He makes it with the planes / scraping tools,
and with a compass he traces it out.
And he made it like a man's figure,
like a human's beauty,
to inhabit a house / temple.

Isaiah 46:13,

I brought near My right-relationship,
It will not be far away;
and My salvation / deliverance will not tarry / linger,
and I will place in salvation / deliverance in Zion
for Israel, My beauty.

Isaiah 52:1,

Awake! Awake!
Dress with your strength, Zion!
Dress with garments of your beauty--
Jerusalem, the set-apart City!
Because he will not again enter into you,
an uncircumcised person and an unclean person!

Isaiah 60:7,

Every flock of Qedar--they will be gathered to you;
rams of Nebayoth will serve You.
They will go up acceptably on My altar,
and (the) temple of My beauty I will beautify.

Isaiah 60:19,

The sun will no longer be for you for light by day;
and for brightness, the moon will not shine for you.

And YHWH will be for you for long-lasting light,
and your God for your beauty!

Isaiah 62:3, speaking of Jerusalem / Zion,

And you will be a crown of beauty in YHWH's hand,
and a turban of royalty in your God's hand.

Isaiah 63:12,

(Where is the) One leading by Moses' right hand with an arm of His beauty,
dividing waters from before them,
to make for Himself an everlasting name?

Isaiah 63:14,

Like the animal in the valley it went down;
YHWH's Spirit gave it / him rest.
In this way You led Your people,
to make for Yourself a beautiful name.

Isaiah 63:15,

Look from (the) heavens and see!
From Your set-apart and Your beautiful elevated dwelling-place—
where (is) Your zeal and Your strength,
(the) roar of Your belly and Your compassions,
for me You restrained!

Isaiah 64:10^{Heb} / **11**^{Eng}

Your set-apart temple, and our beauty,
where our fathers praised You,
was a burning of fire,
and all our pleasant things became a desolation!

2. **Passages in the Hebrew Bible Referring to God's "Reign"**

Psalm 47:9,

God reigned (as king) over nations;
God sat upon (the) throne of his set-apartness! (Past tense)

Psalm 146:10,

YHWH will reign (as King) to long-lasting time,
your God, Zion, to generation and the generation!
Praise Yah, you peoples! (Future tense)

Exodus 15:18,

YHWH will reign (qal imperfect / "future")
To long-lasting time and forever! (Future tense)

Psalm 93:1a,

יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ
YHWH reigned!

Greek:
ὁ κύριος ἐβασίλευσεν
The Lord reigned as King. (Past tense)

Psalm 96:10,

(You people) say among the nations, YHWH reigned (as King)!
Yes, a world / earth will be established,
it will not be shaken.
He will judge peoples with uprightness!
(Past tense)

Psalm 97:1a,

יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ
YHWH reigned!

Greek:
ὁ κύριος ἐβασίλευσεν
The Lord reigned as King.
(Past tense)

Psalm 99:1-2,

- 1 YHWH reigned (as King)!
Let peoples quake!
One is dwelling (on the) cherubim,
let the earth shake!
- 2 YHWH in Zion (is) great,
and He (is) being high over all the peoples!
(Past tense combined with present tense)

1 Chronicles 16:31,

Let the heavens rejoice,
and let the earth be glad (synonym)!
And let them say among the nations,
YHWH reigned (as King)!
(Past tense)

Isaiah 24:23,

And the white one / moon will be ashamed
and the hot one / sun will be embarrassed (synonym);
because YHWH of Armies reigned on Mount Zion,
and in Jerusalem,
and before His officials / elders, glory / honor!
(Past tense)

Micah 4:7,

And I will place / make the lame one for a remnant,
and the one removed for a strong nation.
And YHWH will reign (as King) over them on Mount Zion,
from now, and until long-lasting time!
(Future tense)

Psalm 146:10,

YHWH will reign (as King) for long-lasting time,
your God, Zion, to generation and generation!
(You people) praise Yah!
(Future tense)

3. **Statements in Second-Isaiah Declaring Israel's Forgiveness / Redemption / Salvation**

Isaiah 40:2,

Speak (plural imperative) to Jerusalem's heart,
and cry out to her,
that her warfare is complete,
that her iniquity / guilt was accepted / forgiven,
that she received from YHWH's hand double (punishment)
for all her missings-of-the-mark!
(Notice the past tenses!)

Isaiah 43:1,

And now, in this way YHWH spoke,
your Creator, Jacob,
and your Former, Israel:
You shall not be afraid,
because I redeemed / acted as Next-of-Kin for you;
I called by your name;
you belong to Me!
(This is not something that YHWH promises to do, but what He has done for Israel. They are not awaiting restoration to fellowship with YHWH!)

Isaiah 43:3-4,

- 3 Because I (am) YHWH your God,
Israel's Set-apart One, your Savior!
I gave your ransom--Egypt;
Ethiopia and Seba instead of / in exchange for you!
- 4 Because you were precious in My eyes,
you were honored;
and I, I loved you!
And I will give a human being / humanity instead of / in exchange for you,
and people instead of / in exchange for your innermost-being!
(Here the ransom is described as in the past, and also as in the future. It is not a partial relationship, but a relationship of love and acceptance!)

Isaiah 43:8,

Bring forth a blind people,
and they have eyes;
and deaf people,
and they have ears.
(That is, YHWH enlightens blind eyes, and enables deaf ears to hear! That is good news for blind and deaf Israel!)

Isaiah 43:11-12,

- 11 I, I (am) YHWH;
and there is none beside Me, a Savior!
- 12 I, I declared,
and I saved / delivered,
and I cause to hear,
and there is not among you people a stranger!
And you (plural) (are) My witnesses--
a saying of YHWH--
and I (am) EI!
(This is not a promise that in the future YHWH will save, but that He has saved!
Israel is no longer “estranged,” but lives in intimate fellowship with YHWH, acting
as His witnesses)

Isaiah 43:14a,

In this way YHWH spoke,
your (plural) Redeemer / Next-of-Kin,
Set-apart One of Israel...
(This is not a Divine promise that YHWH will raise up His servant to be Israel's
redeemer, but that YHWH Himself is Israel's Redeemer.)

Isaiah 43:25,

I, I—He Who wipes away your transgression for My sake;
and your missings-of-the mark I will not remember!
(Here the present participle is used; YHWH is the One Who wipes away Israel's
transgression, the One Who will not remember Israel's sins in the future!)

Isaiah 44:22-23,

- 22 I blotted out / wiped away like the cloud your transgressions;
and like a cloud (synonym) your missings-of-the-mark!
Return to Me,
because I ransomed / acted as Next-of-Kin to you (singular)!
- 23 Cry aloud, heavens!
Because YHWH did (it)!
Raise a shout, lowest parts of earth!
Break forth, mountains, (with) a ringing cry—
forest, and every tree in it!
Because YHWH redeemed / acted as Next-of-Kin to Jacob,
and in Israel He will be glorified.
(YHWH affirms that Israel's transgressions and sins have been blotted out; He
has redeemed Israel—it is done; it is not a future promise. It is not a partial
forgiveness, awaiting atonement, but a forgiveness that enables Israel to praise
YHWH whole-heartedly for their redemption!)

Isaiah 45:17,

Israel was saved by the YHWH;
a long-lasting salvation--
they will not be ashamed, and they will not be humiliated
until ages of long-lasting time.

(This is describing past action—"Israel was saved by the YHWH!" And it is a long-lasting salvation, not a salvation awaiting atonement. **Rahfs** has "Israel is being saved (present indicative passive) by (the) Lord—an eternal salvation; they will not be ashamed, neither be put to shame, until the age / forever." It is no temporary, incomplete salvation that YHWH has given Israel!)

Isaiah 46:13,

I brought near My right-relationship,
It will not be far away;
and My salvation / deliverance will not tarry / linger,
and I will place salvation / deliverance in Zion
for Israel, My beauty.
(YHWH's salvation is near, although still in the future.)

Isaiah 48:17,

In this way YHWH spoke, your Next-of-Kin / Redeemer,
Set-apart One of Israel
I—YHWH your God,
One teaching you to profit / benefit,
causing you to walk in a way you will walk.
(YHWH identifies Himself as Israel's Redeemer, already active in Israel's life—not a matter of promising a coming suffering servant or redeemer for Israel.)

Isaiah 48:20,

Go forth from Babylon, flee from (the) Chaldeans!
With a sound of a ringing-cry make this heard--
cause it to go forth to the earth's end--
say, YHWH redeemed / acted as Next-of-kin to His servant Jacob!
(YHWH's redemption of Jacob has already occurred! It is not depicted as only promised to happen in the future.)

Isaiah 49:13,

Cry aloud, heavens!
And rejoice, earth!
And break forth, mountains, (with a) ringing-cry!
Because YHWH showed compassion (to) His people,
and He showed mercy (to) His afflicted-poor people!

(Heavens and earth are called to break forth in praise because of YHWH's compassion for Israel, and for the poor. It is depicted as having happened—not as a promise for the future.)

Isaiah 49:25-26,

25 Because in this way YHWH spoke:

Even captivity of a mighty man will be taken,
and booty of a terror-striking person will escape.

And I will contend with those contending with you;
and your children, I, I will save / deliver!

(YHWH promises His salvation / deliverance in the future.)

26 And I will cause your oppressors to eat their (own) flesh,
and they will get drunk with their (own) blood, like sweet wine!

And all flesh will know that I (am) YHWH, your Savior,
and your Redeemer / Next-of-Kin, Mighty One of Jacob!

(YHWH's actions in the future will enable "all flesh" to know YHWH is Jacob's Redeemer.)

Isaiah 51:22,

In this way your Lord YHWH and your God spoke:

Who will plead the cause of His people:

Look—I took from your hand (the) cup of the reeling / staggering,
the goblet (?) cup of My rage.

You will not repeat again to drink it!

(YHWH has acted for His people in the past, and will do so in the future.)

Isaiah 52:7,

How beautiful upon the mountains (are the) feet of one announcing good news!

One causing Peace! to be heard,
one announcing good news of good!

One causing salvation / deliverance to be heard,
one saying to Zion,

Your God reigned!

(The announcement is that peace and salvation have occurred—it is the good news that is being proclaimed, which embodies God's reign as King.)

Isaiah 52:9

Break forth! Shout for joy together,
ruins of Jerusalem!

Because YHWH comforted His people,
He redeemed / acted as Next-of-Kin to Jerusalem!

