

## Isaiah 61, Hebrew Text with Translation and Footnotes

61:1 רִנָּה אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה עָלַי

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<sup>1</sup>Oswalt states that “**Chapters 61 and 62** speak of the character of the people of God when they experience the deliverance that the arm of the Lord procures for them. The section begins with the servant / messiah’s announcement of his role (**61:1-3**), and concludes with a call for the people to enter into the salvation that God has made available to them and to embrace their role as ‘the holy people (**62:10-12**). Between these two points, three major segments are united by the recurrence of Divine promises regarding Zion and the nations: **61:4-10**, Zion will eat the wealth of the nations; **62:1-5**, God will show the nations that Zion is not forsaken; **62:6-9**, the nations will not devour Zion’s wealth. In all of this the ‘righteousness’ of the people is given high prominence (**61:3, 10, 11; 62:1-2**), an important fact in view of the call to do righteousness at the beginning of the division (**56:1**) and the documented inability of the people to keep that command in **chapters 56-59.**” (P. 562)

Alexander comments on **chapter 61** that “After describing the new condition of the church, [the prophet Isaiah] again introduces the great personage by whom the change is to be brought about. His mission and its object are described by himself (**verses 1-3**). Its grand result shall be the restoration of a ruined world (**verse 4**). The church, as a mediator between God and the revolted nations, shall enjoy their service and support (**verses 5-6**). The shame of God’s people shall be changed to honor (**verse 7**). His righteousness is pledged to this effect (**verse 8**). The church, once restricted to a single nation, shall be recognized and honored among all (**verse 9**). He triumphs in the prospect of the universal spread of truth and righteousness (**verses 10-11**).” (P. 397)

Slotki comments on **verses 1-3** that “The herald, probably the prophet himself, announces his mission.” (P. 298) That is, Slotki thinks the prophet speaking identified himself as the servant.

Achtemeier asks, “Who speaks in this oracle?,” and then states, “It has been common to describe **verses 1-3** as an individual’s account of his prophetic call, and **Third-Isaiah** is then identified as an individual prophet. But the speaker is not an individual here, but the faithful Levitical-prophetic community, which here takes on the role of **Second Isaiah’s** servant. They are, as in **Isaiah 49:6**, that portion of Israel sent ‘to restore the preserved of Israel’ and to be ‘a light to the nations.’ As in **57:1-2**, **Third Isaiah** is deliberately attributing to the Levitical-prophetic community [in our terminology, those who identify with the teaching of **Jeremiah 7** and both **Second Isaiah** and **Third Isaiah**] the functions of **Second Isaiah’s** servant...

“The connections made are numerous [**42:1** with **61:1**; **42:7** with **61:1... 49:8** with **61:2**; **49:13** with **61:2**; **42:3** with **61:3**; **49:8** with **61:4**; **49:9** with **61:5**; **49:9** with **61:5**; **49:18** with **61:11**; **49:13** with **62:10**]...**Third-Isaiah** has taken up **Deutero-Isaiah’s** pictures of the faithful servant and applied them to the faithful in his own

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situation [we note that Achtemeier does not mention any connection with **52:13-53:12**]...

“Thus, in the first two strophes, **verses 1-3** and **4-6**, the Levitical-prophetic community speaks, as an individual, in the role of servant to Judah. In the third strophe, **verses 7-9**, where we have a change to third person address, Yahweh Himself is the Speaker, describing the coming transformation of His people’s life. In the final strophe, **verses 10-11**, the whole Judean community responds in praise, also speaking corporately as an individual.” (Pp. 88-89)

Ackerman, somewhat differently, identifies the speakers as follows: The prophet speaks in **verses 1-2**, and the description of his mission continues through **verses 3-7**; in **verses 8–9** the Lord speaks, while in **verses 10-11** the prophet again speaks. (P. 1042)

Knight states that “There is no need to ask who is speaking here, for the language of this unit [61:1-11] has already been used to describe the calling of God’s servant people, Israel. ‘Me’ is both Trito-Isaiah and Israel at once.” (P. 50)

It is, of course, a very difficult matter to determine the speaker in each verse, or in groups of verses, unless there are clear indications given in the text—and very few such indications are given. However, it does seem clear from the language that the servant of **chapter 49** is the same servant of **chapter 61**, and there can be no doubt that the mission of the servant as depicted here in this chapter is the mission that Jesus Christ identified as his own in his first sermon in Nazareth, as described in **Luke 4:16-21** (including a portion of **Isaiah 58:6**).

So, in these commentators, we see three answers to the question of who is speaking in **verse 1**: (1) the prophet **Third Isaiah**; (2) the community of returned exiles; and (3) Jesus, the messiah / servant.

Alexander mentions the view of Umbreit, that Isaiah himself is the speaker, but only as a type and representative of a greater prophet.” (P. 397) And then he adds, that “a subordinate and secondary reference to Israel as a representative of the messiah, and to the prophets as in some sense the representatives of Israel, as well as of messiah in their prophetic character, must be admitted.” (P. 398)

Oswalt states that “Considerable scholarly attention has been given to the identity of the speaker in **61:1-3**. One of the most obvious connections is with the servant of **42:1-9; 49:1-9; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12** [if this is the case, we would conclude that the servant is Jacob / Israel, spoken to an individual person]...This person has been personally chosen and empowered by God for a purpose, and that purpose is to bring about the deliverance of His people...The centrality of this figure in this obviously eschatological section of the **book** argues for someone more than one of the prophets,

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or as is more popular today, a personalization of the hypothetical 'Levitical-visionary group.'

"This conclusion is strengthened when one recognizes the continuity not only between this person and the servant but also between this person and the messiah, as depicted in **chapter 11**. The 'Spirit of the Lord' is upon the messiah (**11:2** [compare **42:1**]); his most potent instrument is the word of his mouth (**11:4**; note the centrality of speaking in **61:1-3**); his work is directly associated with the establishment of righteousness (**11:5**); and the result of his work is the exaltation of God (**11:9-10**)...Jesus' appropriation of these words in **Luke 4:16-21** plainly indicates that he understood himself to be the realization of the synthesis that Isaiah was describing in the servant / messiah." (Pp. 562-63)

We add that just as the servant of YHWH is identified as "Jacob / Israel" time and again in **chapters 40-66**, it seems obvious that Jesus Christ is presented in the **New Testament** as the embodiment of Israel—that is, as the "true Israel."

Knight comments that "The Spirit comes, not descending like the gentle dew, but 'pushing,' 'impelling,' as we see for example at **Judges 13:25**,

And YHWH's Spirit began to impel / disturb him (Samson) in Machaheh-Dan,  
between Tsorah and Eshtaol.

"Theologians have dubbed the Spirit in the **Old Testament** 'God's tempest'...As **Isaiah 30:28** puts it, the Spirit is like an 'overflowing stream' [/ wadi; in New Mexico we would say 'arroyo'], just as it is pictured also in the famous promise of the outpouring of the Spirit 'on all flesh' at **Joel 2:28-29**...

"All that the servant people are anointed here to say and to do they perform not on their own initiative nor in their own strength. All that happens to them or through them is of grace, of the power of grace, in a manner that no humanist need try to claim man-kind can do of themselves. In fact, mankind's great sin is in resisting the awesome might of the Spirit and in not having the faith and the loyalty to let the Spirit act through them... In Jesus alone do we find the total obedience to the Spirit that we read of in **Luke 4:21**. (We note that this Lucan passage is prefaced by the words: 'And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit (**verse 14**)).

"God Himself then purposes to act in and through Israel His instrument [servant] so that His plan for humankind may bring about *shalom* in human society. He can produce it actually out of the misery, greed, and violence that rule human life, and out of 'man's inhumanity to man.' God can do this, it seems, only by entering into the human scene Himself. He does not intend to utter fiat from the sky, while Himself remaining outside of the misery of humanity..."

(continued...)

יַעַן מָשַׁח יְהוָה אֹתִי  
 לְבִשְׂרֵי עֲנָוִים  
 שֶׁלַּחֲנִי לְחִבְשׁ לְנִשְׁבְּרֵי-לֵב  
 לְקַרְא לְשָׁבוּיִם דְּרוּר  
 וּלְאַסוּרִים פְּקַח-קוֹחַ:

Spirit<sup>2</sup> of my Lord YHWH (is) upon me--  
 because YHWH anointed me,<sup>3</sup>

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

“God had set Israel free, our poet now grasps clearly, in order that in the power of the Spirit Israel might set all other peoples free. For this is what being anointed is basically for. God had anointed Cyrus (**45:1**), giving him the power to set Israel free; now it was Israel’s turn...” (Pp. 50-51)

<sup>2</sup>The Aramaic Targum interpolates the phrase אֲמַר נְבִיא רוּחַ נְבוּאָה, “The prophet spoke (by the) Spirit of prophecy” at the beginning of **verse 1**. Oswalt suggests that “Perhaps this is an attempt to contradict the messianic interpretation stemming from Jesus’ use of the passage (**Luke 4:16-21**).” (P. 561)

<sup>3</sup>Slotki states that the phrase “anointed me” “may be understood literally since we find that prophets were anointed (**1 Kings 19:16**), or metaphorically for ‘appointed.’” (P. 298)

Alexander likewise comments that “Unction [anointing] in the **Old Testament** is not a mere sign of consecration to office, whether that of Prophet, Priest, or King (**1 Kings 19:16; Leviticus 8:12; 1 Kings 1:31**), but the symbol of spiritual influence, by which the recipient was both qualified and designated for his work...The office here described approaches nearest to the prophetic.” (P. 397)

Yes, but here especially, the fact of YHWH’s having anointed Cyrus the Persian to do His work in setting the Israelites captives (along with other captives, from other nations) free is most relevant. Just as YHWH had anointed Cyrus (**45:1**), so now He has anointed the speaker, as representative of YHWH’s servant Jacob / Israel, for a similar, but much larger task—that of setting all captives, in all the world, free! And when Jesus takes up this scripture in explaining his mission in his hometown of Nazareth, he is taking upon himself nothing less—the job of setting captives free, all over the world, by the power of the Spirit! See Knight’s comments in footnote 1.

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Following this line, a series of seven infinitive verbs, the first six dependent on the verb “sent,” and the seventh further explicating the sixth—all depicting the “six-fold task” of the servant community:

to bring good news to poor people;  
to bind up (the) broken-hearted;  
to proclaim to captives freedom and to prisoners opening;  
to proclaim a year of acceptance for the YHWH, and a day of vengeance /  
recompense for our God;  
to comfort all those mourning;  
to place for the (heads) of Zion’s mourners--  
to give to them a (joyous) turban instead of ashes,  
oil of rejoicing instead of mourning,  
a mantle / wrap of praise instead of a faint spirit.

Knight states that “Israel has been anointed within the covenant relationship to be a covenant to the people (**Isaiah 49:6**) now. Israel’s task is not to be carried forward in a spirit of triumphalism (as some commentators seem to think). Israel’s task is to teach, preach, and serve from Trito-Isaiah’s day onwards. Unlike modern people, who suppose that ‘the gospel’ is concerned with religion and ethics, Trito-Isaiah’s gospel is concerned with revelation, obedience, and love...

“As God’s ‘messiah,’ His ‘anointed’ (**45:1**), Cyrus had been instrumental in laying in Zion a new foundation, a precious cornerstone: ‘He who believes will not be in haste.’ Thus Israel had been set free only by ‘God’s strange work’ (**28:21**) in identifying Himself with His servant Israel when the latter was in ‘prison’ in Babylon.

“But there was a reason for Israel’s being set free. Any ‘theology of liberation’ must take that reason into account. God had a purpose and plan from the foundation of the world (**51:16**) to use His people in His passionate concern for all His human creatures. Thus in **chapter 61** we are made to see that Trito-Isaiah has ‘brought forth’ (Jesus’ term at **Matthew 13:23**) a new *torah* out of the old. He has already demonstrated in **Isaiah 57** how the human situation is such that laws to control society are necessary, in fact that ‘law’ must come before ‘gospel.’ But his new *torah* accepts that the ‘law of Moses’ is fulfilled in the one law that subsumes all others—the law of love (**Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Mark 12:29-31**)...

“Trito-Isaiah believes he has discovered this to be so, not by his own reasoning, but by the Spirit of the Lord (**Isaiah 61:1**). This means that, by revelation, he sees that ethics is not an absolute in itself. Ethical action cannot be classified or controlled by any religious or philosophical system, for it is the fruit of love (*tsedaqah* [righteousness]) applied to every possible human situation. It is also performed, as God wills it to be by those who have experienced His *tsedeq* [righteousness], through the power of the Spirit that has come upon them.

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to bring good news<sup>4</sup> to poor people;<sup>5</sup>

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

“It was this essential significance of the new foundation that the Zadokites, those priests who traced back their authority to Aaron, could not grasp (E. Achtemeier, **The Community and Messge of Isaiah 56-66**). They were clearly amongst those who now opposed Trito-Isaiah as he preached the gospel of ‘liberty to the captives’...

“Now, says Trito-Isaiah, the Lord has anointed ‘me’ to do just this for the new Israel so that the people of God might perform the same task of interpreting God’s purpose of love to the world. To this end, therefore, Trito-Isaiah uses history as his textbook.” (Pp. 54-56)

<sup>4</sup>The first part of this anointed one’s task is to bear good news (בְּשִׂרָה). For occurrences of this verb in the **Book of Isaiah**, see:

**Isaiah 40:9** (twice),

Upon a high mountain, go up (feminine singular imperative) for yourself,  
proclaimer (feminine) of good news (to) Zion!  
Raise high (hiphil imperative, feminine singular) with strength your voice,  
proclaimer of good news (to) Jerusalem!  
Raise high, do not be afraid (feminine imperative),  
say (feminine imperative) to Judah’s cities,  
Look–your God!

**Isaiah 41:27**,

First to Zion: Look! Look at them!  
And to Jerusalem, one announcing good news (masc. sing.) I will give.

**Isaiah 52:7** (twice),

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!

**Isaiah 60:6**,

A multitude of camels will cover you,  
young camels of Midian and Ephah;  
all of them from Sheba will come.

(continued...)

He sent me forth<sup>6</sup> to bind up (the) broken-hearted,<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>(...continued)

Gold and frankincense they will carry,  
and praises of YHWH they will announce as good news.

**Isaiah 61:1** (here),

Spirit of my Lord YHWH (is) upon me--  
because YHWH anointed me,  
to bring good news to poor people;  
He sent me forth to bind up (the) broken-hearted,  
to proclaim to captives freedom,

Instead of “poor people,” Slotki’s translation is ‘the humble,’ a term often used to denote the faithful minority in Israel who remained staunch throughout the national trials.” (P. 298)

The noun is עֲנִיָּים, which **Brown-Driver-Briggs** defines as “poor, afflicted, humble, meek.” There is a tendency among some biblical students to avoid the sociological meaning of this term, and make it a religious term, meaning “humble before God,” rather than “poor in earthly possessions.” The fact is, we think, those who are poor in earthly possessions are far more likely to be humble before God than are the wealthy and powerful, since wealth and power far too often “go to one’s head,” making their possessor proud instead of humble before God.

See, for example, Oswalt’s interpretation: “Who are the poor? Those who are so broken by life that they have no more heart to try; those who are so bound up in their various addictions that liberty and release are a cruel mirage; those who think that they will never again experience the favor of the Lord, or see his just vengeance meted out against those who have misused them; those who think that their lives hold nothing more than ashes, sackcloth, and the fainting heaviness of despair. These are they to whom the servant / messiah shouts ‘Good news!’” (P. 565) Yes, but what about those who are poor in earthly possessions? Is there any good news for them?

<sup>6</sup>The original text of 1QIs<sup>a</sup> omitted the phrase שָׁלַחַנִּי, “He sent me forth.” But a later hand has written in above the line, שָׁלַחַנִּי (we see no reason for the gap), to make the scroll correspond to our Hebrew text.

Knight states concerning the phrase “He has sent me,” that “this is how God always works...He ‘sends out,’ extends His ‘Self’ into human flesh, thereby employing that flesh by motivating it to do His will.” (P. 52)

to proclaim to captives<sup>8</sup> freedom,<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>For this phrase, לְנִשְׁבְּרֵי-לֵב, compare:

**Psalm 34:19:**

YHWH (is) near to (the) broken-hearted,  
and He saves / delivers those crushed / contrite of spirit.

**Isaiah 57:15,**

Because in this way He spoke—One High and Lifted up,  
Who dwells forever, and Set-apart (is) His name:  
(In the) height, and (in the) set-apart (place) I will dwell,  
and with a contrite / crushed person, and lowly of spirit,  
to bring alive (the) spirit of lowly people,  
and to bring alive (the) heart of contrite / crushed people!

Slotki comments that “binding up the broken-hearted” means to cure their wounds. (P. 298)

Compare **Ezekiel 34:4**, where the similar phrase occurs, literally, “to the broken you (plural) did not bandage.”

Knight states that “The instruction ‘to bind up the broken hearted’ provides a picture of what God is like in Himself. Compare **Psalm 147:3**,

He [YHWH] heals the broken-hearted,  
And makes bandages for their wounds.

Israel’s ministry is thus to be a ministry of grace. Both Judaism and Christianity are aware that to forgive sins is to heal.” (P. 52)

How do you think a prophet could cure the wounds of a broken-hearted person? Have you ever tried to do that when someone you know is broken-hearted with grief over the death of a loved one, or the breaking up of their marriage? One thing is sure—easy answers won’t help. But confidence in biblical promises such as these can be of help— assuring the broken-hearted that God knows their hurt, and is with them, working to heal their broken heart.

<sup>8</sup>The passive participle שְׁבוּיִם means “those taken captive,” and in the context of **Third Isaiah** may have specific reference to the former captives in Babylon, who have now returned to their native land. But it could have a much broader reference, meaning whoever is captive, whether in foreign countries, or being held captive in prison, or slaves who have been taken captive in warfare.

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<sup>9</sup>Slotki comments on the noun **הִרְרוֹר**, which he translates by “liberty,” that “it is the term used in connection with the year of Jubilee (**Leviticus 25:10**). What that year signified to the harassed individual the coming redemption will mean for the nation.” (P. 298)

In the fiftieth year of Jubilee, freedom / liberty was to be proclaimed throughout the land; property which could not be sold in perpetuity would be returned to by its original owners. Houses in villages (but not in walled cities) would be returned to by their original owners. Israelites who had been forced to sell themselves into slavery were to be released on the fiftieth year (although foreign slaves would not). But here in **Isaiah 61** there are no such limitations mentioned concerning the freedom / liberty that was to be proclaimed, and we should probably understand it to include all captives, all slaves, all prisoners, regardless of their nationality, especially in the light of **Isaiah 56** with its broad view of acceptance proclaimed to eunuchs and to foreigners.

See **Ezekiel 46:17**, where the phrase **שְׁנַת הִרְרוֹר**, “year of the freedom / liberty” occurs.

Oswalt states that this one whom he identifies as the servant / messiah “will announce (i.e., will effectively bring to pass, as a king ‘announces’ an amnesty) liberty and release (this word, **הִרְרוֹר**, is especially associated with the Jubilee Year [**Leviticus 25:10; Jeremiah 34:8; Ezekiel 46:17**] and its restoration of property and release of debts and slaves). Only a king greater than all those others who hold his people captive can make such an announcement. This is the Messiah at work, bringing in his reign of justice and righteousness (**11:3-5**; compare also **1:27**).” (P. 565)

Knight states that “‘To proclaim liberty to the captives’ had been the great message of Deutero-Isaiah; compare also **Isaiah 58:6**,

Is not this (the kind of) abstaining from eating I will choose:  
to get rid of unfair advantages;  
to loosen everything that binds others down;  
and to send forth those who are oppressed (as) free people;  
and to tear apart everything that binds other down?

“...As God’s servant, therefore, Israel was now, in the spirit of *tsedaqah* [righteousness], to set free the rest of mankind.” (P. 52)

He adds that “‘To proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor’ is to be understood in connection with the setting free of slaves...At **Leviticus 25:10** we read: ‘And you shall hallow the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants; it shall be a jubilee for you, when each of you shall return to his property and...to his family.’ Cyrus’ decree had marked just such a jubilee. It had now been proclaimed exactly fifty years after the fall of Jerusalem. The people had been released and

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and to prisoners certain opening (of locked doors);<sup>10</sup>

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

restored to their families and to their property...Now this newly occurred historical event was to be the sign of God's 'year of favor' for all mankind. The good news which the new Israel was to proclaim was thus certainly not to be understood in terms of 'religion' or of a promise of a world hereafter. It was to be understood as an event which would arise from this historical fact, and was to continue to be effective within Israel's historical experience. This, of course, is what Jesus meant when he declared, in quoting this passage about himself, 'Today this scripture had been fulfilled in your hearing' (**Luke 4:21**).” (Pp. 53-54)

<sup>10</sup>Where our Hebrew text has the phrase **וְלֵאסוּרִים פִּתְחוֹת־קוֹיָהּ**, “and to those imprisoned opening of (?)”, **Rahfs** has “and to blind people seeing again / recovery of sight.” The unusual Hebrew **פִּתְחוֹת־קוֹיָהּ**, “opening of ?,” is defined by **Brown-Driver-Briggs** “opening of eyes (but does **קוֹיָהּ** mean eyes?),” along with their making it into one word, **פִּתְחוֹת־קוֹיָהּ**. Our translation, “certain opening (of locked doors),” is a guess.

Slotki holds that “The unusual Hebrew form, which should be read as one word... means ‘complete or wide opening of the eyes.’ It signifies the ability to see clearly as contrasted with the gloom of a prison.” (P. 298) But he gives no indication of how he determined that this is the meaning.

Alexander states that “Kimchi and Jarchi (explain the noun / phrase) to mean *opening of the prison*, the second word being regarded as a derivative of **לָקַח**, ‘to take’...Gesenius and others are disposed to follow Aben Ezra in treating it as one word (**פִּתְחוֹת־קוֹיָהּ**)...intended to express the idea of complete or thorough opening...This Gesenius understands to mean the opening of the prison, but in opposition to the settled usage which restricts **פִּתְחוֹת** and its derivatives to the opening of the eyes and ears...

“The only natural sense which can be put upon the words is that of spiritual blindness and illumination.” (P. 397) Obviously, where Alexander thinks this is the “only natural sense,” other Hebraists disagree.

Sometimes there is the mistaken idea that learning the biblical languages—Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek-- will enable the student to clear up all problems in understanding the biblical text. Those who have spent their lives in those languages know that this is simply not the case. While a knowledge of the original languages of the **Bible** can throw great and helpful light on the text, it by no means solves all problems—and expert linguists constantly differ in their understanding of those languages.

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61:2 לְקַרְא שְׁנַת־רְצוֹן לַיהוָה

וַיּוֹם נִקְמָה לְאֱלֹהֵינוּ

לְנַחֵם כָּל־אֲבֵלִים:

to proclaim a year of acceptance<sup>11</sup> for the YHWH,

and a day of vengeance / recompense for our God;<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>(...continued)

Knight states that “Israel is also to proclaim ‘the opening of the prison’... What we have here is ‘and to the prisoners ‘very much opening’ or ‘smashing open’...At **Isaiah 42:7** and **49:9** opening the doors of a prison and opening the eyes of the blind are clearly regarded as one, in that a prisoner in those days was held captive in the terrible dark-ness of a dungeon. The nations are thus regarded here as all being prisoners held in darkness until the light of God shines on them through the cooperation of Zion (**60:1-2**,

- 1 Arise! Become light! Because your light came,  
And YHWH’s glory arose over you (feminine singular)!
- 2 Because look—the darkness covers earth, and a heavy cloud (covers) peoples.  
And upon you YHWH will arise, and His glory will be seen over you!

This task laid upon Israel is thus to be an intense one of hard work for God, and work which is *of* God.” (Pp. 52-53)

<sup>11</sup>The noun רְצוֹן means “good-will,” “favor,” “acceptance.” It is the proclamation of a year of Divine good-will, favor, acceptance. Instead of Divine anger or wrath or displeasure, it is a time filled with good-will and favor. Instead of a time when some are considered unclean or untouchable or unwanted, it is or will be a time of acceptance for all. This language goes beyond the typical “year of Jubilee.”

Achtemeier comments that “Most important in the list of infinitive phrases is [the third one]: the servant...is sent to proclaim the year of Yahweh’s favor...In short, a new era is dawning, in which Yahweh’s judgment on His people will be turned aside; He will repay Judah’s enemies, and bestow on His sinful and undeserving people nothing but good.” (P. 90)

<sup>12</sup>What does the phrase יוֹם נִקְמָה לְאֱלֹהֵינוּ, “day of *naqam* for / belonging to our God” mean? If this phrase stood by itself, it would mean a day of God’s vengeance on evil-doers, as Slotki says, vengeance “on the ungodly or the enemies of Israel.” (P. 298)

(continued...)

to comfort all who are mourning;<sup>13</sup>

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

Knight states that “Furthermore, Israel is to herald ‘the day of vengeance of our God,’ the day of vindication, of rescue, when God will faithfully bring forth justice (**42:3c**; **63:4**; compare **34:8**; **35:4**.” (P. 56)

Oswalt comments that “Some commentators (e.g., Muilenburg, Westermann, Whybray) have doubted that *vengeance* means what it appears to mean here. They point out that every other note in the passage is a positive one of comfort and thus argue that the word has lost its specific connotations here and is simply a conventional term meaning salvation. This seems strange in view of **63:1-6**, where ‘vengeance,’ although paralleled with ‘redemption’ in **verse 4**, clearly has destruction of enemies in view in the larger context...

“It is a great source of comfort to anyone who is oppressed to know that the source of the oppression will one day get exactly what it deserves, and that its power will be broken. Thus we have no reason to take the statement at anything other than its face value.” (P. 566)

<sup>13</sup>The phrase concerning God’s vengeance is continued in this line: לַנְּחָם כָּל אֲבֵלִים, “to comfort / console all who are mourning.” That is, it is a Divine vengeance on all the causes of mourning.

Oswalt states that “Those who mourn for their own sin and for the ruined state of Zion will hear words of comfort from the messiah; but, more than that, they will be comforted by him.” (P. 566)

And we are reminded of the words attributed to Jesus in **Matthew 5:4**, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted,” along with his constant giving of comfort to the mourning—see the story of Jesus and Lazarus in **John 11** and His offer of comfort to His disciples in **John 14:1-3**. The messiah Jesus Christ is also the suffering servant who bears the sins of others.

Knight states that “The servant people are ‘to comfort all who mourn.’ Here again is a case not just of talking but of doing, of giving oneself to others, an act that can of course be a costly thing.” (P. 56)

Can this mean Divine removal of death with the wiping away of all tears as depicted in **Isaiah 25:6-8** be related to this comforting of mourners? We think it certainly can!

6 And YHWH of Armies will make for all the peoples,  
on this mountain,  
a drinking-banquet of fatness,

(continued...)

61:3 לשׁוֹם | לְאַבְלֵי צִיּוֹן

לְתֵת לָהֶם פֶּאֶר תַּחַת אֶפֶר

שֶׁמֶן שָׁשׂוֹן תַּחַת אֶבֶל

מֵעֵטָה תִּהְלֶה תַּחַת רוּחַ כְּהֵה

וְקָרָא לָהֶם אֵילֵי הַצֶּדֶק

מִטֵּעַ יִהְיֶה לְהַתְּפָאֵר:

to place<sup>14</sup> for the (heads) of Zion's mourners--

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<sup>13</sup>(...continued)

a drinking-banquet of aged / matured wine–  
fatness full of marrow,  
(and) refined wines.

7 And He will swallow up on this mountain  
the appearances of the shroud  
that shrouds over all the peoples,  
and the mourning-veil  
that is woven over all the nations.

8 He swallowed up the death for long-lasting time.  
And my Lord YHWH will wipe out tear(s) from upon all faces.  
And He will remove His people's reproach from upon all the earth,  
because YHWH said (it)!

What a tremendous source of hope and comfort this is to those who love the biblical teaching! God's ultimate purpose is the swallowing up of death, the wiping away of tears!

Slotki holds that this means "all that mourn for Zion" (p. 298), but the statement in this verse is not that explicit, and can be taken to mean all who mourn for whatever loss they have suffered.

<sup>14</sup>Slotki's translation of the phrase לְשׁוֹם (our "to place") has "to appoint," and he comments that "the verb (literally 'to put') seems to have no object unless it is to be regarded as an anticipation of the following 'to give,' the objects being a garland...oil, etc." (P. 298)

Alexander states that "Of the many senses which might here be attached to the verb שׁוֹם, the most appropriate is that of *putting on*, as applied to dress.



a planting of YHWH for Glorifying Himself.<sup>21</sup>

61:4<sup>22</sup> וְבִנְיָ חֲרֻבּוֹת עוֹלָם

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<sup>20</sup>(...continued)

Knight states that the “oaks of righteousness” means “great strong trees, deeply rooted in God’s saving love. Such was the reality of faith of the constitution of the new Israel. Compare **60:21**,

And your people, all of them, (will be) righteous;  
for long-lasting time they will inherit earth / land—  
a sprout of My planting, a work of My hands, to make itself beautiful.

The biblical oak was an evergreen tree that never shed its leaves...What we have is a renewal of the old, not of something wholly different...Moreover, it was the Lord who planted [the oaks of righteousness], not for their sakes, but for His Own sake, that His name might be glorified amongst the nations of the earth.” (P. 56)

<sup>21</sup>Compare **Isaiah 60:21**,

And your people, all of them, (will be) righteous;  
for long-lasting time they will inherit earth—  
a sprout of My planting, a work of My hands, to make itself beautiful.

Alexander observes that “The mixture not only of metaphors but also of literal and figurative language in **verse 3** shows clearly that it has respect to spiritual not external changes.” (P. 400)

Oswalt comments on **verse 3** overall that “Here is another of the great paradoxes of this **Book [of Isaiah]** and of the **Bible**: try to make ourselves mighty, and we burn ourselves up; admit ourselves helpless and doomed, and God gives us His beauty [and His stability]. We are made to be mirrors; when His beauty is reflected in us, we become beautiful [and stable].” (P. 568)

<sup>22</sup>Oswalt comments on **verses 4-11**, and particularly **verses 4-9** that they “are the ‘good news’ that the servant / messiah proclaims. **Verses 10-11** are first of all a response on the part of Zion, and then a summary and confirmation of what has been said before. Altogether they are an expression of the promise of God to fulfill His ancient promises and to demonstrate His nature to the world through Israel. Words for the foreign nations appear six times.” (P. 570)

Slotki comments on **verses 4-7** that “The ruins of the waste cities of the Holy Land shall be rebuilt, and strangers will tend the flocks and cultivate the soil; while Israel, free from worldly cares, will consecrate his life to the service of God and, as His priests, will teach religion and morality to the nations of the world.” (P. 299)

(continued...)

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<sup>22</sup>(...continued)

Achtemeier comments on **verses 4-6** that they “expand still further on these glowing promises. Not only will Jerusalem be rebuilt (compare **44:26; 45:13; 49:17; 60:10**), but all the devastation Israel has known through the years of warfare and conquest will be replaced by new cities with new inhabitants (compare **58:12; 60:15; Ezekiel 36:33; Amos 9:14**). As in **60:10** and **60:14** (compare **14:2**), those who formerly oppressed Israel and held it captive will become its servants, while Israel will serve as Yahweh’s kingdom of priests (compare **Exodus 19:6; 1 Peter 2:5; Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:6**), mediating the knowledge of Him to the world. The result is that the nations will confess Yahweh as their God also (‘our God,’ **verse 6b**; compare **56:6**). The oracle envisions nothing less than worldwide allegiance to the Lord (compare **45:14, 22-25**). But Israel as Yahweh’s priests will have no need to worry about material necessities, for the wealth and abundance of all the nations will sustain its life (compare **60:5, 11**).” (P. 90)

Alexander refers to the nineteenth century commentator on **Isaiah** (1841), Henderson’s view that **verse 4** and the next “admit of no consistent interpretation, except on the principle that the Jews are to be restored to the land of their **fathers**. The ruins and desolations are those of cities that had once been inhabited, and cannot, without the utmost violence, be applied to the heathen world.”

But, Alexander asks, “Why may they not be explained as ‘imagery’...or be ‘taken metaphorically,’ and without reference to external desolation?” (P. 400)

We agree with Henderson. What do you think?

Oswalt comments on **verse 4** that it “closely agrees with **verse 3** in its continuation of the theme of restoration. At the same time, its emphasis on the specifics of the new situation in the land makes it much like **verses 5ff**...It seems plain that the emphasis shifts from the person and work of the servant / messiah in **verses 1-3 (4)** to the promises to Israel in **verses (4) 5-11**...

“As in **54:3** and **58:12**, the promise is made that no matter how devastated the ruins, nor how desolate the land, God will enable it all to be rebuilt...No matter how long the ruins may have existed, they will be rebuilt, and no matter how terrible the desolation, new life for Israel will spring up again. Compare **Isaiah 35:1-2**...

**Isaiah 54:3,**

Because (to the) right and (to the) left;  
you will spread out;  
and your descendants will possess nations!  
And desolated cities they will inhabit!

**Isaiah 58:12,**

(continued...)

שְׁמֹמֹת הָאֲשָׁנִים יִקְוֹמְמוּ  
וְחִדְשׁוּ עָרֵי חָרָב  
שְׁמֹמֹת הַיָּם וְדֹרֹתָ:

And they<sup>23</sup> will build long-time ruins,<sup>24</sup>  
former desolations they will raise up;

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<sup>22</sup>(...continued)

And they will build up the long-time wasted places because of you,  
foundations for generation after generation you will cause to stand!  
And you will be called “Repairer (of) Broken Walls,”  
“Restorer of Pathways for Living”!

**Isaiah 35:1-2,**

- 1 Desert and dry land will exult,  
and (Jordan’s) plain rejoiced,  
and it budded forth like the crocus.
- 2 It will certainly bud forth and it will rejoice;  
even (with) rejoicing and ringing cries;  
glorious radiance of the Lebanon will be given to it  
splendor of the Carmel, and the Sharon,  
these will see YHWH’s glorious radiance, splendor of our God.

“Interestingly, history has already borne out these prophecies. Assyria and Babylon are piles of dust, while Jerusalem, in spite of seemingly endless wars and destructions, is a thriving city.” (Pp. 570-71)

But **Third Isaiah** depicts Jerusalem as being the center of the world, having dominance over the nations, with lasting peace, and history has certainly not borne out that depiction! We think Oswalt “jumps the gun” with his declarations that the prophecies of **Isaiah** have been shown to be true by history. Some of them, yes. But all of them, and these in particular, no.

<sup>23</sup>Slotki notes that the phrase “and they” is indefinite as to who is meant. “The subject may be indefinite, or refer to the mourners in Zion (**verse 3**) or to the strangers (**verse 5**).” (P. 299)

<sup>24</sup>Compare **Isaiah 58:12**, where the fruits of genuine righteousness are depicted:

And they will build up the long-time wasted places because of you,  
foundations for generation after generation you will cause to stand!  
And you will be called “Repairer (of) Broken Walls,”  
“Restorer of Pathways for Living”!

and they will renew cities of desolation (synonym),  
ruins of generation and generation.<sup>25</sup>

61:5<sup>26</sup>, <sup>1</sup> וְעִמְדוֹ זָרִים וְרָעוּ צְאֲנָכֶם

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<sup>25</sup>**Rahlfs** has “for generations.” 1QIs<sup>a</sup> interpolates the verb at the end of this line, וְקוֹמְמוֹ, “they shall raise up,” the same verb that occurs earlier in the verse.

This verse seems to reflect a time before the return of the exiles from Babylon, or the time when the returning exiles have just arrived in the land, and are surrounded by the destruction that has occurred generations previously. We think this is very important for dating **Third Isaiah**. Obviously reconstruction is still in the future.

Knight comments that “The rebuilding of Jerusalem, (compare **Isaiah 49:8**,

In this way YHWH spoke:

At a time of acceptance I answered you, and in a day of salvation I helped you.

And I guarded you, and I gave you for a covenant of a people,

to raise up a land, to cause to possess devastated possessions.)

out of the present ruins represents both the literal building up again of the ancient buildings and the spiritual renewal of the people who live in the city.

“Moreover, we see that God leaves humans to do the building; ‘God may feed the sparrows, but He does not throw their food into the nest.’ Mankind has to work as well as pray for the fulfilment of the phrase ‘Thy kingdom come...on earth.’ But they can do so only in the power of the Spirit (**61:1**), on the ground that they are created in the like-ness of the Creator (**Genesis 1:27**). Thus mankind’s recreative work (‘build up,’ ‘raise up,’ ‘repair’) under God’s blessing becomes a sign of the eschatological [‘final’] future, which is always that of bringing forth new things out of the old.” (P. 57)

Compare **Matthew 13:53**,

But then he (Jesus) said to them,

Because of this every official secretary, trained for the kingdom of the heavens,

is like a man, a home-owner,

who will bring out of his treasury new things and old things.)

In all this, moreover, we should note that Trito-Isaiah never talks either of mankind or of ‘society’ in the abstract. Trito-Isaiah is concerned with the concrete, with poor, unhappy, disillusioned, hungry persons, no two of whom are alike. It is these, not ‘society,’ whom God desires to adopt as His children.” (Pp. 56-57)

<sup>26</sup>Oswalt comments on **verses 5-7** by asking “What will be Israel’s relation to its former oppressors in its final restoration? [The word ‘final’ is not found in the text.] Two

(continued...)

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<sup>26</sup>(...continued)

extremes are ruled out. On the one hand, the nations will no longer oppress Israel, and Israel will no longer bow down to them and their Gods. Now the nations will serve Israel. The figure of speech that the prophet uses is of farmworkers (**verse 5**). Without question the roles identified—shepherds, plowmen, and vinedressers—are of the lower social classes. There is no sense in which such persons will be in a position to lord it over anyone. The day is coming when Israel will need fear the nations no more. Furthermore, the abundance of the nations (**verse 6**; compare **60:11** [‘And your gates will be open continually, by day and night they will not be closed--(in order) to bring to you (the) wealth of nations; and their kings driven / led in procession.’]) will be Israel’s to enjoy and to take pride in. Although history may seem to suggest that the Gods of the nations are greater than the God of Israel, the further unfolding of history, and particularly the end of history, will make unmistakably clear that this is not the case.” (P. 571)

Oswalt’s “Although history may suggest that the Gods of the nations are greater than the God of Israel,” should be changed to “history shows, not just suggests.” The fact of history is that this promise of the nations coming to the Jerusalem of the returnees, with their wealth, and Israel dominating the nations, has never happened—but rather, the Nation of Israel has suffered abuse at the hands of the nations for almost two and a half millennia, and still today is a tiny nation surrounded by hate-filled enemies, intent on Israel’s destruction. To appeal to the future, as Oswalt does, is to avoid the facts of history. What do you think?

Oswalt goes on to state that “This passage avoids the other extreme, however, that the roles will simply be reversed, with the formerly oppressed now becoming the new oppressors. [In a footnote, **Oswalt** says that ‘This is not to say the **Book [of Isaiah]** never mentions the nations becoming slaves of Israel; **14:2** is one clear example. But that is not the point here.’ We think **Isaiah 60:11** is another example, with its promise that kings will be “driven” by Israel.]...

“This inference is confirmed by the description of Israel in **verse 6** as *priests of the Lord* and *ministers of our God*. Israel is not ruler of the world, but priests of the world, just as **Exodus 19:6** and **Deuteronomy 33:10** had earlier stated...This understanding of Israel’s calling and function has been explicit in the **Book [of Isaiah]** since **chapter 2**, and is fundamental to a correct understanding of its structure and function.” (Pp. 571-72)

We think Oswalt wants to believe that this is the case, but in fact priests / kings like Melchizedek have ruled over nations, and have owned slaves—and to say that Israel is to be priests of the world does not mean that they will not dominate and rule—which can easily be drawn from depiction of the future in **Third Isaiah**, as the nations bring their wealth to give to Israel.

Knight entitles **verses 5-7** “The Second Aspect of God’s Comfort.”

(continued...)

## וּבְנֵי נֹכַר אֲפָרִיכֶם וְלֹרְמִיכֶם:

And strangers<sup>27</sup> will stand, and they will shepherd your (plural) flocks;

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<sup>26</sup>(...continued)

He comments that “Now Trito-Isaiah turns his searchlight on the gentile peoples. There is no suggestion of the damnation of unbelievers or such like. The return from exile had been the sign of God’s forgiving, renewing love for Israel *in the first place*. But it cannot stop at that point; it must extend to all people. God’s special relationship with Israel is one of function, not of favoritism. As an element in the covenant, Israel is to be a ‘kingdom of priests’ (**Exodus 19:6**)—priests both to God and to mankind. Israel is to do priestly service to the nations by living out before their eyes the *tsedeq*, the saving love of God...Now it was the task of the new Israel, as a kingdom of priests, to let the whole world know about the love of God, and to do so by their *tsedeqah* [righteousness] towards all foreigners (**Isaiah 56**)...

“What a unique emphasis came into the world in Trito-Isaiah’s period. It is one that his contemporaries in the field of religious innovation knew nothing of, whether in India, Persia, or China. A Chinese professor, Woon Swee Tin, has recently described the Confucian code of ethics that was born about the year 550 B.C.E.: ‘It is a closed system that puts excessive emphasis on filial piety, chastity, material achievement, loyal-ty to family and moderation to the point of insensitivity.’ In contrast, Vatican Council II acknowledges as the continuing outcome of God’s command in this chapter of **Isaiah** ‘the emergence here of a new humanism, one in which man is defined first of all in terms of his responsibility towards his brothers and toward history’ (**Gaudium et spes**, no. 55).

“So we note that it is Israel who is to do the building of the kingdom of God on earth, that the Gentiles are only to supply the nuts and bolts—and all for the sake of the poor of the world. **Isaiah 66:21** goes somewhat further and hopes that Gentiles will actually share with Israel in the building of Zion.” (Pp. 57-58)

What do you think? Who has the better interpretation, Oswald or Knight? And while we agree with Professor Tin’s statement concerning Confucian ethics, we wonder if Cyrus’ allowing the captives from numerous nations to return home with religious freedom isn’t in fact the forerunner of Third Isaiah’s “universalism.” At least modern Iranians believe that the Cyrus Cylinder from that same period is the forerunner of more modern views of the universal rights of human beings. See our end-note 1.

We say that the Cyrus Cylinder, along with Third Isaiah’s call for the people of God to practice genuine righteousness in the world, is of unique and profound importance, both politically and religiously!

<sup>27</sup>The noun זָרִים means “strangers” or “foreigners.” Compare **Isaiah 60:10**,

(continued...)

and children of foreignness<sup>28</sup> (will be) your plow-men and your vine-dressers.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>(...continued)

And children of foreignness will build your walls,  
and their kings will serve you.  
Because in My wrath I struck you;  
and in My favor, I had compassion on you!

<sup>28</sup>The phrase בְּנֵי נֹכַר, “sons / children of foreignness” means people from another family, tribe, or nation. See **Genesis 17:12, 27; Exodus 12:43; Leviticus 22:25; Isaiah 56:3, 6; 60:10; 61:5 (here); 62:8; Ezekiel 44:7, 9; Nehemiah 9:2; 2 Samuel 22:45, 46 = Psalm 18:45-46, Psalm 144:7, 11.** See especially,

**Nehemiah 9:2,**

And Israel’s descendant(s) separated themselves from all (the) children of foreignness,  
and they stood, and they confessed to their sins and the iniquities of their fathers.

These “children / sons of foreignness” that **Ezra / Nehemiah** would demand to be put away from the community of returnees, are to be in the future, the builders of Israel’s walls, or as **Third Isaiah** puts it here, their plowmen and vine-dressers, integral, though lowly, participants in the Nation of Israel that is promised in the future.

This is to be contrasted with **Ezra 4:1-3**, which depicts the refusal by the leaders of the returnees to allow the people living in Jerusalem to help them in building the temple:

- 1 And the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard,  
that (the) children of the exile were building a temple to the YHWH, God of  
Israel.
- 2 And they drew near to Zerubbabel and to (the) heads of the fathers’ (households), and they said to them:  
We will build with you—because like you, we will seek your God.  
And we have not / have been offering sacrifice to Him since (the) day of Esar-Chaddon, King of Assyria, the one bringing us up here.
- 3 And Zerubbabel and Yeshua and (the) rest of (the) heads of the fathers’ (households) belonging to Israel said:  
(It is) not for you and for us to build a house / temple for our God!  
For we alone will build for the YHWH, God of Israel—  
just as the King Cyrus, King of Persia commanded us!

We have no doubt that this reflects a basic difference / controversy between Third Isaiah and a large group of the returnees who would eventually be headed up by

(continued...)

61:6 וְאַתֶּם כֹּהֲנֵי יְהוָה תִּקְרְאוּ

מִשְׁרְתֵי אֱלֹהֵינוּ יֹאמְרוּ לָכֶם

חֵיל גּוֹיִם תֹּאכְלוּ

וּבְכַבֹּדָם תִּתְיַמְרוּ:

And you (plural) will be called Priests of YHWH;<sup>30</sup>

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

Ezra / Nehemiah, with their insistence on segregation from half-breed Jews and children / sons of foreignness. Where Third Isaiah, building upon his predecessor Second Isaiah's work, advocated reaching out to the "people of the land," including them in the community, and depicting foreigners as participants in the rebuilding of the cities of Israel, especially in helping to finance the projects.

<sup>29</sup>Alexander comments on **verse 5** that "As to the meaning of the prophecy, interpreters are much divided. Some seem to take it in the strictest sense as promise that the heathen would be slaves to the Jews...Gesenius understands it as meaning that the Jews should confine themselves to spiritual services, and leave mere secular pursuits to the Gentiles...Hitzig's explanation (is) that the Jews and Gentiles are described as sustaining the relation of priests and laymen to each other. Ewald qualifies it still more by describing the relation to be that of the Levites to the other tribes..."

[But, Alexander holds,] no exclusive promise of Levitical or sacerdotal rank to the Jews, as distinguished from the Gentiles can be here intended. This is confirmed by the language of Peter, who applies the promise of the next verse to the Christian Church (**1 Peter 2:5**). The only way in which all these seeming discrepancies can be reconciled, is by supposing...that even in **Exodus 19:6** the promise is addressed to Israel not as a nation but a church; so that when the Jewish people ceased to bear this character, they lost all claim to the fulfilment of the promise, which is still in force, and still endures to the benefit of those to whom it was originally given, namely, the Israel of God, that is to say, His church or chosen people." (P. 401)

According to the dream / vision of **Third Isaiah** the returnees from Babylon are still the "Israel of God," and in their future they will be called YHWH's priests / ministers, as they consume the wealth of nations. Alexander's view that the promise depicts a time when Israel ceased to bear the character of a church, is being read into the passage, not taken from it—it foresees no such time.

<sup>30</sup>Compare **Exodus 19:6**, where Moses is told by YHWH to tell Israel:

(continued...)

Ministers of our God,<sup>31</sup> it will be said to you.  
Wealth of nations you shall eat,  
and in their abundance you shall boast.<sup>32</sup>

61:7<sup>33</sup> תַּחַת בְּשִׂתְכֶם מְשֻׁנָּה

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<sup>30</sup>(...continued)

And you (plural) will belong to Me, a kingdom of priests,  
and a set-apart nation!

These (are) the words which you (Moses) shall speak to Israel's children.

Slotki comments that "As the priests subsisted upon what the Israelites allocated to them, so the priestly nation will be supported by the other peoples since it is dedicated to the Divine service." (P. 299)

But the very fact that the other peoples support the Israelites as priests, implies that the Israelites will serve those peoples as their priests—i.e., as their teachers, and as their leaders in worship of YHWH. See Knight's comment in footnote 26.

<sup>31</sup>The combination of the construct nouns מְשָׁרְתֵי (אֱלֹהֵינוּ) כְּהֵנָּה and "priests of," and "ones ministering (to) our God," is typical language used for the Levitical priests— but here this is the language of the foreigners, who come to share in Israel's faith, and to learn from the Israelites as they teach them and minister to them.

<sup>32</sup>As a result of the Israelites priestly ministry to the nations, the nations will bring their wealth to support the Israelites.

The phrase וּבְכְבוֹרָם תִּתְיַמְרוּ, which we translate by "and in their abundance you shall boast," is translated by Slotki as "and in their splendor you shall revel." He comments that "The splendor that was hitherto the lot of the nations will now pass over to Israel. The verb translated 'revel' has also been variously explained as 'succeed to' (literally, 'take in exchange') or 'boast yourselves.'" (P. 299) Achtemeier has "you shall be transformed (literally: you shall change places)." (P. 87)

Oswalt notes that "Ever since Jerome (see also **Rahfs**, the Aramaic Targum and the Syriac translation) it has been conjectured that the masoretic Hebrew text תִּתְיַמְרוּ was a by-form of תִּתְאַמְרוּ, 'to speak for oneself, boast'...1QIs<sup>a</sup> now seems to confirm Jerome's conjecture, as it reads תִּתְיַמְרוּ." (P. 568)

<sup>33</sup>Achtemeier comments on **verses 7-9** that "Yahweh Himself...takes up the glad announcement." (P. 90)

(continued...)

וּכְלִמָּה יִרְנוּ חֶלְקָם  
 לְכֵן בְּאַרְצָם מִשְׁנֵה יִירָשׁוּ  
 שְׂמֵחַת עוֹלָם תִּהְיֶה לָּהֶם:

Instead of your shame, a double (portion),<sup>34</sup>

and (instead of) reproach, they<sup>35</sup> will rejoice (over) their lot / territory.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup>(...continued)

Slotki comments on **verse 7** that “The prosperity and joy of the future will be commensurate with the sorrow and affliction of the past and present. As the latter was and is in full measure, or double the nation’s deserts, so shall be the former.” (P. 300)

<sup>34</sup>For this line **Rahlf**s has “in this way, out of a second (time), they will inherit the land / earth.”

Slotki states that the word “double” means “twice as much as they deserved, in full measure.” (P. 300) Compare **Isaiah 40:2**,

Speak 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 sins!

Oswalt comments on **verse 7** that “It presents another of the ‘insteads,’ which began in **60:17**, Instead of shame, the disgrace of defeat and captivity, of having been deserted by, or worse, failed by, one’s God, there will be the honor of a double share. The eldest child, the most honored descen-dant, received a double portion of his father’s estate, and that may be the sense of what is being said here (**Deuteronomy 21:17**). Instead of dishonor, there will be honor; instead of dispossession, there will be possession of twice what had been before.” (P. 572)

<sup>35</sup>Oswalt states that “The shift from 2<sup>nd</sup> person in the first colon to 3<sup>rd</sup> person in the remainder of the verse is problematic. The different ways in which the versions attempt to solve the problem (e.g., 1QIs<sup>a</sup> and the Syriac translation change everything to the 2<sup>nd</sup> person; **Rahlf**s changes some but not all; the Latin Vulgate and the Aramaic Targum follow the masoretic Hebrew text) attest to the originality of the masoretic Hebrew text. As **Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley**, 144p. shows, such a shift is not uncommon in the prophets, occurring some 11 times in **Isaiah** alone.” (P. 568)

<sup>36</sup>The second line of **verse 7**, וּכְלִמָּה יִרְנוּ חֶלְקָם, literally “and an insult / reproach they shall rejoice their portion,” is given varying translations:

(continued...)

therefore in their land, a double (portion)<sup>37</sup> they shall possess;  
long-lasting gladness will belong to them!<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>(...continued)

**King James**, “and *for* confusion they shall rejoice in their portion”;

**Tanakh**, “Men cried, “Disgrace is their portion”;

**New Revised Standard**, “and dishonor was proclaimed as their lot”;

**New International**, “and instead of disgrace you will rejoice in your inheritance”;

**New Jerusalem**, “instead of disgrace, shouts of joy will be their lot”;

**Rahlf’s**, omits this line.

**Slotki**, “And for that they rejoiced: ‘Confusion is their portion,’” (holding that “they” refers to “the nations under whom Israel suffered.” P. 300)

**Alexander**, “everlasting joy shall be to them.”

Alexander states that “According to Henderson, **verse 7** means that the honor conferred by God upon the restored Jews, and the estimation in which they shall be held by believing Gentiles, will far overbalance the contempt to which they have been subject.” But, Alexander holds, “The limitation of the passage to ‘restored Jews’ is...groundless and arbitrary.” (P. 503)

We agree with Henderson, and think that it is groundless and arbitrary to apply the passage to others than the Jewish returnees from Babylon. Of course, **New Testament** writers such as Peter see Christianity as the fulfilment of these promises—but that does not change or override the fact that they were originally spoken to the returnees from Babylon.

Oswalt holds that “תַּחַת [instead of] governs both the first colon and the second: ‘Instead of your shame...and (instead of) humiliation...and to understand some such verb as ‘you will receive’ as either being assumed or as having dropped out of the first colon. Thus it would read ‘Instead of your shame (you will receive) a double share, and (instead of) humiliation they will rejoice in their portion.’” (P. 569)

<sup>37</sup>1QIs<sup>a</sup> reverses the order of these phrases, reading “Therefore a double portion in their land.”

<sup>38</sup>Where our Hebrew text reads שְׂמֵחַת עוֹלָם תִּהְיֶה לָהֶם, “long-lasting joy will belong to them,” **Rahlf’s** has “and eternal gladness above their head.” Compare **Isaiah 35:10**,

And YHWH’s redeemed ones will return,  
and they will come (to) Zion with ringing shouts;  
and long-lasting joy upon their heads;  
they will overtake rejoicing and joy;  
and sorrow and groaning will flee away.

(continued...)

61:8<sup>39</sup> כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֲהַב מִשְׁפָּט

שָׁנָא נִזְל בְּעוֹלָה

וְנִתְתִּי פְעֻלָּתָם בְּאַמָּת

וּבְרִית עוֹלָם אֶכְרֹת לָהֶם:

Because I (am) YHWH—One Who loves justice,

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

Achtemeier comments that “When her [Jerusalem / Zion’s] life is transformed, she will enjoy two-fold abundance in the land...and joyfulness which will never cease.” (Pp. 90-91) Compare:

**Zechariah 9:12,**

Return to a stronghold, prisoners of the hope!  
Also today (I am) declaring a second time,  
I will return to you double!

**Isaiah 60:15,**

Instead of your being forsaken and hated,  
and there is no one passing through—  
and I will place you for long-lasting exaltation / majesty,  
a rejoicing, generation and / after generation!

<sup>39</sup>Slotki comments on **verses 8-9** that “God will make an everlasting covenant with the people and His blessings upon them will be manifest to all.” (P. 300)

Oswalt comments on **verse 8** that “The Israelites may believe that God will do these wonderful things He has promised because of Who He is. The language here is the typical language of self-predication with which God has identified Himself from **chapter 27** onward, but especially in **chapters 41-49**...

“God is promising to reward them (the faithful remnant) and to keep covenant with them forever. Not to do so would be injustice and robbery, which Israelite faith found unthinkable in God (compare **Genesis 18:25** [‘Shall not the Judge of all the earth do justice?’]).” (P. 573)

Who hates robbery with offering-up / injustice.<sup>40</sup>  
 And I will give their recompense<sup>41</sup> in true-faithfulness,<sup>42</sup>  
 and a long-lasting covenant I will cut for them!<sup>43</sup> ,<sup>2</sup>

61:9 וְנִוְדַע בַּגּוֹיִם זִרְעָם

וְצִאצְאֵיהֶם בְּתוֹךְ הָעַמִּים

כָּל-הָאֵיחָם יִפְרֹחַ

<sup>40</sup>The Hebrew phrase here, בְּעוֹלָה, is ambiguous, and can be read with the Masoretes as “with offering-up,” or “with injustice” (בְּעוֹלָה). Without the masoretic pointing (vowels), either can be read. **King James** has “for burnt offering,” and **Tanakh** has “with a burnt offering.” **New Revised Standard, New International** and **New Jerusalem** all have “and wrong-doing.” **Rahlfs** has “spoils / booty out of injustice.” The Aramaic Targum has “oppression.”

<sup>41</sup>The noun פְּעֻלָּה means “work,” “recompense.” Translations vary:

**King James**, “and I will direct their work in truth”;

**Tanakh**, “I will pay them their wages faithfully”;

**New Revised Standard**, “I will faithfully give them their recompense”;

**New International**, “In my faithfulness I will reward my people”;

**New Jerusalem**, “and I shall reward them faithfully”;

**Rahlfs**, “and I will give labor / toil to righteous ones.”

**Oswalt**, “I will give their reward in truth,” but suggests the translation “just wage.” (P. 569)

<sup>42</sup>Alexander comments that this is “the enunciation of the general truth, that the Divine justice renders absolutely necessary the destruction of His obstinate enemies, and the deliverance of His people from oppression.” (P. 404)

We add, passages like **Ezekiel 16** support this truth, that Divine justice means destruction for YHWH’s enemies, such as the prostitute-city Jerusalem, and her sister-prostitute-cities, Samaria and Sodom—but their destruction does not mean their final end, as YHWH declares He will one day restore the fortunes of all three cities! See **Ezekiel 16:63-65**. We say, Beyond Divine judgment of destruction lies the hope of restoration by Divine grace!

<sup>43</sup>The Divine promise is the gift of a בְּרִית עוֹלָם, “long-lasting covenant,” translated by **Rahlfs** as διαθήκη αἰώνιον, “eternal covenant.” For occurrences of this phrase in the **Hebrew Bible**, see our end-note 3.

כִּי הֵם זֵרַע בְּרַךְ יְהוָה:

And their descendant(s) will be known among the nations,  
and their offspring in (the) midst of the peoples.

Everyone seeing them will recognize them,  
because they are descendant(s) YHWH blessed!<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Alexander states that “The true application of **verse 9** is to the Israel of God in its diffusion among all the nations of the earth, who shall be constrained by what they see of their spirit, character, and conduct, to acknowledge that they are the seed which the Lord has blessed. The glorious fulfilment of this promise in its original and proper sense, may be seen already in the influence exerted by the eloquent example of the missionary on the most ignorant and corrupted heathen, without waiting for the future restoration of the Jews to the land of their fathers.” (P. 404)

But this is taking the passage out of its original context, of being spoken to the returnees from Babylon, and meaning the future of Jerusalem / Zion in its own land.

Oswalt states concerning **verse 9** that “The result of God’s faithfulness is twofold. First, there will be recognizable Israelite offspring. The ancient promise to Abraham will be kept. Israel will not disappear among the nations, absorbed and no longer existent as a separate nation...

“Since human history began, hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people-groups have disappeared into the larger mass. How easily that could have been true of Israel. Where are all the groups who were contemporaries of Israel (the -ites that are the bane of **Bible** readers)? They are all gone, yet Israel remains. Why? Because God has promised they would and will.

“The second aspect of the promise is that not only will Israel have historical continuity, but it will also be a witness to the peoples of the world...Isaiah says that people from all over the world will recognize that God has blessed His people, the spiritual and physical descendants of Israel.” (P. 573)

Knight comments on **verses 8-9** that “Now we see how God’s total forgiveness reveals what God means by justice. We learn that justice can be understood only as an aspect of love...Such then is the justice of God, understood as the unwarranted outpour-ing of grace. Instead of the ‘shame’ of the exile (**61:7**) Israel will inherit (from God!) ‘eschatological’ [final] joy, joy on earth that has total meaning for eternity. This is because ‘My covenant,’ says God, is ‘everlasting,’ so that it too belongs both to time and to eternity.” (Pp. 58-59)

We insist that the word עוֹלָם means “long-lasting-time,” not “eternity” as Knight constantly translates it, borrowing from Greek philosophical language. Nevertheless,

(continued...)

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

the promise of a “long-lasting covenant” that endures from generation to generation foresees an unending relationship between YHWH and His people—which He promises to them, not because of what they have done (they have gone into captivity because of their deeds!), but because of His love and unwarranted forgiveness. God’s concern for justice does not override His love for His people, or mean that He cannot forgive the guilty. What do you think?

<sup>45</sup>Slotki comments on **verses 10-11** that “The prophet voices the feelings of the redeemed people.” (P. 300)

Achtemeier comments on these verses that “In the final strophe, the Judean community is...shown breaking forth in joyful response to these happy announcements.” (P. 91)

Alexander holds that “these are the words of the same speaker who appears at the beginning of this chapter and the next”—that is, the messiah / servant, Jesus Christ. See our comments on **verse 1**, with its question concerning the identity of the speaker.

Oswalt comments on **verse 10** that “One of the characteristics of this poem [61:4-11] has been the shifts back and forth from one person to another. Now yet another speaker is introduced. Scholars have been divided about who this person is. Some have argued that he is the same as the one who spoke in the first person in the first three verses. But more have agreed that the speaker is Zion...[Oswalt himself thinks] the prophet seems plainly here to speak as Zion, voicing her praise to God for what He has done for her through the servant / messiah...clothing His bride with salvation and righteousness...The joyous tone is heightened by the use of wedding imagery.” (P. 574)

But we ask, Where is anything said in this poem about what God has done for Zion through the servant / messiah? Oswalt assumes that the speaker in **verses 1-3** is the servant / messiah, but if so, it is not made explicit. We think it is the prophet himself, speaking on behalf of the returned Israelites, just as Oswalt says is the case in **verses 4-11**.

Knight entitles **verse 10** “The First Magnificat” (the word Magnificat comes from the first word in the Latin translation of **Luke 1:46-55**; it is the title given by Roman Catholics to the “Song of Mary” which she sang in response to the revelation that God had given her concerning the birth of Jesus).

He comments that “Zion speaks, acknowledging that God has now done to that community that which comprised the content of his ‘mission’ [meaning, God’s sending the new Israel as His missionaries to embody His righteousness / love to the whole world]...Zion’s whole being (*nephesh*) ‘rejoices...in my God’...’The garments of salvation (*yeshah*)’ revealed to all eyes that God had ‘saved’ their wearer. ‘He has covered me

(continued...)

תִּגְלֵנִי בְּנֶפְשִׁי בְּאֱלֹהֵי  
כִּי הִלְבִּישָׁנִי בְּגָדֵי־יֵשׁוּעַ  
מִעֵיל צְדָקָה יַעֲטֵנִי  
כַּחַתָּן יִכְתֹּן פָּאֵר  
וּכְכֹלֵה תַעֲרָה כְּלִיָּה:

I<sup>46</sup> will certainly rejoice in the YHWH;

my innermost being will rejoice (synonym) in my God!

Because He dressed me (with) clothing of salvation / deliverance;

(with) a robe of righteousness / righteousness<sup>47</sup> He covered me,

<sup>45</sup>(...continued)

with the robe of righteousness (tsedaqah): It was He Who put this garment on me, no I myself. Without Him I could not have known how to love and care for the Gentile world, and so for the poor of the human society...’As a bridegroom decks himself’ (or, with the Hebrew, ‘priests himself beautifully’ in preparation for his task in the royal covenantal priesthood—that is, as he puts on the appropriate finery for his task as priest)...so the Lord has dealt with Israel.” (Pp. 59-60)

<sup>46</sup>The Aramaic Targum interpolates the phrase אִמְרַת יְרוּשָׁלַם, “Jerusalem said” before the phrase אֲשִׁישׁ שׁוֹשׁ, literally, “rejoicing I will rejoice.”

<sup>47</sup>Somewhat strangely to us, translations of the noun צְדָקָה, vary with some having “victory” instead of “righteousness” or “righteousness.” **Tanakh** has “victory” (as does Slotki); **New Jerusalem** has “saving justice.” **Rahlf’s** has εὐφροσύνης, “gladness.”

We think that in the context of **Third Isaiah**, we should think of the kind of “righteousness” depicted in **chapter 58**, wherein righteousness is defined as self-giving love for others, something so desperately needed by all peoples and nations at all times—not a proud claim of victory over others. We insist that the only way the people of God can be pleasing to God is through such self-giving love, as earlier depicted by **Second Isaiah**’s description of the “suffering servant” who willingly gives his life for others—the very opposite of the modern Islamic terrorist movement that beheads and murders those who differ from it!

like a bridegroom acts (like) the priest<sup>48</sup> (with a) turban,<sup>49</sup>  
and like a bride ornaments herself (with) her jewels.

61:11<sup>50</sup> כִּי כְאֶרֶץ תּוֹצִיא צְמִיחָהּ  
וּכְגִנָּה זְרוּעֶיהָ תַצְמִיחַ  
כִּן אֶדְנִי יִהְיֶה יְצְמִיחַ צְדָקָהּ  
וּתְהַלֵּלָהּ נֶגֶד כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם:

Because like the earth brings forth its growth,  
and like a garden causes to sprout what is sown in it,

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<sup>48</sup>Where our Hebrew text has the piel verb יִכְתֹּן, “will act as priest,” 1QIs<sup>a</sup> reads ככהן, “like a priest.”

Oswalt notes that “Since פִּאָר [headdress / turban] is used of the priestly turban in **Exodus 39:28** and **Ezekiel 44:18**, the sense is apparently to put on a headdress like a priest.” (P. 570)

<sup>49</sup>Slotki’s translation has “puts on a priestly diadem,” but he suggests the translation “adorns himself with a garland.” The verb is connected with **kohen** (priest) and may perhaps mean here ‘adorns himself with the kind of headgear worn by a priest.’ This ancient custom was forbidden at a later period as a mark of mourning for the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans. For a similar reason a bride, too, was not allowed to wear a wedding crown.” (P. 301)

<sup>50</sup>Slotki comments on **verse 11** that “The Divine promises to Israel are as assured as the natural course of Nature. The comparison between the survival of Israel and the growth of seed may be carried farther. The seed in the earth, though apparently decayed, sprouts into fresh life and multiplies itself. So Israel in exile, though apparently deteriorated and lost in his miseries, will in God’s time emerge into a new existence, increased both in strength and numbers.” (P. 301)

But the depiction in this chapter is not of a future in which Israel is decayed, or deteriorated and lost—rather the dream / vision is that of the returnees from Babylon becoming ever mightier and ever more numerous, ruling over the nations of earth that come to Jerusalem, bringing with them the wealth of nations. At the time of the writing of **Third Isaiah**, the promise has only begun to be fulfilled. But if Israel will lift up its eyes, to see the Divine vision / dream of **Third Isaiah**, it will see that this is only the beginning of Israel’s growth, and of the wondrous future which will know no such decay or deterioration, but will be universally recognized. What do you think?

in this way my Lord YHWH<sup>51</sup> will cause righteousness to sprout,  
and praise before all the nations!<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Where our Hebrew text has אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה, “my Lord YHWH,” 1QIs<sup>a</sup> has YHWH Elohiym, “Yahweh God,” as does the Aramaic Targum. The other ancient versions support the Hebrew text.

<sup>52</sup>Achtemeier comments on **verse 11** that “Finally, the Judean community is pictured confessing its faith in Yahweh’s fidelity to His promises...The people confess that as surely as the earth brings forth vegetation, so surely will the Lord Yahweh (repeating the title from **verse 1** to close the unit) cause His salvation (compare **Psalm 85:11**) and praise in Israel to spring up before the eyes of all the nations as a witness to them (compare **60:18**).” (P. 91)

Achtemeier concludes her comments on **chapter 61** by stating that “The authors of this oracle are here holding out before Judah the vision of what she can become under God—nothing less than the center of the kingdom of God on earth...”

“One cannot help wondering how these glorious promises were received by the struggling Judean community. Had they not heard them all before, from **Second Isaiah**? The promises had not come to pass in the actual return from exile. Why should the Judeans put any more credence in the promises of salvation now?...The Judeans must have been as skeptical about this gospel as we are of the message of some ragged figure on a city street who carries a sign proclaiming the end of the world. When did such promises ever come to pass for Judah?

“The only answer we can make is to point to that account of the beginning of the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, recorded in **Luke 4:16-19**, which tells of the day he stood up in his hometown synagogue and read the opening lines of this passage from **Third-Isaiah**. After Jesus had closed the book and sat down, he said to those in the synagogue, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing’ (**verses 20-21**). In similar fashion, **Matthew 11:5** (= **Luke 7:22**) records that Jesus used a portion of this oracle to point to himself as the awaited Messiah. In other words, the gospel writers saw these promises proclaimed by **Third-Isaiah**, to have been fulfilled in the activity of the final suffering servant, Jesus Christ.

“There is a long stretch of time between the sixth century B.C.E. postexilic Judean community and the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth, and the fact that the **Bible** knows of no other fulfillment of **Third-Isaiah**’s words than that given by God in Christ, shrouds in mystery the way God works in history to keep His word. His ways are truly not our ways and His thoughts not our thoughts, and we cannot calculate aforesaid the manner in which God will work out His purposes. But the fulfillment of this oracle in Jesus Christ warns us against terming any word of God preserved in the **Old Testament** by Israel as merely visionary or unrelated to reality. The people of Israel still hope

(continued...)

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

in this word today. We in the church believe we have seen its fulfillment, and we are stewards of that mysterious working of God.

“It should further be noted that in the **Bible**, the promises of God always have a proleptic [the representation of something as actually existing before it does] effect. That is, once a promise of God is proclaimed, the power of that very word enables its recipients to live, at least in a partial manner, as if the word of promise had already been fulfilled. For example, Israel never saw the kingdom of God come on earth [but see **2 Chronicles 13:8**, מִמְּלַכֶּת יְהוָה בְּיַד בְּנֵי דָוִד, ‘YHWH’s kingdom in (the) hand of David’s sons’] and yet the **Enthronement Psalms (47, 96-99)**, [with the affirmation כִּי־יְהוָה עֲלִיּוֹן נוֹרָא מֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל עַל־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ, Because YHWH--Most High, Awe-Inspiring--a great King over all the earth!; and the repeated phrase מֶלֶךְ יְהוָה, ‘YHWH reigned!’] witness to the fact that Israel knew in its finest worship the joy and security of the universal kingdom already come...

“Similarly, the Christian Church has not yet experienced the resurrection and the final messianic banquet, and yet there can be no doubt that through the proclamation of their certain coming, in our worship and at the Lord’s Supper, we already experience the first fruits of their power and gladness. The power of the very word of promised resurrection enables us to lead new lives. The promise works its fulfillment in our present situation even before it is fulfilled.

“So it was, too, with this word of **Third-Isaiah**. It was preserved by Israel after **Third-Isaiah’s** time not only because Israel saw it as a promise for the future, but also because it worked its liberating and saving effects in sixth century B.C.E. Judah and in every succeeding generation. Those who heard these words were in fact freed and comforted and made joyful in their generation. God’s future became their present. And the fact that these words have been fully realized in the person of Jesus Christ only confirms Israel’s experience for our faith.” (Pp. 92-4)

Oswalt comments on **verse 11** that “In a comparison reminiscent of **40:7-8**, but from a different angle, Isaiah asserts that the joyous scene he has just described is an absolute certainty...If nature is reliable, how much more so is the Creator of nature! He will plant righteousness in the seed-bed of Israel, and it will spring up like flowers in a garden.” (P. 575)

### **Isaiah 40:7-8,**

7 It was dry–green grass,  
it withered–a blossom,  
because YHWH’s Spirit / wind blew upon it.  
Surely grass (is) the people!

(continued...)

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

8 It was dry—green grass,  
it withered—a blossom.  
And our God's word  
will stand for long-lasting time!

**Isaiah 45:8,**

Drizzle, O heavens, from above;  
and clouds, drip righteousness!  
Open, O earth,  
and bring forth salvation;  
and righteousness, spring forth together!  
I, YHWH, I created it!

**Psalm 85:12-13<sup>Heb</sup> / 11-12<sup>Eng</sup>**

12/11 Also, YHWH will give that which is good;  
and our land will give its produce.  
13/12 Righteousness will walk before him;  
and he will place his foot-steps for the way.

Knight comments on **verse 11** that “Israel is to be the ‘garden,’ or the vineyard, of the Lord—well-kept, fruitful, a witness to all the nations (and not producing poisonous grapes, as Isaiah had felt it necessary to say at **5:1-7**). Within the garden, however, the seed must first fall into the ground and die (**42:9; 43:19; 55:10**). It is the Lord Who will sow it and let the seed ‘die,’ as Israel did indeed ‘die’ in the exile (**Ezekiel 37**)...

“However, that cannot be the end, since God is the living God Who alone can make the seed germinate. ‘The Lord God will cause *tsedaqah* (love for mankind for mankind) [our ‘righteousness’] to spring forth before all the nations’ when they turn round and look towards this chosen people, now wearing the clothing of love, as beautiful as a garden of flowers. This vision will necessarily become reality, because God has said it will.” (P. 60)

1.

## **Cyrus the Great and Human Rights**

“The decrees Cyrus made on human rights were inscribed in the Akkadian language on a baked-clay cylinder. In 539 B.C.E., the armies of Cyrus the Great, the first king of ancient Persia, conquered the city of Babylon. But it was his next actions that marked a major advance for humanity. He freed the slaves, declared that all people had the right to choose their own religion, and established racial equality. These and other decrees were recorded on a baked-clay cylinder in the Akkadian language with cuneiform script.

“Known today as the Cyrus Cylinder, this ancient record has now been recognized as the world’s first charter of human rights. It is translated into all six official languages of the United Nations and its provisions parallel the first four Articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

“From Babylon, the idea of human rights spread quickly to India, Greece and eventually Rome. There the concept of “natural law” arose, in observation of the fact that people tended to follow certain unwritten laws in the course of life, and Roman law was based on rational ideas derived from the nature of things.

“Documents asserting individual rights, such as the Magna Carta (1215 C.E.), the Petition of Right (1628 C.E.), the US Constitution (1787 C.E.), the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789 C.E.), and the US Bill of Rights (1791 C.E.) are the written precursors to many of today’s human rights documents.” (**Wikipedia**, 3/31/2016)

## 2. Occurrences of “Long-Lasting Covenant” in the Hebrew Bible

**Genesis 9:16**, where God promises Noah:

And the bow will be in the cloud; and I will see it,  
to remember a long-lasting covenant between God  
and every life among all flesh which (is) upon the earth.

**Genesis 17:7**, where God promises to Abraham,

And I will cause My covenant to stand between Me and you;  
and between (Me and) your descendant(s) after you, to their generations,  
for a long-lasting covenant; to be to you for a God,  
and to your descendant(s) after you.

**Genesis 17:13**, again, God to Abraham,

Surely circumcise one born in your house, and one purchased with your money;  
and it will be My covenant in your flesh, for a long-lasting covenant.

**Genesis 17:19**, again, God says to Abraham,

And God said, Of a truth, Sarah your wife is bearing a son for you;  
and you will call his name ‘Isaac’;  
and I will cause My covenant to stand with him,  
for a long-lasting covenant to his descendant(s) after him.

**Exodus 31:16-17**,

16 And Israel’s children shall observe the day-of-rest,  
to make the day-of-rest for their generations, a long-lasting covenant  
17 between Me and Israel’s children--  
it is a sign for long-lasting time;  
because YHWH made the heavens and the earth (in) six days;  
and on the seventh day He rested and He was refreshed.

**Leviticus 24:8**,

On the day of rest, on the day of rest (i.e., regularly),  
he (the high priest) shall arrange it (the twelve loaves of bread on the  
table in the tabernacle) before YHWH continually–  
(it is) a long-lasting covenant (coming) from Israel’s children.

**2 Samuel 23:5**, where David is depicted as saying,

Because is not my house this way / so with (the) Supreme God?  
Because a long-lasting covenant He placed for me,

set in order in the whole, and observed?

Because all my deliverance / salvation and every desire—  
because did He not cause it to prosper?

**Isaiah 24:5,**

And the earth / land was polluted / defiled beneath its inhabitants--  
because they passed over--laws / teachings they passed through /  
changed,  
they broke / frustrated a statute--a covenant of long-lasting time.

**Isaiah 55:3,**

Incline your (plural) ear, and come to Me!  
Listen—and your (plural) innermost-being will live!  
And I will cut for you people a long-lasting covenant--  
steadfast loves of David, the true-faithful ones!

**Isaiah 61:8 (here),**

Because I (am) YHWH—One Who loves justice,  
Who hates robbery with offering-up / injustice.  
And I will give their recompense in true-faithfulness,  
and a long-lasting covenant I will cut for them!

**Jeremiah 32:40,**

And I will cut for them a long-lasting covenant which I will not turn back from  
following after them;  
to do good to them,  
and I will place my fear / reverence in their heart,  
so as not to turn away from Me!

**Jeremiah 50:5,**

Zion—they shall ask (the) way there, their faces;  
Come, and we will join (ourselves) to YHWH—  
a long-lasting covenant—it will not be forgotten!

**Ezekiel 16:60,** where YHWH says to His prostitute wife Jerusalem,

And I will remember, I (will)!—My covenant with you in (the) days of your  
youth,  
and I will cause to stand for you a long-lasting covenant!

**Ezekiel 37:26,**

And I will cut / make for them a covenant of peace,  
a long-lasting covenant will be with them.  
And I will give to / make for them, and I will multiply them.  
And I will give / place My sanctuary in their midst to long-lasting-time!

**Psalm 105:10,** where it is said of YHWH's promises to Abraham and Isaac,

And he caused it to stand for Jacob, for a statute,  
for Israel, a covenant, a long-lasting one,

**1 Chronicles 16:17,** speaking of the covenant which YHWH made with Abraham and Isaac,

And He caused to stand for Jacob for a statute,  
for Israel, a long-lasting covenant.

