

## Isaiah 65, Hebrew Text with Translation and Footnotes

65:1<sup>1</sup> נִדְרֵשְׁתִּי לְלוֹא שְׂאֵלָה

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<sup>1</sup>Slotki comments on **chapter 65** that it contains “the Divine answer to the prayers and pleas in the preceding chapter. A distinction is drawn between the loyal servants of God and the provoking rebels.” He also states that in **verses 1-7** the “reasons for Israel’s tribulation and sorrow” are given. (P. 313)

Alexander sums up **chapter 65** by stating that “The great enigma of Israel’s simultaneous loss and gain is solved by a prediction of the calling of the Gentiles (**verse 1**). This is connected with the obstinate unfaithfulness of the chosen people (**verse 2**). They are represented under the two main aspects of their character at different periods, as gross idolaters and as pharisaical bigots (**verses 3-5**). Their casting off was not occasioned by the sins of one generation, but of many (**verses 6-7**). But even in this rejected race there was a chosen remnant, in whom the promises shall be fulfilled (**verses 8-10**). He then reverts to the idolatrous Jews, and threatens them with condign [fitting and deserved] punishment (**verses 11-12**). The fate of the unbelieving carnal Israel is compared with that of the true spiritual Israel (**verses 13-16**). The gospel economy is described as a new creation (**verse 17**). Its blessings are represented under glowing figures borrowed from the old dispensation (**verses 18-19**). Premature death shall be no longer known (**verse 20**). Possession and enjoyment shall no longer be precarious (**verses 21-23**). Their very desires shall be anticipated (**verse 24**). All animosities and noxious influences shall cease for ever (**verse 25**).” (P. 436)

Again Alexander reads Christian theology into the text. Where is anything said about “pharisaical bigots,” or “carnal Israel,” or “the true spiritual Israel”? Where is “the gospel economy” mentioned, or “the old dispensation”? Such “eisegesis” [interpreting and reading information into the text that is not there] is out of place.

Ortlund entitles **65:1-25** “The Eagerness of God for His People’s Eternal Joy,” and comments that “Though the people of God have unfaithful sinners mixed among them now, He is eager to bring His true people into their glorious eternal home.” (P. 1357)

But this idea of an “eternal home” can hardly stand up to an examination of these verses, which depict a renewed Jerusalem where life expectancy is only a little over a hundred years and sinners are still present. We will quickly sense how Christian interpreters have read their preconceived ideas (based on **New Testament** teaching) into this ancient Hebrew document.

Motyer, pp. 522-23, gives the following “archway pattern” of chapters **65-66**:

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- A1 The Lord's call to those who had not previously sought or known Him (**65:1**)
  - B1 The Lord's requital on those who have rebelled and followed cults (**65:2-7**)
    - C1 A preserved remnant, His servants, who will inherit His land (**65:8-10**)
      - D1 Those who forsake the Lord and follow cults are destined for slaughter
        - because He called and they did not answer but chose what did not please Him (**65:11-12**)
      - E Joys for the Lord's servants in the new creation. The new Jerusalem and its people (**65:13-25**)
    - D2 Those who have chosen their own way and their improper worship. They are under judgment because the Lord called and they did not answer but chose what did not please Him (**66:1-4**)
    - C2 The glorious future of those who tremble at the Lord's Word, the miracle children of Zion, the Lord's servants (**66:5-14**)
  - B2 Judgment on those who follow cults (**66:15-17**)
- A2 The Lord's call to those who have not previously heard (**66:18-21**)

Conclusion: Jerusalem, pilgrimage center for the whole world (**66:22-24**)

Obviously, in the light of Motyer's analysis of the structure of this passage, it reveals a very careful, artistic design.

Ackerman holds that **Isaiah 65:1-7** is "an oracle closely related to **57:3-13**, which we think is clearly the case. Turn to that earlier passage, and read it again carefully, to see how true this is.

**57:3-13** is a difficult passage to translate, but we believe its overall sense is fairly clear. It is an example of the taking up in Judah and Jerusalem by the returnees from Babylon of the fertility religious practices from the surrounding culture of the ancient Near East, perhaps which they have learned to practice in Babylon, which is also found here in **Isaiah 65:1-7**. Its language and shocking depictions remind us of the language of **Ezekiel 16** (YHWH's adopted daughter and later wife, who becomes the worst kind of prostitute, and deserves death) and **Ezekiel 23** (the two prostitute sisters, Oholah (Samaria) and Oholibah (Jerusalem), but whom YHWH still loves, and pledges Himself to remarry (form a new covenant with her) and restore her fortunes.

Readers are not only shocked by the crude, explicit sexual language, but also here in **Isaiah 57** by the charge that Jerusalem has murdered her children as sacrifices to the foreign Gods. See the article "Sacred Sex, Sacrifice and Death," by Susan Ackerman in **Bible Review**, February 1990, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 38-44.

Achtemeier comments on **verses 1-7** that "Yahweh now replies to the lament of **63:7-64:12**. It was customary in the cult of Israel for a priest or cultic prophet to

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respond to the lament of a worshiper with an oracle of salvation...

“But this reply is not the expected oracle of salvation; that does not follow until **65:8-25**. Instead, this is an oracle of judgment on the idolatrous Zadokite party and their followers, much like we found in **57:1-13**, and it spells failure for the Levitical-prophetic efforts to intercede for the Judean community as a whole...

“The Levitical-prophetic preaching and prayers have not borne fruit. The Zadokite party remains as stubborn and sinful and proud as ever. Their eventual doom, therefore, is certain at the hands of a recompensing God. This oracle spells out the reasons for that certain fate.” (P. 122)

Oswalt comments on **chapter 65** as a whole, that “Some commentators...agree that at least part of **chapter 65** has been placed at this point in the **book [of Isaiah]** because it appears to give an answer to the questions raised in **63:7-64:11**<sup>Heb</sup> / **12**<sup>Eng</sup> ...

“**Verses 1-7** denounce the spurious holiness of the rebels, and **verses 8-16** contrast the destiny of the rebels (‘you’) with that of God’s true servants. **Verses 17-25** are quite different from **verses 1-16** both in atmosphere and in terms of address. They are not addressed to either servants or rebels, but rather, like **chapters 60-62** (and **11:6-9**), speak in glowing terms of Zion’s coming peaceable kingdom.

“If **verses 1-16** stand apart from **verses 17-25**, what is their relationship to what precedes them? The vast majority of ancient and medieval commentators understood them to be the answer to the questions raised in the previous section. That position has come to be disputed only in the modern period. Cheyne and Skinner sum up the objections: there is no effective response to the complaint that the reason for the continued sin is God’s silence; there is no recognition of the genuine penitence expressed; there is too great a discontinuity between the claim that we are all ‘Your’ people and the division of the people into two groups. Nonetheless, Muilenburg has shown that the connections between **65:1-16** and **63:7-64:11**<sup>Heb</sup> / **12**<sup>Eng</sup> are too numerous for the relationship to be merely casual. Beyond that, he is surely correct when he asserts that this is a pointed response to what was said in the lament. God will deliver His Own (**verse 8**), but on His terms, not theirs...

“Thus God insists that the problem is not His silence or His apparent unwillingness to save. He bluntly disclaims any responsibility for their sinful condition. He is not remote at all, but has constantly been saying ‘Here am I, here am I.’ What then is the problem? Hypocrisy...

“As in **57:3-13**, the prophet seems to lump a number of cultic sins together for effect...In short, this response is a dash of cold water on the piety of **63:7-64:11**<sup>Heb</sup> / **12**<sup>Eng</sup>. Just because God was indeed the ‘Father’ of the nation, and just because He had given them His **Torah** at Sinai, did not mean that all who called themselves His

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נִמְצָאתִי לֵאלֹהֵי בְקִשְׁנֵי  
אֲמֶרְתִּי הַנְּנִי הַנְּנִי  
אֵל-גֹּי לֹא-קָרָא בְשֵׁמִי:

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

children were such. Indeed, as was made clear from the very beginning of this division (**56:1-8**), foreigners who were true to the intent of the covenant might be more truly His ‘servants’ (**56:6**) than His ‘children’ whose religiosity amounted to the same thing as eating swine flesh.” (Pp. 634-36)

Slotki comments on **verse 1** that “God’s ready accessibility was spurned [by the Israelite returnees from Babylon.” (P. 313)

Oswalt comments on this verse that its tone “differs noticeably from that of the preceding lament...The lament is couched in beautiful, allusive language, while this verse and those following are blunt and to the point...And the point is that the charges addressed against [God] are wrong. Israel’s problem is not the distance of God or His implacable silence in the face of penitent cries. God was answering before anyone was asking, and was revealing Himself before anyone was looking...

“The idea of God’s giving Himself to whoever would respond to His initiative is clearly in the writer’s mind...Israel’s problems are not the result of God’s refusal to listen; God was listening before they were calling. More than that, He was actively disclosing Himself, as the repeated *Behold Me* [our ‘look at Me’] indicates (compare also **Isaiah 40:9; 41:27; 52:6; 58:9**). If people did not call on His name, it was not because God had ‘hidden His face’ ([as is claimed in] **64:6<sup>Heb</sup> / 7<sup>Eng</sup>** ).” (P. 636)

Knight comments on **verses 1-5** that “Paul, in his day, lived in a society that was religiously divided, just as were the people who were now resettling themselves in Jerusalem. Because of this, it is clear that Paul made himself aware of the contents of this chapter.

“The evidence of the early chapters of **Ezra** is that, in proportion to the availability of homes in the ruined city, quite large numbers of loyal, believing people—both clergy and laity—had by now (probably some years after **Isaiah 64** was preached) returned from Babylon. No wonder, as Haggai angrily declares (**Haggai 1:4**), these settlers had had to spend so much of their energies on merely getting settled. But there were evidently others also in Jerusalem—adventurers, drifters, men and women with no home roots who knew nothing of national boundaries, just like the modern Bedouin. These were an easy prey to the superstitions of the peasantry who, for the past fifty years, had mingled with the Canaanite population. **Isaiah 65** therefore now takes up issues raised at **64:8-12**, while **verses 3-5** take up what was said at **57:5-13**. This is all expressed in a Divine speech in reply to the lament uttered in the previous chapter.” (P. 89)

פְּרַשְׁתִּי יָדַי כָּל-הַיּוֹם<sup>2</sup> 65.2

אֶל-עַם סוֹרֵר

הַהֹלְכִים הַדֶּרֶךְ לֹא-טוֹב

אַחַר מַחְשַׁבְתֵיהֶם:

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<sup>2</sup>Justin Martyr quotes **65:2** in his **Dialogue with Trypho the Jew**, 114, claiming that it is an instance of the “prophetic perfect” (our words, not Justin’s). The text speaks of what YHWH has done already—“I was sought,” and “I spread out My hands,” as something that had already happened when the prophet was speaking. But Justin insists that it had not already happened—it is a prophecy of what is going to happen in Jesus Christ and His church.

We ask, Would it not be more true to the text to say that this is the kind of God YHWH has always been, and always will be—a God Who is seeking, spreading out His hands, inviting all who will hear to come to Him?

Achtemeier comments on **verses 2-5** that “We even have the poignant picture of Yahweh holding out suppliant [someone making an humble plea to someone in authority] arms to His people, like a Father calling His children to return to Him, **verse 2** (compare **63:8**; **Romans 10:21** [where Paul quotes **Isaiah 65:2**]). The depth of mercy in such pleading is revealed in the description of the ‘backsliding’ (compare **57:17**) that follows in the participial phrases of **verses 2-5.**” (P. 123)

Oswalt comments on **verse 2** that “Far from ‘hiding His face,’ God has actively offered Himself to the people...All day long God has been begging His people, if one dares to say it, to return to Him...It is not He Who needs to turn to them...but they who must relinquish their stubbornness...and turn to Him...Here, then, is the problem. It is not that He is unresponsive, but that we try to have Him on our terms and not His...The result is, as **30:18** puts it, that God must simply wait until someone is ready to accept His terms—His ways and His thoughts—so that He can deliver them.” (Pp. 636-37)

**Isaiah 30:18,**

And therefore YHWH waits to show favor to you;  
and therefore He will exalt Himself / be high to show compassion to you.  
Because YHWH (is) a God of justice—  
blessed (are) all those waiting for Him!

I spread out My hands<sup>3</sup>,<sup>1</sup> all day-long<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>The phrase פִּרְשֵׁתִי יָדַי, “I spread out My hands,” pictures YHWH as “praying,” as Himself being “in the attitude of prayer”—as He reached out His hands and prays to the nation not called by His name. Again, we ask, “Is this not “prevenient grace”? Knight insists that “the point to note is that prevenient grace still prevails. The exasperated Shepherd still regards the flock as His sheep.” (P. 90)

For statements in the **Hebrew Bible** concerning the “hand” of God, see our end-note 1 at the end of which we state:

“The biblical authors are ordinary human beings, with many faults—but they share in the fact that they have experienced the hand of YHWH in their lives, in many different ways. YHWH’s hand has touched them, calling them to speak for Him, and write down the message, giving His commandments through them (specifically, Elijah, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Ezra and Nehemiah). YHWH’s hand has revealed YHWH’s plan / purpose in history to His servants. It doesn’t mean that they have gotten or understood the message perfectly, or that they will not make mistakes, or that they will no longer be deeply puzzled, but it does mean that their lives have been deeply impacted.

“Those who have felt the hand of YHWH / God touching them can never be the same. They see everything in a different light; they have a whole new world-view, one that is filled with ethical demand and ringing hope for the future. The writings of these biblical authors are filled with instances in which they have seen and felt YHWH’s hand at work in human history—in the rise and fall of nations, especially of their own nation, Israel, in its deliverance from Egypt, but also as being fiercely against them in their times of rebellion. It is YHWH’s hand that has raised up Cyrus the Persian to be His messiah, to bring freedom to the captive Israelites in Babylon. But the biblical writers extend this observation much more broadly, seeing YHWH / God’s hand in all of nature / creation, in providing living-space and nourishment for animals, in the birth of every child, in the heart of every king, even in the bad things that happen (Naomi).

“These numerous passages concerning the hand of YHWH challenge us, the readers, to be open to the experience of that Divine hand in our own lives, and to let that touch transform us, imparting meaning and purpose to our aimless lives.

“What about you? What about in your birth? If you haven’t consciously experienced the touch of the Divine hand, is it because It has not touched you, or because you have been insensitive / blind to It?”

Ringgren in **Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament**, 12, p. 123, states that “To indicate a gesture of prayer, פִּרְשׁ is often used with [‘hands’] as its object. Petitioners spread the palms of their hands upward as if to receive God’s gifts or to express their desire for union. As soon as Moses stretches out his hands in prayer to

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

Yahweh, the [Divinely sent plague-] storm ceases (**Exodus 9:29, 33**). Ezra spreads out his hands to Yahweh and confesses the people's sins (**Ezra 9:5**). Zophar admonishes Job to stretch out his hands toward God that God may [remove] his guilt (**Job 11:13**). Solomon spreads out his hands toward heaven (**1 Kings 8:22, 54; 2 Chronicles 6:12-13**) and asks God to grant the prayers made with hands outstretched toward the temple (**1 Kings 8:38; 2 Chronicles 6:29**)."

He goes on to state that **Isaiah 65:2** means "God can stretch out His hands as an invitation to His people." But we would change this to say, "God stretches out His hands in prayer as an invitation to those who are not identified as His people." What do you think?

Alexander comments that "All [the interpreters of **Isaiah** whom he has consulted] agree that it implies a gracious offer of Himself and of His favor to the people...The rebellious people is admitted upon all hands to be Israel." (P. 438)

We think the clear implication is that YHWH is adopting the attitude or gesture of prayer in appealing to the nation not being called by His name, to a stubborn people walking in the wrong way. Just as He cries out "Here am I, here am I!", adapting the attitude of a Servant, waiting for instructions, or reporting for duty, so He adapts this common gesture of prayer, as He reaches out to human beings, seeking to bless them, even though they rebel against Him. YHWH is praying to us humans! Indeed, YHWH is "thinking outside the box"! Do you agree?

Motyer states, "What a reversal, then, of the rightful relationship! The Lord with His hands spread out! Such is His longing to move His people to the desired response." (P. 524) And, we add, when we say "His people," it includes those nation(s) that are not called by His name or do not call on His name! But at the same time, it includes sinful Israel—whom He has not rejected, but to whom He is extending His hands in prayer!

Who would these people be in this 21<sup>st</sup> century in America? Would not this include the peoples who are flocking to America from other countries, with their national religions such as the Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, and many others? Is not YHWH / Jesus Christ anxious to reach them? Has not "the mission field" come to America?

How can new church plants achieve such a goal? Are there examples of churches / or para-church organizations that have successfully accomplished this? What can they teach us?

<sup>4</sup>For this phrase, כָּל-הַיּוֹם, "all the day," or "all day long," see the following passages in the **Hebrew Bible**:

**Genesis 6:5**, it obviously means "all the time," "continually," not just one 24-hour day;

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to a people being stubborn,<sup>5</sup>

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

**Exodus 10:13**, the combined phrase, **כָּל-הַיּוֹם וְכָל-הַלַּיְלָה**; “all that day and all the night,” obviously meant literally, for one 24-hour period; **Numbers 11:32**, almost identical;

**Deuteronomy 28:32, 33**, where first the singular, “all the day,” is followed by the plural, **כָּל-הַיָּמִים**, “all the days,” obviously meaning “constantly,” not just one 24-hour period;

**Deuteronomy 33:12**, Benjamin shields the beloved of YHWH all the day, obviously meaning more than just one 24-hour period.

See also **Judges 9:45**, meant literally, one 24-hour period; **1 Samuel 19:24**, meant literally of one day and night, same as in **Exodus 10:13**; **1 Samuel 28:20**, same;

**Psalms 25:5**, not meant literally, but = “all the time” as in **Genesis 6:5**; **32:3-4**, similar; **35: 28**, similar; **37:26**, same; **38:7, verse 6** in English; similar, **13, verse 12** in English; similar; **42:4, verse 3** in English; similar, **11, verse 10** in English; same; **44:9, 16, 23, verses 8, 15, 22** in English; all similar; **52:3, verse 1** in English; similar; **56:2, 3, 6, verses 1, 2, 5** in English; all similar; **71:8, 15, 24**, similar, only of constant praise; **72:15**, similar; **73:14**, similar; **74:22**, similar; **86:3**, similar; **88:18, verse 17** in English; similar; **89:17, verse 16** in English; similar; **102:9, verse 8** in English; similar; **119:97**, similar;

**Proverbs 21:26**, “constantly,” as in **Genesis 6:5**; **23:17**, similar; **New International** translates by “always”; **Isaiah 51:13**, similar; **52:5**, similar; **62:6**, similar to **Exodus 10:13**; **65:2**, here; similar to **Genesis 6:5**; Motyer translates by ‘incessant,’ p. 524, **5**, similar; **Jeremiah 20:7, 8**, similar; **Lamentations 1:13**, similar; **3:3, 14, 62**, all similar; **Hosea 12:2, verse 1** in English; similar.

<sup>5</sup>“Being stubborn” is our translation of the qal active masculine singular participle **סוֹרֵר**, which can also be translated “being rebellious,” or “back-sliding” (Achteimeier).

**1QIs<sup>a</sup>** reads instead **מורה**, from the verb **מָרָה**, “being rebellious.” The Greek translation has “a people disobeying and speaking against / contradicting,” interpolating the last two words which reflect a Hebrew text reading **וּמורה**.

This participle occurs in the **Hebrew Bible** at:

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the ones walking (in) the way not good<sup>6, 2</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>(...continued)

**Deuteronomy 21:18, 20**, **בֵּן סוֹרֵר וּמוֹרֵה**, a son being rebellious and disobedient, a synonym;

**Psalms 78:8**, Israel's forefathers were exactly what **Deuteronomy 21:18, 20** is describing;

**Isaiah 65:2**, here, where it can be understood most probably with reference to non-Jewish nation(s) who stubbornly walk in their own chosen ways; or perhaps to the rebellious Jewish nation itself;

**Jeremiah 5:23**, Jeremiah applies **Deuteronomy 21:18, 20** to his present generation;

**Lamentations 3:11**, confession that "my ways are being stubborn or being rebellious."

These passages let us know for sure that **Isaiah 65:2** may well be speaking of Israel, exactly the way Paul understands this passage in **Romans 10:21**, "But concerning Israel (**Isaiah**) says, 'All day long I have held out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people,' in spite of Motyer's insistence that these words are spoken concerning Gentiles.

Knight comments that "Such a cry reveals therefore the amazing humility of the living God ...[Who] is now faced with the problem of having to deal out of sheer grace with a people that has placed itself outside of the covenant He had given them in the days of Moses...It was this lapsed house of Israel, then, that God was patiently waiting to 'ask for Me'! In fact, the tables are turned here. To 'spread out the hands' is the position that a person takes when he seeks God in prayer. But here it is God Who spreads out His hands to mankind...The One Who does 'terrible things' (**64:3**) is also the One Who is utterly humble before mankind. How astonishing is this Isaian picture of God's love." (Pp. 89-90)

Ackermann states that "Paul quotes these verses [**65:1-2**] in **Romans 10:20-21**, applying **verse 1** to the Gentiles and **verse 2** to the Jews; later Christian interpreters (e.g., Justin Martyr, Augustine, Isidore of Seville) often used these verses (as well as **verse 3**) to denounce the Jews for obduracy and blindness" (something this **Study Bible** calls an example of "Anti-Semitic Interpretation of **Isaiah**"). (P. 1046)

What do you think? Is Paul, himself a Jew, "anti-Semitic"? We think not—but believe that Paul is interpreting **Isaiah** in its intended sense. Both Jesus (see especially **Matthew 23** with its seven woes pronounced against the Pharisees) and Paul say nothing more than what the prophets of Israel have said in even stronger terms! We agree with Justin Martyr in his statements to the Jews insisting that they should "read their prophets"!

–after their imaginations–<sup>7, 3</sup>

65:3<sup>8</sup> הָעַם הַמְּכַעֲסִים אוֹתִי

עַל־פְּנֵי תָמִיד

זְבָחִים בְּגִזּוֹת

וּמִקְטָרִים עַל־הַלְבָּנִים:

the people, the ones provoking Me<sup>9, 4</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>The phrase לֹא־טוֹב, “not good,” occurs some 34 times in the **Hebrew Bible**. See our end-note 2. Walking in the way that is “not good,” means walking in the way that leads to destruction and death, rather than to life and peace.

<sup>7</sup>Motyer comments that “...What they were like in their will they followed through in their life-style (*walk in ways not good*), which in turn was rooted in the mind (*their own imaginations or after their thoughts*)...” (P. 524)

For some 49 occurrences of this noun plural noun, מִחְשְׁבֵייהֶם, “their imaginations,” “their thoughts,” in the **Hebrew Bible**, see our end-note 3.

<sup>8</sup>Slotki comments that **verses 3-5** detail “the abominable cults and superstitions followed by the Israelites.” (P. 314)

Oswalt comments on these verses that they “describe the people through a string of participles that was begun in **verse 2**...[They are] a people characterized as continually walking in ‘not-good’ ways. The participles identify what those ways are. The people have chosen religious behavior that, far from winning God’s favor, seems expressly designed to vex, or provoke, Him.” (P. 637)

<sup>9</sup>The hiphil masculine plural participle הַמְּכַעֲסִים, “the ones provoking,” comes from the root כָּעַס, which in the hiphil means “to vex, to provoke to anger, especially of provoking YHWH by worship of idols / other Gods. For occurrences in the **Hebrew Bible**, see our end-note 4.

Oswalt comments that “This verb...appears often in **Deuteronomy, 1 & 2 Kings, and Jeremiah** in connection with idolatry, as it does here...Instead of the penitence that characterized the preceding lament, God says that the people vex Him to His face, that is, brazenly...While some may be truly penitent, many others are not penitent at all but are quite satisfied with their religious attainments (compare **verse 5**)...The rebels may

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to My face<sup>10</sup> constantly,<sup>11</sup>

sacrificing<sup>12</sup> in the gardens,<sup>13</sup>

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

believe they are being penitent, when in fact their acts of penitence are only another form of self-congratulation. This is precisely the point of **chapter 58**.” (P. 637) Yes!

What do you think? Do you wonder how Israel and Judah of old could have done such things to provoke YHWH, leading to their exile in foreign lands? And then, even more, do you wonder how the returnees from exile, who had suffered because of just this kind of going astray, could have continued these practices on their return from Babylon?

What about ourselves? Do you suppose that our worship of the “Almighty Dollar,” our addiction to pornography, and our trust in America’s military might provokes God / Jesus Christ? And do you wonder how we, with all our experiences, can continue on in such worship?

<sup>10</sup>For this phrase, **עַל־פְּנֵי**, literally “upon My faces,” see the following occurrences in the **Hebrew Bible**:

**Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 5:7**, both of these, the first commandment, have this exact Hebrew phrase;

**Isaiah 65:3**, here, of people provoking YHWH’s face constantly;

**Jeremiah 6:7**, Israel’s sickness and wounds are ever before YHWH’s face.

We think the phrase undoubtedly refers to the first of the ten commandments, and is used to accuse Israel of having violated that commandment through the making of other Gods. We agree with Motyer in his statement that the phrase refers to “the cultivation of alternative objects of worship.” (P. 524)

<sup>11</sup>The adverb **תְּמִיד**, means “continually,” of going on without interruption, or in a constant repetition.

<sup>12</sup>Where the Masoretic Text reads **זֹבְחִים בַּגְּנוֹת וּמִקְטָרִים עַל־הַלְּבָנִים**, “slaughtering for sacrifice in the gardens and burning sacrifices upon the bricks,” **1QIs<sup>a</sup>** reads **וַיִּנְקְוּ עַל־הָאֲבָנִים בַּגְּנוֹת יָדֵיהֶם**, “and they (are) slaughtering, sacrificing in the gardens, hands upon the stones.” This variant reading makes a significant difference for the meaning of this phrase, but makes little difference for the

(continued...)

and burning sacrifices upon the bricks--<sup>14</sup>

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

overall meaning. It indicates, we think, that the exact rituals occurring in the fertility-magic religious practices were not well known by the copyists.

<sup>13</sup>Motyer comments that “The garden as a locus of false religion is peculiar to **Isaiah**.” We suspect this is overstatement, as can be seen in the following passages:

**Isaiah 1:29**, “You (Jerusalem) will be ashamed because of the sacred oaks in which you have delighted; you will be disgraced because of the gardens that you have chosen”;

**Isaiah 66:17**, “Those who consecrate themselves to go into the gardens, following the one in the midst of those who eat the flesh of pigs and rats and other abominable things...”;

**2 Kings 21:18, 26**, “Manasseh...was buried in his palace garden, the garden of Uzza...”  
Motyer thinks this last passage “may indicate a widespread practice.” (P. 524)

See the article by Jacobs-Hornig in **Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament** 3, p. 34, who states that “The kings of Mesopotamia tell of their gardens, where they had fruit trees, cedars, and other kinds of trees planted. These gardens were planted with great skill and often attained the size of a park. Assyrian emperors like Tiglathpileser I, Ashurnasipal II, Sargon II, and Sennacherib made sure that the horticulture of their land was well known far beyond their borders. Usually, too, the Babylonian sanctuaries were surrounded by gardens. According to Sumerian and Babylonian creation stories, man’s purpose and task consisted of ‘making the field of the Gods grow.’ In a figurative sense, the king and prince is given the rule over a ‘garden of plenty’...when he worships the God Ashur and celebrates his holy New Year Festival.”

We think that in Israel, lush gardens, copied after those of their Mesopotamian neighbors, were adapted by the Israelites as the location for worshiping the fertility Gods of Mesopotamia--with burials taking place in them, and with rituals designed to get in contact with the spirits of the dead (“necromancy”), as worshipers spent the night sitting by / in the graves and as **Isaiah 66:17** shows, eating pork and rats along with other “abominations,” including the offering of infant sacrifices in the Valley of the Sons of Hinnom, and the burning of incense on bricks as mentioned in this present passage.

Ackerman agrees with this, stating that “‘Sacrificing in gardens’ refers to fertility rituals associated with the Canaanite Mother Goddess Asherah (as in **Isaiah 1:29; 17:8, 10-11; 27:9; and 57:5**), Who was worshiped by some alongside the Lord.” (P. 1046)

<sup>14</sup>The Greek translation interpolates the phrase “to the demons [or ‘Gods’] that do not exist.”

(continued...)

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

What do you think? Do the demons “not exist (in reality),” but “do exist (in people’s minds and religious rituals)”? Do you think that when first century writers such as Josephus and the **Gospel** writers describe demons as real beings, they are scientifically correct? Or, are they reflecting the pre-scientific world-view and beliefs of the first century? Do you believe the Baals and Asherahs existed in reality—or only in people’s minds and rituals? While His Jewish counterparts believed in demons, and thought they made people “unclean,” what did Jesus teach in **Mark 7:1-23** concerning what

makes people “unclean”? Did Jesus not teach that the real source of uncleanness and evil is the human heart and its thoughts? How do you explain all of this?

Motyer comments that “Just as the garden was an unauthorized place for sacrificing, so bricks were an unauthorized material for an altar (**Exodus 20:25** [altars not to be built out of ‘chiseled stones’; does this include bricks?]; **Deuteronomy 27:5-6** [‘complete stones to be used’]...”

For the piel participle used here, מִקְטְרִים, “burning sacrifices,” see the following passages, which demonstrate that this participle is only used of illegal, unauthorized sacrifices in the **Hebrew Bible**:

**1 Kings 22:44**, Jehoshaphat did what was right in YHWH’s eyes, but did not remove the high places, and the people continued מִזְבְּחִים וּמִקְטְרִים בַּבָּמֹת, slaughtering and sacrificing on the high places; **2 Kings 12:4**, **verse 3** in English; same, but in the time of Josiah; **2 Kings 14:4**, same, but in the time of Amaziah; **2 Kings 15:4**, same, but in the time of Azariah; **2 Kings 15:35**, same, but in the time of Jotham;

**2 Kings 18:4**, here the report is given how Hezekiah finally got rid of the practice: He took away the high places, and he shattered the pillar; and he cut (down) the Asherah [a Phoenician Goddess, in the form of a pole or tree]; and he beat to pieces the bronze serpent which Moses made; because until these days, Israel’s children were sacrificing to it; and he called it Nechushtan [meaning perhaps, “Bronze God”].

**2 Kings 23:5**, among other reforms, Josiah caused the idol-priests to cease, whom Judah’s kings appointed; and he sacrificed (we should read “they sacrificed” or “to sacrifice” instead of the Masoretic Text’s “he sacrificed”) on the high places in Judah’s cities and Jerusalem’s surroundings; and the ones sacrificing to the Baal, to the Sun, and to the Moon and to the Constellations, and to all the heaven’s Host.

**Isaiah 65:3**, here, of an unauthorized type of sacrifice offered by the people of Judah;

(continued...)

הַיֹּשְׁבִים בְּקִבְרִים 65:4<sup>15</sup>

וּבְנִצְוֹרִים יִלְיָנוּ

הָאֹכְלִים בֶּשֶׂר הַחַיִּיר

(וּפְרָק) [וּמְרָק] פְּגָלִים כְּלֵיהֶם:

those who sit among the graves,<sup>16</sup>

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

**Jeremiah 11:12**, YHWH says that the towns of Judah and the people of Jerusalem will cry out to the Gods to Whom they are sacrificing, but those Gods will not help them when disaster comes;

**Jeremiah 44:15, 19**, the women of Judah were sacrificing to other Gods, to the Queen of Heaven.

Slotki comments that the allusion to sacrificing upon bricks “is uncertain, but it may be referring to the heathenish practice of burning incense on roofs to star-Deities (compare **Jeremiah 19:13**; **Zephaniah 1:5**).” (P. 314)

<sup>15</sup>Alexander comments on **verse 4** that “All [the numerous interpreters of **Isaiah** whom he had consulted] agree that this verse is intended to depict, in revolting colors, the idolatrous customs of the people.” (P. 439) And by “the people,” we understand the people of Israel, the returnees from Babylon.

Oswalt states that “In this verse the activities described are especially associated with cultic uncleanness, and uncleanness of the basest sorts: contact with the dead and the demonic, and eating of grossly unclean food...These persons think their religiosity is earning them favor with God, when in fact they might just as well be sitting in tombs and filling their sacred vessels with an abominable stew. As for their sanctimonious prayers, they might as well be spending the night in some cave of mysteries in hopes of receiving a Divine dream (While the text does not indicate why people spend the night in a guarded, or secret, place [בְּנִצְוֹרִים], the explanatory comment of the Greek translation, ‘for the sake of dreams,’ seems reasonable.)” (P. 638)

<sup>16</sup>Wolf / Stek comment that this was “Perhaps to consult the dead.” (P. 1111) We think this is correct. Slotki agrees, stating that this involved “forms of ancestor-worship and invocation of the spirits of the dead.” (P. 314) Compare:

**Isaiah 8:19**, “And when / if they shall say to you people, seek / inquire to / by means of the pits and familiar spirits, the ones chirping and murmuring, should not a

(continued...)

and they spend the night<sup>17</sup> in the guarded places,<sup>18</sup>  
those eating the pig's flesh,<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>(...continued)

people seek / inquire to / by means of its God? Shall it seek the dead on behalf of the living?"

**Isaiah 57:9**, included among the fertility religious practices which the Israelites were practicing (see **verses 3-10**) was that of **תִּשְׁפִּילִי עַד-שְׁאוֹל**, you (feminine singular) caused to descend as far as sheol / the grave; meaning unclear);

**1 Samuel 28**, the story of Saul and the Witch of Endor, in which Saul successfully communicates with the dead spirit of Samuel through the witch's magic.

<sup>17</sup>The Greek translation interpolates the phrase *δι' ἐνύπνια*, "through dreams" at this point in the text. We think that the sleeping in the guarded places was a matter of incubation (seeking to inculcate) Divine oracles, and that dreams occurring in those conditions were considered oracular in nature.

<sup>18</sup>The Greek translation has *σπηλαίοις*, "in caves" for the Hebrew **בְּנִצְוֹרִים**, "in the guarded places." Watts translates by "and lodging between rocks." (P. 339)

Sitting among the graves, and spending the night in specially protected places is, we think, for the purpose of "incubation," the calling up of spirits from the underworld, in order to communicate with them, and receive revelation from them.

Ackerman comments that "Those who spend the night in secret places seek to induce the Deity to appear to them in a dream and grant them favors." (P. 1046) This is a type of "necromancy," communicating with the dead in order to predict the future.

<sup>19</sup>The definite masculine singular noun **הַחֲזִייר**, **hachaziyr**, means "the swine," or "the boar," or "the pig." For its occurrences in the **Hebrew Bible**, see:

**Leviticus 11:7**, "the pig, though it has a split hoof completely divided, does not chew the cud (i.e., food regurgitated from the first stomach to the mouth of ruminants such as cattle, sheep, goats, deer and giraffes, and then chewed again; it is unclean for you"; **Deuteronomy 14: 8**, similar, but also including camels, rabbits and coneys as unclean ruminants; we think that the reason these animals, even though created by God and declared "very good" are declared "unclean" is that they were commonly used in Canaanite religious rituals;

**Isaiah 65:4**, here; eating the flesh of pigs is a specific instance of sharing in the practices of the Canaanite religion forbidden by YHWH; **66:17**, similar, eating the flesh of pigs and rats and other abominable things;

(continued...)

and fragment(s)<sup>20</sup> of detestable things (are in)<sup>21</sup> their vessels.<sup>22</sup>

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

**Isaiah 66:3**, another specific instance of sharing in Canaanite religion is ritual involving the pouring out of pig's blood;

**Psalms 80:14**, pigs from the forest ravage YHWH's vine-yard;

**Proverbs 11:22**, "like a gold ring in a pig's nose."

Ackerman comments that "The absence of pig bones among archaeological remains suggests that most ancient Israelites actually observed this prohibition." (P. 1046) But here, we think, the returnees from Babylon are continuing these idolatrous practices, apparently learned from their conquerors.

Knight comments that "The indication that they 'eat swine's flesh' shows that they were ostentatiously [in a showy, pretentious manner] rejecting the terms of the covenant...The law of Moses forbade the eating of pork that was employed by some Canaanites in the worship of 'underground Divinities.'" (P. 91)

<sup>20</sup>The Masoretes offer two readings. First, the *kethibh*, "what is written," וּפְרִק, "and a fragment"; and second, the *qere*, "to be read," וּמֵרֶק, "and juice," or "and broth." The *qere* is supported by 1QIs<sup>a</sup>, the Greek translation, the Aramaic Targums and the Latin Vulgate.

Slotki translates by "broth," and comments that it was "prepared in some special way," and "was believed to have magical properties." (P. 314)

Knight states that "'Broth of abominable things' could mean eating rats and mice (compare **Isaiah 66:17**). This was done, probably, not because of hunger but in order to mix a 'hell's brew,' like the witches in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*." (Pp. 91-2)

<sup>21</sup>1QIs<sup>a</sup> reads בְּכַלֵּיהֶֿמָה, perhaps meaning "in their (feminine plural) vessels," along with The Aramaic Targum and the Latin Vulgate, all with the preposition ב "in" before the noun "vessels"; some other Hebrew manuscripts read the preposition "from" before the noun. The Greek translation has "having stained all their vessels."

<sup>22</sup>Knight comments that "In a word then, Trito-Isaiah's fellow citizens had forgotten God's threefold 'requirement' of Israel that was meant to supplant all aberrant thoughts gained from the 'religions' of the world: justice, love, and submission." (P. 92)

See **Micah 6:8**,

(continued...)



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

He declared to you, O human being, what is good,  
 and what YHWH is requiring from you--  
 only to enact justice,  
 and to fall in love with steadfast love,  
 and to walk humbly with your God!

Knight adds that ‘Church historians agree that the success of the Protestant Reformation in England brought new and terrible superstitions to the surface amongst many illiterate folk. The traditional ritual framework for dealing with daily misfortune and worry had been destroyed, leaving many simple people more anxious than before; so they turned to witchcraft and the occult, for no longer was there an outlet in traditional sacramental magic and pilgrimage piety...

“Norman Cohn suggests that this resort to the occult was an unconscious resentment against Christianity as too strict a religion, against Christ as too stern a taskmaster (**Europe’s Inner Demons**, p. 262). Steven Ozment declares that, ‘the great shortcomings of the Reformation was its naive expectation that the majority of people were capable of radical religious enlightenment and moral transformation’ (**The Age of Reform 1250-1550**, p. 437)...

“This is probably the situation we find here in the period before sacrificial worship was resumed in the rebuilt temple. It is a great pity that the two parties which we find to be in opposition in these chapters could not discover that neither emphasis can do without the other. It is the two together that make a ‘catholic’ faith.” (P. 92)

Should we not conclude that the “social gospel” needs the “personal gospel” in our modern world, that social activists need participation in worshiping faith communities?

<sup>23</sup>Oswalt comments on **verse 5** that “This verse introduces the crowning irony: these persons who are profoundly unclean warn off others because of their holiness! Ultimately, this is the perversion of the pagan heart, that what is good seems bad, and what is filthy seems holy.” (P. 638)

We wonder if this may not be describing the followers of **Ezra / Nehemiah**, who are so intent on making themselves “clean” and segregating themselves from those they consider “unclean.” But at the very time they are centering their religion on becoming ritually “pure,” they are failing to practice the righteousness of neighborly love, caring for the less fortunate as demanded in **Isaiah 58**. Why is it that they will not care for those who in need? Because they are concentrating their attention and concern on themselves, and their obedience to the 613 commandments of the Mosaic **Torah**, seeking to keep themselves “holy”! Can this passage be equating these practices of the fertility religions with the Jewish **Torah**-piety? Compare **Isaiah 66:3**.

(continued...)

אֶל-תִּגְשׁ-בִּי כִּי קִדְשְׁתִּיךָ

אֱלֹהֵי עֵשֶׂן בְּאַפִּי

אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָת כָּל-הַיּוֹם:

The ones who are saying, Keep to yourself<sup>24</sup>

--do not touch me, because I am set-apart (from) you!<sup>25, 5</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>(...continued)

We think this is entirely possible, but Oswalt rejects it (see his p. 639). Nonetheless, he concludes by saying, “So who is saying these things, and about whom? The prophet Isaiah is saying them, and he is saying them about persons in any and all times, but specially post-exilic times, who would style themselves servants of the Lord by virtue of birthright [that’s the view of **Ezra / Nehemiah**], either physical or theological, and by cultic trappings of piety. He says to them, and us, that those who depend on such factors, whether clergy or lay, are nothing more no less than pagans, *smoke in My nostrils*.” (P. 639)

<sup>24</sup>Where the Hebrew reads תִּגְשׁ, “(don’t) come near,” 1QIs<sup>a</sup> reads תִּגַּע, “(don’t) touch.” Achtemeier translates (or paraphrases) by “Stand back!”

<sup>25</sup>1QIs<sup>a</sup> is slightly illegible for the words אֶל־הָאֱלֹהִים, where the only legible letters are קִדְשְׁתִּיךָ.

The pointing of the Masoretes, קִדְשְׁתִּיךָ, “I am set apart (from) you,” qal perfect, can be read as piel perfect, קִדְשְׁתִּיךָ, “I set you apart.” However, as Watts points out, both meanings are ambiguous, and the precise meaning is uncertain.

We think that this warning to stay away from this person, because of his peculiar “set-apartness,” or “holiness,” is a reflection of the ancient “magical” religious practices, in which those seeking to receive Divine communications from the spirit-underworld were considered to be sacred, not to be touched by others, lest it interfere with their communications, and is being applied by Third Isaiah to the legalists / segregationists who are teaching the Jewish returnees to keep themselves pure / clean, segregating themselves from those they teach are impure, refusing to have fellowship or dealings with them.

Knight thinks this refers to those returned exiles who had rejected YHWH. “Now that they had been granted freedom and were back at home in Jerusalem, these same people had thereupon lost interest in God’s initial act of *tsedeq* [Knight’s ‘love,’ our

(continued...)

These are smoke in My nostrils,<sup>26</sup>

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

‘righteousness’]...They had rejected the God Who had chosen them in love...They were not prepared to make a response to God’s renewed initiative, and ‘couldn’t care less’ about God’s plans for His city (**64:8-12**). Moreover, they had been heard to sneer at the Mosaic legislation, saying ‘I have got myself into a state of holiness (**65:5**) without any need for the Mosaic law, and so without the help of God.’ (P. 90)

Achtemeier states that here in **verse 5**, “we have a reference to the supposed holiness of the Zadokite priests, who were set apart to the service of the altar and forbidden therefore to touch anything or unholy, that is, anything or anyone in the secular sphere and therefore unclean and contaminating (compare **Ezekiel 44:5, 13, 15**); it is for this reason that the priest and Levite ‘pass by on the other side’ in the story of the Good Samaritan, **Luke 10:31-32**; compare **Isaiah 58:7**. Paul Hanson [**The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology**. Revised Edition. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975, 1979], pp. 148ff., has conclusively shown that this is the meaning of **verse 5**. Such Zadokites have presumed to be set apart to Yahweh’s service in an exclusivity that overlooks the idolatrous worship and unjust social practices taking place in the community.

“Yet to all such persons, Yahweh has held out hands of loving supplication, begging them to return to Him—and they have not...”

“This then is sin ‘with a high hand’ (compare **Numbers 15:30**), sin flaunted before the very Presence of God Himself like a fist shaken in His face. That sin, the **Bible** maintains, cannot be forgiven (**Mark 3:28-30**). In a stunning contrast to the Zadokite claims to holiness, **verse 5cd** states that the Zadokites and their idolatrous followers are instead accursed, kindling the smoke and fire of Yahweh’s consuming wrath (compare **Jeremiah 17:4; Deuteronomy 32:22**). Prayers for such rebels are in vain. They must be destroyed.” (P. 124)

For the background in ancient Near-Eastern religious customs **Isaiah** is describing here, see our end-note 5.

<sup>26</sup>This statement that such religious practitioners are “smoke in My nostrils,” means that they are irritating, nauseating to YHWH, causing His anger to arise. The true and living God does not have to be “incubated,” or manipulated in order to obtain His revelation. In fact, any so-called “God” that has to be, or can be incubated or manipulated is certainly not the true God!

Compare **2 Samuel 22:9 / Psalm 18:9, verse 8** in English, “Smoke arose in His nose, and fire from His mouth will eat / devour; coals of fire burned from Him / it (His mouth).” If this is the meaning, it implies that YHWH’s anger over such practices is continual.

(continued...)

a fire burning all the day-long!<sup>27</sup>

65:6<sup>28</sup> הנה כתובה לפני

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

YHWH God has revealed Himself through Moses and the Spokespersons; His Word has been spoken and recorded. It is an open denial of YHWH-religion to get involved in the fertility religions with their bizarre sexual practices, their murder of innocent children, and their use of all sorts of physical means to contact the spirits of the underworld for information. None of this is necessary –since YHWH, the one and only true God, is near, anxiously inviting, even praying to Israel / humanity to seek / call upon Him! And to be involved in such practices is to deliberately provoke YHWH God, substituting flimsy, human-made, immoral religion for the powerful ethical religion of YHWH!

<sup>27</sup>The practice of this syncretistic religion [the combination of two different types of religion] in the heart of Israel is not something sporadic, only occasionally seen—it is going on all the time, and its fire is eating at the heart of Israel! All day long YHWH is spreading out His hands, offering His help, praying for apostate Israel's or the non-Jewish nation(s)' attention, so He may come to their aid; but at the same time, all day long, the magical sacrificial fires of their religious rituals keep burning, provoking, irritating, nauseating YHWH, Israel's and the nation(s)' only rightful God!

Alexander comments that “the great end which the Prophet had in view was to describe the unbelieving Jews as abominable in the sight of God. His manner of expressing this idea is poetical, by means of figures drawn from various periods of their history, without intending to exhibit either of these periods exclusively...

“To a Hebrew writer what could be more natural than to express the idea of religious corruption by describing its subjects as idolaters, diviners, eaters of swine's flesh, worshipers of outward forms, and self-righteous hypocrites? Of such the text declares God's abhorrence.” (P. 441)

But it seems much more likely that **Third Isaiah** is describing what was actually being done in the worship of the returnees from Babylon—not just a picture drawn from differing periods in Israel's history. And it may be that **Third Isaiah** is equating the orthodox religious practices of the followers of **Ezra / Nehemiah** with the religious practices of the Canaanite fertility religions—see **Isaiah 66:3**. What do you think?

<sup>28</sup>Achtemeier comments on **verses 6-7** that “The sentence upon them [the Zadokite priests who claim themselves to be untouchable] is therefore pronounced. So certain is the judgment that it is like words written on a scroll and read by Yahweh. In answer to the question of **64:12** in the lament, Yahweh replies that He will by no means keep silent...Rather He will repay...

“The sin of the fathers is included, because nothing has been learned from the exile. Iniquity is heaped up (contra [against, in contrast to] **Ezekiel 18**) and now over-

(continued...)

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

flows in continued baalistic worship (compare **Hosea 2:13**), in deliberate defiance of Yahweh. Yahweh will therefore carefully measure out (compare **Jeremiah 13:25; 32:18; Ruth 3:15**) the judgment which the rebels have earned, bringing it upon their heads and repaying it into their bosoms (compare **Psalms 79:12**)...The Divine Warrior not only destroys His enemies among the foreign nations (compare **63:1-6**). He also will destroy His enemies within His covenant people...

“The question that arises in connection with such a conclusion, however, is that age-old query of Abraham’s: ‘Will You indeed destroy the righteous with the wicked?’ There are yet faithful followers of Yahweh within the Judean community—those who have walked in His ways and who have sought Him with a contrite heart and humble spirit...

“It is a dilemma with which the **Bible** wrestles throughout its pages (**Habakkuk 1; Jeremiah 31:39; Ezekiel 18; Matthew 13:24-50; John 9:2**)—that a God of justice should destroy the good with the evil (compare **Genesis 18:25**)—and it is with this dilemma that the following portions of **Third-Isaiah** deal.” (Pp. 124-25)

Knight entitles **verses 6-7** “The Judgment of God.”

He comments that “God’s word (‘it’ here) is first uttered, and only then ‘is written before Me.’ Therefore we dare not brush aside its significance (**55:11**)...

“So we are given here a warning of what is to follow in the final chapter of this long **Book of Isaiah**.

“God is a God of justice. Therefore He must necessarily punish the disloyal... The pages of Trito-Isaiah reveal to us the human search for the ultimate meaning of the idea of judgment. Some of the returnees saw the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C.E. as the moment of supreme judgment, the end spoken of by Amos (**Amos 8:2** [‘the end has come upon My people Israel’]). Others, as here (**Isaiah 65:6**) see God’s ‘coming’ as a continuing process. We find this reflected in the thought of the early Church, in its use of the Aramaic term *Maranatha* (e.g., **1 Corinthians 16:22** [**Nestle-Aland 28** has it as *μαράνα θά*, ‘Our Lord, come!’]). For if the word is pronounced as Maran-atha, then it means ‘The Lord has come.’ If it is pronounced Marana-tha, then it means ‘O[ur] Lord, come!’...

“So God here speaks judgment with burning wrath. We recall that in his famous encyclical ‘Mit brennender Sorge’ (‘With Burning Anxiety’) Pope Pius XI in 1937 chose to use the language of this passage as he condemned the racism of the Nazi creed (with the words): ‘I will not keep silent...because they burned incense upon the mountains.’ The pope refuted the Nazi creed in terms of Trito-Isaiah’s theology:

(continued...)

לֹא אֶחְשָׂה כִּי אֶם־שָׁלַמְתִּי

וְשָׁלַמְתִּי עַל־חַיִּקָּם:

Look–(it was) written<sup>29</sup> before Me--<sup>30</sup>

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

True Christianity proves itself in the love of God and the active love of one's neighbor...He who wants to banish biblical history and the wisdom of the **Old Testament** from school and church commits blasphemy against the word of God.

“‘They burned incense...’ marks a recrudescence and application of pagan myths to the life of the whole nation. God says here: ‘I will repay...into their bosom’ (that is, ‘throw it back at them’) ‘your iniquities and your fathers’ iniquities together.’” (P. 93)

<sup>29</sup>For occurrences of the feminine singular qal passive participle כְּתוּבָה, “written,” see:

**Joshua 10:13**, reference to a non-canonical work called סֵפֶר הַיָּשָׁר, “Book of the Upright”);

**2 Samuel 1:18**, another reference to this same non-canonical work which contained the “Lament of the Bow,” which David wanted taught to the men of Judah;

**Isaiah 65:6**, here, where the reference is uncertain; see the next footnote;

**Jeremiah 17:1**, Judah’s missing-of-the-mark is written with an iron engraving tool, with a flint point, upon their hearts, and upon their altars; obviously a metaphor for the depth of Judah’s sin);

**Ezekiel 2:10**, as a part of Ezekiel’s “call” to be a spokesperson for YHWH, he sees a scroll, with words of lament and mourning and woe written on both sides;

**Daniel 9:11**, the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses that have come true in Israel’s history.

There are some 233 occurrences of the verb כָּתַב, “to write,” in the **Hebrew Bible**. Ancient Israel is no stranger to the written word! See the article on this root by H. Haag in **Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament** VII, pp. 371-382.

(continued...)

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

Haag states that “Scholars today generally agree that writing was widespread in Canaan at an early date...It is becoming increasingly clear that the alphabet originated in the Palestinian region, ‘where the cuneiform and hieroglyphic spheres of influence met’ (Rolig). The earliest alphabetic cuneiform tablet found at Ugarit dates from about 1360 B.C.E.; the script itself is earlier. The earliest known evidence for Israel’s adoption of the Phoenician-Canaanite alphabet of twenty-two consonants is a twelfth-century [1100’s B.C.E.] ostrakon from Izget Sartah, near Aphek (‘the period of the Judges’ (J. Naveh)...The alphabet fragments from Lachish ‘make it reasonable to assume that there was formal school instruction’ as early as the ninth or eighth century. The earliest extended Hebrew text outside the **Bible**, however, is still the Siloam inscription.” (Pp. 374-75) That inscription was found chiseled into the rock wall of Hezekiah’s tunnel, describing the experience of digging that tunnel.

See the article “Oldest Hebrew Writing” on the Internet, which claims that a Hebrew writing from the 9<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. has been discovered, written in proto-Hebrew, from the time of David and Solomon.

Oswalt states that the phrase “it is written before Me” can be taken in either of two ways. “One possibility is that the sins are written down for posterity...The other is that a decree of judgment has been written (and thus is immutable).” (P. 640)

<sup>30</sup>What does this mean? What is it that has been written? Where has it been written? We think that YHWH means the written messages that He has given to Israel through Moses and the Spokespersons, beginning with Elijah and continuing down through the many people called by YHWH and commissioned to speak His Word, and to record that Word for ensuing generations. At the heart of that message is the proclamation of judgment to come if Israel refuses to take YHWH seriously, and follow His on-going, continuing Word. It is a clear, powerful message, that has been handed down from generation to generation, and that is integral to Israel’s history.

Where is it written that YHWH will not keep silence, **לֹא אֶחְשֶׁה**? We think the answer is clear—it is written in the following passages:

**Isaiah 42:14-15**, “For a long time I [YHWH] have kept silent, I have been quiet and held Myself back. But now, like a woman in child-birth, I cry out, I gasp and pant. I will lay waste the mountains...”;

**Isaiah 57:11-12**, “Whom have you so dreaded and feared that you have been false to Me, and have neither remembered Me nor pondered this in your hearts? Is it not because I have long been silent that you do not fear Me? I will expose your righteousness and your works...”;

**Isaiah 62:1**, “For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem’s sake I will not remain quiet...”

(continued...)

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

And where is it written that YHWH “will repay” (שָׁלַמְתִּי, used twice in this verse, once as past tense, once as future tense)? See the following passages:

**Deuteronomy 7:10**, those who hate YHWH will be repaid with destruction; He will not be slow to repay);

**2 Samuel 3:39**, David prays that YHWH will repay the murderer of Abner according to his evil deeds;

**Isaiah 59:18, 18**, “According to what they have done, so He will repay wrath to His enemies and retribution to His foes; He will repay the islands their due”;

**Isaiah 65:6**, here;

**Isaiah 66:6**, “A voice of uproar from a city; a voice from a temple; a voice of YHWH, repaying to His enemies recompense!”;

**Jeremiah 16:18**, “I will repay them double for their wickedness and their missing-of-the-mark...”);

**Jeremiah 32:18**, “...You bring the punishment for the fathers’ missings-of-the-mark into the laps of their children after them...”;

**Joel 4:4**, “Why are you doing these things to me, Tyre and Sidon? Are you trying to get even with me, land of Philistia? I will very quickly repay you for what you have done!”;

**Job 21:19**, “It is said, ‘God stores up a man’s punishment for his sons.’ Let Him repay the man himself, so that he will know it!”;

**Job 34:11**, Elihu states that God “repays a man for what he has done...”

We conclude that this matter of YHWH’s “repayment” for evil is written clearly in the **Torah** and in the **Spokespersons**, including **Isaiah** and **Jeremiah**, especially **Jeremiah 32:18** (“into the laps”).

Achtemeier holds that “what is written” refers to the sentence which YHWH pronounces against the rebellious idolatrous worshipers. (P. 124) But it seems unlikely that a biblical author would refer to what he is writing at the time as being “what is written.”

Slotki holds that “The tale of their vile practices is duly recorded in the heavenly annals.” (P. 316)

(continued...)



I will not be silent,<sup>31</sup> but rather, I repaid;  
and I will repay<sup>32</sup> into their lap--<sup>33</sup>

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

Ortlund notes that YHWH's vow to not keep silent answers the question of **64:12** ['Will You keep silent?'], I will repay. God vows a reckoning with Israel for their historic accumulation of sins (compare **6:9-13**; **10:22-23**).” (P. 1358)

<sup>31</sup>Where the Masoretic Text reads לֹא אֶחְשֶׂה, with the letter שׁ, **sin**, **Codex Leningradensis** along with many other Hebrew manuscripts and editions of the **Hebrew Bible** read with the letter שׁ, **shin**, לֹא אֶחְשֶׂה. We think that this variant spelling is a correction of a mistake in the Masoretic Text, but are reminded that the difference between **shin** and **sin** was not found in pre-Masoretic Hebrew texts (as becomes obvious in the **Psalm 119** acrostic, where the two letters are joined together as one section of the **Psalm**).

<sup>32</sup>The Masoretic Text reads a double occurrence: שָׁלַמְתִּי וְשָׁלַמְתִּי, “I repaid and I will repay.” The second verb is omitted by the Greek translation, the Harclean Syr-iac and the Arabic translation. The second verb may have been omitted by homoteleuton (same endings), and we disagree with D. Winton Thomas’ (editor of **Isaiah** in the **Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia**) decision to delete the verb on the basis of this slight textual evidence. We think the repeated verb is a Hebrew way of making the statement (doubly) emphatic.

Could this double occurrence of the verb mean “I repaid such actions in the past, and I will repay them again in the present and future”? If so, it warns, “Let not the present generation suppose they can escape the punishment that I sent upon their fathers.”

<sup>33</sup>This phrase עַל-חִיקָם, “into (or ‘upon’) their lap,” means that the repayment will come directly to them, “into their arms,” striking them “in their heart.” Watts translates by “Yes, I will repay on their bodies.” (P. 339) Compare the similar statement in the very next **verse 7**; and see:

**Jeremiah 32:18**, “You bring the punishment for the fathers’ missings-of-the-mark into the laps of their children after them”;

**Psalm 79:12**, “Pay back into the laps of our neighbors seven times the reproach they have hurled at You, YHWH!”

Alexander comments that “The meaning of the text is obvious, as teaching that the guilt which had accumulated through successive generations should be visited, though not exclusively, upon the last (generation)...According to the sense which the apostle puts upon the two first verses of this chapter, we may understand those now

(continued...)

65:7 עֲוֹנֹתֵיכֶם וְעֹנֹת אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם יַחְדָּו

אָמַר יְהוָה

אֲשֶׁר קָטְרוּ עַל-הַהָרִים

וְעַל-הַגְּבָעוֹת חֲרַפְוּנִי

וּמִדְּתֵי פְעֻלֹתֵם רֵאשְׁנָה (עַל-) [אֶל-] חֵיקָם:

your iniquities,<sup>34</sup> and your fathers' iniquities together--<sup>35</sup>

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

before us as predicting the excision of the Jews from the communion of the church, and from their covenant relation to [YHWH], as a testimony of His sore displeasure on account of the unfaithfulness and manifold transgressions of that chosen race throughout its former history, but also on account of the obstinate and spiteful unbelief with which so many later generations have rejected the Messiah for whose sake alone thy ever had a nation-al existence, and enjoyed so many national pleasures." (Pp. 442-43)

See our footnote 8, where we insist that Paul's view is that God has not rejected Israel, in spite of their sins. And here, in **chapter 65:6-10** and **13-16** and **17-25**, **Third Isaiah** does not predict the rejection of Israel, but rather predicts a glorious national future for the faithful remnant in Israel, even though sinners in its midst will suffer Divine visitation in judgment.

<sup>34</sup>Instead of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural suffix of the Hebrew text, "your iniquities," both the Greek and Syriac translations read the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural suffix, "their iniquities."

<sup>35</sup>For this combination of עֲוֹנֹתֵיכֶם וְעֹנֹת אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם, "your iniquities (or 'guilts') and iniquities (or 'guilts') of your fathers," see the following passages from the **Hebrew Bible**:

**Exodus 34:7**, "...He (YHWH) punishes the children and their children for the עֲוֹן, iniquity of the fathers to the third and fourth generation";

**Leviticus 26:39, 40**, "Those of you who are left will waste away in the lands of their enemies because of their iniquities; also because of their fathers' iniquities they will waste away. But if they will confess their iniquities and the iniquities of their fathers..."

(continued...)

YHWH said—<sup>36</sup>  
(you) who made sacrifices upon the mountains,<sup>37</sup>

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

**Numbers 14:18**, “He (YHWH) punishes the children for the iniquity of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.”

**Numbers 18:1**, “YHWH said to Aaron, ‘You, your sons and your father’s family are to bear the responsibility for offenses against the sanctuary...’”

**Isaiah 65:7** (here), (“(I will repay into their laps) both your iniquities and the iniquities of your fathers,’ says YHWH”)

**Ezekiel 18:20**, “The innermost being that misses-the-mark is the one who will die. The son will not share the iniquity of the father, nor will the father share the iniquity of the son...”

**Lamentations 5:7**, “Our fathers missed-the-mark and are no more, and we bear their punishment.”

Achtemeier comments that ““The Divine Warrior not only destroys His enemies among the foreign nations (compare **63:1-6**). He also will destroy His enemies within His covenant community. Such is the only devastating result possible when God’s forgiving mercy is rejected. The question that arises in connection with such a conclusion, how-ever, is that age-old query of Abraham’s: ‘Will You indeed destroy the righteous with the wicked?’...It is with this dilemma that the following portions of...**Isaiah [65:8-25]** deal.” (P. 125)

<sup>36</sup>The claim that YHWH has given this message is repeated in **65:7, 8, 13, 25; 66: 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 12, 17, 20, 21, 22** and **23**. Readers need to pay attention to this claim of Divine origin of the prophetic message. Jews who reject the messages of the prophets such as **Isaiah, Jeremiah** and **Amos** as “harangues,” need to rethink the matter. We say, “Listen to the Prophets!” And we mean this for Christians, just as well as for Jews.

<sup>37</sup>For this matter of making sacrifices upon the mountains (and high hills / places), see elsewhere:

**Deuteronomy 12:2**,

You shall certainly destroy all the places where the nations you are  
dispossessing worship their Gods,  
upon the high mountains and upon the hills and under every spreading  
tree.

(continued...)

and upon the hills reproached<sup>38</sup> Me,

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<sup>37</sup>(...continued)

**1 Kings 14:23**, during the time of Rehoboam, Judah set up for themselves high places and pillars and Asherahs (trees or poles) upon every high hill and beneath every spreading tree;

**2 Kings 16:4**, Ahaz did these same things;

**2 Kings 17:10**, as did Northern Israel, causing them to go into exile;

**2 Chronicles 21:11**, as did Jehoram, King of Judah;

**2 Chronicles 28:4**, as did Ahaz, also King of Judah;

**Isaiah 57:7**, You made your bed on a high and lofty hill; there you went up to slaughter your sacrifice.

**Jeremiah 2:20**, long ago Judah broke off her yoke and turned from serving YHWH; on every high hill and under every spreading tree she lay down as a prostitute; **3:6**, Jeremiah tells King Josiah how Judah has done these things;

**Jeremiah 17:2**, even the children of Judah remember Judah's altars and Asherahs beside the spreading trees and on the high hills;

**Ezekiel 6:13**, the people of Israel will know YHWH when their people lie slain among their idols on every high hill, on the tops of the mountains, under every spreading tree and every leafy oak—the place where they offered their soothing smell to their Gods;

**Ezekiel 18:15**, the rightly related man does not eat upon the mountains, or lift up his eyes to the idols;

**Ezekiel 20:28**, the people of Israel sacrificed on every high hill and under any leafy tree;

**Hosea 4:13**, Northern Israel's leaders "sacrifice on the mountaintops and burn offerings on the hills, under oak, poplar, and terebinth, where the shade is pleasant. Therefore your daughters prostitute themselves, and your daughters-in-law / brides are sexually immoral."

<sup>38</sup>The phrase **הִרְפוּנִי**, "they reproached Me," has the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural piel perfect verb. For occurrences of this verb, see:

**Psalms 42:11**<sup>Heb</sup> / **10**<sup>Eng</sup>; "My foes reproach me (the psalmist)";

(continued...)

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

**Psalms 55:13<sup>Heb</sup> / 12<sup>Eng</sup>**; “if an enemy reproached me (the psalmist)”;

**Psalms 102:9<sup>Heb</sup> / 8<sup>Eng</sup>**; “all day long my enemies reproach me (the psalmist)”;

**Psalms 119:42**, “I will answer the one who reproaches me (the psalmist)”;

**Proverbs 27:11**, if the son is wise, the wise father can answer anyone reproaching him;

**Nehemiah 6:13**, Nehemiah’s enemies have hired a man to cause him to be reproached;

**Isaiah 65:7**, the fertility-style religion of Israel on the mountains and hills reproached YHWH.

For other, similar phrases, see:

**Judges 8:15**, Gideon is reproached concerning Zebah and Zalmunna;

**1 Samuel 17:10, 25, 36, 45**, Goliath reproaches the soldiers of Israel and of the living God);

**2 Samuel 21:21; 1 Chronicles 20:7**, huge man with 12 fingers and 12 toes who reproaches Israel;

**2 Samuel 23:9**, David and his 3 chosen men reproach the Philistines;

**2 Kings 19:4, 16, 22, 23; Isaiah 37:4, 17, 23, 24**, the King of Assyria has sent his field commander to reproach the living God, the Set-apart One of Israel, YHWH;

**Zephaniah 2:8, 10**, Moab and the Ammonites have reproached Israel, the people of YHWH of Armies;

**Psalms 44:17<sup>Heb</sup> / 16<sup>Heb</sup>**, the psalmist is reproached and reviled;

**Psalms 57:4<sup>Heb</sup> / 3<sup>Eng</sup>**, God Most High reproaches those who hotly pursue the psalmist;

**Psalms 69:10<sup>Heb</sup> / 9<sup>Eng</sup>**; the reproaches of those who reproach YHWH fall on the psalmist;

**Psalms 74:10**, how long will an adversary reproach God?;

**Psalms 74:18**, remember how an enemy reproached YHWH;

(continued...)

and I will measure their first repayment<sup>39</sup> into<sup>40</sup> their lap.<sup>41</sup>

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

**Psalm 79:12**, “pay back into the laps of our neighbors seven times the reproach they gave You (YHWH)”;

**Psalm 89:52**<sup>Heb</sup> / **51**<sup>Eng</sup>, YHWH’s enemies have reproached every step of YHWH’s anointed one;

**Job 27:6**, Job claims that his conscience will not reproach him as long as he lives;

**Proverbs 14:31**, he who oppresses the poor person reproaches his Maker; **17:5** (very similar).

This great God, YHWH, is reaching out to them, praying to them, inviting them to allow Him to bless them; but instead of responding in thankfulness, they “reproach” Him, bringing Him shame and dishonor instead of loving service and obedience. Nonetheless, He is praying to them!

<sup>39</sup>The noun **פְּעֻלָּתָם**, can mean either “their work,” or “their wages (earned from work).” The Greek translation has τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν, “the works of theirs.” Does this imply that YHWH’s judgment returns to people what they have done? See the following passages where this noun occurs:

**Leviticus 19:13**, wages of a day-worker;

**Ezekiel 29:20**, YHWH has given Nebuchadnezzar Egypt as wages for him and his soldiers;

**Isaiah 40:10**, My Lord YHWH comes with pay and wages; **Isaiah 62:11**, similar;

**Isaiah 49:4**, what is due me is in YHWH’s hand and my wages with my God;

**Isaiah 61:8**, the wages YHWH pays are true faithfulness and a new covenant;

**Psalm 109:20**, desire of the psalmist that YHWH’s wages for his accusers be wrapped with cursing);

**Proverbs 10:16**, the wages of the righteous bring life.

<sup>40</sup>The Masoretes offer two readings: first the *kethibh* (what is written) the preposition **עַל**, “upon”; second, the *qere* (to be read) is **לְ**, “into.” Those who hold to the belief in a verbally infallible **Bible** need to take into consideration this matter of the Masoretic Text’s inclusion of the *kethibhs* and the *qeres*, where the Masoretes make it

(continued...)

<sup>40</sup>(...continued)

known that they are not certain as to what should be read, and leave it up to the reader to make his or her own decision. That is hardly an “infallible text”!

<sup>41</sup>Oswalt comments that “God will give His people the reward they have earned. But here, in keeping with the tone of this passage, the connotation is negative. Do His people want Him to come quickly and give them what they really deserve? If they gave a little more attention to the real character of their religion, they might be less hasty in begging Him to split the heavens and come down.” (P. 641)

<sup>42</sup>Achtemeier comments on **verses 8-25** that “This salvation-judgment oracle is intimately connected with the judgment oracle in **65:1-7** and should be read along with it...Here we have the answer to the question of whether or not Yahweh will destroy the faithful in Judah along with the unfaithful. For the first time in the **Old Testament** we find [a depiction of] Yahweh acting in an ultimate manner toward Israel in two different ways. To the faithful He will give final salvation; to the unfaithful, death [if they do not hear His prayer, and respond]. The people of Israel is now divided into two separate groups with two separate destinies. The community of the nation is broken in a manner never again healed.

“There were preparations for this separation between the faithful and unfaithful in what went before. Isaiah’s (**1:9; 10:20-23**) and Zephaniah’s (**3:11-13**) preaching about a remnant envisioned the remainder or return of the faithful few (compare **Jeremiah 24:4-7**). Ezekiel spelled out in careful detail the possibility of life in the mercy of God for those individuals who turned from their evil ways (**Ezekiel 18; 33**). And yet, when those prophets dealt with God’s final future [such a phrase is never found], they spoke of that future in relation to Israel as a people, and they envisioned the covenant community retaining its wholeness as the elect of God (**Isaiah 2:2-4; Ezekiel 37; Jeremiah 31:31-34**, and...**Zephaniah...3:14-20**). Paul stands in this same tradition when he writes of ‘all Israel’ in **Romans 11:26**.

“Here now in **Third Isaiah**, however, the former covenant community is no more, and the relationship with God is no longer mediated solely through that community. Rather, we have the equivalent in **65:8-25** of a new election by Yahweh, replacing the first election at the exodus...The election has nothing to do with the deliverance from Egypt; the old exodus traditions are not even used. Yahweh forms a new chosen group for Himself quite apart from the exodus remembrance...

“The Levitical-prophetic authors of **Third-Isaiah** found it impossible to answer the question about the fate of the faithful in any other way. Certainly the answer they gave influenced all of the Judaic-Christian writings that came after them. Thus this particular passage is of the greatest importance in the development of the **Bible’s** literature.” (Pp. 128-29)

(continued...)

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<sup>42</sup>(...continued)

Ackerman comments on **verses 8-25** that “The righteous in Israel will be saved and will live in peace and harmony in a restored Jerusalem.” (P. 1046)

Oswalt entitles **verses 8-16** “So will I do for My servants.”

He comments that “These verses are a continuation of God’s response to the lament of **63:7-64:11**<sup>Heb</sup> / **12**<sup>Eng</sup>. In **65:1-7** He has dispatched any false assumptions on which that lament may have been based, namely, that He was unwilling to help the people repent, and that His springing into action would automatically mean the deliverance of His chosen nation...

“So is there no hope?..These verses respond...God will by no means repudiate the ancient promises. He will deliver His servants and will manifest all the features of His grace to them, but they must realize that merely to have been among the survivors of the various catastrophes that were to befall Judah and Jerusalem between 700 and 400 B.C.E. was not what qualified them as servants. God’s *servants* are those who have sought Him (**verse 10**) and have responded to His call...There *will* be salvation; God will respond to the pitiful cries of those who are truly His people, but His refusal to destroy all the people (**verse 8**) in no way means that all who claim descent from Abraham will be saved.” (P. 644)

Oswalt comments on **verses 8-10** that “These verses address the natural horror that **verses 1-7** would arouse as an answer to the preceding lament. Is God going to destroy everybody because of the sins of the majority?...Here, as there, God hastens to assure His people that those who love Him will be spared.” (P. 644)

Ortlund comments on **verses 8-10** that “Though His judgments will destroy, God will also bless His old covenant people by preserving a remnant (compare **1:9; 10:20-23; Matthew 13:24-30; Romans 9:27-29; 11:1-5**).” (P. 1358)

Slotki likewise comments that “Despite the debased practices of the majority, the nation will be preserved for the sake of those who remained loyal to their God. The degenerate, however, who persist in their idolatrous ritual will be delivered to slaughter ... As the cluster of grapes is preserved on account of the little wine in it, so will the nation [of Israel] be spared from annihilation for the sake of the faithful servants of God therein.” (P. 315) Ackerman agrees, stating that “In **Second Isaiah**, all Israel was designated God’s chosen servant...but here, the chosen *servants* are only the righteous among the Israelites.” (P. 1046)

Justin Martyr quotes **Isaiah 65:8** in his **Dialogue with Trypho the Jew**, p. 135, but takes the remnant or the good grapes to be referring to the Christians, not to loyal Israelites.

(continued...)



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<sup>42</sup>(...continued)

Oswalt comments on **verse 8** that “While the basic point of the imagery from the vineyard is clear, its finer nuances are not...Part of the ambiguity centers on the ambiguity of *it*. Does the pronoun refer to the vine or to the cluster? Is the vine (Israel) to be spared because some clusters on it have grapes that, instead of being wizened [shrivelled, wrinkled with age] and bitter (compare **Isaiah 5:1-7**), are obviously bursting with the juice that will become new wine? Or does the pronoun refer to the cluster, as the syntax would normally suggest? In that case, the sense might be that even though the cluster has some bad grapes, they will be spared because of the good grapes in it. But even if cluster is the antecedent, which seems likely, the final colon of the verse, so as *not to destroy the whole*, argues that the point is the opposite of what was just stated: even if the cluster has some bad grapes, that does not mean the whole cluster will be thrown out...The good grapes will be culled out and spared (compare **27:2-6**)...

“So it will be for God’s people: although judgment is coming, and will begin with those who claim to be His, those who demonstrate their faith through joyous obedience have nothing to fear...

“Reading **chapters 40-55** alone might give one the impression that all that is necessary to be part of the remnant is to believe God’s promise to deliver. **Chapters 56-66** make plain that those who are truly the servants of God are those who believe His promises enough to obey His covenant.” (Pp. 645-46)

Knight entitles **verses 8-9** “God Himself Speaks Again.”

He comments that “The concept of the remnant here is one that runs through all ‘Isaiah’ (**1:9; 7:3; 10:20-22; 37:31; 46:3**). So also is it the case with the metaphor of the vine, or of the vineyard (**5:1-7**). Here the two are placed together...

“What connection has this metaphor then with ‘Jacob’? Jacob was of course the ‘father’ of those northern tribes who were taken into exile as long ago as 721 B.C.E. ‘Judah,’ on the other hand, was the ‘father’ of the south, where Jerusalem and Bethlehem lay. Trito-Isaiah thus agrees with Ezekiel when the latter declared that God’s remnant would come forth from amongst all the twelve tribes in exile (**Ezekiel 37:15-22**)...The result of God’s blessing of it therefore is that this remnant of Israel would in turn be a blessing to the world...

“We note that God lays down no conditions, such as that Israel should first repent. All He says is that ‘My chosen shall inherit it [YHWH’s mountains]’—not in order that Israel might be saved while other nations are damned, but that the world, through the chosen Servant, might be saved.” (Pp. 94-5) See:

**Isaiah 43:12;**

(continued...)

כְּאֲשֶׁר יִמְצָא הַתִּירוֹשׁ בְּאֶשְׁכּוֹל

וְאָמַר אֶל-תְּשַׁחֲתֵהוּ כִּי בִרְכָה בּוֹ

כִּן אֶעֱשֶׂה לְמַעַן עֲבָדֵי

לְבַלְתִּי הַשְּׁחִית הַכֹּל:

In this way YHWH spoke.<sup>43</sup>

Just as the new wine will be found in the cluster (of grapes),  
and he<sup>44</sup> will say, Do not destroy it, because a blessing (is) in it,<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>(...continued)

I, I declared, and I saved / delivered,  
and I cause to hear, and there is not among you people a stranger (God)!  
And you (plural) (are) My witnesses--a saying of YHWH--and I (am) El / Supreme  
God!

#### Isaiah 49:6,

And He said, It was too trifling for you to be for Me  
a servant to raise up Jacob's tribes,  
and to return those preserved of Israel;  
and I will give you (singular) for a light of nations,  
to be My salvation as far as the earth's end!

<sup>43</sup>This is another claim that Isaiah's message comes from YHWH.

<sup>44</sup>Or "one..."

<sup>45</sup>Achtemeier comments that **verses 8-10** set forth "Yahweh's new elective act, using the familiar **Old Testament** figure of Israel as a bunch of grapes (compare **5:1-7**)...The popular proverb quoted in **verse 8** recognizes that the first clusters found on a grapevine were not very good grapes for wine-making. Nevertheless, all of the first grapes were not destroyed, but some of them were preserved and given as first-fruit offerings, because they were signs of Yahweh's gift of life and blessing...The community of Israel is compared to these new grapes, and the promise of Yahweh is that He will not destroy them all in the judgment announced in **65:1-7**, but will preserve some of them as those who are blessed (compare **61:9**).

(continued...)

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

“Those to be preserved are called Yahweh’s ‘servants’ (compare **63:17**), His ‘chosen ones,’ a ‘seed’ from Judah, and it is very clear who they are. They are the faithful Levitical-prophetic party and their followers, as in all the preceding oracles, who truly ‘seek Yahweh’ (compare **58:9**), who are lowly and contrite in spirit (**57:15**), who walk in Yahweh’s ways, according to His order, and who do justice and mercy to their fellows. They will inherit Zion and possess the land, **verse 9** (compare **57:13**), and this possession is spelled out in Deuteronomic terms as an inheritance of ‘rest’ (compare **63:14; 58:12; 32:18**). Moreover, they will not only inherit Zion, but the whole plain from the Plain of Sharon along the northwest coast to the Valley of Achor at the northwest corner of the Dead Sea... **verse 10**. **Deuteronomy** and the Deuteronomic historian always envisioned God’s final gift of abundant life to His people as a gift of rest in the land, and that fulfillment is here pictured given to the faithful...

“Only because Yahweh will choose the faithful will they be His ‘chosen ones.’ A new election of a new chosen group now takes place, in contrast to the offer of the land to all of Judah in **60:21** and **61:7**. Many of the Judeans, in their faithlessness, rejected Yahweh’s earlier gracious offer. The land therefore now will be given only to those who seek Yahweh.” (Pp. 130-31)

Motyer comments that “*Juice* (תִּירוֹשׁ) is not unfermented wine but (compare **Hosea 4:11** [prostitution, old wine and new wine take away the understanding]) ‘wine made from the first drippings of the juice before the press was trodden.’ ‘Finding’ this juice may mean that the grapes were already oozing as they were being picked and thrown into the press and that this spontaneous juice was collected as specially valued...

“*There is yet some good in it, for a blessing is in it*, that is, it is prized for itself. We may dare to say that the Lord’s people are a blessing to Him, and He will carefully guard them from destruction...All merit the winepress but some are saved from it.” (P. 526)

Westermann comments that “**Verse 8a** explains what follows it by means of a proverb-like figure of speech...about the vintager [a person who harvests grapes] at the vintage [the place in which wine is produced]. In the same way as **Isaiah (28:23-28)** likens God’s actions to that of the farmer, the phrase ‘do not destroy it, for there is a blessing in it’ suggests that there is an idea of throwing the grapes away, but someone objects to it, saying ‘there is blessing in it’—some of the fruit is still good, that is to say, there is still juice in the grapes.” (P. 404)

Watts states that “The first grapes cut were never the best for making wine. Yet some of them were kept for Yahweh as a sign of life and blessing...The whole is preserved from deserved destruction for the sake of the few faithful servants and the potential life and blessing inherent in them...The judgment is designed to get rid of the rebellious group, but is carefully administered *not to destroy the whole*. The process by

(continued...)

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

which a remnant is preserved in which God's promised destiny can be fulfilled is being put into effect." (P. 344)

The figure of YHWH treading the winepress in **Isaiah 63:1-6** is certainly a symbolic picture of YHWH's judgment and destruction that has come upon Edom (and the nations), without any thought of producing wine. But here, evidently, the imagery is varied. The winepress is being trodden, but the one treading the wine-press spies a cluster of good grapes, oozing new wine, and sets that cluster aside, to be the source of refreshing new wine. So it is with YHWH's judgment of His people—it is not indiscriminate. YHWH recognizes the good people in the midst of a nation deserving destructive judgment, and saves them because of their goodness. This figurative language supports Susan Ackerman's interpretation of **Isaiah** as not rejecting all Judaism, but only the "bad grapes." See footnote 42.

The "Song of the Vineyard" in **Isaiah 5:1-7** states concerning the vineyard, **וַיַּעַשׂ בְּאֲשֵׁיִם**, "and it made / produced worthless things / bad grapes (**New International** has "only bad fruit," but there no word for "only" in the Hebrew text. The Song goes on to depict YHWH as stating that He will utterly destroy the vineyard (Israel), with nothing said concerning any "remnant." But here, an exception is made to that overall judgment on Israel, YHWH's vineyard. The ones treading the vineyard (in judgment) find a cluster of grapes in which there is still some good juice—it is "good fruit"! And YHWH draws the conclusion from this that He will not destroy all of Israel, but will preserve a remnant—one of Isaiah's prominent themes.

Jesus takes up **Isaiah's** Song of the Vineyard in **Matthew 21:33-44**, making the allegory much more explicit, and predicting that the vineyard / kingdom of God will be taken away from Israel, and given to a people who will produce its fruits. Jesus says nothing about exceptions in His application of the vineyard to Israel of His day, just as Isaiah does not in **Isaiah 5**. See also **Mark 12:1-11** and **Luke 20:9-18** which are closely similar to **Matthew's** account.

But in **Luke 13:6-9**, Jesus is depicted as adapting the vineyard metaphor specifically to a fig-tree in the vineyard, and allows for the possibility that with proper horticulture, it is possible that it will bear some good fruit—otherwise, it will be cut down. The **New Testament** makes it very clear that there was a fairly large number of Israelites who followed Jesus (Who was Himself a Jew, as were almost all of His followers as depicted in the **Gospels**), and who became a "remnant," surviving the destruction of the vineyard in 70 A.D.

But still, we ask, were there not some Israelites in the time of Jesus who, while not following Jesus, still produced "good fruit," and who could be described in the same terms that Jesus gave to Nathanael when introduced to him, ἴδε ἀληθῶς Ἰσραηλίτης ἐν ᾧ δόλος οὐκ ἔστιν , "Look--an Israelite in truth, in whom there is no guile /

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

treachery”? Is that not an example of at least one good grape in Israel? And, of course, there are many more, as described in the Nativity stories in **Matthew** and

especially **Luke**—the parents of John the Immerser and Jesus, and the humble, elderly worshipers in the Jerusalem temple, such as Simeon and Anna.

What do you think? Can someone be a part of a “good cluster” in Israel if they refuse to hear the Word of God made flesh in Jesus?

Modern Jewish religious leaders will quickly answer, “Yes, of course!” And they will add that it is unfair for Christians to accuse them of having refused to listen to God’s Word in Jesus. But the fact is, that is exactly what has happened, and is happening, as some Jewish religious leaders dismiss the **New Testament** as irrelevant and unimportant—if not absolutely wrong.

We Christians have to acknowledge that there are many of us who have refused to listen to the word of God in Moses and the Prophets, indeed in the entire **Tanakh (Hebrew Bible)**--who have for all practical purposes dismissed the **Hebrew Bible**, not listening for the Divine message contained within it. And then we are confronted by Muslim religious leaders who claim that they respect the word of God in Moses and the Prophets, including Jesus—but then accuse Jews and Christians of having refused to listen to the word of Allah / God through their prophet Mohammed in the **Koran!** A similar thing can be said for many other world religions with their “inspired books.” What about the **Book of Mormon**? What about our native American religious traditions?

Can we dare believe that God is acting through other religions than our own, and that we need to be open to them and hear their testimonies? An important passage in answer to this question is **Amos 9:7**:

Are not you Israelites the same to Me as the Cushites / Ethiopians?

It is a saying of YHWH--

Did I not bring Israel up from Egypt,  
and (the) Philistines from Caphtor,  
and the Arameans (Syrians) from Kir?

That is, YHWH claims that the farthest-off nation (in the world-view of Amos’ time), the Cushites / Ethiopians of southeastern Africa are the same to Him as the Israelites, and that while He has in fact worked in Israel’s history in powerful, saving ways, bringing them into a new land, He has also done the same or similar things in the history of Israel’s most hated enemies, the Philistines and the Syrians!

How would this same theology be expressed today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Would it say something like the following?

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

Are not you Christians the same to Me as the Muslims / Hindus / American Indians?

It is a saying of YHWH--

Did I not bring salvation / deliverance to the non-Jewish nations through Jesus Christ,

and did I not work in the same way among the Arabians, and among the Indian peoples of the world?

Can we Christians honestly believe that God the Creator, the life-giving Spirit, and the loving Savior Jesus Christ are all at work, hiddenly, mysteriously, among all the peoples and nations and religions of earth, bringing salvation / deliverance to those whom we consider forsaken by God, abandoned? And if we do believe such a thing, does that mean we have to give up our convictions concerning what God / Spirit / Jesus have accomplished, and are accomplishing in our language and culture? Did Amos hold that the Jews should give up their religious convictions in order to affirm YHWH's universal work?

What are we to do in such a confusing situation, which cannot be avoided--as the world religions have come to America, building their mosques and temples and shrines in the midst of our cities and states, and as our neighbors and co-workers and our children's class-mates share with and learn from active members of those religions? Do not the churches have an important responsibility in dealing with this matter pastorally and theologically, and especially by setting forth proper examples in our communities? What would Jesus Christ have us do? Would He encourage, or slam the door to open, honest dialogue with our neighbors?

One thing we believe, Jesus Christ would have us do--it is to listen to our religious neighbors with whom we differ, humbly and honestly, calling on the God we believe in to guide us and teach us in the midst of our confusion--refusing to simply reject others out of hand, without being open to and respectful of their religious convictions--confident that truth will be victorious in all such honest dialogue.

Do we dare to believe with **Second and Third Isaiah** that YHWH God is creating something new in our time, and that out of our confusion He will bring clarity and resolution with renewed hope for our world? And even though many of our older, established churches are ill-prepared for, or are unwilling to meet this challenge, will this not be an integral responsibility for new church-starts in our modern multi-cultural situations, enabling peaceful, constructive dialogue between the differing religious view-points, trusting the power and light of Divine truth to prevail, as we get to know one another and treat each other respectfully rather than as antagonists?

See the paper "Complexities of the World Urge Religions to Move from Co-existing to Acting Together," by His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of Lebanon, available on the Internet, which contains important statements concerning the role of local churches and Christian schools in inter-religious dialogue.

(continued...)

so I will do for the sake of My slaves,<sup>46</sup>

so as not to destroy the whole (nation).<sup>47</sup>

65:9<sup>48</sup> וְהוֹצֵאתִי מִיַּעֲקֹב זֶרַע

וּמִיִּהְיֹדָה יוֹרֵשׁ הָרִי

וַיִּרְשׁוּהָ בְּחִירֵי

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

Or should we retreat with the various fundamentalisms to our past traditions, attempting to build even higher walls to protect against the influence of other world-religions, protecting our constituents from hearing their claims, insisting that God has worked in our history, but not in theirs, refusing to prepare them for the interchange and dialogue that is already taking place? What do you think? What are the followers of Jesus Christ called to do in such a situation?

<sup>46</sup>The plural noun with the 1<sup>st</sup> person pronominal suffix is עֲבָדַי, “My slaves / servants.” This is the noun which plays such an important role in **Isaiah 40-55**, in its discussion of YHWH’s “slave” or “servant,” and which is used as a title for the nation of Israel as well as for an individual within Israel who suffers for Israel’s sins.

See **Isaiah 41:8, 9; 42:1, 19, 19, 43:10; 44:1, 2, 21, 21, 26; 45:4; 48:20; 49:3, 5, 6, 7; 50:10; 52:13; 53:11; 54:17; 56:6; 63:17; 65:8, 9 (here) 13, 13, 13, 14, 15 and 66:14.**

<sup>47</sup>That means, YHWH’s judgment is selective, not indiscriminate. Those who are righteous, trembling humbly at the Word of YHWH, need not fear the judgment that is coming. Behind this statement lies **Isaiah’s** view of the “remnant,” those who escape the judgment, and who become the seed or sprout or branch from which the future is built.

Knight comments that “The concept of the remnant here [in **verses 8-9**] is one that runs through all **Isaiah (1:9; 7:3; 10:20-22; 37:31; 46:3)**. So also is it the case with the metaphor of the vine, or of the vineyard (**5:1-7**). Here the two are placed together.” (P. 94)

<sup>48</sup>Oswalt comments on **verse 9** that “If the threats of **verses 1-7** had made it appear that God was going to wipe the children of Jacob off the map, that impression was incorrect. God has the power to raise up a seed from even a field of burned-out stumps (**6:11-13; 11:1; 53:10**), and can bring out of Judah (compare **Micah 5:2**) one who will truly have the right to possess God’s land.” (P. 646)

וְעַבְדֵי יְשׁוּבֵי-שָׂמָה:

And I will bring forth a descendant from Jacob,<sup>49</sup>

and from Judah<sup>50</sup> one inheriting My mountains.<sup>51</sup>

And My chosen ones<sup>52</sup> will inherit<sup>53</sup>, it,<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Watts holds that this mention of “a seed / descendant from Jacob” confirms “the promise to Abraham that his children will inherit the land. The later history as well as a part of that ancient promise is recognized in the phrase *and from Judah an heir*. Yahweh stresses continuity with the past at this point, even in the very new creation that is being announced...” (P. 344)

<sup>50</sup>Wolf / Stek hold that this mention of Jacob and then Judah means “the northern and southern kingdoms respectively.” (P. 1111) That is, the remnant that is preserved will come from both northern and southern Israel. But it may be that the mention of Jacob and Judah only means the descendants of the common father of Israel (“Jacob”), through Judah, as the ancestor of the Israelites in the “kingdom of Judah.” What do you think?

<sup>51</sup>For the phrase יִרְשׁ הָרֵי, “one inheriting My mountains,” or “mountain,” see:

**Deuteronomy 11:11**, “the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess is a land of mountains and valleys”;

**Judges 1:19**, Judah “was possessing [singular participle as here in **Isaiah 65:9**] the mountain”;

**Isaiah 57:13**, “the one who makes Me his refuge will inherit the land and possess My set-apart mountain”;

**Isaiah 65:9**, here, one inheriting YHWH’s mountains, out of Judah;

**Obadiah 1:19**, “people from the Negebh will possess the mountains of Esau...”

Compare **Isaiah 49:8-13**, which predicts the restoration of Israel to the land, walking along the roads in the mountains, hearing the mountains themselves singing for joy along with the land. Wolf / Stek claim that “‘Mountains’ refers to the whole land, since so much of it was hilly.” (P. 1111) See the prominence of “mountains” in **Ezekiel 6:2-3**.

<sup>52</sup>The noun בְּחֵירָי, “My chosen ones,” means that those who are delivered from destruction are those whom YHWH has “chosen.” For occurrences of this noun in the **Hebrew Bible**, see:

(continued...)



and My slaves / servants will dwell there.<sup>55</sup>

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

**2 Samuel 21:6**, Saul is YHWH's "chosen one";

**Isaiah 42:1**, YHWH's slave or servant is "My chosen one";

**Isaiah 45:4**, Israel is "My chosen one";

**Isaiah 65:9**, here, in the plural, "My chosen ones," those delivered from destruction;

**Isaiah 65:15**, those under YHWH's judgment "will leave their name for a curse for My chosen ones");

**Psalms 89:4**, YHWH says, "I have made a covenant for My chosen one," meaning king David, YHWH's slave or servant;

**Psalms 106:5**, the psalmist wants to be able to see the goodness enjoyed by YHWH's chosen ones;

**Psalms 106:23**, Moses is YHWH's "chosen one."

<sup>53</sup>The root **יָרַשׁ**, "to inherit," occurs twice in this verse, "one inheriting My mountains," and "My chosen ones will inherit it." The root plays a prominent role in the **Hebrew Bible**, occurring some 231 times. In **Isaiah** it occurs some ten times, as shown in our end-note 6.

<sup>54</sup>Here the 3<sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular pronominal suffix is used, even though the reference is to the plural masculine noun, "My mountains." The Greek translation omits the suffix, but others (the Aramaic Targum and Latin Vulgate) support the Masoretic Text. We think this is an example of a grammatical mistake, which should not be "cleaned up" by later editors. What do you think? And if you hold that every word in the **Bible** is "inspired" and "infallible," do you think God made a grammatical mistake here?

<sup>55</sup>There is a shift in **verse 9** from singular to plural: *descendant* and *one inheriting* in the first two lines, and then *chosen ones* and *slaves / servants* in the second two lines. Are the first two lines talking about Abraham's promised descendant, i.e., the Messiah, or about the Jewish nation? Are the last two lines talking about individuals within the nation, or those individuals who follow the Messiah? The language is not exact, but tantalizingly ambiguous.

Watts states that "The inclusive views of the Vision [of **Isaiah**] are enforced again. There is to be a division here, but not between north and south or between Judah and the other tribes or between priest and people. It will be between true servants of Yahweh and those who rebel by insisting on their own ways of worship and

(continued...)

<sup>55</sup>(...continued)  
politics.” (P. 344)

Alexander states that “Of the promise here recorded there are three principal interpretations. The first...is that the verses predict the restoration of the Jews from Babylon. The second...the future happy occupation of Palestine by a regenerated race of Jews...The third...the perpetuation of the old theocracy or Jewish Church; not in the body of the nation, but in the remnant which believed on Christ; and which, enlarged by the accession of the Gentiles, is identical in character and rights with the church of the old dispensation, the heir to all its promises...

“For the promise that [Abraham] should be the heir of the world was not to Abraham, or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith (**Romans 4:13**). If it should please God to collect the natural descendants of the patriarch in that land and convert them in a body to the true faith, there would be an additional coincidence between the prophecy and the event, even in minor circumstances, such as we often find in the history of Christ. But if no such national restoration of the Jews to Palestine should ever happen, the extension of the true religion over that benighted religion, which both prophecy and providence encourage us to look for, would abundantly redeem the pledge which God has given to His people in this and other parts of Scripture.” (P. 444)

Again, Alexander brings his Christian theology into the interpretation of this passage, which says nothing about “the righteousness of faith,” or “the true faith,” or his description of the Jewish religion as “benighted.” As we have stated before, this is truly an example of “eisegesis,” interpreting and reading information into the text that is not there.

We have often commented that the **Hebrew Bible** “stands on tip-toe,” looking out into an unknown future with less than clear vision (remembering **Numbers 12:6-8** and **1 Corinthians 13:9-12!**), and predicting a joyful, hope-filled future for the people of YHWH / God. The details may be fuzzy, and confused—but the hope and the trust in YHWH that generate that vision is solid. In spite of the Divine threats of destruction, there is hope for the future!

The question in this text is, Who is this “descendant from Jacob and from Judah who inherits YHWH’s mountains, where YHWH’s chosen ones / slaves will live? Is it the sinful nation of returnees from Babylon? Is it the messiah and his people? Is it the com-ng new David? **Third Isaiah’s** vision is unclear and is not specific as to identities—but his hope-filled faith is not! YHWH has a wondrous future in store for His people!

<sup>56</sup>Oswalt comments on **verse 10** that “The metaphor of God’s blessing through the land is continued in terms that are familiar from the earlier parts of the **Book [of Isaiah] (29:17; 32:14-15, 18)**. Where once the land had been burned and barren

(continued...)

וְעַמֵּק עֶבֶר לְרֵבֶץ בְּקָר

לְעַמֵּי אֲשֶׁר דְּרָשׁוּנֵי:

And the Sharon will become<sup>57</sup> a habitation of sheep,<sup>58</sup>

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

(33:9), now it will be a prosperous and peaceful place.” (P. 647)

<sup>57</sup>1QIs<sup>a</sup> has the first word of **verse 10** the same as our Hebrew text, וְהָיָה, but a later hand has written the letter נ over it. And we wonder what this could mean. Did the second hand mean that the verb should be read וְנָאֵהֵיָה, “And I will be the Sharon”? This hardly makes sense in the context.

<sup>58</sup>הַשָּׂרֹן, “the Sharon,” refers to the fertile maritime plain on the Mediterranean from Joppa northwards, a very suitable location for the herding of sheep and goats in the present day, but as Knight notes, “‘Sharon’ in those days was a swamp, not a fit place for domestic animals.” (P. 95). In **Third Isaiah’s** vision, great changes in topography are going to occur.

The noun occurs in the **Hebrew Bible** at:

**Joshua 12:18**, מֶלֶךְ לְשָׂרֹן אֶחָד, one king belonging to the Sharon;

**Isaiah 33:9**, “the Sharon became like the Arabah,” probably meaning the Arabah both above and below the Dead Sea, i.e., desolate;

**Isaiah 35:2**, the wilderness will be transformed with the splendor of the Carmel and the Sharon;

**Isaiah 65:10**, here; the Sharon will become a habitation for sheep;

**Song of Solomon 2:1**, the beloved woman says she is a “crocus (beautiful flower) of the Sharon”;

**1 Chronicles 5:16**, the Gadites lived in all the pasture-lands of Sharon;

**1 Chronicles 27:29**, “Shitrai the Sharonite was in charge of the herds grazing in Sharon”; similar to **Isaiah 65:10**).

and Akhor<sup>59</sup> / Trouble Valley a resting-place (for) cattle,<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>1QIs<sup>a</sup> is slightly illegible for the place name עֶכּוֹר, with the letters עֶכּ legible, but no certainty concerning the וּ.

<sup>60</sup>עֶמֶק עֶכּוֹר, literally “Valley of Trouble,” is located to the west or southwest of Jericho, today the area between Jericho and Qumran.

Knight comments that “‘The Valley of Achor’ too was proverbially accursed because it was a barren gorge.” The phrase occurs in the **Hebrew Bible** at:

**Joshua 7:26**, the name given to the area outside Jericho where Achan, who had brought trouble upon Israel, was buried beneath a pile of rocks;

**Joshua 15:7**, mentioned among the many boundary markers for the Tribe of Judah;

**Isaiah 65:10**, here; “Trouble Valley” will become a resting-place for cattle;

**Hosea 2:17**, **verse 15** in English; YHWH promises to make the “Valley of Trouble” into a “Door of Hope,” similar to **Isaiah 65:10**).

Knight comments that “Hosea employed that incident to point to the manner in which God can take even what is accursed—in fact, the worst thing an Israelite could do was to break God’s covenant of grace—and turn even that into a ‘door of hope.’” (P. 95)

Motyer notes that “Sharon was to the west and Achor to the east of Palestine, hence, the whole land would be under blessing.” (P. 527) Ortlund holds this same view, stating that “Their respective locations on the western and eastern borders of Israel signify God’s restorative blessing covering the whole of the land.” (P. 1358)

Knight comments that “God is the One Who not merely creates, He may actually create good out of evil, out of chaos (**Genesis 1:2-3**).” (P. 95) See the development of this great theme of Biblical Theology in the story of Joseph in **Genesis 45:5-7** and **50:15-21**. Do you believe (and proclaim) such a God as this?

Achtemeier notes that these faithful people “will not only inherit Zion, but the whole land from the Plain of Sharon along the northwest coast to the Valley of Achor at the northwest corner of the Dead Sea, east of Jerusalem...**Deuteronomy** and the Deuteronomic historian [meaning, in the terminology of Martin Noth, the content of the books from **Deuteronomy** to **2 Kings**] always envisioned God’s final gift of abundant life to His people as a gift of rest in the land, and that fulfillment is here pictured given to the faithful.” (P. 130)

What do you think? Do you think that the promise / blessing of Jesus in **Matt-hew 5:5** concerning the “meek” inheriting the land is a fulfillment / continuation of this

(continued...)

for My people who sought / inquired of Me.<sup>61, 7</sup>

65:11<sup>62</sup> וְאַתֶּם עֲזַבְתֶּם יְהוָה

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<sup>60</sup>(...continued)

ancient vision of **Isaiah**? And what is that “land”? Is it the land of Israel, from Achor to Sharon? Or is the land in the vision of the **New Testament** enlarged to include all of planet earth, or even a “heavenly land”?

In line with these questions, what “piece of land” do you think **Hebrews 12:22-24** has in mind when it says that those who have faith in Jesus as their High Priest have already come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God? Where is that “Mount Zion,” and that “heavenly Jerusalem” located geographically?

<sup>61</sup>The Divine promise is not for all the nation of Israel, but לְעַמִּי אֲשֶׁר דִּרְשׁוּנִי, “for My people who sought Me.” Watts translates by the present tense, “for My people who seek Me out” (p. 340). But who are these people? Are they just devout Jews, a remnant in Israel? Or do they include those in the non-Jewish nations who paradoxically, though “not seeking” are in fact seeking as in **Isaiah 65:1**?

For this matter of “seeking YHWH” in the **Hebrew Bible**: see our end-note 7.

<sup>62</sup>Where **verses 8-10** proclaim hope for YHWH’s people who seek YHWH, **verses 11-12** proclaim the opposite for those who turn away from YHWH.

Oswalt comments on **verses 11-12** that “These verses spell out the opposite of seeking the Lord...The great irony is that these people in their quest for holiness have abandoned the holy mountain of God...”

“One of the perennial concerns of humanity is the control of the future...Thus here, living in self-induced darkness (compare **8:19-22**), these persons seek the Gods of Fortune and Destiny in an attempt to propitiate them and gain good luck in their future.” (P. 648)

Achtemeier comments on **verses 11-15** that “In contrast, the judgment oracle of this second strophe pronounces doom on the idolaters of whom we heard so much in **chapters 57-59** and in **65:17**, namely the Zadokite priestly party and their followers. In addition to the idolatrous practices mentioned in **65:3-5**, we are told here that they also offer sacrifices (‘prepare a table’) and drink-offerings to two foreign Gods, Gad and Meni...probably equivalent to Gods of fate and fortune...”

“Yahweh therefore says (**verse 12**) that He too will make a sacrifice—of the idolaters to Sword and to Slaughter, here personified as foreign Gods: ‘to bow down’ in **verse 12b** means to kneel down for execution.” (P. 131)

(continued...)

הַשְׁכַּחִים אֶת־הַר קְדְשִׁי  
הַעֲרִכִים לְגַדׁ שְׁלֵחַן  
וְהִמְמַלְאִים לְמִנִּי מִמְסַדִּי:

And you people who are forsaking YHWH,<sup>63</sup>

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

Alexander comments on **verse 11** that it “is only a description of the object of address; the address itself is contained in the next **verse [12]**...

“The class of persons meant is first described as forsakers of [YHWH] and forgetters of His holy mountain...The description of the same persons in the last clause is much more obscure, and has occasioned a vast amount of learned...discussion... Amidst this diversity of theories and explanations...there is perfect unanimity upon the only point of exegetical importance, namely, that the passage is descriptive of idolatrous worship.” (Pp. 445-46)

He adds that “The true sense of the passage seems to be the same as in **verses 3-7**, where [the prophet is completing] his description of the wickedness of Israel, by circumstances drawn from different periods of his history, such as the idolatrous period, the pharisaical period, etc.” (P. 447)

We think the passage is describing the syncretistic worship of the returnees from Babylon, who are continuing to combine the fertility practices of the Babylonians with their own Israelite worship—something abhorrent to YHWH, calling forth His judgment of destruction.

<sup>63</sup>The definition of what it means “to forsake YHWH” is given in the next three lines: it means forgetting the temple in Jerusalem, arranging a table for the God “Fortune,” and filling a mixed drink for the God “Fate”—that is, going to, seeking, other Gods than YHWH in His prescribed way. See 89 for a description of the many elements of the Near-Eastern fertility religions, which we think would include these practices mentioned in this verse.

1QIs<sup>a</sup>, instead of our Hebrew text’s וְאַתֶּם עֹזְבֵי, “and you people who are forsaking,” has וְאַתֶּםהָ עֹזוּב, apparently “and you people forsaken (by YHWH).”

For the phrase עֹזְבֵי יְהוָה, “ones forsaking YHWH,” see the following passages from the **Hebrew Bible**:

(continued...)

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

**Deuteronomy 29:24, verse 25** in English; the disaster that will come on Israel will be because the people forsook the (Sinai) covenant of YHWH; **1 Kings 9:9**; **Jeremiah 22:9**; **2 Chronicles 7:22**, similar;

**Joshua 24:16, 20**, the people tell Joshua that they will not forsake YHWH to serve other Gods; Joshua warns that if they do, they will face disaster;

**Judges 2:12, 13**, after the generation of Joshua, the Israelites forsook YHWH to follow other Gods such as Baal and the Asthoreths; **Judges 10:6**, similar, but naming also Baals in the plural, the Gods of Aram / Syria, the Gods of Sidon, Moab, the Ammonites and the Philistines;

**1 Samuel 12:10**, the Israelites, under the invasion of Sisera, Moab and the Philistines, cry out to YHWH, confessing their forsaking Him to serve the Baals and the Ashtoreths;

**1 Kings 18:18**, Elijah charges Ahab and his family with having forsaken YHWH's commands to follow the Baals;

**2 Kings 17:16**, the Northern Israelites forsook all YHWH's commands and built two calf-idols and an Asherah, bowed down to the heavenly host and worshiped Baal (leading to sacrificing their children);

**2 Kings 21:22**, Amon, son of Manasseh, forsook YHWH, and did not walk in His way;

**Isaiah 1:4**, Israel is a sinful nation that has forsaken YHWH, the Set-apart One;

**Isaiah 1:28**, "those who forsake YHWH (will perish)," identical phrase found in **65:11**, here;

**Jeremiah 2:17, 19**, this is what Israel has done to itself by forsaking YHWH at the very time He was leading them in the way; it results in bad and bitter consequences!;

**Jeremiah 16:11**, Israel's fathers forsook YHWH to follow other Gods; Israel of Jeremiah's day has done even worse, following the stubbornness of their hearts!;

**Jeremiah 17:13**, all who forsake YHWH will be put to shame; they have forsaken the Fountain of the water of life!;

**2 Chronicles 12:1**, after King Rehoboam was established as King, he and all Israel forsook YHWH;

**2 Chronicles 21:10**, Jehoram, King of Judah, forsook YHWH;

(continued...)

the ones forgetting My set-apart mountain,<sup>64</sup>

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

**2 Chronicles 24:18, 20, 24**, after the death of Jehoiada the High Priest, the officials of Judah persuaded King Joash to forsake YHWH, which he did, bringing disaster on Judah;

**2 Chronicles 28:6<sup>Heb</sup> / 7<sup>Eng</sup>**, Pekah inflicted severe losses on Judah because they had forsaken YHWH.

Yes, the same **Bible** that teaches YHWH will never forsake His people, teaches emphatically that His people may well forsake Him, and suffer the consequences!

<sup>64</sup>This is the only place in the **Hebrew Bible** where this matter of “forgetting YHWH’s set-apart mountain” occurs. It implies that there were those in Israel who no longer had regard for the temple and its sacrificial worship, but turned instead to the religions of the peoples and nations surrounding them, worshiping in the wadis and on the hills and mountains, instead of limiting their worship to the temple in Jerusalem.

Motyer comments that the phrase contrasts with “the *chosen people who possess My mountains*” (**verse 9**), and their practices identify them with the stubborn rebels of **verses 2-7**.” (P. 527)

Alexander states that “The first expression [in **verse 12**] bears a strong resemblance to the words of Wisdom, in **Proverbs 1:24-31**.” (P. 448)

24 Since I called, and you people refused--  
I stretched out my hand, and there was no one paying attention;  
25 And you people avoided all my counsel;  
and my rebuke--you people were not consenting to.  
26 Also I, at your (plural) distress I will laugh;  
I will mock when your fear comes--  
27 when it comes like a holocaust, your fear;  
and your distress like a storm-wind comes,  
when coming upon you distress and pressure!  
28 Then you people will call me, and I will not answer.  
You will rise early (looking) for / you will search diligently for Me, and you  
will not find me--  
29 because you people hated knowledge,  
and trembling awe before / fear of YHWH, you did not choose.  
30 You people were not willing (to accept) my counsel / advice;  
you spurned all my rebuke!  
31 And you will eat from (the) fruit of your way,  
and from your [own] counsels / plans / devices you will be filled!



the ones arranging for the (God) Fortune a table,<sup>65</sup> ,<sup>8</sup>

and the ones filling for the (God) Fate a mixed drink--<sup>66</sup>

65:12<sup>67</sup> וּמְנִיתֵי אֶתְכֶם לְחָרֵב

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<sup>65</sup>The phrase הַעֲרִכִים לְגַד שֶׁלְחָן, means “the ones arranging for the (God) Gad / Fortune a table.” Gad is the name of Jacob’s 7<sup>th</sup> son, and also the name of the Israelite tribe descended from him. It is also the name of a spokesperson contemporary with Saul and David. But here it refers to the Canaanite deity, the “God of Fortune,” named oftentimes in Phoenician and Aramaic inscriptions, but concerning whom we know little.

Motyer states that it was “a Syrian God worshiped widely. Compare the appearance of the name in places like Baal-Gad [“Divine Husband Fortune”] (**Joshua 11:17**) and Migdal-Gad [“Watch-tower of Fortune”] (**Joshua 15:37**)...” (P. 527)

Here it is said that the people of Israel who were forsaking YHWH “set a table for Fortune,” evidently referring to some ritual practices of the Canaanites which the Israelites were adopting. Instead of the table with twelve loaves of bread on it in the Jewish tabernacle / temple, an alternative form of worship to the Canaanite deity was being practiced. Again we are reminded of the manifold practices of the nations surrounding Israel. We think that this ancient Near-Eastern worship of Gad / Fortune was the forerunner of later Goddesses of Luck / Fortune in Greece and in Rome.

For the God “Gad” in the ancient Near East, see the **Wikipedia** article “Gad (Deity)” from which we quote in end-note 8, including an article concerning the God “Fate.”

Knight comments that “Here humankind prepares a gambling table, not before God, but before the Goddess of luck. Then, [the prophet mentions another God] Destiny (*meni*)...If worship of this Deity did actually persist for another thousand years, then she is mentioned again in the **Koran** at **Sura 53:20**.” (P. 95)

<sup>66</sup>The phrase וְהַמְמַלְאִים לְמִנֵּי מִמְסָךְ, “and the ones filling for the Fate a mixed-drink,” indicates that instead of, or possibly in addition to the “drink offerings” of the Levitical worship, the Israelites were preparing “mixed drinks” for another of the Canaanite Gods, one named מְנִי, “Fate,” or “Destiny.”

<sup>67</sup>Oswalt comments on **verse 12** that “Now God announces what He will do to those whose activities were so forcibly emphasized. The first verb, *destine* [מְנִיתֵי], has the same root consonants as the name of the God Destiny (מְנִי). Thus the comment is ironic: because these people have sought to control Destiny, they are destined for the sword...There is surely an ironical association between bending over to arrange the table of the Gods and bending over the slaughter block...”

(continued...)

וְכִלְכֵּם לַטֶּבַח תִּכְרְעוּ  
 יַעַן קִרְאתִי וְלֹא עָנִיתֶם  
 דְּבַרְתִּי וְלֹא שָׁמַעְתֶּם  
 וַתַּעֲשׂוּ הָרַע בְּעֵינַי  
 וּבְאִשֶּׁר לֹא־חִפַּצְתִּי בְּחַרְתֶּם:

and I will fate<sup>68</sup> you people for the sword;

and all of you for will kneel down for the slaughter.<sup>69</sup>

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

“God turns a deaf ear to the idea that ‘all’ the Israelites are His children. Instead ‘all’ who forsake Him and forget His holy mountain will be destroyed...

“These people’s sin is not a more or less casual abandonment of God in search of other, more satisfying, resources, as **verse 11** might suggest. No, Israel’s sin, and that of all humans, is rebellion.” (Pp. 648-49)

<sup>68</sup>Or, “assign,” or “number,” “count.” It is a play on words in Hebrew. In addition to the worship of YHWH, they have chosen to also worship the God “Fate.” In return for that, YHWH says, “I am going to “fate” (וּבְמִנִּיתִי, **umaniythiy**) them to destruction by the sword of their enemies.

The Hebrew name of the God “Fate” is מִנִּי. The Hebrew verb מָנָה, **manah** means “to count,” “number,” or “assign.” It is this last meaning that is being played on here.

Motyer comments that “Compromise is not possible. To follow the cults is to forsake [YHWH]; to be busy on those mountains (**verse 7**) is to *forget* His *holy mountain*. In action they forsook, in mind they forgot. Religion is no substitute for personal relationship. They found no difficulty being religious (**verse 7c**), in fact they would climb any mountain except the one where they might meet the *holy* God...Punishment matches offence, and false religion brings the opposite of what it seems to promise.” (P. 527)

<sup>69</sup>They will kneel down to expose their necks to the sword of their enemies, who will behead them. Compare the use of this verb כָּרַע, to kneel or fall some four times

(continued...)

Because I called, and you people did not answer;<sup>70, 9</sup>

I spoke and you did not listen.<sup>71</sup>

And you did the evil in My eyes,

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<sup>69</sup>(...continued)

in the song of Deborah with reference to the female Jael's killing of the Caananite military officer Sisera in **Numbers 5:27**. The verb is also used at:

**2 Samuel 22:40 / Psalm 18:40**, where David praises YHWH for having caused his enemies to bow before him;

**Psalm 17:13**, the psalmist calls upon YHWH to cause his enemies to kneel down;

**Psalm 20:9**, says that those who trust in horses and chariots will be caused to kneel and fall;

**Psalm 22:30<sup>Heb</sup> / 29<sup>Eng</sup>** says that all those going down to the dust, dying, will kneel / bow before YHWH;

**Psalm 72:9**, the desert tribes will kneel / bow before the ideal king / Messiah, and enemies will "lick the dust"; elsewhere the verb is used for bowing / kneeling in worship.

Elsewhere in **Isaiah**, see the verb used at:

**10:4**, when disaster comes on the oppressive wealthy, nothing will remain for them but to bow down among the captives, perhaps meaning awaiting their slaughter;

**45:23**, YHWH has sworn that to Him every knee will bow; does this mean bow down in defeat, awaiting their execution?;

**46:1-2**, the Babylonian Gods Bel (or, Marduk) and Nebo (the son of Marduk, the God of learning and writing) bow down underneath the load of their people, unable to carry them.

<sup>70</sup>See **verse 2**, "I spread out My hands (in prayer) all day-long to a people being stubborn..." For YHWH's "calling" in the **Book of Isaiah**, see our end-note 8.

<sup>71</sup>This fourth line of **verse 12** says the same thing as the third line, only in slightly different words. When God speaks, it is all important that we listen!

and you chose that with which I was not pleased.<sup>72</sup>

65.13<sup>73</sup> לִכְּן כִּה־אָמְרוּ אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה

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<sup>72</sup>The verb **הִפְצַתִּי**, “I was (not) pleased,” or “I did (not) delight in,” is omitted by 1QIs<sup>a</sup>, but a later hand has added it above the line.

Watts comments that this statement “reverses the recommendation of **56:4** [the eunuchs, forbidden entrance to the temple, but accepted by YHWH, who choose what pleases YHWH]. The self-will that was determined to make God do what they wanted Him to do is apparent throughout.” (P. 345)

Wolf / Stek note that the last four lines of **65:12** are almost identical to those of **66:4**. (P. 1111)

Also, I, I will choose among their immoral cruelties;  
and their terrors, I will bring to them.  
Because I called, and there was no one answering;  
I spoke, and they did not listen.  
And they did the evil in My eyes  
and among whatever I did not like, they chose!

The overall meaning of the two sets of parallel lines is simply that failure to listen to YHWH is the primary problem with Israel.

<sup>73</sup>Ortlund holds that in **65:13-25** “The Lord describes the joys of His true people in their eternal home.” (P. 1359) But, as we have previously noted, this is very difficult to maintain, since the depiction includes death for those living to be over a hundred years old, and also includes sinners living in the renewed Jerusalem. What do you think?

Slotki comments that in **verses 13-16** “a contrast is drawn between the fate of the loyal servants of God and that of the faithless.” (P. 316)

Knight entitles verses 13-16 “Promise and Threat.”

He comments that “Disloyalty is Israel’s basic sin. But loyalty is the mark of God’s faithfulness, His *chesedh*, His ‘steadfast love’...The word ‘truth’ means that God is trustworthy, faithful, the God one can be sure of, the God Who will never let you go. Not only so, He is the ‘all-knowing God Who forgets’ (!): ‘the former troubles are forgotten and are hid from My eyes.’ This is such a shocking statement to come out of the mouth of God that the **Septuagint [Rahlfs]** refuses to translate it. All that version has is ‘It shall not come into their mind.’ Unfortunately, the pre-Reformation Church did not use the Hebrew text of our **Bible**, and had to rely upon the **Septuagint [Rahlfs]** for its knowledge of the **Book of Isaiah**.” (P. 96)

(continued...)

הִנֵּה עֲבָדֶיךָ יֹאכְלוּ  
וְאַתֶּם תִּרְעָבוּ  
הִנֵּה עֲבָדֶיךָ יִשְׁתּוּ וְאַתֶּם תִּצְמָאוּ  
הִנֵּה עֲבָדֶיךָ יִשְׂמְחוּ  
וְאַתֶּם תִּבְשּׁוּ:

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

Achtemeier states that in **verses 13-15a** “we see how decisive has become the split in the community. The only other places in the **Old Testament** where we have such lists of blessings for the faithful and curses for the unfaithful are in those lists of covenant blessings and curses connected with the making or renewal of the Sinai covenant (com-pare **Deuteronomy 27-28; Leviticus 26**); and the fact that we find them here also rein-forces the view that **Third-Isaiah** here pictures a new election of a new group within Israel. As before, the title of ‘servants’ is intended to appropriate for the Levitical-proph-etic community the role of **Second Isaiah’s** Servant. They have become the ones whom Yahweh will exalt and lift up, so that they prosper (**52:13**). Once again the connection with the Beatitudes [of Jesus] should be noted (‘Blessed are those who hunger...thirst... mourn...’).” (Pp. 131-32)

Alexander states that **verses 13-14** are “a solemn prediction of happiness to the believing, and of misery to the unbelieving Jews.” (P. 449)

Oswalt comments on these two verses that “In a series of beautifully balanced bicola [double lines], God pronounces judgment on the sinners by contrasting their condition with that of those who are truly His *servants*...The effect is to communicate in the clearest terms that God will not allow His promises to Abraham and his descendants to fall to the ground, but that the qualifications for participating in that promise are not primarily genetic. Obedience is what marks the servants of God, and those who do not obey are not His servants, no matter what their bloodlines may be.” (Pp. 649-50)

We think in terms of **Ezra / Nehemiah’s** program, demanding that all without the proper bloodline be segregated out of the community of returnees, and **Third Isaiah’s** continued maintaining that it is obedience / righteousness that is the determining factor, not one’s bloodline.

Therefore, in this way my Lord<sup>74</sup> YHWH spoke--<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>One Hebrew manuscript omits אֲדֹנָי, ‘my Lord.’ 1QIs<sup>a</sup> also omits the phrase, but it has later been added to the text, written above the line.

<sup>75</sup>This phrase, כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה, or just כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה, is the typical phrase used by the spokespersons of Israel, in introducing a Divine speech. It asserts that the message being given is of Divine origin, not something the spokesperson has thought up in his own mind.

The problem is that the false spokespersons used this same phrase in introducing their messages as did the genuine prophets—see, for example the story of Jeremiah and the false prophet Hananiah in **Jeremiah 28:2**, where he introduces his message with the words צְבֹאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה, “In this way YHWH of Armies, God of Israel spoke, saying...” and the reader must exercise caution and dis-crimination to determine if the following message is truly from YHWH.

How can we do that? It is not as difficult as it might at first seem. The true message always leads us to YHWH, and to the Divine will, almost always at great cost to ourselves—not to schemes and desires for self-aggrandizement. An honest examination of the message will give many clues as to its origin—but there is no iron-clad certainty.

What do you think? Can you with certainty tell from listening who is truly speaking for God and who is not? What are your criteria?

As you look at the writing prophets / spokespersons of Israel, you will quickly come to recognize the truth of their messages. They constantly spoke against the establishment—whether the kings or the high priests—and at great cost to themselves (oftentimes paying the highest price—their deaths), they called for justice and righteousness. There was no charge for their message, no personal gain involved—and it was given freely to all who would hear. They were called “prophets of doom,” as they announced the coming destruction of their own nation by the hand of YHWH. Then, when the destruction had fallen, they quickly became “prophets of hope / salvation,” as they announced YHWH’s coming deliverance from captivity, and His new covenant filled with forgiveness and hope. It cannot be honestly denied that their message was proven true.

After years of studying the spokespersons / prophets, we say, “Listen to the prophets!” Indeed—for in their message is a powerful criticism of the Mosaic **Torah**, avoiding its pit-falls; there is the basis for ethics in society; there is hope in the face of evil and death. Yes, “Listen to the prophets!”

(continued...)

Look<sup>76</sup>–My slaves / servants will eat,<sup>77</sup>  
and you, you people will be hungry.<sup>78, 10</sup>  
Look–My slaves will drink,<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>(...continued)

It seems apparent that in the list of contrasts that follows in **verses 13-14**, the general condition of YHWH's chosen people corresponds to the blessings promised in **Leviticus 26:3-13** and **Deuteronomy 28:1-14**, while the hunger and thirst, and overall terrifying condition of those forsaking YHWH corresponds to the curses predicted against those forsaking YHWH in **Leviticus 26:14-39** and **Deuteronomy 28:15-68**.

<sup>76</sup>This is the first of four הִנֵּה, “Look!” clauses, all of which contrast the condition of those who are YHWH's “servants” with the condition of those who are forsaking YHWH.

<sup>77</sup>1QIs<sup>a</sup> has the imperfect verb יֹאכְלוּ, and a later hand has written the letter ך above the ך, indicating how the verb should be pronounced.

Ackerman comments that “As in **Isaiah 56:10-12** and **63:18**, some scholars see evidence here of political factions in the post-exilic community.” (P. 1047)

We think the evidence is not clear enough here to indicate political factions. Do you agree?

But as we have insisted, there can be little doubt that such divisions among the returning exiles were prevalent, with some, perhaps the majority tending towards the legalism and segregationism that would become explicit with the coming of **Ezra-Nehemiah**—demanding the rebuilding of Jerusalem's wall and altar and temple, while excluding foreigners, especially those who had intermarried with people of the land. Over against them were those who sided with the prophets **Second** and **Third Isaiah** (and **Jeremiah**) in wanting to include non-Jews and share with them the good news of God, serving them in genuine righteousness (self-giving care)—the same theological conflict that existed in the days of Jesus and His conflict with the Pharisees. What do you think?

<sup>78</sup>For the verb אָכַל “to eat” in **Isaiah**, see our end-note 9.

<sup>79</sup>This verb in 1QIs<sup>a</sup> is slightly illegible. The letters ך שׁ can be read, but the ך is not apparent.

and you, you people will thirst.<sup>80</sup>

Look—My slaves will rejoice,<sup>81, 11</sup>  
and you, you people will be ashamed.

65.14 הִנֵּה עֲבָדַי יִרְנוּ מִטּוֹב לֵב

וְאַתֶּם תִּצְעֲקוּ מִכָּאֵב לֵב

וּמִשִּׁבְר רֹוַח תִּילִילוּ:

Look—My slaves will give a ringing cry from goodness of heart;  
and you, you people will cry aloud from pain of heart,<sup>82</sup>  
and from brokenness<sup>83</sup> of spirit you people will howl!<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup>Compare **Isaiah 41:17-18**, “The poor and the needy are seeking water, and there is none; their tongue dried up with the thirst. I YHWH will answer them; Israel’s God, I will not leave them. I will open on the barren heights rivers, and in the midst of valleys springs. I will make the wilderness a marsh of water, and the dry land sources of water.” See the list of passages in the preceding footnote, where sometimes drinking is combined with eating.

<sup>81</sup>The **Book of Isaiah** speaks of rejoicing using the verbs שָׂמַח, to rejoice, to be glad, and גִּיל, “rejoice,” with their related nouns שְׂמֵחָה, “joy, gladness, mirth,” and גִּילָה, “rejoicing.” See our end-note 10. There is reason for joy in listening to YHWH, and sharing in the hope-filled future He is creating!

<sup>82</sup>For these four contrasting observations in **verses 13-14**, see especially the two chapters **Leviticus 26:3-33** and **Deuteronomy 28:1-68**, with their lists of the blessings that are promised to those who hear and obey YHWH’s Self-revelation, and the curses that those who refuse to listen and obey will bring upon themselves.

<sup>83</sup>Where the Masoretic Hebrew text reads וּמִשִּׁבְר, “and from brokenness,” 1QIs<sup>a</sup> reads וּמִשִּׁבְרוֹן, which means the same thing. This spelling found in 1QIs<sup>a</sup> is also found at **Jeremiah 17:18** and **Ezekiel 21:11**.

<sup>84</sup>The last 3 lines of **verse 13**, and the entirety of **verses 14-15** give a sharp contrast between the future of YHWH’s chosen people and those who are forsaking Him:

(continued...)



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

YHWH's Chosen People

Those Forsaking YHWH

eating	going hungry
drinking	thirst
rejoicing	shame
ringing cry from goodness of heart	howl from brokenness of spirit
another name	name
used for universal blessing	used for a curse
former troubles forgotten	put to death

Motyer comments that the phrase “My servants (our ‘My slaves’)” makes “a link with **verse 9**, and the hunger and thirst motif contrasts with the spread table [for the God Fortune] of **verse 11**. *Eat* and *drink* is to be understood as in **25:6; 55:1-2**, that is, the contrasting elements necessary to full bodily nourishment used as a picture of the meet-ing of every need of the person. To this is added the element of (literally) ‘joy of heart,’ internal satisfaction as well as external provision. By contrast, those who forsook [YHWH] and turned to the cults (**verses 2-5, 11-12**) will find that they have condemned themselves to total non-fulfilment, to *shame*, that is disappointed hopes, *anguish* gripping the whole person at the center (*heart*) and *brokenness of spirit*, the breakdown of every vital energy and purposeful activity.” (P. 528)

Watts comments that “Yahweh’s servants are destined to obtain the blessing, first announced in **chapter 40**...while the rebellious and pagan group being addressed is cut out of these benefits...**Luke 6:20-26** and **Matthew 25:31-46** make a similar distinction between two groups...The contrast in the fate of the two groups is shown by their responses. Yahweh’s *servants will sing*. The others will *wail* in their *anguished spirit*.” (P. 345)

And again we ask, Who are these two groups? Are they the followers of the type of exclusive, legalistic religion embodied in **Ezra-Nehemiah** over against those following the leadership of the prophets, **Jeremiah** and **Second** and **Third Isaiah**? We think they may well be.

<sup>85</sup>Oswalt comments on **verses 15-16** that “The contrast between the destiny of the rebels and that of the servants of God continues in these verses, although not in the highly patterned form of **verses 13-14**...

“Now another aspect of the Abrahamic promise is alluded to: the *name* (**Genesis 12:2**)...Isaiah says that far from having an honored name, these people’s name will be used in a curse...

“It is an open question as to how sweeping this statement is. A number of Christian commentators across the centuries (e.g., Calvin) have taken it to mean that the

(continued...)

לְשׁוּבוֹעָה לְבַחֲרֵי

וְהַמִּיתָ אֶדְנִי יְהוָה

וְלַעֲבָדָיו יִקְרָא שֵׁם אַחֵר:

And you people will leave your name  
for a curse for My chosen ones.

And my Lord YHWH will put you (singular) to death.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup>(...continued)

name used in the curse is 'Israel' and that this signals the replacement of the Jews by the Gentiles as 'the Israel of God.' But this seems too broad. The passage is not talking about replacement ('He will give them your name'), but about the criteria for inclusion (not ethnicity, but whole-hearted commitment to God and His ways)...It is not a whole people that is being displaced here; it is from that people (or any other) who depend on external trappings for their relationship with God...

"The other name that is to be given to the servants is reminiscent of **62:4** and **12**...The reputation and character of the people (their 'name') will be such that other people will not praise them, but will be drawn to the God seen in them, One Who is absolutely dependable...

"It is not the God of Israel, the God of some ethnic entity, by which men and women will swear, but the God Who has demonstrated through His servants, of whatever ethnic background they are, a gracious faithfulness that the world desperately wants." (Pp. 651-52)

<sup>86</sup>Motyer comments that "Second person plural pronouns (**13b-15a**) are replaced by a second person singular, *put you to death*, bringing the threat of judgment home to the individual (compare a similar singular in the judgment passage in **Deuteronomy 28:48**). The idiom of an 'individualizing singular' is widespread." (P. 528)

Westermann comments that "This new form of simultaneous announcement of salvation and its opposite with its basis in blessing and cursing became very important in the post-exilic period. It continued on into Jesus' proclamation, as we see from **Matthew 25**. It was also the source from which the twofold judgment of the day of judgment derived." (P. 406)

We disagree with Westermann, and hold that this matter of blessing and cursing is found throughout biblical literature, beginning with the stories of **Genesis** (with blessings on Abraham and his family, side-by-side with the destruction falling upon the cities of the plain). and continuing on, for example, in the predictions of blessings and curses of **Leviticus 26 / Deuteronomy 28**, and in the varying fortunes that befell Israel

(continued...)

And for the slaves of Mine, He will call<sup>87</sup> (by) another name.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>(...continued)

during the time of **Judges**. It seems naive to conceive of this as something new, becoming very important only in the post-exilic period. What do you think?

Slotki holds that this line of **verse 15** “is the form which the curse will take,” that is, as he translates, “So may the Lord God slay thee.” (P. 317)

<sup>87</sup>The phrase **וְלַעֲבָדָיו יִקְרָא**, “and to (or ‘for’) His slaves He will call,” is translated by the Greek as “but then for the ones slaving / serving for Him it will be called.” Aquila, Symmachus, the Aramaic Targum and Latin Vulgate all agree with the Hebrew text.

<sup>88</sup>1QIs<sup>a</sup> replaces **בְּאֱלֹהֵי אֱמֵן אֲשֶׁר תִּמְתְּבֶרֶךְ בְּאֶרֶץ יִתְבָּרֵךְ**, “by God of Amen; whoever is the one blessing himself in the land will bless himself” by the one word, **תָּמִיד**, a noun used as an adverb, “continually.” and then leaves a blank space with room for 3 to 4 words—indicating that the copyist knew something was missing. The Hebrew text is taken up again with the phrase **וְהַנִּשְׁבַּע**, “and the one swearing,” but changes it to read **וְהִיא הַנִּשְׁבַּע**, “and it will be, the one swearing...” All the versions support the Masoretic Text, none of them agreeing with 1QIs<sup>a</sup>.

Motyer comments that “The giving of a new [the text has ‘another,’ not ‘new’] name recalls **Genesis 17:5**, the foundation of [YHWH’s] Abrahamic plan. As then, so here, the different name ‘means’ becoming a different person with different potentialities and prospects.” (P. 528) Is that what this text means? Is he calling for the Jewish religion of his day to be radically transformed, so that another name can reflect its new character of humility and obedience to YHWH?

What do you think this means—you people will leave your name for a curse for My chosen ones...and for the slaves of Mine, He will call (by) another name”? Does this mean that the name “Israel” is no longer the name of YHWH’s chosen ones, but rather is used for cursing, or has a curse placed upon it, the curse of death? Or is the name to be understood as “Non-listening Israel,” not including those who listen to YHWH? Does it mean that YHWH intends to give a new name for His chosen ones / slaves—such a name as “Word-tremblers” (so, Motyer), or even “Christians” (see **Acts 11:26; 26:28**)?

Such an interpretation will be quickly rebuffed in our modern world of ecumenism, of trying to get along well and peaceably with people of other religions, claiming that all religions are equally true (and false). But what else can YHWH’s statement here mean? We think it certainly means that YHWH can reject any people He desires who will not listen to His word—regardless of their genealogy / heritage / name—and can

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<sup>88</sup>(...continued)

give a new name to any who will listen to and tremble before His Self-revelation. Do you agree?

YHWH, the calling, inviting God, is announcing His rejection of, and His sentence of capital punishment upon, those who refuse to listen to His voice—not on all Israel, but on those in Israel who will not listen. But their refusal to be His obedient people does not stop YHWH from acting, from choosing a new people, either within or beyond historical Israel, or from giving those whom He has chosen another, a new name. Of course, the message of **Isaiah** will apply equally to those wearing that new name, if they cease to listen to YHWH.

Alexander comments that “According to the usage of the prophecies the promise of another name imports a different character and state, and in this sense the promise has been fully verified. But in addition to this general fulfilment...it is a matter of history that the Jewish commonwealth or nation is destroyed [he is writing in the middle of the nineteenth century C.E.; we wonder what he would say in the light of the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948]; that the name of Jew has been for centuries a by-word and a formula of execration, and that they who have succeeded to the spiritual honors of this once favored race, although they claim historical identity therewith, have never borne its name, but another [that is, ‘Christian’], which from its very nature could have no existence until Christ had come, and which in the common parlance of the Christian world is treated as the opposite of Jew...”

“While I fully believe that this verse assures God’s servants of a very different fate from that of the unbelieving Jews, I have no doubt that it also has respect to the destruction of the Jewish State, and the repudiation of its name by the true church or Israel of God.” (P. 450)

Ackerman describes much Christian interpretation of **Isaiah** (she names specifically “Church Fathers” who have called **Isaiah** the “Fifth Gospel,” including Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Origen, Eusebius, Athanasius, Ambrose, John Chrysostom, Jerome, Augustine, Isidore of Seville (and Martin Luther, who applied **Isaiah’s** message to the Roman Catholic Church of his day [we have no doubt she would include Alexander]) as being “anti-Semitic.” She states that “**Isaiah** has...been frequently cited by anti-Semitic interpreters who find a condemnation of all Judaism in the **book’s** condemnations of the unrighteous among the ancient Israelites. They thus claim God has rejected Judaism in favor of their own Christian faith. This claim is a misreading of **Isaiah**.” (P. 956)

We agree that **Third Isaiah** teaches YHWH has rejected only a Jewish religion that refuses to listen humbly to His voice / Self-revelation, and that only people who listen humbly to that voice / Self-revelation can be His people—by whatever name He may give them. For those who listen to His voice, the words of **Isaiah 54:13** apply: “All

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<sup>88</sup>(...continued)

your children shall be taught by YHWH, and great shall be the prosperity of your children (who will be established in righteousness)!”

But when interpreters say exactly what Isaiah—a full-blooded Semite—says, and apply it to the new situations in which they live, is that being anti-Semitic? And when that message of **Isaiah** is applied to all religions, Christianity as well as Judaism—no matter their name—is that not being true to the Semitic message? What do you think? And when Israel refuses to hear the on-going message of YHWH in Jesus Christ, does that not make the application obvious? Is Israel not being “anti-Christian”?

A similar reaction occurs in the study of Jesus’ stringent attack on Pharisaic Judaism in **Matthew 23** (along with parallels in **Mark 12:38-39**; **Luke 13:34-35, 20:45-46**). It is claimed by some ecumenically-minded interpreters, longing to establish friendly relations with modern Jews (including my beloved professor at Duke, W. D. Davies), that Jesus could not have spoken such harsh words (but we hold that Jesus says nothing more stringent than the words of **Isaiah, Jeremiah, or Amos!**).

Such a reaction dilutes the biblical message—which stands in sharp condemnation of any and all proud religion that refuses to listen humbly to the Divine Word / Self-revelation!

Yes, Jesus in fact is clearly depicted by **Matthew** and **Luke** as speaking a devastating criticism of Pharisaic Judaism, and we do not do well to dismiss or deny that criticism. But we Christian interpreters must be very careful to first apply that message to ourselves and to our churches, before applying it to modern-day Judaism. All religions need desperately to hear and respond humbly to the Divine message—whether on the lips of Moses, or Isaiah or on the lips of Jesus and His representatives! Do you agree? Why? Why not?

I am reminded of hearing a Jewish leader at Duke University who stated something to the effect that “Our religion has continually had to put up with harangues like these in **Jeremiah 7** and in **Isaiah 65**, and has continued on in spite of them.” He compared **Jeremiah’s** and **Third Isaiah’s** language to that of Stephen in **Acts 7**—whom he described as nothing more than a young upstart scolding his elders, who deserved to be stoned to death! He could have said the same thing concerning Jesus’ criticisms of Jewish religion in **Matthew 23**.

In this way we all too easily dismiss YHWH’s Word through His servants the prophets—whether Jeremiah, or Isaiah, or Jesus or Stephen! What do you think?

We hold that the religious world is in desperate need of humble and open, frank and honest dialogue between Jewish rabbis, Christian ministers, Muslim Imams, and any and all other religious leaders, developing programs in churches, synagogues,

(continued...)

65.16<sup>89</sup> אֲשֶׁר הַמְתַּבְרֵךְ בָּאָרֶץ יִתְבַּרֵךְ בֵּאלֹהֵי אֱמֵן

וְהַנִּשְׁבַּע בָּאָרֶץ יִשְׁבַּע בֵּאלֹהֵי אֱמֵן

כִּי נִשְׁכַּחוּ הַצָּרוֹת הַרְאֵשְׁנוֹת

וְכִי נִסְתָּרוּ מֵעֵינַי

Because<sup>90</sup> the one who blesses himself in the earth will bless himself by God of Amen;<sup>91</sup>  
and the one who swears in the earth will swear by God of Amen.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>(...continued)

mosques and religious temples, designed to engender understanding—not only between Jews and Christians and Muslims, but also between Christians and all the world-religions, especially Hinduism, and Buddhism.

If this is not the responsibility of the churches / synagogues / mosques / temples, whose responsibility is it? Such honest confrontation and dialogue will not skip over statements like these, but will take them seriously, and attempt to come to terms with them. How will you deal with this?

<sup>89</sup>Alexander comments on **verse 16** that “Two things have divided and perplexed interpreters in this verse, as it stands connected with the one before it. The first is the apparent change of subject, and the writer’s omission to record the new name which had just been promised. The other is the very unusual construction of the relative pronoun אֲשֶׁר.” (P. 450)

<sup>90</sup>The Greek translation omits this initial word אֲשֶׁר which we have hesitatingly translated “Because...” Alexander translates by “(By) which...” Others have “That he...”; “For whoever...”; “Then whoever...”; “Whoever...” Rahlfs has ò, “The one who...”

<sup>91</sup>Motyer notes that “The verb *invokes a blessing* (the reflexive of בָּרַךְ) is a further Abrahamic link (**Genesis 22:18; 28:4**; compare the reflexive niph'al in **Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 28:14**). The thrust of the reflexive verb is, ‘whoever in the world would enter into the blessing designed for him will enter into that blessing in the God of truth.’” (Pp. 528-29)

<sup>92</sup>What does the phrase בֵּאלֹהֵי אֱמֵן, “literally “by God of Amen” mean? אֱמֵן is an adverb, meaning “truly,” and it seems that the phrase should be understood as meaning the God Whose promise or word can only be responded to by saying, “truly!”

(continued...)

For the former<sup>93</sup> troubles were forgotten,<sup>94</sup>  
and because they were hidden from My eyes.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup>(...continued)

or Who Himself confirms His promise or Word by a Divine affirmation, “Truly!” His Word is always true; His promise always comes to reality.

Motyer and others, including Slotki and **New International** translate by “God of Truth” or “God of the Amen.” **Tanakh** translates by “the true God” as does Achtemeier (p. 127). The phrase is found only here in **Isaiah 65** and in the **New Testament** at **2 Corinthians 1:20; Revelation 3:14**, “These things says the Amen, the Martyr, the Faithful One and True One, the Beginning of the creation of the God...”

Motyer comments that “He is the God Who says ‘Amen!’ to all His promises, affirming their reality and His trustworthiness in keeping them.” (P. 529).

But it may mean it is God’s people who pronounce the “Amen!” upon hearing His Word, giving their backing to that Word, not God Himself. What do you think? Wolf / Stek suggest that “Perhaps a contrast is intended with those who took oaths in the name of Baal.” (P. 1112) See **Jeremiah 12:16**, which states that YHWH’s people were formerly taught to swear by the Baal.

It is possible to point in a different way: אֱמִן, “(God of) faithfulness,” or אֱמִן, “(God) Who Supports,” or possibly אֱמִינִן, “(God of) faithfulness.”

<sup>93</sup>This feminine plural adjective, הַרְאֵשְׁנוֹת, apparently means “the former (things),” or “the past events,” referring to troubles and difficulties experienced in former times.

<sup>94</sup>Watts comments that “*The former troubles* refers to the judgments on pre-exilic Israel which were the subject of **chapters 1-39**...*Forgotten* stands in contrast to the deliberate ‘remembering’ in **chapters 63-64** where these were thrown into God’s face either as models for what they want Him to do or as wrongs done to Israel. *Hid from My eyes*. God has turned to the future. The past is done with now and hidden. The stress for God is on what is new and real in the present and the future.” (P. 346)

<sup>95</sup>The reason the former things will be forgotten, and are hidden from YHWH’s eyes, is given in the next **verse (17)**. Things are forgotten, and are hidden from the Divine sight, because of what YHWH is doing, creating anew. Compare **Isaiah 40:1-2**,

- 1 Comfort, comfort My people, ways your (2<sup>nd</sup> person plural) God!
- 2 Speak to / upon Jerusalem’s heart, and cry out to her,  
that her warfare / time of service is fulfilled,  
that her iniquity / guilt is accepted as satisfactory / forgiven,

(continued...)

<sup>95</sup>(...continued)

that she has received from YHWH's hand double (punishment) for her sins!

Do you believe in a God like this, a God Who forgives, Who is not tied to the past, but Who is acting in new ways in the present? Does this message of **Isaiah** fit well with Christian theologies that insist that everything has been done / revealed, that nothing really new is happening in the present? Is your God a “static God” of the past, or a dynamic, “active God” of the present? And is your synagogue's / church's / mosque's program designed to do something new and innovative, or is it tied to the past—and therefore condemned to repeat the mistakes of the past?

If this message was initially directed to the returnees from Babylon, who as a group had suffered for seventy years for their disobedience to and rebellion against YHWH, it means that YHWH has forgiven and forgotten their disobedience and rebellion, and is actively creating a new beginning, a fresh start for those captives. And, as Christian readers of **Isaiah**, must we not say that this is exactly what YHWH was doing in Jesus Christ—forgiving and forgetting the past, creating a new beginning for His people?

<sup>96</sup>Motyer entitles **verses 17-20** “New creation, new city.” (P. 529)

Knight entitles **verses 17-19** “The New Creation.” (P. 96)

Oswalt entitles **verses 17-25** “New heavens and a new earth.” (P. 654)

Slotki states concerning **verses 17-25** that they depict “The glories and marvels of a new era in which all existing earthly conditions will undergo complete transformation.” (P. 317) We think this is overstatement, and that the depiction is that of a transformed earthly Jerusalem, but which still has the curse of death resting upon it. What do you think?

Oswalt comments that “This poem introduces the final section...of the **book (65:17-66:24)**. Here, as in **chapters 1-5**, judgment and hope are juxtaposed. As **chapters 1-5** begin and end with judgment, this section begins and ends with hope (**65:17-25; 66:18-24**). In between these segments are two judgment passages (**66:1-6, 15-17**), with a hope passage between them (**66:7-14**). Thus the pattern is: hope, judgment, hope, judgment, hope, which is a reversal of the pattern in **chapters 1-5**.

“These verses (**65:17-25**) function as the opening to God's final comment on the issues of deliverance and righteousness that have dominated this last division of the **book (of Isaiah--chapters 56-66)**... How will humans ever be able to live the righteousness of God, to be the evidence to the nations that He alone is God? Only in one way:

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<sup>96</sup>(...continued)

if God Himself intervenes and exercises His creative power to remake us and our world...

“The beautiful picture that is painted partakes of all earlier such pictures (**11:6-9; 25:6; 26:15; 35**, etc.). It blends the imagery of several sorts together to create an impressionist canvas...The one bright impression is unmistakable: our God has the power to banish sin and sorrow forever.” (Pp. 654-55)

Justin Martyr, in His **Dialogue with Trypho the Jew**, 81, quotes the entirety of **Isaiah 65:17-25**. He states that “Now we understand that the expression used among these words, ‘According to the days of the tree shall be the days of My people’ the works of their toil shall abound,’ obscurely predicts a thousand years [yes, that is indeed an ‘obscure’ prediction!]...And further, there was a certain man with us, whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, who prophesied, by a revelation that was made to him, that those who believed in our Christ would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem; and that thereafter the general, and, in short, the eternal resurrection and judgment of all men would likewise take place.” The passage Justin is referring to is, of course, **Revelation 20:1-10**.

Alexander states that “Of the whole verse there are several distinct interpretations. Aben Ezra understands it as predicting an improvement in the air and soil, conducive to longevity and uninterrupted health...Thomas Burnet...makes it a prediction of the renovation of the present earth with its skies, etc., after the destruction of the present [world] at the day of judgment...”

“Better than all of these, because requiring less to be assumed, and more in keeping with the usage of prophetic language, is the explanation of the verse as a promise or prediction of entire change in the existing state of things, the precise nature of the change and of the means by which it shall be brought about forming no part of the revelation here.” (P. 452)

Ortlund comments that in **verses 17-25**, “Isaiah uses images from his age to paint a magnificent poetic picture to describe the joys of the world to come [but where is ‘the world to come’ found in this passage? It is not]. Christians differ over whether to read this as

- (1) an idealized description of restored Jerusalem (leading into eternal joys),
- (2) an intermediate ‘millennial’ state [compare Justin Martyr’s statement] , or
- (3) the eternal state itself.

“Certainly the expression ‘new heavens and a new earth’ would seem to suggest the eternal state (because of **Revelation 21:1**). On the other hand, the mention of

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<sup>96</sup>(...continued)

people dying, even at an advanced age, as well as the presence of the sinner (**65:20**), seem to suggest this is not the eternal state...

“Hence (and in view of the larger context of **chapters 40-66**) some interpreters read these verses as describing an idealized future for Jerusalem—not simply as a restored city but as the center of the world, in which all manner of people know and delight in God and live at peace with each other (as **2:2-4; 9:6-7; 11:1-10**). Under such circumstances, human community and piety flourish. At the same time, the description goes far beyond anything that the world has ever seen, inviting the believing reader to yearn for more and play his or her role as the story unfolds to its glorious end (compare **2:5**).” (P. 1359)

Knight comments that “The creeds of the Church were drawn up in the early Christian centuries within a world view very different from that of the **Old Testament** prophets. So the creeds begin: ‘I believe in one God the Father Almighty, *Maker* of heaven and earth...’ Only secondly thereafter comes the confession that God is also the Redeemer, and only after the name of Jesus Christ has been mentioned! For Trito-Isaiah, however, creation is what comes forth out of God’s redeeming love...

“The prophet’s understanding of **Torah** was that God had made Himself known first as the Redeemer, at that point in history when He rescued Israel out of Egypt in the days of Moses. Yet now, he declares, God has once again revealed Himself in a redemptive action when He brought home to Jerusalem the very generation of Israelites whom Trito-Isaiah is even now addressing. What is more, that act of God is also a creative act. He had now created the *New Israel* by means of His ‘creative’ love and Self-emptying. Thus since He had now done so twice, there was no need to suppose that He would not make a habit of it!...

“Consequently, what we now hear is ‘(Realize) that (*ki*) I am creating new heavens and a new earth’ (God Himself is speaking). The word ‘create’ here could be a future form of the verb. But what we are to recognize is that God’s creative activity is really a continuation, an outflow, from **Genesis 1:1**: ‘When God began to create the heavens and the earth’ (**Revised Standard Version** margin). So this active participle shows that God is not required to make a repair job on a world that is in a mess.

“God is not a *deus ex machina* [an unexpected power or event saving a seemingly hopeless situation, especially as a contrived plot device in a play or novel], such as the Greek tragedians employed to right the wrongs of their city and people in one great magical act. God is continually bringing good out of evil, life out of death...

“Martin Luther declared that the constant re-creation of sinful human beings showed more than anything else that the Creator God is essentially nothing other than the outpouring of love...

(continued...)

וְלֹא תִזְכְּרֵנָה הַרְאֵשְׁנוֹת

וְלֹא תַעֲלִינָה עַל-לֵב:

Because look at Me—<sup>97</sup> creating<sup>98, 12</sup> new<sup>99, 13</sup> heavens<sup>100, 14</sup> and a new earth;<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>96</sup>(...continued)

“Incidentally, moreover, Trito-Isaiah is warning us here (if we might use him for evidence) that the first chapter of **Genesis** is not a scientific document over which ‘creationists’ and evolutionists’ can continue to argue, but is an expression of God’s loving purpose and plan for the universe He has created for the good of mankind...

“In fact, since God is always re-creating, bringing new life out of death, then the concept of ‘the end’ becomes a technical term to denote distinct, different points of the eschatological timetable, or no specific point, or more than one point...Trito-Isaiah understands the purpose of God quite differently from the millenarian or adventist views of some present-day sections of the Church.” (Pp. 96-7)

Knight continues: “Thus what follows is not to be described as being “apocalyptic in embryo’...Rather, it speaks of the ultimate meaning of God’s re-creative love at each moment that He ‘visits’ His people...The end-point to which it refers is seen as the final forgiveness of God of all that is past...From our angle, of course, the vision given us in the following passage can be grasped only when we think of it as a vision of the future. But Trito-Isaiah thinks of it as eternally present, in that the present is what determines eternity (compare Jesus’ teaching at **Matthew 25:31-46**). [The key to understanding] is to be found in the nature of God, in that He is the God Who forgives and Who, in forgiving, renews.

“The eschatological significance of the ruins of the decadent city of Jerusalem in the prophet’s day is therefore no less than ‘rejoicing’ and the people of the city ‘joy.’ Life lived in the faith of God’s re-creative love is one of joy. This is why some theologians [one such theologian is Juergen Moltmann—see his **Christianity—A Religion of Joy**] have named the **Old Testament** ‘The Book of Joy.’ They have done so because God Himself is joy—joy in knowing that Israel is forgiven and that they are now the New Israel, by grace alone. God Himself says (**verse 19**) ‘I will rejoice *in* Jerusalem, and be glad *in* My people’...If this is how God feels about His people, then we are meant to do so also, that is, experience joy in the people who are our neighbors.” (Pp. 98-9)

The student should keep these differing viewpoints in mind while seeking to understand Isaiah’s text concerning the new heavens and new earth.

<sup>97</sup>Oswalt holds that this opening phrase of **verse 17** “introduces a substantiating statement for everything from **56:1** onward...Isaiah is further developing his original thought as he introduces this final section. If deliverance from Babylon would be the kind of new thing that only the Creator could do, so also only that Creator Who spoke creation into existence in the first place has the power to create new heavens and a

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<sup>97</sup>(...continued)

new earth, where sin and its works have no more dominion over us...The *former* world will be forgotten...Everything associated with the old world will be forgotten. All the ways in which sin has stamped this world with its own deformed image will be wiped away, not only from reality but even from memory (compare **Revelation 21:4**). They will not even come to mind.” (Pp. 655-57)

But Oswalt is reading his Christian ideas into this text—not everything associated with the old world will be forgotten—for sin will still be in this new heavens and earth, and so will death.

We take the phrase to mean, Don't focus your attention on the troubles that surround you, but focus your eyes on Me, YHWH God, and the future that is coming through My on-going Self-revelation and creative activity in the present! Is this not a God of new cities, new religious-sites, new beginnings? Is this not a challenge to modern church-planters, encouraging them to break with old models, to be open to completely new beginnings, trusting YHWH God to be actively creating in their midst?

Watts comments that “The limits of this episode are marked by the exclamatory פִּי־הַנְּנִי, ‘Indeed, look at Me!’ in **verse 17** which introduces a change of mood and pace as the scene turns to a description of Yahweh’s new world for His new city. It continues through **66:5** where the radical newness of the city is contrasted with the opponents who will be ‘shamed’ when the new city becomes reality.” (P. 351)

<sup>98</sup>The qal active masculine singular present participle בּוֹרֵא, “creating,” means that the Divine creation did not end with the 7-day creation story of **Genesis 1:1-2:3**. No, YHWH God is still busy, still creating, in spite of the claims of some that all creative activity of God ended with the seventh-day rest of YHWH God in that story.

**Rahfs** omits any mention of “creating,” and translates by “For the heaven will be new, and the earth new...” All of the other ancient versions have “creating” like the Hebrew text. In **verse 18**, **Rahfs** again omits the two references to “creating.”

For occurrences of the verb בָּרָא, **bara**), “create,” in the **Hebrew Bible**, see end-note 11.

Study of all these passages leads the reader to recognize YHWH God as the initial Creator of heaven and earth, but also as the God Who is continually creating in human history—through all human births, and through the evolution / growth of new, wondrous creations never known before, including calling new bodies of people to belong to Him. He creates not only the good and the light, but also the evil and the darkness; and He is creating a glorious future for His people, including bringing “new birth” to individuals and cities as well. What a powerful Creator is being depicted!

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<sup>98</sup>(...continued)

The teaching of the **New Testament** adds to all this that there is a “new creation” in Jesus Christ—which fits hand-in-glove with this view of on-going, continuous creation in the **Hebrew Bible**.

Achtemeier notes that this is a qal active participle, “signifying that Yahweh is already beginning His new creation [that is, centuries before the coming of Jesus Christ] and that it is a continuous process within Israel’s historical life.” (P. 133) See our footnote on **66:22**, for **Isaiah’s** statement that the new heavens and new earth “are standing” before YHWH, i.e., as present realities, not only as something in the future.

She states that “What follows in the oracle deals with Jerusalem and houses and gardens and child-birth and prayer, and...is looking forward to a transformation that will take place [or that is taking place] within the sphere of its historical circumstances.” (P. 133)

That is, **Third Isaiah’s** vision of the new heavens and new earth does not depict some future, other-worldly hoped for reality, but this same earth, being re-created, radically transformed for the better.

<sup>99</sup>Watts comments that the adjective שְׁחֻרְחֻרְחֻ “may mean several different things. It may be temporal in describing something that has never existed before and therefore is unknown to this time. It may distinguish what is different from what has already existed. Or it may mean ‘to be fresh, pure, young...or sharp, polished, bright’...The word is contrasted here with הַרְאִשִּׁנֹּת, ‘the first (or ‘former’) things,’ which is already familiar from earlier uses in **Isaiah**.” (P. 353)

For occurrences of שְׁחֻרְחֻרְחֻ, “new” in **Isaiah**, see end-note 12.

For occurrences of הַרְאִשִּׁנֹּת, in both singular and plural in **Isaiah**, see end-note 13.

Watts holds that here the reference is to “the new order that is being created is (like **chapter 45**) the one in which Persia holds sway over the entire area so that Jerusalem can be rebuilt...’The first things’ are the past kingdoms of Israel under curse and judgment that were pictured in **chapters 1-39**...These are to be eliminated from memory and attention. This command is understandable, but the vision [of **Isaiah**] will show that this was not totally possible with contemporary rebels reviving dreams of the past in their current paganism and rebellion.” (Pp. 353-54)

**Chapter 45** certainly foretells the coming of Cyrus, YHWH’s “messiah,” who will enable both the release of the Babylonian captives and the rebuilding of the temple, but the word “new” does not occur in **chapter 45**.

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<sup>99</sup>(...continued)

What do you think? What are the “former things,” and what do the “new heavens and new earth” refer to? Do you agree with Watts that it means the new administration of Palestine by Persia instead of the Babylonians? During the time of Persian control of Palestine, did the average life-span of the Israelites increase to over 100 years? Is there any indication that it increased at all? Did hostility between the animals no longer occur? Our answer is no—the Persian rule was not such a “new creation.” The Jews returned to Jerusalem, but it was hardly the “new Jerusalem” which Isaiah describes here.

What then does **Isaiah’s** vision mean? Is it talking about a “heavenly” future beyond this earth, and this life? Hardly—since surely such a hoped for future involves more than a 100-year-long life span, and does not involve building houses and planting crops. What do you think?

One thing is sure. **Isaiah’s** vision of the future is rooted in faith in God the Creator, Whose creative work is not finished, but which is continuing—today, in the here and now. And its vision is filled with hope, for the “good days coming.” What do you think? Do you believe in such a God?

<sup>100</sup>For the phrase “new heavens and a new earth,” see: **Isaiah 65:17** (here); **66:22**; **2 Peter 3:13** and **Revelation 21:1**.

Watts holds that “The *new heavens* may well represent the new order [he means the Persian Empire under Cyrus], Divinely instituted, which **chapters 40-66** have revealed and in which the Persian Empire has Yahweh’s sanction and Israel is called to be a worshiping and a pilgrim people with Jerusalem as its focus.” (P. 354)

Do you agree with Watts? And if so, how do you explain the obvious fact that life-expectancy did not increase dramatically in the new Jerusalem, and the carnivorous animals did not become vegetarians? Is Isaiah only using this language metaphorically, and his prediction is not to be taken literally? Or was he simply mistaken in his prediction?

There can be no doubt that **Isaiah’s** vision of the future involves not just hope for Israel, but hope for all humanity; and the vision involves world-wide mission with the message of YHWH God’s glorious radiance. We think interpretation of **Isaiah** should point forward to the coming of Jesus Christ, and His new creation of the church—His followers—whose lives are radically changed for the good. As the early “church fathers” understood **Isaiah**, it is in a real sense “a fifth gospel,” pointing forward to a wondrous future, and we who believe in Jesus Christ can see all manner of ways in which the message of **Isaiah** is fulfilled in Him, in ways much greater than any fulfillment in Cyrus and the Persian empire in the post-exilic period of Jewish history.

But if it means the new creation through Jesus Christ and His church, how does the centrality of Jerusalem in Isaiah’s vision correspond with the Christian fulfillment? Is

(continued...)

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<sup>100</sup>(...continued)

the world-wide church of Jesus Christ called to return to Jerusalem in the land of Israel monthly and weekly in observance of Israel's new moon celebrations and seventh-day sabbaths (**66:23**)? And has Jesus Christ transformed the nature of carnivorous animals into vegetarian animals?

Or has the **New Testament** transformed the literal City of Jerusalem into a lifted-up "heavenly Jerusalem," which Christian believers have already come to and live in, no matter their geographical location on earth? See **Hebrews 12:22-24**,

- 22 But rather, you (plural) have come (to) Zion mountain,  
and (to) a city of (the) living God,  
(to) (the) heavenly Jerusalem,  
and to myriads / tens of thousands of angels / messengers in festal  
gathering,
- 23 and to an assembly of first-born ones, having been enrolled in (the) heavens,  
and to a Judge, to (the) God of all things,  
and to (the) spirits of righteous persons, having been made complete.

The author of the **Book of Hebrews** knows well the many problems and disappointments surrounding the congregation(s) to whom he writes, just as does **Third Isaiah**. But still he sees them as already living in the heavenly Jerusalem—and we wonder, has he been influenced by the reading of **Second** and **Third Isaiah**? We think this may well have been the case. What do you think? Is this a form of "realized eschatology"? In spite of our many criticisms of the **Book of Hebrews** in its treatment of the **Hebrew Bible**—for which, see our end-note 16—we think its view of the "heavenly Jerusalem" is profoundly true to these latter two sections of the Book of Isaiah.

<sup>101</sup>Watts translates by "creating a new heaven and a new land" (p. 349), and in fact the noun אֶרֶץ, **erets**, is ambiguous, sometimes meaning "earth," and oftentimes meaning "land" (especially "Land of Israel"). However, when the contrast is between "heavens and אֶרֶץ," it seems obvious that the translation should be "heavens and earth," just as in **Genesis 1:1**.

But when the depiction of the "new earth" is given here in **Isaiah 65**, it is Jerusalem in the Land of Israel that is described. Of course, if the entire earth is "new," that would include Jerusalem and Israel. What do you think?

Watts understands "the land" to refer to Palestine. "*Creating it new* may refer to regaining agricultural fertility (**27:2-5** [but see **verse 6**—does it not imply a spiritual kind of fruitfulness?]; **35:1-2**; **41:18-20**; **43:19-21**; **44:3-4** [certainly including spiritual fertility!]; **49:9-10**; **55:[12]-13**; **62:8-9**; **65:9-10**)...

(continued...)

and the former things<sup>102, 15</sup> will not be remembered,<sup>103, 16</sup>  
and they will not come up on heart(s).<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup>(...continued)

“Or it may refer to a new political and social reality under the [Persian] empire. The land, which in **chapter 24** stood under the curse of blood and death, is now recreated for blessing and joy as Yahweh’s proclamation in **26:19** decreed. But this is not an eschatological picture of the distant future. It portrays the goal of Yahweh’s plans as they are fulfilled in these chapters. Jerusalem is being rebuilt and made ready for the pilgrims who come throughout the following centuries.” (P. 354)

Motyer comments that the “*Heavens* and *earth* represent the totality of things, as **Genesis 1:1**.” (P. 529) This is true, and it would seem that **Isaiah** is going on to describe a completely new creation, such as that in **Genesis 1:1-2:3**, but that is not the case. The new heavens and new earth” that **Isaiah** describes are this same heavens and earth, with Jerusalem decidedly improved over its former condition—but not a “heavenly Jerusalem” such as is described in the **New Testament Books of Hebrews (12:22-24)** and **Revelation (chapters 21-22)**.

<sup>102</sup>See footnote 102 and end-note 15 for this feminine plural definite noun הַרְאִשֹׁנֹת, “the first things,” or “the former things.” Watts translated by “the first,” without any indication of the plural noun in the original phrase.

Motyer comments that “*Former things* picks up the reference to ‘former troubles’ in **verse 16** but expresses a ‘grander’ conception; not only its sorrows but everything about the old order will be gone in this total renewal.” (P. 529)

We think that this is wishful thinking on Motyer’s part. The new Jerusalem which is described here is the same city as the old Jerusalem—with vast improvement, but still filled with death (after a century of life) and with a graveyard and publicly-viewed crematorium outside its gates.

What do you think? Do you agree with Motyer?

<sup>103</sup>For occurrences of the verb זָכַר, “to remember” in **Isaiah**, see our end-note 14. Here, just as with “former things,” there are things to be remembered, and things that should not be remember-ed, according to the teaching of **Isaiah**.

<sup>104</sup>The previous statement, in the last two lines of **verse 16**, is “For the former troubles will be forgotten, and because they are hidden from My eyes.” Here, the statement is similar, but varied: “and the former things will not be remembered--which means the same things as ‘will be forgotten’--and they will not come up on heart(s)--which changes the subject from YHWH’s eyes to human hearts, meaning that not only will YHWH not see them any longer, but neither will the people even think of them again!

(continued...)



65.18 כִּי־אִם־שִׂישׁוּ וְגִילוּ עַד־עֵד

אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי בּוֹרֵא

כִּי הִנְנִי בּוֹרֵא אֶת־יְרוּשָׁלַם גְּלִיָּה

וְעֵמָה מְשׁוֹשׁ:

But rather,<sup>105</sup> rejoice and be glad<sup>106</sup> until, until—<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup>(...continued)

Something new and glorious is happening, in the light of which all former troubles will disappear and be forgotten--while the great truths of Israel's faith, rooted in the past, will be remembered!

<sup>105</sup>The phrase כִּי־אִם, which we take to mean “but rather” (see **Brown-Driver-Briggs**, p. 475), is translated by the Greek as ἀλλ', the adversative particle which means “on the contrary,” “but rather.” The contrast is with remembering the troubles and sad experiences of the past. In their place, by sharp contrast, will be the joyous happiness of the future that YHWH is creating.

Motyer comments that “The awareness will be of a total newness without anything even prompting a recollection of what used to be. The Divine forgetfulness of **verse 16** will be matched by general amnesia.” (P. 529)

Oswalt comments on **verse 18** that “In place of (*But rather*) the sorrow and shame that sin has brought into the world in so many ways, God tells His people to *rejoice and be glad* on account of what He is about to create. The imperatives suggest that the rejoicing is to begin at once because of the imminence of God's actions and that it will go on *forever* because of the permanence of the results.” (P. 657)

<sup>106</sup>For passages in the **Hebrew Bible** in which these two verbs שִׂישׁוּ וְגִילוּ, occur, see:

**Isaiah 35:1**, In the good times coming, The desert and the parched land will be glad, the wilderness will rejoice and blossom...it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy;

**Isaiah 61:10, 10**, I delight greatly in YHWH; my innermost being rejoices in my God;

**Isaiah 65:18, 18, 19**, here, rejoice and be glad for what YHWH is creating;

**Zephaniah 3:17**, YHWH will take great delight in you...He will rejoice over you with singing.

(continued...)

because I am creating;<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup>(...continued)

The two verbs in Hebrew, שִׂישׂוּ וְגִילוּ, are both qal imperative, masculine plural, “Rejoice!” and “Be glad!” **Rahfs** has “but rather, gladness and rejoicing they will find in it / her.” Watts translates by “they rejoice and find continuing gladness,” reflecting neither the Hebrew text nor the Greek. (P. 349) 1QIs<sup>a</sup> has שִׂישׂ וְגִיל, “a joy and a gladness.”

<sup>107</sup>The unique phrase עַד־עַד repeats the same word twice, the first time in its poetic form, and the latter in its ordinary form--both of which mean “until,” and so the phrase means literally “as far as, as far as,” or “until, until.” English translations usually have “forever,” but this is reading a philosophical concept into the ancient Hebrew phrase that is not genuinely contained in it.

The phrase occurs in the **Hebrew Bible** at:

**Psalms 83:18, verse 17** in English; may YHWH’s enemies be ashamed and dismayed as far as, as far as!;

**Psalms 92:8<sup>Heb</sup> / 7<sup>Eng</sup>**, though the wicked spring up like grass and all evildoers flourish, they will be destroyed as far as, as far as;

**Psalms 132:12**, if David’s sons keep YHWH’s covenant, they will sit on his throne as far as, as far as;

**Psalms 132:14**, Zion is YHWH resting-place as far as, as far as;

**Isaiah 26:4**, trust in YHWH as far as, as far as;

**Isaiah 65:18**, here; Israel is to rejoice as far as, as far as.

We take the phrase as emphasizing “continually,” “into the distant future.”

<sup>108</sup>Why should YHWH’s chosen people be glad and rejoice? Because they have come to know that YHWH “is actively creating”—and that means, the God Who created a completely good universe (**Genesis 1:1-2:3**) is continuing His creative work, and faith in YHWH tells believers that YHWH’s future will be truly “good” for His people!. His people can entrust their futures into His creative power, which includes evil and death within its grasp!

They may not be able, indeed they are not able to fill in the details of what that future holds (for even the prophets / spokespersons see through a mirror darkly, in enigmas—see **Numbers 12:6-8** and **1 Corinthians 13:9-12**), but they can rejoice in its hope nonetheless!

because look at Me—creating Jerusalem a gladness,<sup>109</sup>  
and her<sup>110</sup> people a rejoicing.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup>It isn't just that YHWH "is creating" in a general way. Very specifically, YHWH is creating Jerusalem, the city at the heart of Israel. The old city is being given a face-lift, a complete "once-over." YHWH is at work in her midst, re-creating the city chosen by Him to be the place of His worship! In the place of her suffering and sadness (see especially **Lamentations!**) will come a city of gladness, where sorrow and sadness are forgotten.

What do you think? Do you believe in such a God as this—a God of city-renewal, of urban redevelopment, who wants and enables His people to live to at least a hundred years old in cities made more liveable and enjoyable?

<sup>110</sup>Where our Hebrew text has וְעַמָּהּ, "and her people," **Rahlfs** has "and the people of Mine." Oswalt states that "With the double accusatives...God says that He is creating Jerusalem as *gladness*, and her people as *joy*...

"Many commentators...point out that the reference to Jerusalem, and then to birth and death and building and planting in the succeeding verses, show that this is really not a new heaven and earth, but only a transformed one...[But Oswalt concludes that] It does not seem appropriate to ask of such a picture [of the as yet unseen future] whether it is a truly new Jerusalem or just a transformed one. It will be a Jerusalem whose very nature is gladness. That will be enough." (P. 657) But this is little more than an attempt to side-step the question. If the very nature of the new Jerusalem is gladness, how can there be sin and death there?

<sup>111</sup>Not only the City of Jerusalem, but Jerusalem's people—they too are the objects of YHWH's creativity—they too will become a people of rejoicing, with their mourning over, their sadness gone! Here the two root-words, שׂוּשׁ, "to rejoice" and גִּיל, "to exult," occur again, only here in the reverse order, and in the form of nouns, גִּילָה, "rejoicing," and מְשׂוּשׁ, "exultation."

Watts comments on **verse 18** that "The new creation is intended to be enjoyed. This contrasts with the sadness of **chapters 1-39** [but this is overstatement. There is sadness in those chapters, but there is also rejoicing—see **9:3; 25:9; 35:1-2, 10**]. The building of *Jerusalem*, the focal point of God's creative action is intended to be a *rejoicing*. *Her people* are to become a *joy* in themselves and for Yahweh's scattered people everywhere." (P. 354)

Alexander states that in **verse 18** "the creation is declared to be the making of Jerusalem a joy and Israel a rejoicing. Now the whole analogy of the foregoing prophecies leads to the conclusion that this means the exaltation of the church or chosen people; and the same analogy admits of that exaltation being represented as a revolution in

(continued...)

65.19 וְגִלְתִּי בִירוּשָׁלַם

וְשָׁשְׁתִּי בְעַמִּי

וְלֹא-יִשְׁמַע בָּהּ עוֹד קוֹל בְּכִי

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<sup>111</sup>(...continued)

the frame of nature. On the other hand, a literal prediction of new heavens and new earth would scarcely have been followed by a reference merely to the church; and if Jerusalem and Zion be explained to mean the literal Jerusalem and the restored Jews, the only alternative is then to conclude that as soon as they return to Palestine, it and the whole earth are to be renewed, or else that what relates to Jerusalem and Israel is literal, and what relates to the heavens and the earth metaphorical, although...the connection of the verses renders it necessary to regard the two events as one...

“From all these incongruities we are relieved by understanding the whole passage as a poetical description of a complete and glorious change.” (Pp. 452-53) We think Alexander, like Oswalt, is side-stepping the question by saying the description is poetical. What do you think?

Achtemeier comments on **verses 15-18** that “Yahweh’s servants will be given a new name (compare **56:5; 58:12; 61:3, 6; 62:2, 4**). Earlier the new name was offered to the community as a whole; now it becomes the appellation of Yahweh’s servants alone. But a new name implies a new character, a change in one’s very being, and that is the emphasis here...Indeed, the former troubles—that is, the idolatry and the injustices practiced by the unfaithful— will be totally don away and forgotten. Evil will be no more.

“This thoroughgoing transformation is characterized in **verse 17** as Yahweh’s creation of new heavens and a new earth. Once again this is a prophecy totally new in **Old Testament** history, and the verse has caused much debate. Is this the beginning of apocalypticism in the prophetic movement? That is, has the present age come to be seen as so evil that Yahweh can only do away with it by a totally new creation? Or is this simply a metaphor for Yahweh’s thoroughgoing transformation of Israel’s continuing history?...

“It cannot be denied that **Third-Isaiah** says nothing about how this transformation will come about. Gone are any connections with the historical movements of nations. Yahweh alone is the actor on the scene. The new era of salvation comes solely by His creative power. Nevertheless, what follows in the oracle deals with Jerusalem and houses and gardens and child-birth and prayer—transformation that will take place within the sphere of its historical circumstances. The door to apocalypticism has been opened only a crack here, though later writers seized upon this passage to fling the door wide open.” (Pp. 132-33)

Among those later writers, she names **2 Peter 3:11-13** and **Revelation 21:1**.

## וְקוֹל זַעֲקָהּ:

And I will be glad in Jerusalem,<sup>112, 17</sup>

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<sup>112</sup>Not only will the people of YHWH rejoice in Jerusalem, but YHWH Himself will rejoice in His transformed city!

Oswalt asks, “Why will God take joy in us? Because tears and cries of distress, those works of sin...will be forever gone...From **Genesis 3** onward, He has been working toward this day, a day when what was marred in creation will be fully restored...The figures for these sorrows in the following verses are taken from the pages of every person’s experience of this fallen world: untimely death, futile work, impermanence and upheaval, children born to tragedy. Someday all that will change, and God rejoices for us that it is coming.” (P. 658)

If this is so, why then the continued existence of sin and death in the new Jerusalem, as is made explicit in the following **verse 20**?

For the picture of the Jerusalem that Isaiah envisions, compare **Zechariah 8:1-8**:

- 1 And YHWH of Armies Word came, saying:
- 2 In this way YHWH of Armies spoke,  
I was jealous for Zion—a great jealousy!  
And (with) great rage I was jealous for her!
- 3 In this way YHWH spoke:  
I (have) returned to Zion!  
And I will dwell in Jerusalem’s midst!  
And Jerusalem will be called City of the True Faithfulness!  
And YHWH of Armies’ mountain (will be called) Mountain of the Set-apartness!
- 4 In this way YHWH of Armies spoke:  
Again elderly men and elderly women will dwell in Jerusalem’s streets,  
and a man / person, (with) his staff / walking cane in his hand, from abundance  
of days / old age;
- 5 and the city’s streets will be filled (with) boys and girls  
playing in its streets.
- 6 In this way YHWH of Armies spoke:  
Because it will be marvelous in (the) eyes of this people’s remnant in  
those days,  
also it will be marvelous in My eyes—  
(it is) a saying of YHWH of Armies!
- 7 In this way YHWH of Armies spoke:  
Look at Me—One saving / delivering My people from an eastern land,  
and from a land of the sun’s setting!

(continued...)

and I will rejoice in My people.<sup>113</sup>

And a voice of crying<sup>114</sup> will not be heard in her again,<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup>(...continued)

8 And I will bring them, and they will dwell in Jerusalem's midst;  
and they will be a people for Me,  
and I will be for them for a God, in true-faithfulness and in righteousness!

Again, as in **Isaiah 65-66**, the future Jerusalem depicted by **Zechariah** is the Jerusalem of this world, but in much better condition than in the past, especially when it was under the judgment of YHWH. People are living longer lives, becoming so old that they have to walk with staffs in their hands. Boys and girls are laughing (and we assume, playing) in the city plazas. It is a far-cry from the new Jerusalem described in **Revelation 21-22**, where there is no more death.

<sup>113</sup>Not only will Jerusalem and her people be filled with gladness and rejoicing, YHWH Himself will rejoice in her and in her people. Here again, the two root-words, שׂוֹשׂ, "to rejoice" and גִּיל, "to exult," occur, only here in the form of verbs, וְגִילֹתִי, "and I will rejoice," and וְשִׂשְׂתִּי, "and I will exult."

Watts comments that "Undoubtedly God's tears had flowed for both the city and His people many times during the previous four centuries. Finally this can be reversed." (P. 354)

What do you think? Do you think YHWH wept over New York City with her fallen Twin Towers? Did He weep over New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina, or after the Gulf of Mexico oil spill? Did He weep over Baghdad, Iraq, or Port-au-Prince in Haiti, or over the terrifying earth-quake and tsunami in Japan? And does genuine faith believe that He is creating, re-creating the fallen cities of this world?

Parents know that when their children are happy, and filled with gladness, they themselves are filled with joy too. So with YHWH, the great Father of His people. He wants all His children to live in a "city of gladness," and He wants their hearts to be filled with long-lasting, genuine rejoicing. When that happens—and YHWH is causing it to happen—YHWH too will rejoice! What YHWH commands His people to do, He too will do—because the future He is creating is certain! So, **Third Isaiah** depicts.

Do you believe this? Why? Why not? Does your Christian faith tell you that God does not care for the cities of this world—such as Chicago, or Amsterdam, or Miami, or Los Angeles—that all He cares about is getting people saved out of this world and taken to a heavenly country / home?

<sup>114</sup>For the noun בְּכִי, "(voice of) crying" in the **Hebrew Bible**, see:

(continued...)

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<sup>114</sup>(...continued)

**Deuteronomy 34:8**, a time of crying at the death of Moses;

**Judges 21:2**, the people of Israel cry over the loss of the tribe of Benjamin;

**2 Samuel 13:36**, David and his sons cry over the murder of Amnon;

**2 Kings 20:3; Isaiah 38:3**, King Hezekiah cries over the announcement of his soon-coming death;

**Ezra 3:13**, loud shouts of joy could not be distinguished from the sound of crying;

**Job 16:16**, Job's face is red from crying;

**Psalms 30:6**, crying remains for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning;

**Isaiah 65:19**, here; in the newly created Jerusalem, crying over loss and death, desolating judgment and broken relationship with YHWH, will no longer be present;

**Jeremiah 3:21**, the people of Israel crying because of their perverted ways and their forgetting of YHWH;

**Jeremiah 9:9**, Jeremiah will cry over the desolation coming to his country;

**Jeremiah 31:15**, Rachel crying over the loss of her children;

**Jeremiah 48:5**, the Moabites crying over the destruction that has come upon their country;

**Malachi 2:13**, the people of Judah cry at YHWH's altar, because of His failure to take pleasure in their offerings.

Does the **New Testament** depict Jesus as caring for the earthly City of Jerusalem? Indeed, it does—see **Matthew 23:37; Luke 13:34; 19:41-45; 21:20-24** and **23:38-31**.

<sup>115</sup>The voice of crying has oftentimes been heard in Jerusalem—see for a classic example, **Lamentations**—with its five powerful chapters filled with crying over Jerusalem's destruction. But in the Jerusalem that YHWH is creating, that voice will no longer be heard!

Here, the vision of **Isaiah** closely corresponds to the vision of John in **Revelation 21-22**, where all tears are wiped away (**Revelation 21:4**; compare also **Isaiah 25:6-8**).

(continued...)

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<sup>115</sup>(...continued)

It is a common conviction of the biblical vision of the new heavens and new earth, no matter their differences, that the Creator will stop all crying or tears in them! Compare

**Isaiah 25:8,**

He swallowed the death for the perpetuity!  
And my Lord YHWH will wipe away tear(s) from upon all faces!  
And His people's reproach He will remove from upon all the land / earth!  
Because YHWH said (it)!

**Revelation 7:17,**

Because the little lamb, the one in the midst of the throne, will shepherd them;  
and he will guide them to / upon a spring of life waters;  
and the God will wipe away every tear from their eyes!

Beginning with this statement in **verse 19b**, and continuing through **verse 25**, there is a continuing series of contrasts between the new and the old, between the Jerusalem that was subject to capture and destruction, and the new Jerusalem in which conditions will have totally changed.

Basically, we think, the old world is depicted as a world suffering the curses predicted in **Leviticus 26:14-39** and **Deuteronomy 28:15-44**, a world in which YHWH is not being obeyed.

By contrast, the “new heavens and earth” are depicted as enjoying the blessings promised in **Leviticus 26:3-13** and **Deuteronomy 28:1-15** (and **Isaiah 58:6-12**), a condition that results when YHWH is respected and His Word “trembled before” and obeyed, and His justice is imparted to the oppressed.

In other words, the “new heavens and new earth” are not to be understood chronologically, but spiritually—it is a newness that only comes when YHWH's teaching is fulfilled. Only an obedient Israel can enter into that newness. Likewise, the “old heavens and old earth” are not just some condition of the past, but are what happened and will always happen to a disobedient Israel. That means, just to return from Babylonian captivity will not result in that newness—only full-hearted, humble obedience to the Word of YHWH!

What do you think? Do you agree with this assessment? Would you agree that while Jesus promises newness of life, and “inheritance of the earth” to His disciples (see **Matthew 5:3-12**), such a condition can only result from genuine discipleship to Jesus? Under such an interpretation, the coming of “new heavens and new earth” always remains a possibility—but is always conditioned upon human decision and obedience. How do you understand this biblical teaching?



and a voice of outcry.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>116</sup>The voice of זַעֲקָה, is the voice of “outcry,” “distress” For occurrences of this noun in the **Hebrew Bible** see:

**Genesis 18:20**, the outcry that has risen to YHWH from Sodom and Gomorrah;

**Isaiah 15:5, 8**, the outcry that comes up from Moab over her destruction;

**Isaiah 30:19**, YHWH will hear Zion’s outcry, and come to her aid;

**Isaiah 65:19**, here; the outcry, mentioned in **30:19**, will no longer be heard in the Jerusalem YHWH is creating;

**Jeremiah 18:22**, Jeremiah prays that an outcry will be heard arising from the households that have persecuted him;

**Jeremiah 20:16**, Jeremiah prays that the man who announced his birth will hear an outcry in the morning and in the evening;

**Jeremiah 48:4**, Moab’s little ones will hear an outcry as a result of their country’s destruction,

**Jeremiah 48:34**, the sound of their outcry, joined in by Jeremiah, arises from all over Moab;

**Jeremiah 50:46**, Babylon’s outcry upon her fall will resound throughout the nations;  
**51:54**, similar;

**Ezekiel 27:28**, Tyre’s seamen make an outcry over the fall of their city;

**Proverbs 21:13**, the outcry of the poor, to which some stop their ears;

**Ecclesiastes 9:17**, the outcry of a ruler of fools;

**Esther 4:1**, Mordecai’s outcry over Haman’s plan to destroy the Jews;

**Nehemiah 5:6**, the outcry of returned exiles who are becoming slaves of the wealthy;

**Nehemiah 9:9**, the outcry of Israel at the Sea of Reeds, when Pharaoh was about to destroy them.

Such outcries—over oppression, destruction, persecution of spokespersons, social injustice, genocide, and dishonest treatment, will be a thing of the past in the Jerusalem YHWH is creating— its sound will not be heard again! Such a condition was

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<sup>116</sup>(...continued)

not found in the new Persian rule of Palestine, nor is it found in Christian history—far from it!

Nonetheless, it is a hoped for future that YHWH is creating, and that can become a reality where YHWH's will is trusted and obeyed—or where people genuinely follow Jesus Christ, the Conqueror of death. What do you think?

<sup>117</sup>Motyer comments that “Throughout this passage **Isaiah** uses aspects of present life to create impressions of the life that is yet to come. It will be a life totally provided for (**verse 13**), totally happy (**verse 19cd**), totally secure (**verses 22-23**) and totally at peace (**verses 24-25**)...

“Things we have no real capacity to understand can be expressed only through things we know and experience. So it is that in this present order of things death cuts life off before it has well begun or before it has fully matured. But it will not be so then. No infant will fail to enjoy life nor an elderly person come short of total fulfilment. Indeed, one would be but a youth were one to die aged a hundred! This does not imply that death will still be present (contradicting **25:7-8**), but rather affirms that over the whole of life, as we should now say from infancy to old age, the power of death will be destroyed. He who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed is a possible translation, save that it softens the literal ‘will be accursed.’ ‘But the sinner, a hundred years old, will be accursed’ is a more likely rendering...not least because it matches and prepares for the reference to the serpent in **verse 25c** and also because it provides negative strengthening for the assertion of the Lord’s total delight in the new city (**verse 19ab**)...

“Of course, there will be no sinners in the new Jerusalem (**verses 6-7, 12, 15c**). Once more metaphor is being used, but the reality is that even if, *per impossible*, a sinner were to escape detection for a century the curse would still search him out and destroy him. Thus **verse 20** expresses a double thought: death will have no more power and sin no more presence.” (P. 530)

However, we think this is wishful thinking, rather than solid exegesis. Motyer assumes that there can be no contradiction in the prophetic vision, and because **Isaiah 25:7-8** envisions the overcoming of death, this present passage cannot possibly mean it when it says people will not die until they have passed the century mark. This present vision depicts the possibility of the continuing existence of some sinners in the new Jerusalem, but Motyer’s wooden interpretation has to say this is only metaphor, because it is impossible that sin can be present there.

What this reveals is that Motyer has not come to this text to learn what it says the new Jerusalem will be like. Rather, he has brought his conviction concerning the nature of the new Jerusalem with him to this text, and holds that whatever contradicts that

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<sup>117</sup>(...continued)

conviction must be metaphor, or explained away, joining in the style of Alexander and Oswalt.

We think it is much better exegesis, to acknowledge the limitations of the prophetic vision (as is described in **Numbers 12:7-8** and **1 Corinthians 13:9-12**) and not expect biblical visions to be perfectly clear and without contradictions—but rather, to expect them to be filled with enigmas, seeming contradictions and inconsistencies.

What do you think? How much confidence do you think the believer should place in biblical predictions of the future? Do you think this prediction by **Third Isaiah** of new heavens and new earth, and a renewed Jerusalem came to pass for the returnees from Babylon? Has it ever come to pass in the history of Jerusalem? And if it is fulfilled in the new heavens and new earth and new Jerusalem of Christian teaching, how is it that sinners and death still remain in that city?

We hold that the text of **Isaiah** is not depicting a Jerusalem where there is no longer any death, nor a Jerusalem where is no more sinfulness, as Motyer claims.

Do you agree? Do you think it is fair interpretation of this passage to force it to conform to John's vision in **Revelation 21-22**?

Knight comments that "God is offering here and now, not the immortality of the soul (a Greek and Hindu concept), but a life knowing full satisfaction." (P. 100) Do you agree with Motyer, or with Knight?

Knight entitles **verses 20-25** "Eschatology," and comments that "This strophe offers us a case of 'realized eschatology.' It gives a picture of what God is actually creating now, and which arises and goes on arising out of all our 'nows.' We can understand this term best by employing our modern terms 'sacrament' and 'sacramental' to explain it. The idea of a child living to be 'a hundred years old' pictures the totally fulfilled life, one without tragedy or pain, in the same sense as **John 10:10**,

The thief does not come except in order that he might steal and murder and destroy.  
I, I came in order that they may have life, and may have (it in) abundance!

It tells us that life here and now has potentially total meaning. That is one side of the coin, the side we can see with our eyes. Its other side, however, is what we cannot see, that is the totally fulfilled life in eternity [but where is this said in the text?]...

"The phrase 'they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit' describes the joy of a fulfilled vocation, of seeing the fruits of one's labors (compare **53:11**), of discovering that ordinary daily life has ultimate significance...God is offering here and now, not the immortality of the soul (a Greek and Hindu concept), but a life knowing full satisfaction.

(continued...)

וְזָקֵן אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יִמְלֵא אֶת-יָמָיו  
כִּי הַנֶּעַר בֶּן-מֵאָה שָׁנָה יָמוּת  
וְתִחְוֶטָא בֶּן-מֵאָה שָׁנָה יִקְלָל:

There will not again be from there<sup>118</sup> a sucking child (who lives only a few) days,<sup>119</sup>

<sup>117</sup>(...continued)

God offers life lived in all the fullness of His grace, a life that is nourished by prayer and by fellowship with God at all times (**65:24** [‘And it will be, before they will call—and I, I will answer; while they are still speaking—and I, I will hear]), and increasingly so in eternity...

“Here we find no trace of what the secularist today calls ‘pie in the sky,’ of a heaven to which individual souls are transmitted as they are plucked out of an evil world or released from the weight of their human bodies. The biblical heaven is social, where all are in fellowship both with God and with one another, and a heaven where matter matters!...

“Entrance to this heaven that Trito-Isaiah looks for comes about only through an act of God. That act is His act of forgiveness. ‘Before they call I will answer,’ for God’s grace is prevenient grace. ‘The lion shall eat straw like the ox,’ for the ‘world’ too will have been redeemed, and not merely the souls of people. And so the two-sided dream of Isaiah will have been realized when all nations will flow up to the house of the Lord, to be found on the highest of the mountains (Isaiah 2:1-5), and the ‘earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea’ (Isaiah 11:9).” (Pp. 96-100)

Ackerman comments on **verses 20–24** that “The Jerusalem of the new creation will be like a new Eden, its inhabitants blessed with long life, abundant food, and closeness in their relationship with God. This idea is adumbrated [represented in outline] in... **Isaiah 51:3** but greatly elaborated upon here, also in **66:6-16**.” (P. 1047)

We doubt that this is **Third Isaiah’s** intention. In Eden originally there was no death, but here in **Third Isaiah’s** new Jerusalem the life-span is only a little beyond one hundred years. In Eden there was no sin (originally), but here in Isaiah’s new Jerusalem there are sinners. Not a word is said in **Genesis** concerning Eden’s animals being vegetarians. **Isaiah 51:3** mentions Zion’s desert-land becoming like Eden, but **Third Isaiah** has nothing relating to Eden. What do you think?

<sup>118</sup>Where our Hebrew text has מִשָּׁם, “from there,” **Rahfs** has ἐκεῖ, “there,” as does the Latin Vulgate. 1QIs<sup>a</sup> and 1QIs<sup>b</sup> and the Aramaic Targum all read as does our Hebrew text. The Syriac translation has “in her.”

(continued...)

and an old man who will not fulfill his days.<sup>120</sup>

Because the youth will die at a hundred year(s) old,<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>118</sup>(...continued)

Alexander translates the adverbial phrase מִשָּׁם by “from there,” or as **King James** has it, “thence,” and holds that this is necessary to the sense, meaning “taken away thence,” or as Kimchi has it, “carried thence to burial.” “It is thus equivalent to יָמוּת, ‘will die’ in the next clause, and denote that none shall die there in infancy.” (P. 453) Based on this, Alexander holds that in the New Jerusalem being described, there will be no infant mortality.

Alexander concludes that **verses 16-19** mean that “Premature death, and even death in a moderate old age, shall be unknown; he who dies a hundred years old shall be considered either as dying in childhood, or as cut off by a special malediction [curse]. The whole is a highly poetical description of longevity, to be explained precisely like the promise of new heavens and new earth in **verse 17**.” (P. 454)

<sup>119</sup>What is meant by עוֹלָם יָמֵי, literally “a sucking child of days”? **Brown-Driver-Briggs** states that this means a child “a few days old.” Does that imply that the child being described dies shortly after birth, and does not reach adulthood? The meaning becomes somewhat clearer in the third line of this verse: “the youth will die at a hundred years’ old.” We translate by “a sucking child (who lives only a few days,” assuming that Isaiah means there will be no more infant deaths, but all children will grow into maturity and advanced age. What do you think?

Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley, **Hebrew Grammar # 139h** states that “The simple plural of words denoting time sometimes includes also the idea of *a few, some*; thus יָמִים *a few days*, **Genesis 24:55, 40:4** (here even of a longer period, = *for some time*); **Isaiah 65:20**.”

<sup>120</sup>The phrase זָקֵן אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יִמְלֵא אֶת־יָמָיו, “an old man who will not fulfill his days,” means an elderly man who dies before reaching the “full measure” of his days, i.e., who dies prematurely. This understanding becomes fairly certain in the light of the fourth line, “and the one who misses a hundred years will be (considered) accursed.”

<sup>121</sup>Where our Hebrew text has כִּי תִנְעַר בֶּן־מֵאָה שָׁנָה יָמוּת, “because the young man will die a son of a hundred year(s),” **Rahlf's** has “for the young man will be a hundred years (of age),” omitting the mention of death.

This is the opposite of a child that dies a few days old in line one of this verse. Achtemeier translates by “For the child will not die for a hundred years.” (Pp. 127-28)

(continued...)

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<sup>121</sup>(...continued)

Wolf / Stek comment that this “hundred years” is “comparable to the longevity of Adam and his early descendants” as described in **Genesis 5**. (P. 1112) But this is nonsense—Adam is depicted there as living 930 years, Seth 912 years, Enosh 905 years, etc. etc.!

In the “new heavens and new earth” that **Isaiah** envisions, death still remains, even though with exceptions, and there is only death after the age of one hundred years. And, as **Isaiah 66:23** shows, there is a cemetery and crematorium just outside Isaiah’s new Jerusalem, with never-dying worms and unquenchable fire consuming the corpses of transgressors, which those coming to worship will witness as they leave the city.

This is in sharp contrast to the vision of John in **Revelation 21:4**, where death is gone forever. In its description of the new Jerusalem in **Revelation 21:9-22:5**, there is no cemetery, but only the trees of life, with leaves for the healing of the nations, and there is no mention of a time-limit on the life of its citizens. There is a lake of fire, which is the “second death” (**21:8**), but nothing is said of anyone witnessing its consumption of transgressors. What do you think? Are **Isaiah** and **Revelation** both envisioning the same “new Jerusalem”?

The fact is, the two visions are not by any means consistent, or identical, and are in some ways enigmatic and contradictory. Should that fact shock us, if we are believers? We think not—it should only remind us of the truth of how limited and enigmatic the prophetic visions of both Jewish and Christian prophets are!

Oswalt notes that “If biblical scholars of past centuries have tended to gloss over differences among biblical passages in the interests of promoting the unity of the **Bible**, that tendency has been more than replaced by the modern proclivity [inclination, predisposition] for driving wedges between biblical passages in the interests of showing that there is no unity of thought whatsoever. So here, there is no fundamental contradiction between this passage and ones like **Isaiah 25:5-6** [no more death] and **Isaiah 26:18-19** [resurrection from death].” (P. 658)

We think such a statement is unfair. Biblical scholars that we have known are more than willing to admit unity of thought in the **Bible**, when it is genuinely present; but are unafraid to point out differences and lack of unity of thought when it occurs—as it does here!

One thing unites the two visions of **Isaiah** and **Revelation**--it is the conviction that YHWH is creating a wonderful future for His people. And while the prophets are not able to accurately envision or depict the details of that future, which essentially remains veiled in mystery, their powerful visions encourage the believer to reach out to the future in trusting hope!

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and the one who misses<sup>122</sup> a hundred year(s) will be (considered) accursed.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup>(...continued)

What do you think? Will you join with the cynical (like Art Linkletter) who, because we do not know exactly what the future holds, or what heaven will be like, simply dismiss the entire biblical vision of hope as an illusion, with which we will not be concerned? That may be fairly easy for the healthy young person to do, but when death comes knocking at our family door, and we come face to face with our own mortality and weakness, such a vision takes on much more importance, especially when we are burying or cremating our dearest loved ones, or when our nation has been devastated by conquering armies or radical jihadists.

<sup>122</sup>The Hebrew text reads **וַיַּחֲזֹטָא**, literally “and the one missing-the-mark,” usually meaning “the misser-of-the-mark,” the “transgressor,” or “the sinner.” But here the noun is used in its original sense of failure to hit a target—the target here being a full life-time of a hundred years. As Watts notes, “It is more effective to simply translate **וַיַּחֲזֹטָא**, ‘sinner,’ as ‘one who fails.’” (P. 351)

Oswalt holds that two meanings are possible. “One is that even though a sinning person should experience the blessing of a very long life (one hundred years), he or she would still be under a curse...The second possibility seems to fit better...One hundred years would be short life, and the sinner would be cursed by living for only one hundred years.” (P. 659)

<sup>123</sup>We take the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular, pual imperfect verb **יִקְלָל**, “will be cursed,” to mean that anyone failing to live to a hundred years of age will be considered to have been “cursed” by YHWH, or must have in fact been so “cursed.” Living to a hundred years of age is the opposite of the phrase “not fulfilling one’s days” in the second line.

Westermann comments on **verse 20** that “In the **Old Testament** life is fulfilled life. But only if it is not cut off prematurely is it such. Thus long life, life lived to the end, is to be every-one’s in the era of salvation [but where has Westermann found this phrase in the text, ‘era of salvation’?]....Unlike **Isaiah 25:8**, even in the era of salvation death still remains. It is only premature death, death that cuts off in the midst of the years or at the beginning, that is no more.” (P. 409)

We both agree and disagree with Westermann at this point. Here in **Third Isaiah’s** vision, life is fulfilled life—as Westermann has stated. But **Isaiah 25:8** is also part of the **Hebrew Bible** (the “Old Testament”), and of **Isaiah’s** vision. Its voice too must be heard, when it tells us that in YHWH’s future death will be “swallowed up forever.” We must not forget the stories of Enoch and Elijah who were “taken” by YHWH, nor the beautiful convictions expressed in **Psalms 49:15** and **73:23-26** (etc.).

What do you think? Did you expect the biblical visions to be unanimous, without inconsistencies, even contradictions?

(continued...)

<sup>123</sup>(...continued)

See a similar situation in Paul's predictions of the future, contrasting his statements in **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18** with his statements in **2 Corinthians 4:16-5:10**, and the resulting conflicting church doctrines of "soul-sleeping" (those who have died "sleep" until the coming of Christ), over against the doctrine of immediate immortality (the swallowing up of death, the putting on of the heavenly body) whenever death occurs. Is Paul contradicting himself? One thing is sure: Paul, and Christian believers, have unyielding confidence and hope in the face of death, even though death is still a mystery for them, and their predictions of exactly when and what are inexact and inaccurate. What do you think?

<sup>124</sup>Westermann comments on **verses 21-22** that "There is to be no more work that is vain and pointless...[It is] perfectly clear that the era of salvation [we say, 'the hope of believers'] as here envisaged is in no sense thought of as lying beyond space and time. It remains within the limitations imposed by existence in history, part of which is work. This work was just of the kind with which the speaker's own circumstances had made him familiar, building houses, sowing fields and planting vineyards, and tending these. The only difference now is that the worker is assured of the fruits of his labor. This is the voice of experience, of ordinary experience of men living under enemy occupation." (P. 410)

Slotki states that **verses 21-23** teach that the longevity of those living in the new Jerusalem "will enable each of them to enjoy the fruit of his labor." (P. 318)

Alexander comments on **verses 21-22** that they contain "a promise of security and permanent enjoyment, clothed in expressions drawn from the promises and threatenings of the Mosaic law...The figures here used...make it still more probable that in the whole foregoing context the predictions are to be figuratively understood." (P. 454)

Oswalt comments on these two verses that "One of the curses for breaking the covenant was that a person would never get to enjoy the fruits of his or her labor. One would build a house, but someone else would get to live in it [just as the Jews under Joshua did to the Canaanites!]; one would plant a vineyard, but someone else would eat the fruit of it...By contrast, covenant obedience would result in the opposite of these conditions coming true (**Deuteronomy 28:1-14**). And that is the picture here." (P. 659)

The biblical vision of the future does not exclude work—it does not see work itself as a curse. Only work that is unfulfilled, that accomplishes nothing is lacking in Isaiah's picture.

Some have criticized Christian hope, claiming that it is a picture of spiritual beings floating on clouds, playing harps throughout eternity, as being "boring"—"I'm not interested in that!" But here, in Isaiah's vision, there is plenty to do, there is work to be accomplished—work that achieves its goals, the fruits of which can be enjoyed!

(continued...)



וְנִטְעוּ כְרָמִים וְאָכְלוּ פְרִיָם:

And they will build houses, and inhabit (them);<sup>125</sup>

and they will plant vineyards,<sup>126</sup> and they will eat their fruit.<sup>127</sup>

65.22 לֹא יִבְנוּ וְאַחַר יֵשֵׁב

לֹא יִטְעוּ וְאַחַר יֵאָכֵל

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<sup>124</sup>(...continued)

Those who are acquainted with the history of the Jews in eastern Europe, will recognize how dynamically this vision of Isaiah can speak to those who have built buildings, only to see them occupied by others, or who have planted fields, only to see the crops harvested by others. No more of that in the future that YHWH is creating!

<sup>125</sup>In the new Jerusalem envisioned by **Isaiah**, the construction industry will be in full swing. Not only will its citizens build houses, they will be able to live in those houses. Not only will its citizens be able to plant vineyards, they will be able to eat the fruit of their vineyards. This is in sharp contrast to the curse for disobedience pronounced by Moses in **Deuteronomy 28:30** (“You will build a house, but you will not live in it; you shall plant a vineyard, but you shall not enjoy its fruit”); see the entire passage, **28:15-68**. The Mos-aic curse for disobedience will be overcome in this new Jerusalem of **Isaiah’s** vision—not a curse, with premature death, but a blessing with long, fulfilled life!

<sup>126</sup>Motyer comments that “*Vineyards* are the chosen example because they took so long to cultivate and bring into production that they required settled conditions.” (P. 531)

Obviously, Isaiah’s vision of the new Jerusalem is a vision in which the blessings of **Leviticus 26** and **Deuteronomy 28** are being enjoyed, and where the curses of those two chapters are avoided.

<sup>127</sup>Compare **Isaiah 62:8-9**, where it is said that YHWH has sworn, “Never again will I give your grain as food for your enemies, and never again will foreigners drink the new wine for which you have toiled; but those who harvest it will eat it...and those who gather the grapes will drink it...”

This is also related to the curses announced against disobedient Israel in **Leviticus 26:16**, “You will plant seed in vain, because your enemies will eat it,” and **Deuteronomy 28:33**, “a people that you do not know will eat what your land and your labor produce.” Compare **Jeremiah 5:17**. “(a distant nation) will devour your harvests and food...your vines and fig-trees.” Not so, in **Third Isaiah’s** vision of the Jerusalem that is promised the returnees from Babylon!

כִּי־כִימֵי הָעֵץ יָמֵי עַמִּי

וּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵיהֶם יִבְלוּ בַחֲרֵי:

They will not build, and another inhabit (their buildings);

they will not plant, and another eat (their fruit)<sup>128</sup>

Because like the tree's<sup>129</sup> days –My people's days,<sup>130</sup>

and the work of their hands, My chosen ones will use to the full.<sup>131</sup>

65.23 לֹא יִיָּגְעוּ לְרִיק

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<sup>128</sup>The first two lines of **verse 22** are parallel with the two lines of **verse 21**, stating negatively what **verse 21** states positively.

<sup>129</sup>**Rahlfs** has τοῦ ξύλου τῆς ζωῆς, “of the tree of the life,” as does the Aramaic Targum. None of the other ancient versions have this interpolation.

<sup>130</sup>That is, instead of the ordinary 70 to 80 years of an individual's life (as stated in **Psalms 90:10**), their lives will be like the life of a tree—which commonly lasts for generations before dying. Motyer calls this “a picture of durability and longevity.” (P. 531)

This is not at all a vision of “eternal life,” in which death is conquered—as in John's vision in **Revelation 21-22**, but rather is a vision of long, fulfilled life, as Ortlund says, this is “A picture of longevity and durability (some [yes, some—but precious few] trees live 2,000 years), as compared (in **40:7-8**) to grass, which withers and fades.” (Po. 1359-69)

Even so, that is a far cry from the “eternal life” of the **New Testament's** vision of the future.

<sup>131</sup>Where our Hebrew text has וּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵיהֶם יִבְלוּ בַחֲרֵי, literally “and (the) work / produce of their hands, they will wear out, My chosen ones (will),” Rahlfs has “the works of their labors they shall make old<sup>23</sup> but then My chosen ones...” The Latin Vulgate follows the Greek, but the Aramaic Targum and the Syriac translation follow the Hebrew.

Again, as in **verse 21**, **verse 22** depicts the new Jerusalem as a city blessed by YHWH— not subject to the Divine curse described in **Leviticus 26:16** and **Deuteronomy 28:30**. This same theme is continued in **verse 23**.

Motyer translates the piel imperfect verb יִבְלוּ, in the last line of **verse 22** by “will long enjoy,” but notes that it is literally “will wear out,” and means “use to the full, live to enjoy full use of.” (P. 531) Watts translates by “And My chosen ones wear out by their own use the thing made by their hands.” (P. 349)

וְלֹא יִלְדוּ לְבִהְלָה  
כִּי זָרַע בְּרוּכֵי יְהוָה הֵמָּה  
וְצִאצְאֵיהֶם אִתָּם:

They will not toil for nothing;<sup>132</sup>

and they will not give birth<sup>133</sup> for the sudden terror.<sup>134</sup>

Because they are descendant(s) of those blessed by YHWH;<sup>135</sup>

<sup>132</sup>It is a biblical mark of a Divine curse when people have to work for nothing, when they cannot enjoy the fruits of their labors. In YHWH's new world that He is creating, such an abuse of human efforts will be ended!

<sup>133</sup>Where the Hebrew text reads the qal imperfect verb יִלְדוּ, "they will (not) give birth," the Greek translation (along with the Syriac and the Latin Vulgate) has τεκνοποιήσουσιν, "they will (not) make children."

<sup>134</sup>The first two lines of **verse 23** are directly related to **Leviticus 26:16** and **20**, which describe the punishment for disobedience, punishments that will not exist in the new Jerusalem. The phrase לְרִיק, literally "for the nothingness" in the first line is probably referring to this phrase found in **Leviticus 26:20**, וְתָם לְרִיק פִּחְכֶּם, "and your strength will be spent for nothing."

The phrase in the second line, לְבִהְלָה, "for the sudden terror," probably refers to the statement in **Leviticus 26:16**, "I will bring upon you בִּהְלָה, sudden terror, wasting diseases and fever that will destroy your sight and drain away your life..." Achtemeier translates by "and they shall not bear children (only to have them] suddenly destroyed." (P. 128)

Alexander holds that "The Hebrew word [בִּהְלָה] properly denotes extreme agitation and alarm, and the meaning of the clause is that they shall not bring forth children merely to be subjects of distressing solicitude." (P. 454)

<sup>135</sup>Where our Hebrew text has כִּי זָרַע בְּרוּכֵי יְהוָה הֵמָּה, "because a seed / descendant of those blessed (by) YHWH (are) they," **Rahlfs** has "because it is a seed / descendant blessed by God." The Greek is followed by the Aramaic Targum, while the Syriac and Latin Vulgate translations follow the Hebrew.

Achtemeier translates by "for a seed blessed by Yahweh are they." (P. 128)

(continued...)

and their offspring<sup>136</sup> with them.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>135</sup>(...continued)

Watts has “But they are the seed of Yahweh’s blessed ones.” (P. 349)

Motyer says “This blessing comes in accordance with the promise to the ‘seed’ in **Genesis 17:7** and, more immediately, because they are the ‘seed’ of the Servant (**53:10**).” (P. 531)

<sup>136</sup>The noun **צֵאֵיהֶם**, formed from the verb **יָצָא**, “to go out,” means “their goings forth,” “their issue,” “their offspring,” as Motyer observes, “indicating the direct line from parent to child.” (P. 531). The noun occurs some 11 times in the Hebrew, but only in **Isaiah** and **Job**:

**Isaiah 22:24**, Eliakim’s offspring; parallel with **הַצִּפְעוֹת**, “the offshoots”;

**Isaiah 34:1**, YHWH’s call to the nations to judgment; included are nations, peoples, the earth and all that is in it, the world and all its offspring;

**Isaiah 42:5**, the God YHWH spread / beat out the earth and its offspring;

**Isaiah 44:3**, YHWH promises to pour out His Spirit on His servant Jacob’s seed / descendant(s) and His blessing on Jacob’s offspring;

**Isaiah 48:19**, if only Israel had obeyed YHWH’s commands, her seed / descendant(s) would have been like sand; her offspring of her belly like the sand’s grains;

**Isaiah 61:9**, YHWH is going to cut an everlasting covenant with the returnees to Zion—their seed / descendant(s) will be known among the nations, and their offspring in the midst of the peoples;

**Isaiah 65:23**, the people of the new Jerusalem will be blessed, along with their offspring;

**Job 5:25**, Eliphaz tells Job that if he will let God correct him, his offspring will be like the herbage of the earth;

**Job 21:8**, Job grieves that the wicked’s children are established before them, their offspring before their eyes;

**Job 27:14**, here Job maintains the opposite—the offspring of the wicked will not be satisfied with bread;

**Job 31:8**, Job says, if he has been wicked, then may others eat what he has planted, and may his offspring be rooted up.

65.24<sup>138</sup> וְהָיָה טִרְם־יִקְרְאוּ וְאֲנִי אֶעֱנֶה

עוֹד הֵם מְדַבְּרִים וְאֲנִי אֶשְׁמַע:

And it will be, before they will call—and I, I will answer;<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>137</sup>Westermann notes that what is said for the men in their labor not being in vain, “holds true for the women’s ‘labor’; ‘they do not bear children for sudden terror.’ The meaning is perfectly clear. It is what many a mother today thinks of as she wonders about what the future has in store for the children whom she has borne.” (P. 410)

**Isaiah’s** vision depicts parents and their children sharing in the blessings of YHWH, and as the next verse shows, sharing in intimate communication with YHWH.

<sup>138</sup>Slotki comments on **verses 24-25**, that “All human desires will be Divinely fulfilled even before they have been expressed, and there will be peace and contentment even in the animal world.” (P. 319)

Alexander states that **verse 24** is “A strong expression of God’s readiness to hear and answer prayer, not a mere promise that it shall be heard (like that in **Jeremiah 29: 12; Zechariah 13:9**), but an assurance that it shall be granted before it is heard. The nearest parallel is **Matthew 6:8**, where our Lord Himself says, ‘Your Father knows what things you have need of, before you ask Him.’” (Pp. 454-55)

Watts notes that **verse 24** “recalls the motif of **65:1** which promises a satisfying kind of worship in which reciprocal participation is experienced.” (P. 355)

<sup>139</sup>Where our Hebrew text has אֶעֱנֶה, “I will answer,” **Rahlf’s** has “I, I will listen to them.” The other ancient versions follow the Hebrew.

Motyer comments that “There is such a oneness with the Lord that He anticipates their needs with His constant provident watchfulness for their good.” (P. 531) Compare:

**Isaiah 30:19,**

He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry.

As soon as He heard it, He answered you.

(Note the qal perfects in this verse)

**Isaiah 58:9,**

Then you shall call, and YHWH will answer;

you shall cry, and He will say, Here am I’

(continued...)

while they are still speaking—and I, I will hear.<sup>140</sup>

65.25<sup>141</sup> זָאֵב וְטִלְיָה יִרְעוּ כְּאַחַד

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<sup>139</sup>(...continued)

**Psalm 139:4,**

Before a word is on my tongue,  
You know it completely, O Lord!

**Matthew 6:8,** Jesus said,

Your Father knows what need you have,  
before you ask Him.

<sup>140</sup>Where our Hebrew text has **וְאֲנִי אֲשָׁמַע**, “and I, I will hear,” **Rahlfs** has “I will say, What is it?”

Motyer adds that “There is such an identity of will that while they are still speaking what they say immediately commends itself to Him for action.” (P. 531) Westermann notes that “When men call upon God, they are given an answer...With this access to God *via* word and answer, there is free access to the Well-spring of life.” (P. 410)

This is the kind of “access” to God, and to the “throne of grace” that the **New Testament** describes. See **Romans 5:2; Ephesians 2:18** and **3:12**, along with **Hebrews 4:16**. Christian interpreters need to note that access to God is not something that began with Christianity—but it certainly lies at the heart of Christian experience.

<sup>141</sup>Motyer comments on **verse 25** that “Eden is restored” [so also Knight, p. 100]; but in fact there is not a word in the text about Eden being restored! There is immediate access to God, but access to God continued when Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden, as YHWH counseled with Cain, and as Enoch walked with God and was not, for God took him.

Motyer refers to **11:6-9** [which depicts the idyllic peace that Isaiah envisions as existing in the Messianic kingdom of the future, but says nothing about Eden being restored!]. He states that “old enmities are gone (*wolf*) and fears removed (*lamb*); natures are changed (*the lion will eat straw*), the carnivore will become a herbivore. There is no reference to the great agent of the fall, the serpent, in **11:6-9** but it is accurately in position here...The only point in the whole of the new creation where there is no change (compare **verse 20**) is in the curse pronounced on sin, which still stands (compare **Genesis 3:14**).” (P. 531)

Motyer and Knight have both brought their conviction concerning the restoration of Eden to the text, and have not genuinely read it out of the text. In the biblical story of Eden (**Genesis 2:4-3:24**) there is not one word concerning wolves and lambs, or about

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<sup>141</sup>(...continued)

lions eating straw. There is enmity in that garden, but it is enmity between the woman and the serpent, and between her descendants and the serpent's descendants—not between the different species of animals!

Motyer is right in stating that the serpent is depicted as “eating dust,” but he (along with others) is reading all of the rest of this back into the **Genesis** story. Wolf / Stek comment that “In the old Eden, the *serpent* was condemned to eat dust after Adam's and Eve's transgressions (**Genesis 3:14**), whereas in the new Eden, this curse is imposed on the serpent from the beginning; thus the new Eden cannot suffer its predecessor's fate by falling victim to the snake's craftiness.” (P. 1047) While we disagree with calling the new Jerusalem of Isaiah “the new Eden,” we agree with this observation concerning the serpent. What do you think?

In **Isaiah's** vision, there is no tree of life, no river flowing—as there is in **Genesis 1-3**, and in **Revelation 21-22**. We can much more accurately say that in John's vision in **Revelation** there is a sort of “restoration of Eden”—but even there, it is not a primitive garden that John sees, but an awesome foursquare cube-shaped city, built by God, with the river of the water of life, and the tree(s) of life, offering life and healing to the nations —almost totally different from **Genesis 1-3** and **Isaiah 65**. What do you think?

Knight comments that “Here we find no trace of what the secularist today calls ‘pie in the sky,’ of a heaven to which individual souls are transmitted as they are plucked out of an evil world [is Knight thinking of Enoch and Elijah? Or, the so-called ‘rapture’ of Christian teaching?] or released from the weight of their human bodies [is Knight thinking of Plato's teaching? Or the later Christian belief of immediate giving of a ‘heavenly body’ upon death to believers who die?]. The biblical heaven is social, where all are in fellow-ship both with God and with one another, and a heaven where matter matters! [But is this text in **Isaiah** speaking about heaven? We think not]...

“‘The lion shall eat straw like the ox,’ for the ‘world’ too will have been redeemed, and not merely the souls of people. And so, the two-sided dream of **Isaiah** will have been realized when all nations will flow up to the house of the Lord, to be found on the highest of the mountains (**Isaiah 2:1-5**), and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (**11:9**).” (P. 100)

There is no mention of animals in the **Book of Revelation's** new Jerusalem, but there is here in Isaiah's vision. What do you think? Do you believe the animals will share in God's blessed future for His people? Why? Why not?

It is certainly the case that the biblical vision of the new heavens and the new earth emphasizes the importance of the material world—both here in **Isaiah 65-66**, and in **Revelation 21-22**, where the nations walk in its Divine light, the kings of the earth bring their splendor into it (**Revelation 21:24**), and the nations are healed by eating the leaves of its trees of life (**Revelation 22:2**).

(continued...)

וְאֶרְיָהּ כִּבְקָר יֹאכַל-תְּבֹנִין

וְנֹחַשׁ עִבְרָה לְחֶמְדוֹ

לְאִירְעוֹ וְלֹא-יִשְׁחִיתוּ

בְּכָל-הָהָר קִדְשֵׁי אֱמֹר יִהְיוּ:

Wolf and lamb will feed as one;<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>141</sup>(...continued)

What do you think? Do you agree with Knight? Why? Why not? How much do you think we really know about the actual content of our future hope? How accurately do you think we can be in describing “heaven”?

<sup>142</sup>Alexander states that “The promise of a happy change is wound up in the most appropriate manner by repeating the prophecy in **Isaiah 11:6-9**, that all hurtful influences shall for ever cease in the holy hill or church of God.” (P. 455) We say **Isaiah 65:25** is not repeating **11:6-9** verbatim, but condensing the earlier, longer prophecy:

- 6 And the wolf will live temporarily with the lamb;  
and the leopard will lie down with the young goat;  
and a calf and young lion and fatted animal (will be) together;  
and a small youth will lead them.
- 7 And the cow and the bear will graze;  
together, their young will lie down;  
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.
- 8 And the nursing-baby will play beside the venomous serpent’s hole;  
and the little child will reach out his hand beside the poisonous snake’s  
den.
- 9 They will not do wrong, and they will not destroy,  
in all My set-apart mountain!  
Because the earth has been filled with the knowledge of YHWH,  
like the waters cover the oceans!

65:25 Wolf and lamb will feed as one;  
and lion like the ox will eat straw;  
and a snake–dust (will be) its food.  
They will not do evil, and they will not destroy  
in all My set-apart mountain. YHWH said (it)!

For wolves and lambs to feed side by side is contrary to what we know from natural history—in which lambs are the choice victims of wolves! As Watts notes, “A

(continued...)



and lion like the ox will eat straw;<sup>143</sup>  
and a snake—dust (will be) its food.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>142</sup>(...continued)

*wolf and a lamb* are proverbial opposites. The first is aggressive and voracious, the latter weak and helpless, the wolf's natural food." (P. 355)

But, says **Isaiah**, such a condition will no longer be true in the new heavens and new earth and in the new Jerusalem that YHWH is creating!

<sup>143</sup>For lions, the natural source of food is other animals—cattle, herds, oxen. But not so in the new Jerusalem which Isaiah envisions. As Motyer puts it, the carnivore has become a herbivore—the meat-eater has become a vegetarian!

<sup>144</sup>This is a clear reference to **Genesis 3:14**, where the Divine sentence upon the serpent is, "upon your belly you will move, and dust you will eat, all (the) days of your life!" And what **Isaiah** means by this seems obvious—in that new Jerusalem, instead of this creature of YHWH God being a source of temptation to the citizens of that city—as it was to Eve—it will just "eat dust"! Nothing more! Compare **Micah 7:17**, "nations will lick dust like the serpent."

Of course, serpents do not literally "eat dust," even though the ancient biblical story holds that the serpent was cursed by YHWH God to "eating dirt" (the Greek translation has γῆν ὡς ἄρτον, "earth as bread") throughout its entire life. And it seems obvious that the ancient story-teller thought that serpents / snakes actually had a diet of "dust" or "dirt."

How do you explain this? The literalist believer in an infallible **Bible** says, The **Bible** says it, I believe it, that settles it! So, the **Bible** teaches us that the diet of snakes is nothing other than dirt! But is that the truth?

Herpetologists report that reptiles have a different diet than that: they eat earthworms, fish, amphibians (such as frogs), and other reptiles. But literalistic interpretation of the story as Divinely true in all its details has to think in terms of reptiles literally "eating dirt"—in the same manner that they are prone to think of men as having one less rib than women, and of the original reptiles as walking on legs that YHWH God removed as part of a literal curse.

Such problems in interpretation point to the obvious truth that the ancient story, if it is to have any meaning for modern understanding, must be understood symbolically—that is, not literally, but rather as a parable, explaining the origin of suffering, pain, and death, in a world created "all good" by the great Creator God—and in which evil is caused by human choice to disobey God.

The literal understanding of this biblical story, and of any such literature, is at the same time both unfortunate and grossly inadequate. Parables and allegories and

(continued...)

<sup>144</sup>(...continued)

cosmogonies must be understood for what they are--not as literal, factual, historical statements. Compare Plato's "Allegory of the Cave," in **The Republic** vii).

Parabolic, symbolical stories such as those in **Genesis 1-4** are not intended to be taken literally in this manner, nor should we ask such questions of them--for example, "Where did Cain get his wife?" Or, "Who was Cain afraid of--who was going to kill him, Adam or Eve?" Or, "How did the people chained to the wall in Plato's allegory go to the bathroom?"

Hamilton, in his commentary on **Genesis** (who sometimes himself tends towards literalism), states that "Obviously, snakes do not eat dust, and no ancient writer ever thought they did. One has to take this passage symbolically, not literally. Therefore, it is fruitless to see in this particular verse an etiology of why snakes no longer walk on legs and why they lost their legs." (P. 196)

We agree with this conclusion, but are not sure that ancient writers did not think serpents ate dust, or once had legs and walked upright on feet (as Rashi holds, see **Bereishis** 1, p. 128). Rabbi Hirsch, to the contrary, states that "Actually, snakes do not eat earth, but feed on living creatures. The 'eating of dust' may be a figurative picture of creeping about on its belly..." (**ibid.**)

Think about it, and the important consequences for biblical interpretation this observation can have!

<sup>145</sup>In Isaiah's vision of the new heavens and earth, and the Jerusalem that YHWH is creating, there are two things that will no longer be found: the doing of evil (לֹא־יַעֲשׂוּ), "they will not do evil" or "injure," "hurt") and destroying (לֹא־יִשְׁחָדוּ), "they will not destroy"). Lines 4-6 of **verse 25** are an exact quotation of the first two lines of **Isaiah 11:9**. No more injury, no more hurt, no more evil; no more destroying, no more destruction--what a wonderful world to live in! What a place to call home!

You may dismiss it all, saying It's only a "pipe-dream," meaning a fantasy wish caused by smoking an opium pipe. But no one who has experienced terrifying evil such as the Jews experienced in Nazi Germany, or the American Indians experienced in the United States of America, or that many others have experienced in different times and places, can deny that it is something devoutly to be hoped for!

What do you think? Do you wish for a world where evil has been destroyed, and where peace can take the place of war? Such is the kind of world the biblical authors, in their differing ways, hope for and dream of. Do you dare to share with them in "dream-ing the impossible dream"? We Christians believe that this is the kind of world that is being created by Jesus Christ.

(continued...)

in all My set-apart mountain.<sup>146</sup> YHWH said (it)!<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>145</sup>(...continued)

Watts comments that such a place is “the earthly spot where the reality of God’s presence, His peace and joy, may be experienced.” (P. 355) He states that such a place occurs in **Isaiah** at:

**11:9**, where the shoot or root of Jesse judges with righteousness, bringing justice to the poor, and destroying the wicked, calling the nations to himself;

**27:13**, when, in the aftermath of Divine judgment, the former exiles from Assyria and Egypt come and worship on the set-apart mountain in Jerusalem;

**56:7**, when those excluded from the temple because of physical deformities, along with foreigners, are welcomed into the house of prayer for all nations;

**57:13**, when oppression is ended and YHWH’s people give themselves in service to the hungry and naked, observing the days of rest;

**65:25**, here, in YHWH’s mountain, and in the new Jerusalem He is creating;

**66:20**, when YHWH’s glorious radiance is proclaimed among the nations, and brothers are brought to His set-apart mountain in Jerusalem.

The creation of new heavens and a new earth is YHWH’s desire for His people—but obviously, such a glorious future cannot happen without the cooperation of His people, who tremble at His Word, and do the acts of genuine “righteousness” such as is described in **Isaiah 58**, practicing lovingkindness, mercy, and acceptance of those who have been excluded, committing themselves to worldwide mission. Only so can the new heavens and new earth come into being! What do you think?

We think this is the world that lies at the finger-tips of faith as possibility—but one that constantly eludes our grasp, as we human beings opt for unbelief and disobedience, refusing to enter into the world God wants to give His people.

<sup>146</sup>For the phrase **הַר קְדְשִׁי**, “My set-apart mountain,” or “Mountain of My set-apartness,” see:

**Isaiah 11:9**, same as here;

**Isaiah 56:7**, foreigners who keep rest-days and hold fast to YHWH’s covenant will be brought to His set-apart mountain, and given joy in His house of prayer for all nations, offering up acceptable sacrifices;

**Isaiah 57:13**, the person who makes YHWH his refuge will possess the land and possess YHWH’s set-apart mountain;

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<sup>146</sup>(...continued)

**Isaiah 65:11**, those who join in the Near-eastern magical religious practices are forgetting YHWH's set-apart mountain;

**Isaiah 65:25**, here, a place YHWH is creating where evil and destruction are no longer present;

**Isaiah 66:20**, the surviving brothers from all nations will be brought to YHWH's set-apart mountain;

**Joel 4:17**, Zion is YHWH's set-apart mountain, where He dwells;

**Obadiah 1:16**, Edom and the nations have drunk from Israel's riches on YHWH's set-apart mountain;

**Psalms 2:6**, YHWH proclaims that He has installed His king on Zion, His set-apart mountain.

<sup>147</sup>This is the simple 2-word statement, אָמַר יְהוָה, "He said, YHWH," that is found many times in the **Hebrew Bible**. It occurs already in this chapter at **verses 7** and **8**.

1. **Biblical Statements Concerning the “Hand” of God:**

**Genesis 49:24-25**, Joseph’s hands remained steady on the bow, because of the Mighty One of Jacob’s hands that helped him; note the many Divine epithets;

**Exodus 3:20**, YHWH will stretch out His hand, performing wonders among the Egyptians;

**Exodus 6:1**, because of YHWH’s mighty hand, Pharaoh will drive the Israelites out of his country; **7:4, 5**, similar; **13:3, 14**, similar; **32:11**, similar;

**Exodus 9:3, 15**, YHWH’s hand is going to bring a plague on Egypt;

**Exodus 15:6, 12**, YHWH’s right hand was mighty in power, shattering the enemy, causing the earth to swallow them;

**Exodus 15:17**, YHWH’s hands established His sanctuary in the land of Israel;

**Exodus 16:3**, the Israelites wish that they had died by YHWH’s hand in Egypt;

**Exodus 24:11**, God did not raise His hand against the Israelite leaders who saw Him, and ate and drank;

**Exodus 33:22, 23**, YHWH’s hand covers Moses in a rock cave as He passes by;

**Deuteronomy 2:15**, YHWH’s hand was against the entire generation of fighting men whom He eliminated in the wilderness;

**Deuteronomy 4:34**, Has any other nation ever experienced being taken out from another nation by the mighty hand and outstretched arm of its God, such as happened in YHWH’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt? See **Amos 9:7** for an answer to this question; **5:15; 6:21; 7:8, 19; 9:26; 26:8**, all similar;

**Deuteronomy 11:2**, the generation that came to Moab, ready to cross the Jordan into the promised land, had not witnessed the mighty hand of YHWH in His deliverance from Egypt;

**Deuteronomy 32:40, 41**, YHWH lifts up His hand to heaven and swears vengeance on His adversaries as His hand grasps His sword of vengeance;

**Joshua 4:24**, YHWH dried up the Jordan for Israel to cross over so that all the peoples of the earth may know that His hand is powerful;

**Joshua 22:31**, the Israelites, by acting faithfully, have been rescued from YHWH’s hand;

**Judges 2:15**, when disobedient Israel went out to fight their enemies, the hand of YHWH was against them to defeat them;

**Ruth 1:13**, Naomi, having lost her husband and two sons, exclaims that YHWH's hand has gone out against her;

**1 Samuel 5:6, 9, 11; 6:3, 5, 9**, YHWH's hand was heavy upon the people of Ashdod, devastating them with tumors;

**1 Samuel 7:13**, throughout Samuel's lifetime, YHWH's hand was against the Philistines;

**1 Samuel 12:15**, Samuel warns Israel that if they rebel against YHWH's commands, His hand will be against them;

**2 Samuel 24:14; 1 Chronicles 21:13, 17**, David wants to fall into YHWH's hands, not human hands;

**1 Kings 8:42; 2 Chronicles 6:32**, foreigners will hear of YHWH's great name, mighty hand, and outstretched arm, and will come to worship towards Solomon's temple;

**1 Kings 18:46; 2 Kings 3:15**, YHWH's hand came upon Elijah;

**1 Chronicles 4:10**, Jabez prays that God's hand will be with him and keep him from harm;

**1 Chronicles 28:19**, David gives Solomon the plan for the chariot with its gold winged-animals, which he says he has in writing from YHWH's hand, who gave him understanding in all details for the plan;

**1 Chronicles 29:12**, as part of his prayer, David acknowledges that strength and power are in YHWH's hands (**verses 10-13** are a wonderful prayer for all times!);

**2 Chronicles 6:4, 15**, Solomon acknowledges that YHWH's hands have fulfilled what He promised to David;

**2 Chronicles 20:6**, Jehoshaphat prays to YHWH, saying "You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in Your hand, and no one can withstand You..."

**2 Chronicles 29:25, 31**, musical instruments in the temple worship were **בִּידֵי־יְהוָה**  
**הַמְצִיחַ בְּיַד־נְבִיאָיו**, by the hand of YHWH the commandment, by His prophets' / spokespersons' hand;

**2 Chronicles 30:12**, in Judah the hand of the God was on the people to give them one heart, i.e., unity of mind to obey the orders of King Hezekiah and his officials;

**Ezra 7:6, 9, 28; 8:18, 22, 31; Nehemiah 2:8, 17**, the hand of YHWH his God was on Ezra and other leaders of the returnees, including Nehemiah and anybody else who looks to Him;

**Nehemiah 1:10**, Nehemiah identifies the returnees as those whom YHWH God has redeemed by His great strength and mighty hand;

**Job 1:11; 2:5**, the satan urges YHWH to reach out His hand and strike Job;

**Job 5:18**, Eliphaz states that the Almighty wounds, but He also binds up; He injures, but His hands also heal;

**Job 10:7, 8**, Job states that God knows that no one can rescue Job from God's hand, the hands that shaped / made him;

**Job 12, 9, 10**, Job states that the animals, the birds, the earth and the fish know that the hand of YHWH "has done this"; in His hand is the life of every creature;

**Job 13:21**, Job appeals to God to withdraw His hand from him, to stop frightening him;

**Job 14:15**, Job believes that if he dies, still God will call to him, and he will answer; God will long for the creature His hands have made;

**Job 19:21**, Job cries out for pity, since Eloah's (God's) hand has struck him;

**Job 27:11**, Job will teach his "friends" בְּיַד־אֱלֹהִים , "by God's hand";

**Job 30:21**, Job states that with the might of His hand, God attacks / bears a grudge against Job;

**Job 34:19**, Elihu claims that the Mighty One shows no partiality to the rich or poor, for they are all the work of His hands;

**Isaiah 1:25**, YHWH promises that He will turn His hand against His sinful people, purifying them from their sins;

**Isaiah 5:25; 9:12, 17, 21; 10:4**, YHWH's hand is raised against His people to strike them down by various means; His hand is still upraised;

**Isaiah 8:11**, YHWH spoke to Isaiah with His strong hand upon him;

**Isaiah 11:11**, in the time of Jesse's Root (the Messiah), YHWH will reach out His hand a second time to reclaim the remnant of His people;

**Isaiah 14:26, 27:**

26 This is the counsel / advice that has been counseled / advised over all the earth;  
and this is the hand that has been stretched out over all the nations.

27 Because YHWH of Armies counseled / advised, and who will frustrate (that  
counsel)?

And His hand (is) the stretched out one, and who will cause it to turn  
back?;

(YHWH is the One Who uses the kingdoms of the earth, like Assyria and  
Babylon, to fulfill His purposes—and then punishes them for their arrogance,  
overthrowing them—this is what He does in all the earth, over all the nations!);

**Isaiah 19:16**, in a coming day, the Egyptians will be like women; they will shudder in  
fear at the uplifted hand of YHWH of Armies, as they see Judah coming against  
them;

**Isaiah 19:25**, in a coming day, Israel's former enemies, the Egyptians and the  
Assyrians will worship YHWH together with Israel; YHWH will bless both Egypt  
and Assyria, calling Egypt "My people," and Assyria "the work of My hand," and  
also Israel His inheritance. What a powerful universalistic affirmation this is!;

**Isaiah 23:11**, YHWH has stretched out His hand over the sea, and made its kingdoms  
tremble; Tyre will soon be destroyed;

**Isaiah 25:10**, the hand of YHWH will rest on the mountain where death is swallowed up  
forever;

**Isaiah 26:11**, Isaiah exclaims that though YHWH's hand is lifted high, the people of the  
world do not see it;

**Isaiah 29:23**, when YHWH's people see among themselves their children, the work of  
YHWH's hands, they will revere Him;

**Isaiah 31:3**, when YHWH stretches out His hand, both the Egyptians, who trust in  
horses, and those they are attempting to help (Israel) will fall; both will perish;

**Isaiah 34:17**, YHWH's hand distributes portions for all the animals and birds by  
measure;

**Isaiah 40:2**, Israel (in Babylonian captivity) has received double (full / enough  
punishment) from YHWH's hand for all her sins;

**Isaiah 40:12**, YHWH has measured the waters (of the earth) in the hollow of His hand;

**Isaiah 41:10**, Israel, YHWH's servant, need not fear, for He will uphold her with His  
righteous right hand;



**Isaiah 41:20**, the hand of YHWH has put water in the desert, and planted trees there, in an on-going creation;

**Isaiah 43:13**, from ancient times, YHWH is He—no one can deliver out of His hand!;

**Isaiah 45:11, 12**, do you question YHWH about things to come, or the work of His hands? He made the earth, and created humanity upon it; His Own hands stretched out the heavens; this same God will raise up Cyrus and set His exiles free!;

**Isaiah 48:13**, YHWH's Own hand laid the foundation of the earth; His right hand spread out the heavens;

**Isaiah 49:2**, before YHWH's servant was born, YHWH called him; He made his mouth like a sharpened sword, and hid him in the shadow of His hand;

**Isaiah 49:16**, YHWH has engraved Zion on the palms of His hands;

**Isaiah 50:2**, Is YHWH's hand too short to ransom?; **59:1** says it is certainly not!;

**Isaiah 50:11**, those who refuse to walk in YHWH's light, kindling their own source of light, will lie down in pain—this is from YHWH's hand;

**Isaiah 51:16**, YHWH has put His Word in (His people's) mouth, and covered them with the shadow of His hand—the same One Who set the heavens in place says to Zion, "You are My people!"

**Isaiah 51:17**, Jerusalem is called to awake, rise up—she has drunk from the hand of YHWH the cup of His wrath;

**Isaiah 60:21**, YHWH's shoot which He has planted, the work of His hands, will possess the land forever;

**Isaiah 62:3**, Zion / Jerusalem will be a crown of splendor in YHWH's hand, a royal diadem;

**Isaiah 62:8**, YHWH has sworn by His right hand, that never again will Israel's grain be given to their enemies to be devoured;

**Isaiah 64:8**, Israel acknowledges that YHWH is the Potter; we are all the work of His hand;

**Isaiah 65:2**, all day long YHWH has held out His hands, begging, inviting an obstinate people;

**Isaiah 66:2**, YHWH's hand made heaven and earth, so that they came into being;

**Isaiah 66:14**, YHWH's hand will be made known to His servants, but His fury to His foes;

**Jeremiah 1:9**, YHWH reached out His hand, and touched Jeremiah's mouth;

**Jeremiah 15:6**, since the people of Israel keep on back-sliding, YHWH will lay hands on them and destroy them!;

**Jeremiah 15:17**, Jeremiah did not join the revelers, but sat along, because YHWH's hand was upon him;

**Jeremiah 18:6**, like clay in the hand of a potter, so is Israel in YHWH's hand; compare **Isaiah 64:8**;

**Jeremiah 21:5**, Jeremiah tells Zedekiah that YHWH will fight against him with an outstretched hand and a mighty arm, in anger and fury and great wrath;

**Jeremiah 22:24**, even if Jehoiachin, the king's son, were a seal-ring on YHWH's right hand, He would still pull him off, and hand him over to Nebudhadnezzar, king of Babylon;

**Jeremiah 25:15, 17, 28**, Jeremiah is to take from YHWH's hand a cup filled with the wine of His wrath, and make the nations drink it;

**Jeremiah 32:21**, in his prayer, Jeremiah mentions how YHWH brought Israel out from Egypt by a mighty hand and outstretched arm, and with great terror;

**Jeremiah 51:7**, Babylon was a gold cup in YHWH's hand, who made the nations drink from her wine

**Jeremiah 51:25**, YHWH is against Babylon, the destroying mountain—He will stretch out His hand to roll Babylon off the cliffs;

**Lamentations 1:14**, the Jerusalemite lamenter's sins have been made into a yoke, woven together by YHWH's hands;

**Lamentations 2:3, 4, 8**, YHWH has withdrawn His right hand; His right hand is ready to shoot his arrows; He did not withhold His hand from destroying Jerusalem!;

**Lamentations 3:3**, YHWH has turned His hand against the Jerusalemite lamenter, again and again, all day long;

**Ezekiel 1:3**, by the Kebar River, in Babylonia, the hand of YHWH was on Ezekiel; **3:14, 22; 37:1; 40:1**, similar; **8:1**, while Ezekiel is at home, the Lord YHWH's hand came upon him; **33:22**, at the time of Jerusalem's fall, causing Ezekiel to break his silence and speak;

**Ezekiel 6:14**, YHWH will stretch out His hand to make the land of Israel a desolate waste; **14:13; 16:27; 20:33, 34**, similar;

**Ezekiel 13:9; 14:9**, the Lord YHWH's hand will be against the false prophets;

**Ezekiel 20:22**, YHWH withheld His hand for the sake of His name;

**Ezekiel 21:17**, the Lord YHWH will strike His hands, and His wrath will subside;

**Ezekiel 22:13**, YHWH will strike His hands together at the unjust gain and shedding of blood by the people of Jerusalem;

**Ezekiel 25:7, 13; 35:3**, the Lord YHWH will stretch out His hand against Ammon, Edom and Philistia;

**Ezekiel 37:19**, the two sticks for Ephraim and Israel will become one stick in YHWH's hand;

**Ezekiel 39:21**, the nations will see the Lord YHWH's hand of punishment that He has laid on them;

**Hosea 2:10**, (YHWH) will expose His unfaithful wife, and no one will take her out of His hands;

**Amos 1:8**, YHWH will turn His hand against Ekron;

**Amos 9:2**, though the sinful Northern Israelites seek to hide in the grave, from there YHWH's hand will take them ("no escape from YHWH!");

**Habakkuk 2:16**, the cup from YHWH's hand is coming around to Babylon;

**Habakkuk 3:4**, in a theophany, Habakkuk sees rays flashing from YHWH's hand;

**Zephaniah 1:4**, YHWH will stretch out His hand against Judah;

**Zephaniah 2:13**, YHWH will stretch out His hand against Assyria;

**Zechariah 13:7**, YHWH of Armies will turn His hand against the shepherd of the sheep;

**Daniel 4:35**, Nebuchadnezzar confesses that the Most High does as He pleases with all the peoples of the earth, and no one can turn back His hand;

**Daniel 9:15**, Daniel mentions in prayer how YHWH brought His people out of Egypt with a mighty hand;

**Psalms 8:6, verse 7** in English; YHWH our Lord has made humanity ruler over the works of His hands;

**Psalm 10:12, 14**, YHWH is appealed to, to lift up His hand; when seeing trouble or grief, to take it in hand;

**Psalm 16:11**, enduring, delightful things are in YHWH's right hand;

**Psalm 17:7, 14; 31:5; 63:9**, YHWH saves / delivers by His right hand from wicked people;

**Psalm 18:35, verse 36** in English; God's right hand sustains the soldier, giving him victory;

**Psalm 20:6, verse 7** in English; YHWH saves / delivers His anointed one with the saving power of His right hand;

**Psalm 31:16**, my times are in Your hand, YHWH;

**Psalm 32:4**, when the psalmist kept silent concerning his transgressions, day and night YHWH's hand was heavy upon him;

**Psalm 37:24**, if the person in whom YHWH delights stumbles, YHWH will uphold him with His hand / or, YHWH gives him support by holding his hand;

**Psalm 38:2, verse 3** in English; the psalmist says that YHWH's arrows have pierced him, and His hand has come down upon him;

**Psalm 39:11**, through the hostility of Your hand, I am finished;

**Psalm 44:2, 3, verses 3 and 4** in English; YHWH's hand dispossessed nations, and planted Israel; not their sword, but YHWH's right hand and the light of His face gave them victory;

**Psalm 74:11**, why do You, YHWH, hold back Your hand, Your right hand?;

**Psalm 75:9**, there is a cup of foaming wine in YHWH's hand for the wicked to drink;

**Psalm 77:11**, I said, It is my fault that the right hand of the Most High has changed;

**Psalm 78:54**, God brought Israel to the border of the hill-country which His right hand had acquired;

**Psalm 80:16, verse 15** in English; O God of Armies, watch over the vine Your right hand planted; let Your hand be over the man at Your right hand;

**Psalm 81:15**, if Israel would only listen to YHWH, He would turn His hand against their foes;

**Psalm 89:14, 22, verses 13 and 21** in English; YHWH's hand is strong; His right hand exalted; His hand will sustain David;

**Psalm 92:5, verse 4** in English; at the works of YHWH's hands I sing for joy;

**Psalm 95:4, 5, 7**, the depths of the earth are in YHWH's hands; His hands formed the dry land; we are the sheep of His hand;

**Psalm 98:1**, YHWH's right hand has worked salvation / deliverance for Him;

**Psalm 102:26, verse 25** in English; the heavens are the work of Your hands, YHWH;

**Psalm 104:28; 145:16**, all living creatures look to YHWH for nourishment; when He opens His hand they are filled with good things;

**Psalm 106:26**, YHWH swore with uplifted hand that Israel would perish in the wilderness;

**Psalm 108:6, verse 5** in English; save / deliver us, O God, and help us with Your right hand;

**Psalm 109:27**, let them know, O YHWH, that Your hand has done it!;

**Psalm 110:1**, it is a saying of YHWH to my Lord: Sit at My right hand until I make your enemies a footstool of your feet!';

**Psalm 111:7**, the works of YHWH's hands are true faithfulness and justice;

**Psalm 118:15, 16**, glad songs are heard in the tents of the righteous—YHWH's right hand has done mighty things! YHWH's right hand is lifted high...!;

**Psalm 119:73**, Your hand, YHWH, made me and established me;

**Psalm 119:173**, let Your hand, O YHWH, be ready to help me;

**Psalm 136:12**, YHWH brought Israel out from Egypt with a mighty hand;

**Psalm 138:7, 8**, YHWH stretches out His hand against the anger of my foes, with His right hand He saves / delivers me;

**Psalm 139:5**, YHWH, You have laid Your hand on me;

**Psalm 139:10**, even on the far side of the ocean, Your hand, YHWH, will guide me, Your right hand will hold me tightly;

**Psalm 143:5**, I ponder the work of Your hand;

**Psalm 144:7**, stretch out Your hand from on high and save / deliver me, O YHWH;

**Proverbs 21:1**, the king's heart is in the hand of YHWH; He directs it like a watercourse wherever He pleases;

**Ecclesiastes 2:24**, the wise teacher saw that to eat and drink, and find enjoyment in work, is from the hand of God.

The biblical authors are ordinary human beings, with many faults—but they share in the fact that they have experienced the hand of YHWH in their lives, in many different ways. YHWH's hand has touched them, calling them to speak for Him, and write down the message, giving His commandments through them (specifically, Elijah, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Ezra and Nehemiah). YHWH's hand has revealed YHWH's plan / purpose in history to His servants. It doesn't mean that they have gotten or understood the message perfectly, or that they will not make mistakes, or that they will no longer be deeply puzzled, but it does mean that their lives have been deeply impacted.

Those who have felt the hand of YHWH / God touching them can never be the same. They see everything in a different light; they have a whole new world-view, one that is filled with ethical demand and ringing hope for the future. The writings of these biblical authors are filled with instances in which they have seen and felt YHWH's hand at work in human history—in the rise and fall of nations, especially of their own nation, Israel, in its deliverance from Egypt, but also as being fiercely against them in their times of rebellion. It is YHWH's hand that has raised up Cyrus the Persian to be His messiah, to bring freedom to the captive Israelites in Babylon. But the biblical writers extend this observation much more broadly, seeing YHWH / God's hand in all of nature / creation, in providing living-space and nourishment for animals, in the birth of every child, in the heart of every king, even in the bad things that happen (Naomi).

These numerous passages concerning the hand of YHWH challenge us, the readers, to be open to the experience of that Divine hand in our own lives, and to let that touch transform us, imparting meaning and purpose to our aimless lives.

What about you? What about in your birth? If you haven't consciously experienced the touch of the Divine hand, is it because It has not touched you, or because you have been insensitive / blind to It?

2. **The Phrase לֹא־טוֹב, “Not Good,” In The Hebrew Bible**

**Genesis 2:18**, YHWH God pronounces the male without a female partner “not good”;

**Exodus 18:17**, Moses’ taking too much responsibility for judging legal cases is pronounced “not good” by his father-in-law;

**Numbers 14:3**, the wandering Israelites grumble concerning their fate in the wilderness, asking “would it not be good [i.e., ‘better’]” to return to Egypt?;

**Judges 8:2**, a similar question concerning the grape harvest of Ephraim, “is it not good [i.e., ‘better’]?”;

**1 Samuel 2:24**, the report Eli hears concerning his sons is “not good”;

**1 Samuel 26:16**, David tells Abner that what he has done in failing to guard Saul is “not good”;

**1 Samuel 29:6**, In the eyes of the Philistine princes, David is “not good”;

**2 Samuel 17:7**, Hushai tells Absalom that Ahithophel’s advice is “not good”;

**1 Kings 19:4**, the fleeing Elijah tells YHWH that he is “not good (i.e., ‘better than’) his fathers);

**2 Kings 5:12**, Naaman asks, “Are not the rivers of Syria good [i.e., ‘better’] than Israel’s Jordan?”;

**Isaiah 65:2**, here; closest in meaning to **Genesis 2:18**; **Exodus 18:17**; **Psalms 36:4**; **Proverbs 16:29** and **Jeremiah 5:9**;

**Jeremiah 21:10**, YHWH has determined to do what is לֹא לְטוֹבָה, “not for good” to Jerusalem); **Jeremiah 39:16**, similar; **44:27** (similar, but concerning the Jews in Egypt);

**Ezekiel 18:18**, a father who has done what is “not good” among his people; similar to **Genesis 2:18**; **Exodus 18:17**; **Isaiah 65:2**; **Psalms 36:4**; **Proverbs 16:29**; **Nehemiah 5:9**);

**Ezekiel 20:25**, YHWH has given Judah statutes that are לֹא טוֹבִים, “not good ones,” meaning that judgment must be made concerning God-given statutes, whether or not they are truly “good”! We think, in the light of **Isaiah 56:1-8** that among those statutes declared “not good” by **Ezekiel 20:25** would be **Deuteronomy 23:1-8**. What do you think? Can or should the Bible student make distinctions between statutes that are good and those that are “not good”?

Is this not what Jesus did in His teaching, rejecting the Jewish kosher food laws and their teaching concerning “clean and unclean”?;

**Ezekiel 36:31**, when Israel is returned from Babylonian captivity, and given a new heart, then they will remember their deeds that were **לֹא טוֹבִים**, “not good ones”;

**Amos 9:4**, when Northern Israel is driven by the Assyrians into captivity, YHWH will set His eye on them for evil, **לֹא לְטוֹבָה**, not for good!;

**Psalm 34:11**, verse 10 in English; those who seek YHWH will lack no good;

**Psalm 36:5**, verse 4 in English; the wicked person while upon his bed commits himself to a **לֹא-טוֹב דֶּרֶךְ**, “way not good”; similar to **Genesis 2:18; Exodus 18:17; Isaiah 65:2; Ezekiel 18:18; Nehemiah 5:9**;

**Proverbs 16:29**, a violent man entices his neighbor and leads him down a way that is “not good”; similar to **Genesis 2:18, Exodus 18:17; Isaiah 65:2; Ezekiel 18:18, Psalm 36:4; Nehemiah 5:9**);

**Proverbs 17:26**, to impose a fine on a righteous man is “not good”; **18:5**, similar;

**Proverbs 19:2**, an innermost being without knowledge is “not good”;

**Proverbs 20:23**, deceitful scales are “not good”;

**Proverbs 25:27**, to eat too much honey is “not good”;

**Proverbs 28:21**, to “recognize faces,” or “show partiality” is “not good”;

**Nehemiah 5:9**, the returned exiles are selling their brothers into slavery—it is “not good”!; similar to **Genesis 2:18; Exodus 18:17; Isaiah 65:2; Ezekiel 18:18; Psalm 36:4**.

Walking in the way that is “not good,” means walking in the way that leads to destruction and death, rather than to life and peace.



3. **The Plural Noun מַחְשְׁבֵייהֶם, “Their Imaginations / Thoughts,”  
In The Hebrew Bible:**

**Genesis 6:5**, the reason for the universal flood is that every inclination of the thoughts of humanity’s heart כָּל-יֵצֶר מַחְשַׁבַת לְבוֹ, were only evil all the time; that means, for the **Bible**, evil is rooted in the thoughts, in the human heart;

**Exodus 31:4; 35:32, 35**, YHWH has given the skill of the designer to make creative arts; **2 Chronicles 2:13**, similar to **Exodus 31:4; 26:15**, similar;

**2 Samuel 14:14**, God “thinks thoughts,” or “devises means” whereby the banished, Absalom, may be returned;

**Isaiah 55:7, 8, 8**, the wicked should abandon his thoughts, and return to YHWH; (Whose thoughts are so much higher than human thoughts),

**Isaiah 59:7, 7**, human thoughts, apart from YHWH, are evil, leading to ruin and destruction;

**Isaiah 66:2**, human thoughts that set forth a way that is not good;

**Isaiah 66:18**, because of their (evil?) thoughts, YHWH is about to gather the nations, to come and see His glorious radiance;

**Jeremiah 4:14**, how long will Jerusalem harbor evil thoughts?;

**Jeremiah 6:19**, disaster is coming upon the people because of their thoughts, that have taken the place of YHWH’s Word and **torah** / teaching);

**Jeremiah 11:19**, the people of Jerusalem have devised schemes against Jeremiah, to kill him; **18:18**, similar;

**Jeremiah 18:11, 12**, YHWH has thoughts, plans against Jerusalem, if she does not repent; but they insist on following their own plans;

**Jeremiah 29:11, 11**, YHWH has plans for His people following their punishment—plans of prosperity, hope and a future;

**Jeremiah 49:20**, YHWH has a plan against Edom; **50:45**, similar; only against Babylon; **51:29**, same;

**Ezekiel 38:10**, evil thoughts will come into the mind of Gog;

**Micah 4:12**, the nations gathered together against the daughter of Zion do not know YHWH’s thoughts;

**Psalm 33:10, 11**, YHWH foils the plans of the nations, but His plans stand firm forever;

**Psalm 40:6, verse 5** in English; YHWH's numerous thoughts, plans for His people;

**Psalm 56:6, verse 5** in English; enemies have thoughts, plans to harm the psalmist;

**Psalm 94:11**, YHWH knows the foolish thoughts of human beings;

**Job 5:12**, Eliphaz says that God thwarts the plans of the wicked;

**Job 21:27**, Job claims that he knows the thoughts of his adversaries;

**Proverbs 6:18**, YHWH hates a heart that devises wicked thoughts / plans;

**Proverbs 12:5**, the plans of the righteous are just;

**Proverbs 15:22**, plans fail for lack of counsel, but where there are many advisers, success comes;

**Proverbs 15:26**, YHWH hates the plans / thoughts of the wicked, but loves those of the pure; **Proverbs 19:21**, many are the plans in the human heart, but it is YHWH's purpose that prevails;

**Proverbs 20:18**, make plans by seeking advice; if you are going to wage war, obtain guidance; **Proverbs 21:5**, the plans of the diligent lead to profit, while haste leads to poverty;

**Lamentations 3:60, 61**, YHWH knows the plans of the enemies;

**Esther 8:3**, Haman's evil plan, **5**, same; **9:25**, same;

**Daniel 11:24**, wicked plans to overthrow fortresses;

**1 Chronicles 28:9**, David tells Solomon that YHWH knows every motive behind thoughts / plans;

**1 Chronicles 29:18**, David prays that YHWH will keep the thought / plan for giving generously in the minds of His people forever.

4. **Occurrences Of The Hiphil Masculine Plural Participle הַמְּכַעֲסִים,**  
**“The Ones Provoking,”In The Hebrew Bible:**

**Deuteronomy 4:25**, making idols, doing evil;

**Deuteronomy 9:18**, the Israelites at Mount Sinai build the golden calf;

**Deuteronomy 31:29**, Moses predicts that after his death the Israelites will do evil;

**Deuteronomy 32:16, 21**, “Jeshurun” abandoned God, making Him jealous by turning to “non-Gods”;

**Judges 2:12**, the generation of Israel following the conquest of the land forsook God to serve Baal and the Asherahs;

**1 Kings 14:9, 15**, Ahijah tells Jeroboam that he has done more evil than any before him, making metal Gods for himself and Northern Israel to worship, including Asherah poles;

**1 Kings 15:30**, Nadab followed in committing the same sins as Jeroboam; **1 Kings 16:2, 7**, Baasha, king of Northern Israel does the same; **16:13**, as does Elah likewise; **16:26**, and also Omri, even more; **16:33**, and Ahab, even more; **21:22**, similar, of Ahab; **22:53**, Ahaziah, similar;

**2 Kings 17:11, 17**, the exile of Northern Israel was caused by their setting up Asherah poles on every high place, including their sacrificing of infants;

**2 Kings 21:6, 15**, Manasseh of Judah sacrifice his infant son, adapting Near-Eastern religious practices, just as the Jewish forefathers had done;

**2 Kings 22:17; 2 Chronicles 34:25**, Josiah is warned by Huldah the prophetess that destruction is coming on Judah because of these practices;

**2 Kings 23:26**, Josiah’s great reforms did not stop YHWH’s anger because of Manasseh’s sins;

**Isaiah 65:3**, here; the Jewish religious practices adapted from their Near-Eastern neighbors provoke YHWH;

**Jeremiah 7:18, 19**, common people of Israel’s families join together in making cakes for the “Queen of Heaven”;

**Jeremiah 11:17**, burning incense to Baal; **32:29**, on the roofs of their houses;

**Jeremiah 25:6, 7; 32:30; 44:3, 8**, worshiping what their hands have made rather than YHWH;

**Jeremiah 32:32**, doing evil;

**Ezekiel 8:16-17**, bowing down to the sun, “putting the branch to the nose,” evidently a symbolic gesture in nature worship;

**Ezekiel 16:26**, Jerusalem’s prostitution with the Egyptians;

**Hosea 12:14**, Ephraim’s guilt of bloodshed;

**Psalms 106:29**, Israel’s eating sacrifices offered to lifeless idols at Baal-Peor (see **Numbers 25**);

**2 Chronicles 28:24-25**, Ahaz of Judah shut the doors of the temple and set up altars at every street-corner in Jerusalem, as well as building high places for burning sacrifices to other Gods in every town in Judah;

**2 Chronicles 33:3-6**, Manasseh of Judah built altars to the Baals and erected Asherah poles; he bowed down to the starry hosts, building altars to them in the temple. He sacrificed his sons in the the Valley of Ben Hinnom, practiced sorcery, divination and witchcraft, as well as consulting mediums for guidance.

## 5. The Background of Israel's Idolatrous Practices in the Ancient Near East

See **Leviticus 19:26-31**, with its list of pagan religious customs to be avoided by the Israelites, including eating meat with the blood still in it, practicing divination or sorcery, cutting the hair of the head or beard in certain ways, cutting the body in mourning for the dead, putting tattoo marks on the body and making a daughter a (temple) prostitute.

In James B. Pritchard's **Ancient Near-Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament**, pp. 325-61, there are numerous examples of ancient texts which show the constant use of magical incantations and rituals involving animal sacrifices, blood, fat, yeast, honey, clover, onions, fish, portable shrines, cedar, constant repetition of such words as "Lord!...Lord!" and "My Lady!...My Lady!", pastes made of honey, cream, dates, flour, libations formed from beer, wine, and milk, ritual washings, breaking of pots, musical instruments and singing, poems of appeasement, lamentations, use of substitutes to bear curses, sending away of animals bearing curses (compare the "scape-goat" of **Leviticus 16:10!**), the reading of omens;

Aromatic barley-seed and flour, oil and water, fringed garments upon which sacrifices were offered, tin bracelets, hand-raising gestures, all sorts of beers and wines, lumps of dough made in the form of human organs (such as are found throughout the ancient Near East with its healing centers of Asclepius (including Jerusalem), rituals for Divine marriages accompanied by special meals, blessings and curses, knives made in manifold colors, soda-plants reduced to ashes, twisted cords, tiny boats with silver and gold "oaths," trails made out of poured oil and honey, loaves of bread and small cheeses, clay, mud, wine-dregs, pieces of bitumen, pillars pushed over, burning of threads, spitting, twining together of blue, red, yellow, black, and white wools to make crowns for rams;

Use of mutton tallow, pine cones, kneaded dough, arrows, pieces of fur, scraped animal skins, bow-strings, mice; use of liver, heart and womb of animals, fir-trees, bronze-cups filled with animal blood, copper pegs, figs, grapes, pitchers of wine, cords made of red and white wool along with mirrors, use of bows and arrows in incantations designed to remove homosexuality, nights filled with dreams, fat, wax, trays, black and white sheep, olive oil, small pigs, holes dug in the ground, with casting in of black seeds and blue wool, raisins, mutton-fat, stone pillars thrown into fire, gifts of cast-off fine garments to old women, yeast, sinews, malt and malt-loaves, parading of deaf and blind people, use of men with extruding hernias, fire-brands, pieces of raw and cooked meat, precious metals placed underneath foundation stones, plaster, cold fat, and dog-men.

Reading these texts from the ancient Near East enables us to enter into a quite different culture for the average secularist westerner--although for native Haitians, Indonesians, Thais, Nigerians, Navajos and others still today these texts quickly bring smiles of recognition of the kind of world in which they themselves have grown up. It is very important that when we read **Isaiah** (or **Leviticus**) we think in terms of that kind of magic-filled, superstitious atmosphere, and not make the mistake of reading such legislation in terms of modern scientific presuppositions.

When the prohibition of “eating (meat) upon the blood” (**Leviticus 19:26**) is given, there can be little doubt concerning the relationship of this commandment to the ancient Egyptian and Canaanite fertility religions that surrounded Israel, and that would especially endanger her worship when the nation came into the promised land. In those fertility practices, the manipulation of blood was prominent, being considered as a magical force, that imparted sacred powers to those ingesting it, or rubbing it (especially menstrual blood) into cuts in their bodies.

The phrase, **לֹא תֹאכְלוּ עַל-הַדָּם**, is ambiguous. It is literally “You shall not eat upon the blood,” and has led to varying interpretations. Does the phrase envision people standing in a pool of blood, drawn or pouring forth from the animal being eaten in a “cannibalistic” manner? Jewish exegesis insists that what is meant is the eating of animal flesh from which the blood has not been fully drained--but that is not obvious from the Hebrew. The very fact that this first half of the verse is followed by the second half, with its commandment rejecting the use of omens and the incubation of oracles (a ritual that enables the hearing of a Divine voice) makes it very certain that this use of blood is involved in the fertility practices. The same thing is still true today in Satanic worship and in voodoo, in which ingestion of blood is believed to impart magical power.

The phrase **לֹא תִנְחָשׁוּ**, (**lo thenachashu** in **Leviticus 19:26**) forbids the practice of “divination,” or “observance of signs,” in order to foretell the future. It is closely related to the Hebrew word for “snake” or “serpent,” and may have reference to the use of serpents in their movements for the foretelling of the future. In **Genesis 44:5, 15** the statement is made that Joseph “practiced divination” by means of his cup, the one that he had placed in the mouth of Benjamin’s sack of grain. In addition to **Leviticus 19:26**, see **Genesis 30:27; Deuteronomy 18:9-22; 1 Kings 20:33; 2 Kings 17:17; 21:6** and **2 Chronicles 33:6**.

The phrase **וְלֹא תְעוּנְנֶנּוּ**, (**welo the(onenu**, in **Leviticus 19:26**, has the root verb (**oneyn**, which is very closely related to the phrase **לֹא תִנְחָשׁוּ**, (**lo thenachashu**). It means “practice soothsaying,” i.e., foretelling the future by magical means. This verb is found at **Genesis 9:14; Deuteronomy 18:10, 14; 2 Kings 21:6; Isaiah 2:6; 57:3; Jeremiah 27:9; Micah 5:11** and **2 Chronicles 33:6**. It is obvious that what is being referred to here is the magical means employed by the Canaanite fertility religions in order to obtain Divine counsel and guidance, in the absence of Israel’s **Torah** and **Nebiiym** (as well as the priestly Urim and Thummim).

Baruch A. Levine, in **The JPS Torah Commentary, Leviticus** (Jewish Publication Society, New York, 1989) holds that the word may be closely related to, or derived from, the Hebrew word for cloud, **עָנָן**, (**janan**). He notes that “We possess extensive information on the ominous role of clouds in ancient Near Eastern divination. The forms of clouds, their times of appearance, their movements and positions, and the heavenly bodies they obscure were all factors in interpreting omens.” (P.133) We think that while this is possible, even probable (just as the verb **nachas** may be related to the movement of serpents), it is in fact unproven.

The prohibition of cutting the corners of one's beard (**Leviticus 19:27**), uses the same noun, פֶּאֵה, **pe)ah** that is used for the "corners" or "sides" of the grain-fields (see **Leviticus 19: 9**). It occurs here with reference to the "side-burns," or edges of a person's hair on his head, or beard on his face. Just as the Israelite farmers are to leave the **peah** alone on the sides and corners of their grain-fields as a provision for the poor, letting this provision become a mark of YHWH's authority in their lives and in their incomes, so it is with their personal appearances. They are not to attempt to influence the Deity by peculiar marks on their bodies, or by special ways of cutting and shaping the hair on their head or face. The devotees of the fertility religions practiced these things as magical rituals, including cutting themselves with long gashes, and rubbing blood (both human and animal) into those gashes, seeking to gain Divine power thereby. The appearances of the children of YHWH must be quite different, says the law-code in **Leviticus** --no gashes, no rubbing with blood, no special cutting of the hair, or shaping of the beard, as if such practices could impart magical power.

It is a literalistic and legalistic mistake to understand this passage as forbidding certain hair-styles in modern times which have no religious connotations.

The prohibition of making "an incision for the life," שֶׁרֵט לְנֶפֶשׁ, **seret lanephesh** (**Leviticus 19:28**), presents difficulties for understanding. The verb שֶׁרֵט, **sharat** means "to incise," or "to scratch," and the noun which comes from it means "incision," or "scratch." The difficulty in translation is to understand what is meant by the second word, "for the life." We take this phrase to refer to cuttings in the flesh practiced by the devotees of the fertility religions, in which they would make long and deep gashes or incisions in their bodies, and then rub them full with the blood of powerful animals such as oxen or lions or rams, or use the menstrual blood of women, in hopes that this practice would impart the power [**nepfesh**] of the animals whose blood had been used; or when menstrual blood was involved, was thought to impart the life-giving power of the female to the male.

See the story of Elijah and the spokespersons for Baal in **1 Kings 18**, where the priests of Baal are described as cutting gashes into their flesh in a ritual designed to cause Baal to answer their prayers. Also see **Leviticus 21:5**, where a closely related noun, שֶׁרֵטֶת, **sareteth** occurs in a similar context.

Another practice that is forbidden in **Leviticus 19:28** is that of כְּתִיבַת קַעֲקַע. The first word in this phrase means "writings of..." The second word occurs only here in the **Hebrew Bible**, and its meaning is therefore very uncertain. Suggestions for its meaning have included "incision," "imprint," and "tattoo." It seems most probable that what is intended is some type of writing or engraving on the worshiper's body, intended like the שֶׁרֵט לְנֶפֶשׁ, to impart magical power to the worshiper. For similar teaching in the **Hebrew Bible**, see **Leviticus 21:5**; **Deuteronomy 14:1**; also see **Job 1:20** and **Isaiah 22:12**.

**Leviticus 19:31** prohibits turning to תְּאַבְתִּי, **ha)oboth**, which means literally “the skin-bottles,” and which is used to describe those who seek to communicate with the dead. For its usage in the **Hebrew Bible** see **Leviticus 19:31; 20:6, 27; Deuteronomy 18:11; 1 Samuel 28:3, 7, 7, 8, 9; 2 Kings 21:6; 23:24; Isaiah 8:19; 19:3; 29:4; Job 32:19; 1 Chronicles 10:13** and **2 Chronicles 33:6**. The Greek translators used the noun ἐγγαστριμύθοις, **engastrimythois**, “ventriloquists,” while the Latin Vulgate translates by **magus**, or sorcerer, and also sometimes by **python**, “Diviner,” which reminds us of the “Pythia” of the Greek oracles (see **Acts 16:16**). Another suggestion is that the word comes from a non-Semitic cultural loan-word meaning “sacrificial pit.”

In the **Epic of Gilgamesh** we are told how Gilgamesh dug a pit (**ab**) in the ground, and out of it called up the spirit of his beloved but dead companion Enkidu, and in the magical incantation texts there are many examples of using such pits in ritual magic.

Harry Hoffner has written concerning this word: “From the fifteenth to the end of the thirteenth centuries B.C.E. examples of this sort appear in the Hittite ritual. In this ritual, sacrificial pits...were dug...in the ground at a place which had been determined by interrogating the Gods. In this pit, oblations (loaves, cheese, butter, honey mixed with milk, oil, honey, wine, beer, and sacrificial blood), expensive gifts of silver (models of the human ear, breast ornaments, a miniature ladder) and often even the sacrificial animal was lowered, [where] someone below in the pit slaughtered it. Two of the objects lowered into the pit symbolized the twofold intention of the entire procedure. The silver model of an ear indicated the wish of the offerer to ‘hear’ and to learn from the inhabitant of the underworld. The silver ladder or staircase expressed the desire that the spirit might ascend to the world above...”

“Of particular interest is the personification of the pit as the deity **DA-a-bi**, who is the object of a particular exorcism ritual. He is the god of the underworld, and presides there over a court of justice in which the scales...are used. **DA-a-bi** belongs to the same class of underworld deities as the chthonic [‘pertaining to the gods or spirits of the underworld’] spirit **tarpish**. It is very probable that **tarpish** represents the same ancient migratory word as Hebrew **teraphim**. Thus, both **jobh** and **teraphim** are to be identified as mantic properties of the underworld, in which it was thought that the source of true knowledge was to be found...”

“The **Old Testament** uses this expression in three different senses: (1) the pit which has been dug out, by means of which the spirits of the dead are called up (**1 Samuel 28:7-8**); (2) the spirit or spirits of the dead which are troubled (**Isaiah 29:4**); and (3) the necromancer [‘one who communicates with the spirits of the dead’] who calls forth the spirits to get information (**Leviticus 19:31; 20:6, 27; Deuteronomy 18:11; 1 Samuel 28:3, 9; 2 Kings 21:6 [= 2 Chronicles 33:6]; 23:24; Isaiah 8:19...**)

“The spirit ascends...from the ground and undoubtedly comes forth from a prepared opening. Although the language of **Isaiah 29:4** is perhaps somewhat



figurative, still in the scornful words found there we can get some impression of the way in which the spirits were called:

Then deep from the earth you shall speak,  
from low in the dust your words shall come;  
your voice shall come from the ground like the voice of a ghost,  
and your speech shall whisper out of the dust.

“The prophets of Yahweh describe the audible manifestations of the **Jobh** as ‘whispering’ or ‘chirping’ (**tsaphtseph**), an expression which denotes the cry of certain birds (**Isaiah 10:14**) or the rustling of the leaves of the willow tree...The different verbs connected with **Jobh** indicate only that here was the source of secret information: a person ‘turned to’...‘sought’... ‘used’ ...the necromancer, who asked advice of...the spirit or spirits who came up out of the pit, or ‘divined by them’ (קִסְמֵי־לִי) **בְּאֹב**, ‘consult a spirit for me’) **1 Samuel 28:8**.

“**1 Samuel 28** is the most fruitful and probably also the oldest witness in the **Old Testament** for the understanding of **אֹב**, **Jobh**. In this passage we learn that the crisis which gave rise to the consultation of the necromancer was a serious military threat (**verses 4-5**). Naturally, the approved ways of seeking advice (...‘prophets’; ‘urim’...‘dreams’) were exhausted first, but Yahweh did not answer...When this happened, out of desperation Saul commanded his officers to seek out for him a woman who had access to an **אֹב**, **Jobh**. Saul went to her at night partly to conceal his identity, and partly because necromancers of this sort preferred to do their work at night. He made a twofold request: (1) ‘Divine (**qasam**) for me by a spirit (**Jobh**),’ and (2) ‘Bring up for me...whomever I shall name to you’ (**verse 8**). After the woman had obtained a promise of protection from her client (**verse 10**), the name of the dead person who should be brought up was given to her (**verse 11**).

“This passage gives no information as to the procedure the woman used to entice the spirit of Samuel to come forth. When it appeared, she alone had a visionary experience (**verses 12-13**), because Saul had to ask her, ‘What do you see?’ This visionary experience gave the woman greater potential for comprehension, for suddenly she knew the true identity of her disguised client (**verse 12**). She described that which appeared to her in the vision as ‘spirits’ (אֱלֹהִים... Gods) coming up out of the (opening in the) earth’ (**verse 13**), and as ‘an old man...who is wrapped in a robe’...( **verse 14**). The account of Saul’s nocturnal visit to the **ba(al-ath) Jobh**, female master of a deceased spirit] is told in artistic literary style. But still there can be no doubt that this document accurately reflects the practice of necromancy in ancient Israel.” (Harry Hoffner, **Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament** I, pp. 130-34)

**Leviticus 19:31** also prohibits relying on הַיִּדְעָנִים, commonly translated by “familiar spirits,” with the implication that they are “knowing,” or “wise,” acquainted with the secrets of the unseen world of the dead. Elsewhere In the **Hebrew Bible** see:

**Leviticus 20:6**, YHWH states, “And the person who shall turn to the communicators with the dead, and to the ones intimate with the unseen world, to practice prostitution after them; and I will set my face against that person”;

**Leviticus 20:27**, “And a man, or a woman that will be among them--a communicator with the dead, or one intimate with the unseen world, they shall surely be put to death; with the stone(s) they shall stone them. Their blood is upon them.”;

**Deuteronomy 18:10-11**, “There shall not be found among you anyone who causes his son or his daughter to pass through the fire (as an offering), anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead.”;

**1 Samuel 28:3, 9**, the witch of Endor and Saul; see above;

**2 Kings 21:6; 2 Chronicles 33:6**, Manasseh’s practices;

**2 Kings 23:24**, Josiah gets rid of all these practices;

**Isaiah 8:19**, “And when they say to you, "Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter," should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living?”

We take it that the יִדְעֹנִי, **yidde(oni)** (singular) is one form of the **jobh**. But whereas **jobh** has a much broader meaning, including the pit, the spirits inhabiting the underworld, and the necromancer, the **yidde(oni)** is much more explicit--being a name for the spirit that inhabits the underworld and that is called up, but nothing more.

All of this, of course, is very strange to our modern secular, “western” eyes and ears. But in order to understand **Isaiah’s** language, as well as that of **Leviticus 19** in a genuine way, we must think our way back into that ancient world-view, so saturated with magic and the rituals of the fertility religions. We believe that it is just this type of magical rituals, designed to communicate with the dead, and obtain oracles, that is being described by **Isaiah 65-66**.

What do you think? How do you explain all of these strange elements and practices of ancient Near Eastern rituals? And did you think that following Judah’s exile in Babylon, such magical rituals would no longer be practiced by the returning exiles? We suspect that under the influence of Babylon’s religious practices, they may have been increased by those returning to Judah—at least **Third Isaiah’s** statements lead us to such a conclusion.

6.           **The Verb יָרַשׁ, “To Inherit,” In The Hebrew Bible**

**Isaiah 14:20-21**, at the close of Israel’s “taunt song” against the king of Babylon, the imprecation is raised, “May the offspring of evildoers nevermore be named! Prepare slaughter for his sons because of the guilt of their fathers—lest they rise and possess the earth, and fill the face of the world with cities!”;

**Isaiah 34:11**, the hawk and the porcupine shall possess Edom;

**Isaiah 34:17**, YHWH has commanded, and marked out their portions in Edom—these wild animals and birds shall possess it forever!;

**Isaiah 54:3**, the children of the barren woman “will spread abroad to the right and to the left,” and her offspring “will possess the nations, and will people the desolate cities”;

**Isaiah 57:13**, in the midst of Israel’s idolatry, the one who takes refuge in YHWH will possess the land, and inherit YHWH’s set-apart mountain; again showing that there can be “good grapes” in the midst of an evil vineyard / nation!;

**Isaiah 60:21**, in this chapter, devoted to the future glory of Israel, when nations come to her light, seeing Israel’s children coming from afar, and foreigners building up her walls, Israel will be called “the city of YHWH,” “the Zion of the Set-Apart One of Israel,” a city with gates open day and night, and with YHWH as its everlasting light. YHWH states that “Your people shall all be righteous / righteous; to long-lasting time they shall possess the land!” What a promise that stands alongside the many predictions Israel’s destruction in **Isaiah**! Students of the **Book of Revelation** will quickly recognize the deep influence that this chapter in **Isaiah** has had in John’s writing of **chapters 21-22 of Revelation**! Again, Susan Ackerman is correct in her contention that not all Israel is marked out for destruction in the **Book of Isaiah**!

**Isaiah 61:7**, in the year of YHWH’s favor, Israel shall return to the land to be called “oaks of righteousness,” who build up the ancient ruins, and who possess a “double portion”;

**Isaiah 63:18**, the nation of Israel has been invaded, their temple trampled—which Israel possessed only “for a little”;

**Isaiah 65:9**, from Jacob and from Judah shall come possessors of YHWH’s mountains.

7. **Seeking YHWH in the Hebrew Bible:**

**Genesis 25:22**, Rebekah goes לְדַרְשׁ, to seek / inquire of YHWH;

**Deuteronomy 4:29**, if from their captivity Israel will seek (וּבְקִשְׁתֶּם), a synonym)

YHWH your God, you will find Him if you seek Him (תִּדְרְשׁוּ) with all your heart and with all your innermost being;

**1 Samuel 9:9**, the author's note, informing the reader that "Formerly in Israel, when a person went לְדַרְשׁ אֱלֹהִים, to inquire of / seek God, he said, 'Come, let us go to the seer,' for today's 'prophet' was formerly called a seer;

**1 Kings 22:5, 7, 8**, three times the verb דָּרַשׁ occurs with reference to seeking YHWH's guidance through a prophet / spokesperson; Micaiah is the one who, over against 300 other prophets / spokesperson say the opposite, speaks the true Word of YHWH;

**2 Kings 1:3, 6, 16**, the people of Israel are instructed to go to Baal-zebub לְדַרְשׁ, to seek / inquire concerning the injured Ahaziah's health, whether or not he would recover; Elijah rebukes the king for this, and predicts his coming death as the Word of YHWH;

**2 Kings 3:11**, King Jehoshaphat calls for a prophet / spokesperson to inquire / seek direction from YHWH;

**2 Kings 8:8**, Ben-Hadad, king of Aram / Syria, tells Hazael to go to Elisha, the man of God, to inquire / seek YHWH concerning his health;

**2 Kings 22:13, 18**, Josiah commands his servants to go and inquire / seek YHWH concerning the meaning of the book of the law that had been found; they do so, and receive the Word of YHWH through Huldah the prophetess;

**Isaiah 8:19-20**, And when / if they shall say to you people, seek / inquire to / by means of the pits and familiar spirits, the ones chirping and murmuring, should not a people seek / inquire to / by means of its God? Shall it seek the dead on behalf of the living? To the *torah* / teaching and to (the) testimony! If they do not speak according to this Word—then there is no dawn / breaking light for them! (a difficult text to translate, but not so difficult to understand);

**Isaiah 9:12<sup>Heb</sup> / 13<sup>Eng</sup>**, in the midst of their defeat by enemies, the people of Israel have not sought / inquired of YHWH of Armies!;

**Isaiah 11:10**, Isaiah's enigmatic vision of the future sees the whole earth filled with the knowledge of YHWH as the nations / peoples of the earth seek / inquire of

Jesse's "root" (the Messiah) who stands as an ensign, and who is filled with wisdom, understanding, counsel and knowledge;

**Isaiah 34:16**, Isaiah invites his readers to seek / inquire "from upon" the scroll of YHWH; but what does this refer to? Does Isaiah mean his own written visions foretelling the destruction of Edom?;

**Isaiah 55:6**, seek / inquire of YHWH while He may be found; seeking YHWH is parallel to calling to Him;

**Isaiah 58:2**, day after day they seek / inquire of YHWH; meant cynically;

**Isaiah 65:1**, I, YHWH, was sought by those who did not call; and many other places.

## 8. The Gods Fortune and Fate / Destiny in the Ancient World

Gad was the name of the pan-Semitic God of fortune, and is attested in ancient records of Aram [Syria] and Arabia. Gad is also mentioned [in **Isaiah 65:11** (our text)]--some translations simply call Him (the God of) Fortune), as having been worshiped by a number of Hebrews during the Babylonian captivity. Gad apparently differed from the God of destiny, who was known as Meni. The root verb in Gad means cut or divide, and from this comes the idea of fate being meted out.

How widespread the cult of Gad, the Deity, was in Canaanite times may be inferred from the names Baal-Gad, a city at the foot of Mount Hermon, and Migdal-Gad, in the territory of Judah. Compare also the proper names Gaddi and Gaddiel in the tribes of Manasseh and Zebulun (**Numbers 13:10, 11**). At the same time it must not be supposed that Gad was always regarded as an independent Deity. The name was doubtless originally an appellative, meaning the Power That Allots. Hence any of the greater Gods supposed to favor men might be thought of as the Giver of Good Fortune and be worshiped under that title; it is possible that Jupiter, the planet, may have been the Gad thus honored--among the Arabs the planet Jupiter was called the greater Fortune (Venus was styled the lesser Fortune).

For the Greek equivalent of Gad / Fortune, see the **Wikipedia** article "Tyche," which states that "In ancient Greek city cults, Tyche (Τύχη, meaning "Luck" in Greek, the Roman equivalent is Fortuna) was the presiding tutelary ['protective'] Deity that governed the fortune and prosperity of a city, its destiny. Stylianos Spyridakis (University of California at Davis) concisely expressed Tyche's appeal in a Hellenistic world of arbitrary violence and unmeaning reverses: "In the turbulent years of the Epigoni [or 'Didadochi,' successors] of Alexander, an awareness of the instability of human affairs led people to believe that Tyche, the blind Mistress of Fortune, governed mankind with an inconstancy which explained the vicissitudes of the time." Increasingly during the Hellenistic period, cities venerated their own specific iconic version of Tyche, wearing a mural crown (a crown like the walls of the city). In literature, She might be given various genealogies, as a Daughter of Hermes and Aphrodite, or considered as One of the Oceanids, daughters of Oceanus and Tethys or Zeus Pindar. She was connected with Nemesis [Goddess of Retribution and Indignation] and Agathos Daimon ('Good Spirit'). She was uniquely venerated at Itanos in Crete, as Tyche Protogeneia, linked with the Athenian Protogeneia ("first-born"), Daughter of Erechtheus, Whose Self-sacrifice saved the city. In Alexandria the Tychaeon, the temple of Tyche was described by Libanius as one of the most magnificent of the entire Hellenistic world.

"Tyche appears on many coins of the Hellenistic period in the three centuries before the Christian era, especially from cities in the Aegean. Unpredictable turns of fortune drive the complicated plot lines of Hellenistic Romances, such as Leucippe and Clitophon or Daphnis and Chloe. She experienced a resurgence in another era of uneasy change, the final days of publicly-sanctioned paganism, between the late-fourth-century [Christian] emperors Julian and Theodosius I who definitively closed the temples. The effectiveness of Her capricious power even achieved respectability in philosophical circles during that generation, though among poets it was a commonplace to

revile her for a fickle Harlot. She had temples at Caesarea Maritima, Antioch, Alexandria and Constantinople.”

For Tyche’s Roman equivalent Goddess, see the **Wikipedia** article “Fortuna,” which states that “Fortuna...was the Goddess of fortune and personification of luck in Roman religion. She might bring good luck or bad: she could be represented as veiled and blind, as in modern depictions of justice, and came to represent life's capriciousness. She was also a Goddess of fate: as Atrox Fortuna, She claimed the young lives of the princeps Augustus' grandsons Gaius and Lucius, prospective heirs to the Empire.

“Her Father was said to be Jupiter and like Him, She could also be bountiful Copia [‘Abundance’]. As Annonaria She protected grain supplies. June 11 was sacred to Her: on June 24 She was given cultic worship at the festival of Fors Fortuna. Fortuna's Roman cult was variously attributed to Servius Tullius whose exceptional good fortune suggested their sexual intimacy and to Ancus Marcius. She had a temple at the Forum Boarium and a sacred precinct on the Quirinalis as Fortuna Populi Romani (the Fortune of the Roman people). Her identity as personification of chance events was closely tied to virtues (strength of character). Public officials who lacked virtues invited ill-fortune on themselves and Rome: Sallust uses the infamous Cataline as illustration "Truly, when in the place of work, idleness, in place of the spirit of measure and equity, caprice and pride invade, fortune is changed just as with morality."

Here in **Isaiah** we witness a much earlier form of the Goddess “Fortune” or “Luck” in the Near-Eastern religious pantheon.

9. **YHWH's "Calling" In The Book of Isaiah**

**13:3**, YHWH has called His warriors to carry out His wrath;

**22:12**, On the day of Jerusalem's destruction, my Lord YHWH of Armies called the people to weeping and to mourning...;

**22:20**, On that day, YHWH will call to His servant Eliakim, giving him a position of authority;

**40:26**, YHWH calls each star by name;

**41:2**, YHWH has called Cyrus from the east in righteousness, to be at His feet (in service);

**41:4**, YHWH has called / proclaimed the generations from the first;

**41:9**, YHWH has called His servant Jacob from the farthest corners of the earth;

**42:6**, YHWH has called His servant in righteousness to be a light to the non-Jewish nations, and He will support him in that work;

**43:1**, YHWH has called Jacob / Israel by name; they are His;

**45:3-4**, YHWH calls His servant Cyrus by name, giving him a title of honor, though Cyrus does not acknowledge YHWH;

**46:11**, YHWH calls for a bird of prey from the east (Cyrus);

**48:12**, Jacob / Israel must listen, for YHWH, the great Creator has called;

**48:15**, YHWH has called Cyrus, and he will accomplish his mission against Babylon;

**49:1**, YHWH's servant tells how YHWH called him before his birth;

**50:2**, YHWH asks His divorced wife, Israel, Why, when I called, was there no one to answer?;

**51:2**, when YHWH called Abraham he was only one person, but YHWH blessed him and he became many;

**54:6**, though a divorced wife, YHWH will call her back (contrary to the law of **Deuteronomy 24:1-4**);

**65:12**, here—YHWH has called to His people, but they did not answer; **66:4**, same;

**65:15**, While the wicked in Israel are in sorrow, YHWH will call His servants by another name.



10. Occurrences Of The Verb אָכַל "To Eat" in Isaiah

**1:7**, foreigners are eating up / devouring your ground / land;

**1:19-20**, If you are willing and will listen, you shall eat the good things of the land—if not, you will be eaten up / devoured by the sword;

**3:10**, "Tell the righteous / righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their deeds," probably not meaning physical food, but possibly including it;

**4:1**, Seven women will take strong hold of one man saying We will eat our own bread...;

**5:17**, When YHWH punishes the arrogant, temporary residents will feed among the ruins of the fat rich;

**7:15, 21-22**, by the time Emmanuel learns to reject bad and choose good, people will be eating curds (like our cottage cheese) and honey; following the "shaving" of Israel by the Assyrian king, "a man will keep alive a young cow and two sheep, and because of the abundance of milk that they give, he will eat curds, for everyone who is left in the land will eat curds and honey." Motyer holds that curds and honey were the "food of poverty"; Mowinckel and Ringgren hold that it can mean the "food of Gods," or the food of a land that Baal has fertilized, similar to the phrase "a land flowing with milk and honey";

**9:11<sup>Heb</sup> / 12<sup>Eng</sup>**, Aram and Philistia ate up / devoured Northern Israel as instruments of YHWH's anger;

**9:19-20<sup>Heb</sup> / 20-21<sup>Eng</sup>**, and he divided (? sliced meat?) upon (the) right, and was hungry; and he ate upon (the) left, and was not satisfied; each man ate his arm's flesh; Manasseh devours Ephraim, and Ephraim devours Manasseh; together they are against Judah (a depiction of a terrible internal war in Northern Israel);

**10:17**, the "Light of Israel" will become a fire that eats up / consumes proud Assyria;

**11:7**, in the good times coming, when the earth is filled with the knowledge of YHWH, the formerly carnivorous lion will eat straw like the ox;

**21:5**, Isaiah is overcome by his vision of Elam and Media laying siege to Babylon—he sees Babylonian (?) officers set tables, spread rugs, eat and drink—instead of preparing for the defense of Babylon;

**22:13-14**, YHWH of Armies has called Jerusalem to mourning, but instead there is שִׂשׂוֹן, joy and revelry, killing of cattle and slaughter of sheep, eating meat and drinking "because tomorrow we die!";

**23:18**, the wages earned by the prostitute Tyre will be set apart for YHWH, and will go to those who live before YHWH to eat to their filling, and for purchase of fine clothes!;

**24:6**, a curse consumes earth / land;

**26:11**, may the fire of YHWH's enemies consume them!;

**29:6-8**, a flame of fire will devour those who fight against Ariel / Zion; they are said to be like a hungry man who dreams he is eating, but then awakens hungry; or a thirsty man who dreams he is drinking, but awakens still thirsty;

**30:23-26**, in the good days coming, those who have been given the hard bread of adversity and the water of affliction will be given rain for seed, and rich and plenteous bread (to eat); work-animals will eat in a roomy pasture; on every high and lofty hill there will be brooks running with water, as YHWH binds up His people Israel's wounds;

**30:27, 30**, YHWH's furious judgment is a flame of devouring fire that prepares a "topheth," a "burning-place" for His enemies;

**31:8**, the Assyrian will be devoured by a sword, not a human sword;

**33:11, 14**, a Divinely prepared devouring, consuming fire in which no one can live;

**36:12**, the Babylonian commander tells the Jewish leaders that all the Jews will have to eat their own excrement and drink their own urine;

**36:16**, if the Jews make peace with the Babylonians, the commander promises that they will all eat from their own vine and fig-tree, and drink water from their own cistern;

**37:30**, the sign given to Hezekiah is that in the third year his people will sow and reap, plant vineyards and eat their fruit;

**44:16, 19**, the maker of wooden idols uses some of the wood to cook, roasting his meat and eating his fill, but uses the rest of the wood for the idol, and then worships it;

**49:26**, Israel's oppressors will eat their own flesh and drink their own blood;

**50:9**, those who condemn YHWH's servant will wear out like a robe; the moths will devour them;

**51:8**, similar, including worms that devour wool;

**55:1-2**, YHWH's invitation to the thirsty and hungry—Come, buy and eat, without money; eat and your innermost being will be satisfied!;

- 55:10**, rain and snow water the earth, so that it brings forth bread for the eater;
- 56:9**, the beasts of the field are invited to come and devour Israel, whose watchmen are useless;
- 58:14**, those who go without food the way YHWH wants, caring for the needy, spending themselves on behalf of the hungry, YHWH will cause them to eat the inheritance of Jacob;
- 59:5**, the wicked in Israel hatch the eggs of vipers, and whoever eats them will die;
- 61:6**, the rebuilt people of Israel will “eat the wealth of nations”;
- 62:9**, instead of others enjoying the product of their labors, the returned Israelites will eat it and praise YHWH;
- 65:4**, YHWH holds out His hands to an obstinate people who in their night-vigils eat the flesh of pigs;
- 65:13**, YHWH’s servants who listen to His call will eat and drink, but the obstinate will be put to shame;
- 65:21-22**, in the new Jerusalem YHWH’s people will plant vineyards and eat their fruit; no longer will others eat what they have planted;
- 65:25**, wolf and lamb will graze together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, while the serpent’s “bread” will be dust;
- 66:17**, those who participate in the fertility religion’s practices eat the flesh of pigs and rats and other abominable things.

Isaiah’s theology of nourishment can be developed out of these statements. Those who refuse to listen to YHWH are depriving themselves of nourishment—both physical and spiritual; those who listen to YHWH in obedience are assured of nourishment—both physical and spiritual!

11. **The verbs שָׂמַח, Samach, To Rejoice, To Be Glad, גִּיל, Giyl, “Rejoice,”  
With Their Related Nouns שִׂמְחָה, Simchah, “Joy, Gladness, Mirth,”  
And גִּילָה, Gilah, “Rejoicing” in Isaiah**

**9:2**, To those walking in darkness, a child is born, light shines on the nation, and the cry of joy goes up, “You multiplied the nation; You increased הַשִּׂמְחָה, the joy; שָׂמְחוּ, they were glad / rejoiced before You בְּקִצִּיר כְּשִׂמְחַת, like joy at the harvest, as יִגִּילוּ, they will rejoice when they divide the spoil (following victory in battle).” This is an expression of great joy, based on YHWH’s future actions in history, describing it as already having happened;

**9:16**, when my Lord visits judgment on Israel, לֹא יִשְׂמַח, He will not rejoice / be glad over their chosen young men, and לֹא יִרְחַם, He will not have compassion on their orphans and widows! It is a terrifying statement of Divine judgment on Israel, the very opposite of joy and gladness!;

**14:8**, Israel’s “taunt song” against the fallen king of Babylon depicts the cedars of Lebanon rejoicing at his demise;

**14:29**, Philistia is warned not to rejoice over the fall of Sargon (?), for destruction is coming;

**25:9**, On the day when death is swallowed up forever, and all tears are wiped away, it will be said, וְנִגִּילָה וְנִשְׂמַחָה בִּישׁוּעָתוֹ, “Let us rejoice and let us be glad / rejoice in His salvation!”

**29:19**, in the good times coming, the blind will see, and the humble / afflicted / meek will “add שִׂמְחָה, joy / gladness in the YHWH”;

**35:1, 2**, in that good time coming, the wilderness וְתִגַּל, will rejoice and blossom, with great גִּילָה rejoicing; see also the verb שׂוּשׂ, “exult”;

**39:2**, Hezekiah rejoiced over the coming of the Babylonians officers to whom he showed the royal storehouse treasures, and was rebuked by Isaiah for doing so;

**41:16**, YHWH’s servant Israel will be victorious over its enemies, as they rejoice in YHWH (בִּיהוָה תִּגִּיל, literally “you will rejoice in the YHWH”);

**49:13**, Shout for joy, O heavens! Rejoice, **גִּילִי**, O earth! Burst into song, O mountains! Because YHWH comforts His people...;

**56:7**, YHWH will bring the formerly excluded eunuchs and foreigners who choose to serve Him to His set-apart mountain, **וְשִׂמְחֵתֵם**, “and I will cause them to be glad”;

**61:10**, evidently Isaiah himself exclaims, **שׂוֹשׁ אֲשִׁישׁ** I will exult greatly in the YHWH; my innermost being **תִּגְלַל** will rejoice in my God!;

**65:13**, YHWH’s servants **יִשְׂמְחוּ**, will rejoice, but those who refuse to listen to YHWH will be put to shame;

**65:18-19**, But instead exult and rejoice until until—in that which I am creating, because look—(I am) creating Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people an exultation. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and I will exult in My people. And a voice of weeping and a voice of out-cry will not be heard in her again!;

**66:10**, Zion is giving birth to a new day, and so all who love Jerusalem are commanded, **שְׂמְחוּ**, to rejoice with her, **וְגִילוּ**, and be glad; **מִשׂוֹשׁ אֶתְּהָּ שִׂישׂוּ**, exult with her (in) exultation!

Isaiah’s “theology of joy, gladness and exultation can be developed from these statements. There is reason for joy in listening to YHWH, and sharing in the hope-filled future He is creating!

12. **Occurrences of the verb בָּרָא, bara) , “Create,” in the Hebrew Bible:**

**Genesis 1:1, 21, 27, 27, 27; 2:3, 4; 5:1, 2, 2; 6:7**, all with reference to the initial 7-day creative activity; **Deuteronomy 4:32**, similar;

**Exodus 34:10** (YHWH will do wonders, which have never been created in the earth—continuing creation);

**Numbers 16:30**, YHWH יִבְרָא יְבִיאָהּ, “a creation He will create,” the earth opening up to swallow the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram and their families—a continuing creation);

**Joshua 17:15, 18** (both with the unique meaning of the verb—“clearing” land);

**1 Samuel 2:29** (the hiphil infinitive, with the unique meaning “to fatten”);

But see especially in **Isaiah**:

**4:5**, In the good times coming, when YHWH raises up “the branch” that is, the messiah, He will create a cloud of smoke by day and fire by night over Jerusalem a continuing creation, reminiscent of the wilderness wanderings;

**40:26**, lift up your eyes to the heavens, and ask, “Who created all these?”;

**40:28**, YHWH is the Creator of the ends of the earth;

**41:20**, YHWH will answer the needs of the poor, turning the desert into pools of water, making trees to grow, so that people may see and know that YHWH, the Set-apart One of Israel, has created it—a continuing creation in history;

**42:5**, referring to the initial creation, but a creation which continues as YHWH gives breath and life to earth’s people;

**43:1**, YHWH created Jacob—long after the initial creation;

**43:7**, everyone called by YHWH’s name, He created for His glorious radiance;

**43:15**, YHWH is Israel’s Creator;

**45:7**: Forming (like a potter) light, and creating darkness  
making peace (or ‘prosperity’) and creating evil—  
I, YHWH—One doing all these things! (A continuing creation);

**45:8**, Let salvation spring up, let righteousness grow with it—I, YHWH, have created it—a continuing creation;

**45:12**, YHWH created humanity on the earth;

**45:18**, YHWH created the heavens, and did not create the earth to be empty, uninhabited;

**48:7**, From now on, YHWH will tell Israel of new things, being created now, not long ago—a continuing creation;

**54:16**, YHWH created the blacksmith, who fans the coals into flame and forges a weapon; YHWH has created the destroyer to wreak havoc in history—a continuing creation;

**57:19**, YHWH Who punishes His greedy people, will restore them, and is creating praise on their lips—a continuing creation;

**65:17, 18**, YHWH will create new heavens and a new earth, in which His people can rejoice and be glad; **NIVSB** comments that the new heavens and new earth are “The climax of the ‘new things’ Isaiah has been promising (see **42:9; 48:6**).”

**Jeremiah 31:22**, YHWH will create a new thing in the earth—a woman encircling a man(?);

**Ezekiel 21:24, verse 17** in English; the infinitive **בָּרָא**, **bare**) occurs twice, but its meaning is difficult to determine;

**Ezekiel 21:35<sup>Heb</sup> / 30<sup>Eng</sup>**, the Ammonites are told by YHWH to return to the place where they were created, the land of their ancestry—Divine creation continues whenever human beings are born, in any country!;

**Ezekiel 23:47**, the phrase **וַיִּבְרָא**, literally “and to create,” occurs; its meaning is unclear;

**Ezekiel 28:13**, the king of Tyre was in Eden, on the day he was created; surely meant symbolically; **15**, similar—this is another instance of on-going creation;

**Amos 4:13**, Israel’s God, YHWH of Armies, creates the wind, a present, on-going creation;

**Malachi 2:10**, Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us? A continuing creation;

**Psalms 51:12<sup>Heb</sup> / 10<sup>Eng</sup>**, “Create in me a clean heart, O God!”, a present creation;

**Psalms 89:13**, YHWH created the north and the south;

**Psalms 89:48**, YHWH created all men for futility;

**Psalm 102:19**, a people not yet created, that is, a completely new people of YHWH, may praise YHWH—continuing creation. We understand by this that Israel is not the end of YHWH's creation of a people for Himself!;

**Psalm 104:30**, when YHWH sends His Spirit, the living creatures of the deep are created—a present creation;

**Psalm 148:5**, YHWH commanded, and all the heavenly hosts were created;

**Ecclesiastes 12:1**, “Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come.”



13.

**Occurrences of שִׁׁוּרָה, “new” in Isaiah**

**Isaiah 41:15**, a threshing sledge, with new, sharp teeth;

**Isaiah 42:9**, See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare;  
before they spring into being, I announce them to you;

**Isaiah 42:10**, Sing to YHWH a new song;

**Isaiah 43:18-19**, Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a  
new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?;

**Isaiah 48:6-7**, From now on I will tell you of new things, of hidden things unknown to  
you. They are created now, and not long ago; you have not heard of them  
before today;

**Isaiah 62:2**, you will be called by a new name;

**Isaiah 65:17**, I am creating new heavens and a new earth; **66:22**, same.

14. **A Sample of Obvious Mistakes in the Book of Hebrews’  
Use or Misuse of the Hebrew Bible**

**Hebrews 1:6**, which apparently uses **Deuteronomy 32:43** in the Greek—but which says no such thing concerning the Son of God.

**Hebrews 1:10-12**, which claims the statement of **Psalms 102:25-27** which is addressed to God is a statement made to the Son of God, the Messiah.

**Hebrews 2:14**, which says the devil has the power of death; whereas the **Hebrew Bible** depicts God alone as having the power of death—see **Job 1-2**.

**Hebrews 3-4**, where the author of **Hebrews** equates “sabbath-rest” with Israel’s “rest” in the Land of Israel.

**Hebrews 4:8**, where the author claims that Joshua did not give Israel “rest” in the Land of Israel, which is a denial of **Joshua 23:1** and **1 Kings 8:56**.

**Hebrews 7:3, 8**, where he claims that Melchizedek did not have father or mother, but lives eternally—statement not made in the **Genesis 14** story.

**Hebrews 9:4**, where he claims that the golden altar of incense was located in the “holy of holies, and that the ark of the covenant had within it a bowl of manna and Aaron’s rod that budded, denying the explicit statements in **1 Kings 8:8** and **2 Chronicles 5:10** that there was nothing in the ark of the covenant except the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments.

**Hebrews 9:15-17**, where he makes the mistake of identifying YHWH’s covenant with Israel with a “last will” or “testament,” which only takes effect at the death of the testator, basing all of this misleading idea on the Greek’s use of διαθήκη to translated the Hebrew בְּרִית, “covenant,” which was not at all a “last will and testament,” which would only become effective on the death of YHWH or Moses!

**Hebrews 9:22**, where he makes the mistaken generalization that “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins,” which overlooks the teaching of the **Hebrew Bible** that David, for one example, was forgiven for adultery, lying, and murder, simply by confessing his sin. See **Psalms 51**, especially **verses 16-17**.

**Hebrews 10:5**, where he claims that “it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.” But this is a denial of the many statements in the **Book of Leviticus** that claim there is forgiveness based on the blood of bulls and goats. See especially **Leviticus 16** for its description of the total forgiveness that accompanied the sacrifices made on the Day of Atonement.

**Hebrews 11:27**, where he claims that Moses left Egypt “not being afraid of the anger of the king,” certainly not what the story in **Exodus** depicts—a Moses fleeing Pharaoh’s wrath.

**Hebrew 11:32**, where he reveals his male chauvinism, mentioning Samson and Jephthah as heroes of the faith, but saying nothing of the great female judge, Deborah, whose leadership is celebrated in the **Book of Judges**.

15. Occurrences of ראשונות, in both Singular and Plural in Isaiah

**Isaiah 1:26**, I will restore your judges, as in former times;

**Isaiah 8:23, 9:1** in English; In the former times, He humbled Zebulun and Naphtali;

**Isaiah 41:4**, אֲנִי יְהוָה רִאשׁוֹן וְאֶת־אַחֲרָיִם אֲנִי־הוּא, I, YHWH, (with) former times and with later times—I (am) He!;

**Isaiah 41:22-23**, Bring in your idols to tell us what is going to happen. Tell us what the former things were, so that we may consider them and know their final outcome. Or declare to us the things to come, tell us what the future holds, so that we may know that you are Gods...';

**Isaiah 41:27**, YHWH was the first to tell Jerusalem the good news of Cyrus' coming;

**Isaiah 42:9**, the former things have happened; now YHWH declares new things;

**Isaiah 43:9**, which of the nations has been able to foretell future events, or proclaim the former things?;

**Isaiah 43:18**, Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past!;

**Isaiah 43:27**, your first or former father missed-the-mark;

**Isaiah 44:6**, YHWH is the First and the Last; **48:12**, same;

**Isaiah 46:9**, Remember former things, from long-lasting time! Note this sharp contrast with **43:18**;

**Isaiah 48:3**, the former things from past time, I YHWH declared;

**Isaiah 52:4**, at the former, or first, Israel went down to Egypt;

**Isaiah 60:9**, ships of Tarshish are at the first of those bringing Israel's sons from afar;

**Isaiah 61:4**, YHWH's redeemed people will restore the formerly devastated places;

**Isaiah 65:7**, those who have participated in the fertility religions will be repaid for their former deeds;

**Isaiah 65:16**, the former troubles will be forgotten;

**Isaiah 65:17**, the former things will not be remembered.

16. **Occurrences of the verb זָכַר, “To Remember” in Isaiah:**

**12:4**, cause it to be remembered that YHWH’s name is exalted;

**17:10**, you have forgotten, you have not remembered YHWH, your Rock;

**19:17**, everyone to whom Judah is caused to be remembered will be terrified;

**23:16**, Tyre is described symbolically as a “forgotten prostitute” who sings and plays in order to be remembered;

**26:13**, only in You, YHWH, will we cause Your name to be remembered;

**36:3**, title of officer, the one who causes to be remembered, ‘recorder’, **22**, same;

**38:3**, Hezekiah prays for YHWH to remember how he has walked before Him;

**43:18**, אֶל-תִּזְכְּרוּ רֵאשֵׁנוֹת וְקִדְמוֹנוֹת אֶל-תִּתְּבַנְנוּ, you shall not remember former things; and previous / eastern things you shall not consider diligently; that is, forget the past, quit dwelling on it!;

**43:25, 26**, I, I am the One Who blots out your transgressions for My Own sake, and your missings-of-the-mark, I will not remember! Cause Me to remember, and let us enter into controversy...’ that is, let us argue the matter together);

**44:21-22**, Remember these things, O Jacob...I made you...you shall not forget Me! I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud...;

**46:8, 9**, Remember this, make yourselves certain!

Cause it to return upon (your) heart, rebels!

Remember former things, from long ago!

Because I (am) God (El), and there is not another–

God (Elohiym) and nothing like Me!

(That is, while there are some things that Israel is not to remember, but rather, to forget, Israel is still called to remember the basic truths of its faith, and keep them firm; to remember former things from the distant past—that YHWH alone is God! Note here that **Isaiah** has YHWH saying both “forget the past” and “remember the past”; and this is not contradictory—it means don’t dwell on the past, but see YHWH’s hand creating a future; still, at the same time, remember the past in terms of its teaching the will of YHWH!);

**47:7**, The Queen Babylon did not remember her future[!];

**48:1**, Jacob / Israel causes YHWH’s name to be remembered;

**49:1**, YHWH has caused His servant's name to be remembered from his mother's womb;

**54:4**, Zion will remember no more the reproach of her widowhood,

**57:11**, Israel has gone to Molech, the Canaanite God, and not remembered YHWH;

**62:6**, those who cause YHWH to be remembered;

**63:7**, I will cause YHWH's loving-kindnesses to be remembered);

**63:11**, YHWH's people remembered the days of old;

**64:4<sup>Heb</sup> / 5<sup>Eng</sup>** , YHWH comes to the help of those who remember His ways;

**64:8<sup>Heb</sup> / 9<sup>Eng</sup>** , O YHWH, do not remember our missings-of-the-mark for long-lasting time;

**65:17**, the former things will not be remembered;

**66:3**, a memorial offering.

17.