

Isaiah 64, Hebrew Text with Translation and Footnotes

64:1^{Heb} / 2^{Eng} 1

כְּקִרְחַת אֵשׁ הַמָּוִטִים

מִיָּמִים תִּבְעֶה-אֵשׁ

לְהוֹרִיעַ שְׁמֶךָ לְצָרֶיךָ

מִפְּנֵיךָ גּוֹיִם יִרְגְּזוּ:

¹Slotki comments on **verses 1-3^{Heb} / 2-4^{Eng}** that “This passage continues the wish or prayer of the last part of the preceding verse.” (P. 311)

Oswalt comments on verses **1-2^{Heb} / 2-3^{Eng}** that “Almost all commentators agree that the previous verse, this one, and the one following form a single sentence whose meaning is something like: ‘Oh, if You had just broken in on us, shaking the mountains—like fire burning brush or boiling water—revealing Your nature to the nations, doing wonders we never dreamed of, coming down and shaking the mountains.’ But the Hebrew syntax is not nearly this smooth. It is abrupt and disjointed, full of dislocations ...Perhaps they reveal an agitation on the part of the speaker / writer, who is simply pouring out his soul to God without worrying much about nicely articulated flow of thought.” (P. 621)

Knight comments on these same two verses that “The text of the **Hebrew Bible** makes **verse 1^{Heb} / 2^{Eng}** the climax to the cry of despair at **63:15-19**. What then does it mean? The Hebrew has: ‘If only Thou hadst rent the heavens and come down.’ The verb here is in the past tense and so does not express a wish for the future...The **New English Bible** is correct when it translates by ‘Why didst Thou not do something spectacular like melting the mountains, as when a great volcanic eruption sets fire to whole forests and boils up the waters of great lakes? If only Thou hadst done so, then that would have made ‘Thy name known to Thy adversaries...that the nations might tremble at Thy presence’...

“This is exactly the kind of thinking prevalent today. ‘Give me just one proof of the existence of God.’ ‘I cannot believe, without tangible scientific evidence, as I would in the case of a forest fire or a volcanic eruption.’ Or, with Jesus, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if some one should rise from the dead’ (**Luke 16:31**)...

“For God had ‘come down’ to share with His servant Israel the humiliation, suffering, and death of the exile in Babylon (**Isaiah 53** [is that what **Isaiah 53** says? We doubt it! It depicts an individual who suffers and dies on behalf of Israel’s sins, bearing those sins himself—but is it depicting God as the ‘Suffering Servant’? We think not! Quite to the contrary, **Isaiah 53** depicts God as the One Who causes and is pleased by the suffering of His servant!].” (P. 82)

like kindling a fire of brushwood,²
water will boil (by the) fire--³
to make known Your name to Your adversaries,
from Your presence⁴ nations would quake--

64:2^{Heb} / 3^{Eng}

בַּעֲשׂוֹתֶיךָ נִרְאֹת לֹא נִקְוָה
יִרְדָּת מִפְּנֵיךָ הַרִים נִזְלוּ:

²Alexander states that the verb קִנֵּה [kindle or be kindled; here as the infinitive construct, קִנֵּה, 'to kindle,' 'to be kindled'] "is both transitive and intransitive, either of two constructions may be here adopted—as a fire of brushwood burns, or as fire kindles brush—the last of which is preferred by most interpreters, as simpler in itself, and because fire is the subject of the verb in the next clause also." (Pp. 429-30)

³Alexander comments that "The point of comparison in both these clauses is the rapidity and ease with which the effect is produced." (P. 430)

Oswalt notes that "All the [ancient] versions differ from the Masoretic Hebrew text on this bicolon [two lines], and to a considerable extent from each other." Compare

Psalm 97:5,

Mountains like the wax were melted from before YHWH,
from before (the) Lord, all the earth / land!

Oswalt comments that "*Fire* is intimately associated with the presence of the holy God. In no book is that more true than this one (**Isaiah 4:5; 6:6; 9:4^{Heb} / 5^{Eng}; 10:16; 29:6; 30:27, 30; 31:9; 33:12, 14; 66:15, 16, 24**). If God were to come among these people and apply His fire to their unclean lips and hardened hearts, as He had to Isaiah in **chapter 6**, the brushwood of their lives would burst into flames, and the tepid water of their souls would break into a roiling [rendering water or wine murky / opaque by stirring up sediment] boil. The result would be that God's adversaries, those who had so casually trampled down His temple (**63:18**), would come to know something about the name, i.e., the character, of Israel's God. This is always the purpose of God's Self-revelation." (Pp. 621-22)

⁴The first letter of the phrase מִפְּנֵיךָ, "from Your face / presence" 1QIs^a is illegible. But a later hand has written the letter פ above the line.

while You would do fearsome things we did not expect,⁵

You would come down⁶—from Your presence mountains would have quaked!⁷

64:3^{Heb} / 4^{Eng} ⁸

⁵The prayer-wish seems to imply that when people wait for YHWH's action, they should expect the unexpected! That's certainly what happened at Mount Sinai—and it will be true whenever YHWH manifests Himself / makes Himself known in history!

Oswalt comments that “One of the features of God's Theophany in and through the exodus was the wonders He did in that context (**Exodus 15:1; 34:10; Deuteronomy 10:21; 2 Samuel 7:23; Psalm 106:22**)...These were ‘terrible things’...in the sense that they revealed a power that was not of this world and not amenable to control through it...

“God simply broke in on them and set about delivering them in some startling, and not a little terrifying, ways...Now the people are waiting! Now they know enough about God, His character and His power, to think that He ought to be doing something on their behalf (compare **63:7-14**). Yet He seems to be doing nothing.” (P. 622)

⁶**Rahfs** omits the phrase “You would come down.”

Slotki's translation interpolates “O that Thou wouldest...that the mountains might...” He states that this is “a verbal repetition of the last four Hebrew words of the preceding chapter, forming a parenthesis.” (P. 311)

New Jerusalem similarly has “at the unexpected miracles you would do. (Oh, that you would come down, in your presence the mountains would quake!)” **Rahfs** has “When you might do the glorious things, mountains would take / receive from You trembling / quaking.”

⁷The prayer-wish is for a reenactment of the Mount Sinai Theophany, when the mountains shook with the fiery appearance of YHWH, and the thunderous voice of YHWH enunciated the Ten Commandments (see **Exodus 19-20**), causing the people to tremble in fear: “If only we could have a renewal of that great experience at the founding of our nation!”

⁸Oswalt comments on **verse 3^{Heb} / 4^{Eng}** that “This verse and the first bicolon [two lines] of **verse 4^{Heb} / 5^{Eng}** are a reflection on the preceding verse. What have God's actions over the years taught the people about their God? They had taught them that there is no God like Him...

“But what one thing is it that puts the Holy One beyond compare? Is it the power to split the heavens and smash the rocks?...No, for Baal could do that, or at least such things could be attributed to Him. What truly distinguishes God from the Gods in the prophet's eyes is that He is the Savior...He is the only One Who will act on behalf of those who wait for Him.” (P. 623)

(continued...)

וּמַעֲוֹלָם לֹא-שָׁמְעוּ

לֹא הָאָזְנוּ עֵין לֹא-רָאָתָהּ

אֱלֹהִים זֹלַתְךָ

יַעֲשֶׂה לְמַחֲכָה-לּוֹ:

And from long-ago time they did not hear,
they did not give ear,⁹ eye did not see--
a God except You--
He will do / act for one waiting for Him.¹⁰

⁸(...continued)

Knight entitles **verses 3-5a**^{Heb} / **4-6a**^{Eng} “Thou Didst Terrible Things.”

He comments that “Yet God had indeed come down in days of old and had done ‘terrible things.’ The Hebrew word נֹרְאֹת [verse 2^{Heb} / 3^{Eng}] is used only of that which is humanly inexplicable, such as are all God’s acts of grace [‘fearsome,’ ‘awe-inspiring’]...Yahweh is a God ‘Who works for those who wait for Him,’ for those who expect to hear His voice—not in the earthquake or in the trampling of the warriors’ boots, but as the still small voice uttered in the silence of the Word (as Dietrich Bonhoeffer expressed it, while awaiting his martyrdom at the will of Adolf Hitler [but is this an either / or? Would not Third Isaiah say God’s voice can also be heard in the trampling boots—see **63:1-6**, especially **verse 6?**]). And so our poet now actually answers himself in faith about the God Whose concern for Israel he had doubted. He comes back from his doubts by reading again the central message of Isaiah, and now comments upon it. The answer he finds is that God is love...

“The love of God is apparent...only to ‘him that joyfully works righteousness, those that remember Thee in Thy ways.’ It is only such who are aware that God is love, this God of the thunderstorm Who does terrible [fearsome / awe-inspiring] things. Though He is the infinitely high God, He bends down to us with a love from the higher to the lower, with a love that bridges the gap...This love is a jealous love (**verse 16**), for in it God shows that He really and fully wants us for Himself, to accept Him as ‘our Father,’ so that He may be one with us in the exclusiveness of His Divine Being. Thus it is sin and sin only that separates us from God, while it is love and love only that is the antidote to sin.” (Pp. 83-85)

⁹**Rahlf**s omits this phrase, “they did not give ear.”

¹⁰Where our Hebrew text of **verse 4** has:

(continued...)

¹⁰(...continued)

And from long-ago time they did not hear,
they did not give ear, eye did not see--
a God except You--
He will do / act for one waiting for Him.

Rahfs has:

From the age (past), we did not hear,
neither did our eyes see, a God except you--
and the works of Yours,
what things You will do for those who stay / remain / wait for mercy.

English translations vary slightly:

King James, "For since the beginning of the world *men* have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, *what* he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him."

Tanakh, "Such things had never been heard or noted. No eye has seen *them*, O God, but You, Who act for those who trust in You."

New Revised Standard, "From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him."

New International, "Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him."

New Jerusalem, "Never has anyone heard, no ear has heard, no eye has seen any God but you act like this for the sake of those who trust him."

Oswalt comments that "Biblically speaking, 'to wait' is to manifest the kind of trust that is willing to commit itself to God over the long haul...The **book [of Isaiah]** is about waiting for a God Whose face is hidden to reveal Himself to His people (**8:17**); waiting for a Servant to deal a death blow to sin; waiting for a Messiah to establish his kingdom forever. But as Isaiah and his people wait, they know one thing: unlike all the Gods, God will act on behalf of those who wait for Him." (P. 623)

Alexander comments that "This verse assigns a reason why such fearful things should be expected from [YHWH], namely because He alone had proved Himself able to perform them...Waiting for God implies faith, hope, and patient acquiescence...

"Paul's quotation (**1 Corinthians 2:9**) of the words as descriptive of the gospel as a mystery or something hidden till revealed by the Spirit...deliberately varies the form of the expression, showing that it was not [Paul's] purpose to interpret the original passage, but simply to make use of its terms expressing his own thoughts on a kindred subject." (P. 431)

(continued...)

¹⁰(...continued)

1 Corinthians 2:9,

But rather, even as it has been written (claim to be quoting scripture),
 What things eye did not see,
 and ear did not hear (this and the preceding line paraphrase **Isaiah 64:4**),
 and upon a person's heart it did not come up (nothing like this in **Isaiah 64:4**)—
 what things the God prepared for those who love Him (no mention of loving God
 in **Isaiah 64:4**).

William F. Orr and James Arthur Walther, in **1 Corinthians (The Anchor Bible**, Doubleday & Company, Garden City, New York, 1976) state that “The quotation from scripture cannot be precisely identified. Paul seems to have put together phrases (**Isaiah 64:4; 52:15; 65:17; Jeremiah 3:16; Ben Sirach 1:10**), probably again from memory. The result certainly expresses a prophetic sentiment. It is curious, however, that if Paul was consciously ‘manufacturing’ a quotation, he did not come out with one that fit his grammatical context better.” (P. 157)

J. Paul Sampley, in **The First Letter to the Corinthians, The New Interpreter's Bible**, Volume X (Abingdon Press, Nashville, 2002), calls this verse “a Pauline amalgamation of scriptural echoes; compare **Isaiah 52:15; 64:3 LXX**.” (P. 821)

Paul's claim that he is quoting scripture here in **1 Corinthians 2:9** does not inspire confidence in his knowledge of the **Jewish Bible**—either in the Hebrew or in its Greek translation. Once again, we are reminded of Paul's humble confession in **1 Corinthians 13** concerning his partial knowledge and his “seeing through a mirror darkly,” and we are warned against assuming that everything Paul says is the “infallible word of God.”

¹¹Slotki comments on **verses 4-6^{Heb} / 5-7^{Eng}** that they contain “a humble confession of sins and weaknesses, preceded by the plea that the death of the righteous men, whom God had prematurely taken away because of the people's iniquities, was the cause of the nation's degeneration and moral and religious helplessness.” (P. 311)

Oswalt comments on **verse 4^{Heb} / 5^{Eng}** that “The thought of **verse 3^{Heb} / 4^{Eng}** is expanded here. Waiting on the Lord is not passive but active. It is to do righteousness (compare **56:1**) with joy, which is, in effect, to remember God's ways. Thus to wait for the Lord is to live the covenant life, to commit the future into God's hands by means of living a daily life that shows that we know His ways of integrity, honesty, faithfulness, simplicity, mercy, generosity, and self-denial.” (P. 623)

Yes, but in the context of **Third Isaiah**, “righteousness” has been very carefully depicted in **chapter 58**—it is the life of self-giving love to those in need—the hungry, the

(continued...)

פִּגְעַתְּ אֶת־שֵׁשׁ וְעָשִׂה זְדָקָה

בְּדַרְכֵיךָ יִזְכְּרוּךָ

הֵן־אֵתָהּ קִצְפֹת וְנַחֲשָׂא

בְּהֵם עוֹלָם וְנוֹשָׁע:

You meet¹² one rejoicing, and doing¹³ righteousness;¹⁴

¹¹(...continued)

homeless, the sick—and, instead of segregating yourself from them, to welcome them into your fellowship, and do everything in your power to meet their needs, as well as honoring God with your time, an act that will not only give you rest, but will also give rest to those who work for you. It is the very opposite of the legalistic / separatist program with its emphasis on building walls of segregation and demanding divorce from less than orthodox Jewish families. We do not understand why Oswalt doesn't use **chapter 58** to define righteousness, instead of drawing up a broad definition of his own.

And it is important to note that **verse 4^{Heb} / 5^{Eng}** envisions the possibility for Israelites to “do righteousness with joy”—something Oswalt constantly claims is impossible because of universal depravity. We say, it is entirely possible for human beings to practice righteousness—active love for their neighbors, as commanded in **Isaiah 58**. It is not easy, and may lead to their becoming “suffering servants,” such as is depicted in **Isaiah 53**. But this is what YHWH wants from His servant-people, and it is something they can do, if they choose. Jesus Christ made that choice, and His life of ministry in Galilee is proof of the genuineness of His choice. But it was a costly choice, resulting in His judicial murder by the orthodox Jewish leaders of His day.

¹²Alexander states that this first verb, פִּגְעַתְּ, “You met / You encountered” has been “variously taken in the sense of meeting as an enemy and meeting as a friend, making a covenant, removing out of life, interceding, and accepting intercession. It has been construed as a simple affirmation, both in the past and present form; as a conditional expression...and as the expression of a wish.” (P. 431) See the numerous differing interpretations given to the verse on his pp. 431-32.

Oswalt asks, “What may the person who lives his or her life in this way expect? God will meet them...Elsewhere this verb פִּגְעַתְּ does not have a particularly positive connotation...What can it mean here?...”

“Let a person begin to live according to (remember) God's ways, joyfully doing righteousness, expectantly waiting for Him, and sooner than we might think, we are

(continued...)

in Your ways they will remember You.¹⁵

¹²(...continued)

going to meet Him coming to meet us.” (P. 624) We agree—but note that this is quite a different note, coming from Oswalt!

¹³The words in our Hebrew text, וְעַשְׂהוּ שְׂשׁוּ, are illegible in 1QIs^a, where only the letters שְׁ and עֵהוּ are legible.

¹⁴**Rahlfs** has, instead of “You meet / encounter one rejoicing and doing righteousness,” “For He will meet those doing the righteousness.”

We assume in the context of **Third Isaiah**, that “doing righteousness” means practicing the powerful teaching of **Isaiah 58** concerning true “righteousness” as consisting of worship (“fasting”) that rejoices to reach out to the lost and hurting and rejected in loving care—rather than segregating itself from foreigners and half-breed children, such as legalistic / separatist religion advocated. And in this light, the meaning of the preceding verb “meet / encounter” must be taken in the sense of YHWH’s “meeting as a friend” those who do righteousness.

¹⁵One thing is for sure—**Third Isaiah** has emphatically pointed out the “ways” in which YHWH wants to be worshiped—not with depriving themselves of food in so-called “fasting,” but in rejoicing to reach out across the boundaries of legalism and race and station in life to care for all who suffer, while setting apart one day in seven as a time of rest for workers (and farm animals), and humbly seeking to relate all of life to YHWH. It is in these ways that the Israelite returnees can remember YHWH, and find Him “meeting” them with grace and forgiveness and promise.

But Oswalt, as we would expect, goes on, in the light of his conviction of universal total hereditary depravity, to discuss how this is impossible—since the people are all sinners, and God cannot forgive them apart from the messiah who will come to pay the price enabling their forgiveness, and enabling them to quit sinning. He says, concerning **verses 5-6^{Heb} / 6-7^{Eng}** that “These verses describe the hopeless condition in which the people find themselves, and attribute it finally to God’s activity...It is not the painfully reduced circumstances of the returnees that troubles Isaiah, but the recognition that unless God does something for them to deal with their sinning, which Isaiah recognizes from his own day is endemic, then the exile and the return will have been for nothing.” (P. 625)

But this view that Israel’s sin cannot be dealt with until the coming of the messiah is to deny the opening message of **Second Isaiah (40:2)**, the good news proclaimed to the exiles in Babylon:

Speak to Jerusalem’s heart, and cry out to her,
that her warfare is complete,

(continued...)

Look–You,¹⁶ You were angry, and we missed-the-mark / sinned;
(we were) in them (sins) a long-lasting-time--And shall we be saved / delivered?¹⁷

¹⁵(...continued)

that her iniquity / guilt was accepted / forgiven,
that she received from YHWH's hand double (punishment) for all her sins!

We say, the problem is not that of forgiveness, but rather, Israel's willingness to live by the righteousness of God (**Isaiah 58**), accepting the people of the land as their brothers and sisters, and caring for them as God's righteousness demands.

The heart of the problem, we think, is to be found in the legalistic, segregationist program that would come to full flower under **Ezra / Nehemiah**, demanding the building of a wall of segregation from the peoples of the land, the putting away of foreign wives and their children, and total concentration on personal piety—fulfilling the 613 commandments of the Mosaic legislation, and worshiping in an exclusive rebuilt temple—thereby effectively prohibiting the returnees from practicing God's demand for the kind of righteousness God desires. Following that program leads to separation from neighbor, and from God, resulting not in cleanliness and purity, but rather in sinfulness and depravity.

We seem to hear the prophetic voice saying to the people of God, The legalistic, separatist program is not the way—don't walk in it. Rather, walk in the way of love for God and neighbor!

¹⁶Knight entitles verses **4b-6**^{Heb} / **5b-7**^{Eng} "We Are All Sinners."

He comments that "Bit by bit...we hear our author reassembling his faith. He recognizes that God had indeed 'come down'—but in judgment upon 'our sins.' 'We have been sinners from the beginning' (or, with the **Septuagint [Rahlfs]**, 'have been rebellious' against the covenant). How then can we be saved? In reply to this question Trito-Isaiah declares, first, that we must not despair of being the objects of God's care. Second, we must face up to what sin actually is in the sight of the holy God. 'A polluted garment' is one that has been rendered filthy from constant menstruation (plural). But menstruation is a fact of our human situation, and not of our own will (**Leviticus 2:2**). Over against this, Trito-Isaiah is concerned that we are to do 'all our righteous deeds' (the **Revised Standard** term) in face of our human condition, to perform acts of love (*tsedaqoth* [our 'righteous acts'] simply because God has first acted in this manner to us." (P. 85)

¹⁷These last two lines contain the confession of the Israelite returnees, that they have failed to follow in YHWH's "ways" (see the preceding footnote). They have heard YHWH's desire for their lives—meaning, we think, Second Isaiah's "Songs of the Servant," depicting what YHWH wants His servant-people to be and do, but they have failed to fulfil His desire, causing YHWH to be angry with them. The Divine word has been delivered, but time has passed—a long time—and they have not practiced true righteousness. Therefore the question arises, "Can we, will we be saved / delivered?"

(continued...)

¹⁷(...continued)

Verse 4^{Heb} / **5**^{Eng} is given greatly varying translations:

King James, “Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, *those that* remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved.”

Tanakh, “Yet you have struck him who would gladly do justice, And remember You in Your ways. It is because You are angry that we have sinned; We have been steeped in them from of old, And can we be saved?”

New Revised Standard, “You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed.”

New International, “You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways. But when we continued to sin against them, you were angry. How then can we be saved?”

New Jerusalem, “You come to meet those who are happy to act uprightly; keeping your ways reminds them of you. Yes, you have been angry and we have been sinners; now we persist in your ways and we shall be saved.”

Rahfs, “For He will meet with those doing the right-thing; and the ways of yours will be remembered. Look—You were angry and we sinned / missed-the-mark; through this we went astray.” **NETS** has “For he will meet those who do what is right, and they will remember your ways. Look, you were angry, and we sinned; therefore we went astray.”

Alexander states concerning this verse that “There is perhaps no sentence in **Isaiah**, or indeed in the **Old Testament**, which has more divided and perplexed interpreters, or on which the ingenuity and learning of the modern writers has thrown less light.” (P. 431)

His conclusion is that “The general meaning of the sentence may be thus expressed in paraphrase: ‘Although You have cast off Israel as a nation, You have nevertheless met or favorably answered every one rejoicing to do righteousness, and in Your ways or future dispensations such shall still remember and acknowledge You; You have been angry, and with cause, for we have sinned; but in them, Your purposed dispensations, there is perpetuity, and we shall be saved’...The abrogation of the old economy, though fatal to the national pre-eminence of Israel, was so far from destroying the true church or the hopes of true believers, that it revealed the way of life more clearly than ever, and substituted for an insufficient, temporary system, a complete and everlasting one.” (P. 432)

Again, Alexander reads into the text his Christian theology, with words and phrases found nowhere in the text: “cast off Israel as a nation,” “future dispensations,” “purposed dispensations,” “the abrogation of the old economy,” “the true church,” “true believers,” “substituted for an insufficient, temporary system, a complete and everlast-

(continued...)

64:5^{Heb}, 6^{Eng},

וְנָהִי כַטְמֵאָה כְּלָנוּ

וְכַבְּגָד עֵדִים כָּל-צְדִקְתֵינוּ

וְנִבְל כַּעֲלֵה כְּלָנוּ

וְעֹנֵנוּ כְרוּחַ יִשְׂאָנוּ:

And we became like the unclean (thing), all of us—

and like a garment (stained with) menstrual bloods, all our righteousness!¹⁸

¹⁷(...continued)

ing one.” All of these are being brought into the text, which can be interpreted apart from them.

Oswalt translates the last line of **verse 4^{Heb} / 5^{Eng}** by “in them forever we shall be saved.” He comments that “This colon [line] is very strange, and most commentators ...conclude that it is corrupt. **Rahlf**s has ‘therefore we have erred’; the Syriac translation has ‘against Your ways and yet we will be saved’...The Aramaic Targum paraphrases the entire verse to support salvation through the merit of righteous ancestors... If the text is in error, the error precedes our earliest witnesses.” (P. 619)

All of this from one who holds to the view of an “infallible **Bible**,” with every word in it the word of God! And if Oswalt’s translation is correct, “in them (our sins) forever we shall be saved”—what a comforting teaching!

¹⁸The returnees from Babylon, who had been fully forgiven by YHWH (**Isaiah 40:2**), under the dogmatic leadership of the program to be announced and insisted on by **Ezra / Nehemiah**, will seek to become “righteous” by declaring a large number of their fellow-Israelites “unclean,” because of intermarriage with foreign women and their bearing of “half-breed” children, from whom they have separated / segregated themselves, leaving in its wake numerous single-mothers and children without fathers. They have supposed that they can be “righteous” by seeking to fulfill the 613 commandments of the Mosaic **Torah**, stigmatizing all others who do not follow those legalistic commandments as “unclean”—instead of reaching out to all other people, regardless of their lineage or religion, to love and care for them as members of their own family.

And the result of this attempt at legalistic piety is expressed in this prayer / confession—we ourselves have become as unclean as a menstrual rag! That’s the end result of our segregating ourselves into a narrow, exclusive group, intent on keeping ourselves pure and refusing to reach out to those who need our welcoming care and concern—with our food, our clothing, our healing. And, the prayer / confession states,

(continued...)

And we withered like a leaf, all of us—¹⁹

¹⁸(...continued)

following in this way dictated by legalists, will only lead to our withering as the people of YHWH, leading to our destruction—not to our deliverance / salvation!

We have criticized Alexander and Oswalt for reading their Christian theology into the interpretation of this and other passages in **Third Isaiah**. Our interpretation can be equally criticized—but with this difference: our interpretation is reading in the teaching of **Third Isaiah** itself. What do you think?

Oswalt comments on **verse 5^{Heb} / 6^{Eng}** that “Thus the ‘Holy People’ (**62:12; 64:18**) are not holy at all; they are as unclean as lepers (**Leviticus 13:44-46**; see also **Haggai 2:13-14**); what they call righteous acts are as corrupt as menstrual cloths. They are not the sign of new life coming, but of the lack of conception, because all they do is self-serving and self-enhancing (compare **57:12; 58:2**).” We agree. This is the result of following in the segregationist / isolationist policies that would be formulated later by **Ezra / Nehemiah**, and later by the Pharisees!

¹⁹The community of the returned exiles, promised to become YHWH’s “new planting” (Isaiah 61:3) with tremendous growth as nation, has withered like a leaf. Instead of doing YHWH’s righteousness as commanded in Isaiah 58, reaching out in self-giving love to the foreigners and people of the land, they have followed the legalistic (Ezra / Nehemiah) program, segregating themselves from all others whom they considered unclean, and because of this they have “withered.”

Achtemeier comments on **verses 5c-7^{Heb} / 6c-8^{Eng}**, “To be sure, Judah has been sinful and Yahweh has been angry for a very long time...

Isaiah 47:6a, where YHWH says to Babylon,

I was angry at My people, I profaned My inheritance,
and I gave them into your hand / power.

Isaiah 54:8a,

With a flood of wrath I hid My face from you momentarily.

“This fifth strophe therefore questions in wistful tones if salvation will ever come. The figure of ‘uncleanness’...recalls **Isaiah 6:5a**,

And I said, Woe to me, because I was cut off!
Because I (am) a man of unclean lips,
and in (the) midst of a people of unclean lips, I am dwelling!

(continued...)

and our iniquities, like the wind, will lift us up (for destruction)!²⁰

64:6^{Heb} / 7^{Eng}

וְאִין־קוֹרָא בְּשִׁמְךָ

מִתְעוֹרֵר לְהִחְזִיק בְּךָ

כִּי־הִסְתַּרְתָּ פְּנֶיךָ מִמֶּנּוּ

וְהִמּוֹגְנּוּ בִּיד־עוֹנְנָו:

And there is no one calling on Your name,²¹

(no one) rousing himself to take strong hold on You.²²

¹⁹(...continued)

“**Verse 64:6** is not a continuation of the confession of sin, however, but the further complaint that no one can call on Yahweh’s name, that is, worship Him... because He has hidden His Presence or face (compare **Exodus 33:14**) from them (compare **57:17; 59:2; 45:15; 54:8; 1:15; Deuteronomy 31:18**).” (Pp. 119-20)

²⁰This confession means that Israel is so far gone in its iniquities that the wind is going to sweep them away—we assume, the wind of YHWH’s anger / wrath. We say, The returnees from exile will never become what YHWH wants and expects them to be, so long as they follow in the legalistic pathway of segregation from others, and failure to practice YHWH’s righteousness in genuinely caring for others. We are reminded of the laments of Jesus over Jerusalem for its failure to be what God wanted it to be—see **Matthew 23:34-37; Luke 13:34-35**—and it is apparent to us that Jesus meant Jerusalem’s failure to reach out to the outcasts, as Jesus Himself constantly did in His ministry of love, forgiveness, and acceptance of sinners, including non-Jews, “foreigners.”

²¹Oswalt comments that “The evidence of the hopeless condition of the nation in view of its sins is that no one is even concerned enough about the situation to cry out to God for help.” (P. 626)

We say, this line is obviously an overstatement, since the people uttering this confession / prayer are obviously expressing their lament to YHWH, that is, calling on YHWH’s name! What do you think?

²²The lament claims that the community of returned Israelites is in a state of lethargy—they are, we say, listening to legalistic leaders like **Ezra / Nehemiah / Haggai / Zechariah**, rather than to the voice of YHWH through **Third Isaiah**, calling them to actively reach out to and lovingly serve their neighbors, rather than isolating themselves, rejecting others as “unclean.” The prophetic voice wants the returnees to wake up, to actively become engaged in YHWH’s righteousness, serving others rather than devoting all their attention to their own personal “cleanliness.”

Because You hid Your face from us,

and You made us melt in (the) hand / power of our iniquity!²³

64:7^{Heb} / 8^{Eng} 24

²³The last two lines of **verse 6^{Heb} / 7^{Eng}** are an example of the “blame game.” What has happened to us is not our fault—it’s Your fault, YHWH! You hid Your face from us, You made us melt in the power of our iniquity!

Oswalt comments “But why does this situation obtain? Here the prophet reiterates his complaint (compare **63:17**). It is because (*for*) the all-powerful God is not moving people to do these kinds of things. Indeed, He has apparently hidden His face from them...Because God would not look on the people with mercy (**63:15**), they are at the mercy of their iniquities. God has given them into the power (*hand*) of that which they have chosen (**Romans 1:18-24**), and the result is that the people are helpless.” (P. 627)

What do you think? Is this the actual fact of what has happened, or is this the voice of lament, playing the “blame game” with YHWH, excusing themselves from responsibility?

²⁴Oswalt entitles **verses 7-11^{Heb} / 8-12^{Eng}** “Will You keep silent?”, and comments that “This is the final stanza of the lament that began at **63:7**. It is a plaintive call for God to remember two things: He is the One Who brought Israel into existence, and they are now in misery and shame. It ends with the question: can God simply ignore these facts?” (P. 628)

Slotki comments on these verses that they contain “supplication to the Father and Creator of the nation. Let Him not be wroth for ever, for the sufferings of His people are beyond further endurance. All that was precious is lost, burned, destroyed. Can He calmly look on and refuse His help?” (P. 312)

Achtemeier comments that “Beyond all hopelessness and helplessness, however, there is the fact that God has entered into relation with His people in the past, and it is to that past relationship that **Third-Isaiah** appeals in the final strophe...

“[Judah’s] cities have been destroyed; Jerusalem is a desolation (compare **Isaiah 1:7; 6:11**); the temple, that holy and glorious house (compare **60:7; Psalm 79:1**) where earlier generations praised the Lord, has been destroyed by fire (compare **2 Kings 25:9**), and so can be a house of praise no longer. Every precious object in the temple has been removed or burned or desecrated (compare **Lamentations 1:7, 10-11**). Will Yahweh therefore go beyond such judgment to judge them even more? Will He restrain that mercy which is His very nature? Will He keep silent and not answer their pleas for rescue and not come their aid?

“Such is the prayer which the stricken members of the covenant people of God can utter—an appeal to that mercy of God that made them His people in the first place.”

(continued...)

וְעַתָּה יְהוָה אֲבִינוּ אֵתָהּ

אֲנַחְנוּ הַחֹמֶר וְאַתָּה יֹצֵרֵנוּ

וּמַעֲשֵׂה יָדְךָ כָּלֵנוּ:

And / but now,²⁵ YHWH , You (are) our Father.²⁶

We (are) the clay, and You (are) our Potter!²⁷

²⁴(...continued)
(Pp. 120-1)

Knight entitles these verses “The Poet’s Ambivalent Claim on God.”

He comments that “Clay can only perform what the hand makes it do. What we have here then is a thoroughgoing predestination expressed in terms of **Isaiah 64:6-7^{Heb} / 7-8^{Eng}**, but in contradistinction to verses **3-4^{Heb} / 4-5^{Eng}** ...

“Yet it would be unjust to press this imagery as far as that. What is probably behind Trito-Isaiah’s metaphor is a demand upon God not to let the potter’s wheel cease turning, but that God should complete the artifact He had begun to fashion—in this case, His Own chosen people...

“[Trito-Isaiah] is also saying, ‘Consider, Lord, we are all Thy people,’ a mixed bunch of good and bad—yet perhaps not so bad after all—certainly not bad enough to bring down upon us such anger as You have shown.” (P. 86)

Compare **Lamentations 4:6**,

And (the) daughter of my people’s iniquity / punishment is greater than Sodom’s
sin / punishment for sin;
the overthrow like a moment--
and hands did not wring in / for her!

²⁵Where our Hebrew text has וְעַתָּה, “And / but (disjunctive *waw*) now,” 1QIs^a has וְאַתָּה, “An / but You,” and this is the reading of some five medieval Hebrew manuscripts. The ancient versions all agree with the Masoretic Hebrew text.

²⁶This is a third affirmation of the Fatherhood of YHWH in **Third Isaiah**.

²⁷**Rahlfs** omits the phrase “You (are) our Potter.” All of the other ancient versions have the phrase.

For this use of the figure of a “potter,” compare:

(continued...)

And all of us (are) a product of Your hand!²⁸

64:8^{Heb} / 9^{Eng29}

אֶל-תִּקְצֹף יְהוָה עַד-מְאֹד
וְאֶל-לְעֵד תִּזְכֹּר עוֹן

²⁷(...continued)

Isaiah 29:16,

(It is) your perversity / contrariness, if the potter should be considered like (the) clay.

If a product should say to its maker, He did not make me!
And something formed said to its former, He did not understand!

Isaiah 45:9,

Woe (to) one contending with its former,
a piece of clay along with pieces of clay dirt!
Shall clay say to its former, What will you make?
And, your product has no hands?

Jeremiah 18:6,

Will I not like this potter be able to do to you, House of Israel?
(It is) a saying of YHWH.
Look—like the clay in the potter’s hand,
so (are) you (plural) in My hand, House of Israel!

²⁸Oswalt states that “Here the point [of YHWH as Potter] is more poignant: can the Artist simply toss aside the thing on which He has lavished care and attention, into which He has put so much of Himself? Thus Isaiah appeals to God: although our sin cannot be denied, neither can the nature of our relationship with You. Surely You will not allow our sin to frustrate Your creative purposes, will You?” (P. 629)

²⁹Oswalt comments on **verse 8^{Heb} / 9^{Eng}**, stating “The prophet now pleads that God’s recognition of His special relationship with Israel might mitigate His judgment. Isaiah does not ask that judgment be dispensed with or suspended, only that it not be carried out to its *extremity*, which would surely mean the extermination of the people. This is a major theme of the **book [of Isaiah]**. God’s judgment will fall on this sinful people; there will come a point where it cannot be averted. Nevertheless, judgment is not an end in itself; it is intended to have an ultimately redemptive purpose in cleansing and restoring the people to purity (compare **4:2-6; 30:18-22; 54:7-8**). Isaiah is here appealing for God to actualize that reality...[He pleads] ‘You really will not carry out judgment to its end, will You? Although You cannot ignore our sins, surely You will not remember them forever, will You?’” (P. 629)

הֵן הַבְּטָנָא

עִמָּךְ כִּלְנוּ:

Do not be angry, YHWH, to the utmost / excess!³⁰

And do not remember³¹ iniquity to the perpetuity / forever!³²

Look—observe now--

all of us (are) Your people!³³

³⁰Translations of the phrase עַד־מְאֹד, literally “as far as exceedingly,” vary from “beyond measure,” to “implacably,” to “go too far,” to σφόδρα, “extremely, greatly,” to “to extremity.”

³¹Where our Hebrew text has the qal imperfect תִּזְכֹּר, “You will (not) remember,” 1QIs^a spells with the waw, rather than the *yodh*, תזכור. Oswalt thinks this is a hiphil verb, but this is not apparent to us, unless the copyist mistakes *waw* for *yodh*.

³²Where our Hebrew text has לְעַד, “to the perpetuity,” “forever,” 1QIs^a has לַעַת, “for a time.” The ancient versions read like the Hebrew text.

³³Out of this prayer / confession comes a plea for all of Israel—including those who have sinned, whose “righteousness” is like a menstrual rag—we are all Your people! All of us need Your help! If our understanding of **Third Isaiah** is correct, then this verse represents the followers of **Third Isaiah** (and **Jeremiah 7**) as praying on behalf of the followers of **Ezra / Nehemiah**—something to be desired of the people of God in the midst of their divisions! While you sharply disagree with one another, at least have the grace to pray for one another!

Oswalt comments that “the prophet calls on God to consider the all-important fact that these sinners are not just any people, but they are *Your people*...Since God is their Maker and the One Who has staked His reputation on them, He cannot simply abandon them, no matter how just such abandonment might be.

“The repetition of *all of us* at the ends of **verses 7** and **8**^{Heb} / **8** and **9**^{Eng}...indicates that the writer is not playing off one group in Israel against another. *All* are implicated in the sin of any, and none can stand off in self-righteousness and say that his or her sinfulness is relatively less significant than someone else’s. Neither is the prophet separating himself from the condition of his people.” (P. 630)

Here Oswalt admits the existence of groups among the returnees, even though to our knowledge, he never identifies the groups as Achtemeier and others (including

(continued...)

עֲרֵי קְדֻשָּׁה הָיוּ מִדְּבַר

צִיּוֹן מִדְּבַר הַיְּתֵה

יְרוּשָׁלַם שְׁמָמָה:

Your set-apart cities³⁵ became a wilderness,
 Zion became a wilderness,
 and Jerusalem a devastation!³⁶

³³(...continued)
 myself) have done.

³⁴Oswalt comments on **verses 9-10^{Heb} / 10-11^{Eng}** that “The prophet now turns to the second part of his appeal: the shame and misery of God’s people...The ‘holy people’ (**62:12; 63:18**) are not holy at all (compare **65:5**). They give little evidence of ever having belonged to God, in either character or condition (**63:19**). In the same way, the *holy cities* and the *holy house* give little evidence that they belong to the God Who rules heaven and earth...From glorious Zion to the lowliest village, all are a wilderness, with the result that God’s holy name is profaned (compare **Ezekiel 36:20**).” (P. 630)

³⁵Where our Hebrew text has the plural עֲרֵי, “cities,” both **Rahlfs** and the Latin Vulgate have the singular “city.” 1QIs^a, the Aramaic Targum and the Syriac translation read the plural.

³⁶Alexander notes the use of preterite forms of the verb הָיָה—“Your set-apart cities *became* a wilderness, Zion *became* a wilderness, and Jerusalem (*became*) a devastation!” He states that the preterite “must either have the sense of was, in reference to a definite time past, or has been, implying a continuation of the same state until the present...On the whole, the true sense of the verse, expressed or implied, appears to be that Zion has long been a desolation and Jerusalem a waste.” (P. 435)

We understand this verse as giving clear indication of the time in which **Third Isaiah** was composed--it is that time following the Babylonian invasion of Judah, with the devastating destruction of Jerusalem. This is the condition of Judah when the former exiles returned to their homeland. The description continues in the next verse.

Knight comments that “To experience the full life, human beings need to live in communities. But ‘Thy holy cities have become a wilderness’—that is to say, all the towns of Judah and Samaria where the worship of Yahweh had once been carried on—especially ‘Jerusalem,’ called here by its theological title of ‘Zion.’ Within it the temple, God’s ‘holy and beautiful house,’ where ‘our fathers’ used to praise Thee, ‘has been

(continued...)

³⁶(...continued)

burned by fire.’ What can God mean, the prophet must have pondered, if Israel’s God (of love!) Had allowed such a blasphemous event to take place. And all our ancient ‘pleasant places’—public buildings and stately homes—‘have become ruins.’

“So we watch our theologian-poet struggling to make sense of his faith...He is struggling to discover that it is enough to recognize only what God has *done*, in and through His mighty acts...

“In the same way, we are witnessing today the rejection of the biblical faith by the peoples of the West, especially the faith that the cross of Christ is the final and valid *act* of God in His redemptive plan. For as people today take note, obviously the world is not saved. Facing such a challenge to faith, a private, subjective experience of salvation is not the answer, although it undoubtedly points towards that answer. How very important this whole chapter is then, as its author wrestles with the meaning of faith in a manner that has universal application, in our day as well as his.

“Trito-Isaiah seems to be fighting not just the enemy within himself, but also the preconceptions, as he sees them, of some of his contemporaries. Undoubtedly some of the Levites had never been removed into exile and had continued to minister to the peasants in Palestine over the years. Now, with Haggai and Zechariah, they would want to rebuild the temple, to ‘start again just where we left off.’ They were able to do nothing but exteriorize religion, for they had learned nothing from history. They had not been ‘there’ in the ‘burning fiery furnace’ of the exile, and so could not understand the significance of Deutero-Isaiah’s theological interpretation of that event (**43:2**

[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!])

“And so they were not able to grasp the outcome of it, the ‘resurrection’ of the dry bones of those who had suffered in that foreign land. Theologians today speak of the falsity of trying to do theology in ‘antiseptic laboratories.’ [I think of Duke University—with students studying biblical theology and learning Hebrew and Greek etc. in afternoon ‘laboratories,’ while not serving churches in the midst of the segregated South, with some of their ordained religion professors living immoral lives—where the burning theological questions were deliberately avoided by many]. Trito-Isaiah knew better. He was now laboring, even as his heart was torn in two, to understand the strange ways of God in the rotting ruins of the once beautiful city known before as ‘the joy of all the earth’ (**Lamentations 2:15**,

[They clapped (their) hands over you, all those passing by;
they hissed and shook their head at (the) Daughter of Jerusalem,
(saying:) Is this the City which they said is a perfection of beauty,
a rejoicing for all the earth?])

(continued...)

בֵּית קִדְשֵׁנוּ וְתַפְאֲרֵתֵנוּ

אֲשֶׁר הִלְלוּךָ אֲבֹתֵינוּ

הִיא לְשֹׁרֶפֶת אֵשׁ

וְכָל־מַחְמַדֵּינוּ הִיא לְחַרְבָּה:

³⁶(...continued)

“What a paradoxical God this is, however, to Whom our author is appealing. Down the centuries He had disclosed Himself to Israel through the utterance of His word. But now God Himself, it seems, had created the basic stumbling-block to faith, so that a sincere, believing man must exclaim: ‘Will You keep silent, and afflict us sorely?’ Why should God not now burst forth with a miracle and restore Jerusalem to its former glory?...

“But now Trito-Isaiah had come to see that God is not like that. The clearer God reveals Himself, the thicker the disguise He adopts. The more penetrating the question of God’s providence and plan, the more impenetrable must be His incognito [being intentionally unidentified, disguised]. Unless this were so, of course, Israel would not live by faith but by sight. If God had performed such a miracle as some hoped for, then His act would not have been a miracle, it would have been just magic... If God had thus practiced magic or spoken through astrological pronouncements, nothing would have happened to the returned exiles. They would have remained merely the same perversely unclean and unrighteous group as they had been the day they came home from Babylon (**Isaiah 64:6**,

[And there is no one calling on Your name,
(no one) rousing himself to take strong hold on You.
Because You hid Your face from us,
and You made us melt in (the) hand / power of our iniquity!])

So we discover that Trito-Isaiah, and with him the people of Israel, still has very much to learn about grace and about the unimaginable great purposes of God.” (Pp. 87-8)

³⁷Oswalt comments on **verses 10^{Heb} / 11^{Eng}** that “Even more disgraceful is the condition of the temple, *our holy and beautiful house*. It has been burned to the ground, and with it all the lovely things that had been dedicated to God for worship (compare **Lamentations 1:10; Ezekiel 24:21, 25**)...Can God allow a place with all these associations to lie in ruins? Added to this is the irony of תַּפְאֲרָה, beautiful...In spite of all the glorious promises of **chapters 60-62** about Zion’s ‘beauty,’ the beautiful house is a burned out hulk. Will God keep His promises, or not?” (Pp. 630-31)

Our house / temple of set-apartness,³⁸ and our beauty,³⁹
where our fathers praised You,
became⁴⁰ a burning of fire,
and all our pleasant things⁴¹ became a desolation!⁴²

³⁸1QIs^a has the letters קדשנו as does our Hebrew text, but a later hand has written the letter ך above the word, to insure that it is pronounced correctly.

³⁹Where our Hebrew text has ותפארתנו, “and our beauty,” Rahlfs has “and the glory which our fathers blessed.” The other ancient versions all agree with the Hebrew text.

⁴⁰Where our Hebrew text has the 3rd person singular יהי, “it became,” 1QIs^a has the 3rd person plural, יהיו, “they became.” The ancient versions read like the Hebrew text.

⁴¹Slotki comments that this means “either ‘desirable places’ or ‘desirable objects,’ referring perhaps to the Temple treasures looted by the Babylonians.” (P. 313).

⁴²**Verse 10**^{Heb} / **11**^{Eng} depicts the condition of Israel’s temple at the time of **Third Isaiah**. Israel’s temple, renowned for its beauty, remembered as the place where the Israelites’ ancestors had worshiped YHWH, has been burned down, and is now a desolation.

Alexander comments that “The reference in this verse is of course to the destruction of the temple, but to which destruction is disputed. [Some German interpreters] refer it to the Babylonian conquest, when the temple, as we are expressly told, was burnt (**Jeremiah 52:13**); Grotius to its profanation by Antiochus Epiphanes, at which time, however, it was not consumed by fire; Vitringa and many later writers, with the Jews themselves, to its destruction by the Romans, since which the city and the land have lain desolate. To the first and last of these events the words are equally appropriate...

“With our own hypothesis the passage may be reconciled in several different ways. There is nothing, however, in the terms themselves, or in the analogy of prophetic language, to forbid our understanding this as a description of the desolation of the church itself expressed by figures borrowed from the old economy, and from the ancient history of Israel.” (Pp. 435-36)

All of this seems like an attempt by Alexander to save his overall view of **Third Isaiah**, and an avoidance of the clear meaning of the verse. There is no need to look beyond the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem by the Babylonian, Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C.E., and we think it is unreasonable to think it is referring to Antiochus Epi-

(continued...)

הַעֲלֵ-אֵלֶּה תְּתַאֲפֵק יְהוָה

תַּחֲשֶׁה וּתְעַנְנֵנִי עַד-מְאֹד:

Will You restrain / control Yourself⁴⁴ over these things,⁴⁵ YHWH?

⁴²(...continued)

phanes or to the destruction of the second temple by the Romans in 70 C.E. But there is absolutely no basis for taking its language as a description of the church (true believers in Israel, the followers of Jesus Christ, 'Zion,' the 'New Israel'). We think this verse is an "Achilles' heel" of Alexander's overall view.

⁴³Oswalt comments on **verse 11^{Heb} / 12^{Eng}**, that "All the people's hopes and anxieties are finally summed up in two questions. Will God restrain the compassion that Israel's history has shown to be His most characteristic quality, and will He refuse to respond to their cries (be silent) for mercy and so continue to afflict them to the point of extinction (extremity)?..."

"The only question is whether God's pity for the condition of His children and His concern for His name, which is inextricably linked with Israel, might prompt Him to intervene in the hearts and lives of His people, doing in them what they cannot do for themselves. Will the Warrior from Edom (**59:15b-21; 63:1-6**) act to make possible the fulfillment of the promises of **60:1-62:12?**" (P. 631)

Yes—but we ask, where does the text say that the Israelites "cannot do (these things) for themselves"? They are commanded to do righteousness in **Isaiah 58**—and surely Divine commands such as this are not impossible of fulfilment. What do you think? We say, it isn't that they can't—it's that they won't! Compare **Isaiah 1:16-17**.

⁴⁴Slotki says this means refrain Yourself from compassion and aid. (P. 313)

⁴⁵Slotki says that "these things" refers to "the loss, devastation, humiliation and anguish." (P. 313)

We take this closing verse to be an implicit appeal to YHWH's grace and mercy, asking if He is going to restrain / control His actions towards Israel.

Alexander comments that "The question is not whether God will remain silent in spite of what His people suffered, but whether the loss of their external advantages will induce Him to forsake them. The question as in many other cases implies a negation of the strongest kind. The destruction of the old theocracy was God's Own act, and was designed to bring the church under a new and far more glorious dispensation. How the loss of a national organization and pre-eminence was to be made good is fully stated in the following chapter." (P. 436)

(continued...)

be silent and afflict us excessively?⁴⁶

⁴⁵(...continued)

Again, Alexander is reading far too much into this closing question of **chapter 64**. There is nothing mentioned in this question about “the destruction of the old theocracy,” or its being “God’s Own act,” or about a design “to bring the church under a new and far more glorious dispensation.” All of this comes out of Alexander’s dispensationalist view, and is being read into this question.

However, we agree with Alexander that the question “implies a negation of the strongest kind.” YHWH’s judgment of His people, the Israelite returnees, for their failures / sinfulness, is not His final word for His people—instead, as **Third Isaiah** insists, YHWH has a blessed and glorious future in store for His people, including forgiveness and lasting possession of the land.

⁴⁶**Verse 11**^{Heb} / **12**^{Eng} is translated by **Rahfs** as “and upon / for all these things, You endured / put up with, O Lord, and You were silent; and You humbled us exceedingly.”