

Isaiah 8:1-9:6^{Heb} / 7^{Eng}, Hebrew Text with Translation and Footnotes

Assyrian Invasion Is Coming--

Isaiah's Son, with an Ominous Sounding Name

YHWH's People Must Wait and Hope for the Son of David,

a Coming King, with Astoundingly Hopeful Names

and a Kingdom of Peace!

8:1¹ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי

¹**Chapter 8** is concerned with Isaiah's son with an ominous name, a warning sign of the coming Assyrian invasion, while **9:1-7** is concerned with David's son, a coming King (Messiah), with astoundingly hopeful names, who will restore peace and hope to Israel.

Alexander sums up **chapter 8**: “The prediction of the overthrow of Syria and [Northern] Israel is now renewed in the form of a symbolical name, to be inscribed on a tablet and attested by two witnesses, and afterwards applied to the prophet's new-born son, whose progress as an infant is made the measure of the event (**verses 1-4**)...

“It is then foretold that the judgment denounced upon Syria and [Northern] Israel should extend to Judah, as a punishment for distrust of God and reliance upon human aid, in consequence of which the kingdom should be imminently threatened with destruction...yet delivered for the sake of Immanuel, by whom the strength and wisdom of all enemies should be alike defeated (**verses 5-10**) [and we wonder, Where is anything said about ‘the land being delivered for the sake of Immanuel,’ or that ‘by Immanuel the strength and wisdom of all enemies would be defeated’?]....

“The Messiah himself is then introduced as speaking [where does the text say this? In **8:11** Isaiah says that ‘YHWH spoke,’ but there is no mention of the Messiah speaking!], warning the prophet and the true believers neither to share in the apprehensions nor to fear the reproaches of the people, but to let Jehovah be an object of exclusive fear and reverence to them, as he [He?] would be an occasion of destruction to the unbelievers, from whom the true sense of this revelation was to be concealed, and restricted to his followers, who, together with the prophet and the Son of God himself [where does the text say anything about ‘the Son of God himself’?], should be for signs and wonders to the multitude, while waiting for the manifestation of his presence, and refusing to consult any other oracle except the word of God, an authority despised by none but those doomed to the darkness of despair, which is described as settling down upon them; with a sudden intimation, at the close, of a change for the better, especially in reference to that part of the country which had been most afflicted and despised (**verses 11-23**).” (P. 183)

This obviously “Christian” reading of the chapter interpolates the phrases “the Messiah himself,” and “the Son of God himself,” neither of which is found in the text.

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We are thankful that none of the other Christian commentaries on **Isaiah** which we are reading follow Alexander in this.

Gray states that **8:1-4** is “A further extract from Isaiah’s autobiography...Some time before the fall of Damascus (732 B.C.E.), Isaiah, at the command of Yahweh, records in two different ways and at different times his conviction of the approaching fate of both Damascus and Samaria:

- (1) he writes down, or engraves, in the presence of witnesses, the legend, ‘Belonging to Maher-shalal-chash-baz (Spoil is speedy–plunder hasteneth)’;
- (2) nearly a year later he names his new-born son Maher-shalal-chash-baz, in the expectation that Assyria will have despoiled both Damascus and Samaria before the child is more than about a year old.

“The point of view is the same as in **7:1-16**...[There] Isaiah addresses the king, here he makes his outlook on affairs known to the people at large...

“On the main issue Isaiah’s prophecies were justified. Judah was quickly relieved, much of Ephraim and Syria desolated, and Damascus captured and spoiled, within three years of the interview with Ahaz. The destruction of Samaria was deferred another ten or eleven years—rather longer than Isaiah anticipated.” (Pp. 141-42)

Oswalt entitles **8:1-4** “The Sign of Maher-shalal-chash-baz,” and comments that “**Chapter 8** continues the developments of **chapter 7** in the light of the Syro-Ephraimite crisis. There the sign and its explanation were primarily for Ahaz and the house of David. Here a very similar sign is put before the people as a whole. Here too the sign has a double implication. On the one hand it is a message of hope and confidence (**verses 3, 4**), but on the other it is also one of impending doom (**verses 5-8**)...

“Nonetheless, and here the materials of **chapter 8** go beyond those of **chapter 7**, the coming doom is within God’s purposes, and He will not give the devouring nations permission to run amok indefinitely (**verses 9, 10**)...

“The concluding section of the chapter (**verses 11-22**) consists of wider theological reflection upon the whole experience. It is the nation’s general inability to believe that God could be involved in their daily affairs which has landed them where they are. If they had paid as much attention to God as to the supposed conspiracies of their neighbors, if they had sought God’s will as earnestly as they had endeavored to divine the future through magical means, then they would not be sinking into the darkness as rapidly as they were. As throughout this segment, the question remains, ‘Is God really with us?’ Isaiah knows it, but king and people alike have difficulty believing it.”

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Oswalt adds that “The similarity of **8:1-4** to **7:10-17** is too close to be coincidental. The relation of the sign to the birth and naming of a child is the same, even to the use of the same language (‘she shall conceive and bear a son,’ **7:14**; ‘she conceived and bore a son,’ **8:3**). Moreover, the significance of the signs is the same: before the child reaches a certain age, Samaria and Damascus will cease to be a threat to Judah. These similarities have prompted some writers to conclude that it is these events to which **7:10-17** (at least initially) refers...

“This seems highly likely in that it satisfies the demand of those verses for some specific fulfillment of that prophecy during Ahaz’s time. Furthermore, the occurrence of the name Immanuel in **8:8** and an allusion to it in **8:10** argue that **7:10-8:10** constitutes a unit dealing with the Immanuel theme.” (P. 220)

Kaiser comments on **verses 1-4** that “The first verse of this narrative, which has come down as an account by the prophet in the first person, records...a Divine commissioning of the prophet Isaiah. This time, however, there is simply a symbolic action taking the form of the production of an inscription. **Verse 2** presupposes that the commission has been carried out and by way of supplement reports that the prophet took two witnesses to it...

“**Verse 3a** reports how Isaiah slept with ‘the prophetess,’ her subsequent pregnancy and the birth of a son...In **verse 3b** the prophet receives the further commission to name his son in accordance with the wording of the inscription...

“In **verse 4** the inscription and name of the prophet’s son are explained together...

“It emerges from **verse 4** that the story relates to the outcome of the Syro-Ephraimite war of the years 734-32 B.C.E., and its consequences.” (P. 179)

(an ominous name since it means)
Spoil Speeds; Prey Hastens.

Watts entitles **8:1-4** “Swift-Plunder, Hastening-Booty.” He comments that this section is “first person narrative of the type called prophetic autobiography.” It is composed of two parts:

Verses 1-2, which “tells of instruction received from God to write on a large board the words **לְמַהֲרָה שָׁלֵל חָשׁ בָּז**, ‘To ‘Swift Plunder Hastening Booty.’

Verses 3-4, which “tells of the birth of a son who is given this name and of the meaning this name carries.

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קַח־לְךָ גְּלִיּוֹן גָּדוֹל
וּכְתֹב עָלָיו בְּחַרְט אֲנֹשׁ
לְמַהֵר שְׁלַל חֵשׁ בַּז׃

And YHWH said to me,²

Take for yourself a large tablet,³

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“The people knew Isaiah’s stand on current policy. They will also have understood the general direction indicated by the announcement on the board even before the birth occasioned repetition and emphasis of it.” (Pp. 111-12)

Slotki comments on **verses 1-3** that “The prophet attempts to impress the people by two concrete manifestations. He first displays on a tablet an ominous inscription attested by trustworthy witnesses, and then adopts the same inscription as the name of his newly-born son.” (P. 38)

The words written on the tablet are:

לְמַהֵר שְׁלַל חֵשׁ בַּז׃
Belonging to Spoil Speeds, Prey Hastens

and the name given to Isaiah’s son is just that:

מַהֵר שְׁלַל חֵשׁ בַּז׃
Maher-Shalal-Chash-Baz

²Oswalt comments that “The prophet speaks now in the first person, as throughout the chapter. Isaiah himself is becoming a part of the process of signs that God is giving His people (**verse 18**).” (P. 221)

³Translations of the phrase גְּלִיּוֹן גָּדוֹל, vary, from “a great roll,” to “a large sheet,” to “a large tablet,” to “a large scroll.”

Gray comments that גְּלִיּוֹן “may have been widely applicable to any *blank* surface intended for writing, whether tablets, parchment, or papyrus...Whatever it was, the object being large would be conspicuous and attract attention.” (P. 142)

Watts notes that “The versions all agree in rendering **gadol** ‘large,’ but they vary in translating **gillayon**: [**Rahlfs**], ‘new volume’; Aquila, ‘tanned hide’; Symmachus,

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and write upon it⁴ with a man's stylus / engraving instrument,⁵

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'book'; Theodotian, 'chapter'; Aramaic Targum לוח, 'tablet'; Latin Vulgate, 'book.' Galling (based on **Isaiah 3:23**) suggests that it means a piece of cloth, perhaps of papyrus...Driver suggests a large placard...a wooden board covered with wax [such as one] which was found in Nineveh. This would fit the description here very well." (P. 110)

Driver adds that "**Habakkuk 2:2** records the practice a century later in Jerusalem of displaying prophecies in easily read letters." (P. 112)

Oswalt comments that "Evidently God's intent here is that anyone should be able to read the oracle (compare **Habakkuk 2:2**, 'Make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it')..."

"A גליון, **gillayon** is not a scroll or a stone tablet (לוח), but a flat piece of wood...or metal...and thus appropriate for posting as a sort of placard." (P. 221)

Alexander states that "Lexicographers explain גליון, **gillayon** not as a derivative of גלל, 'to roll,' and a synonym of מגלה, 'a volume ['writing,' 'book,' 'roll']', but as a derivative of גלה, 'to polish' [we do not find the verb with this meaning; we find the meanings 'to uncover,' 'to remove'], and as meaning a tablet of metal...[or] of wood covered with wax." (P. 184)

Kaiser holds that "The commission given to the prophet to take a large tablet is probably an indication that the inscription was intended for public display. (P. 180)

⁴Watts notes that "It is unusual for the narrative to tell of prophets 'writing.' It is likely that this activity was the exclusive prerogative and skill of scribes. Jeremiah uses an *emanuensis* [a person employed to do the writing for another], Baruch. But of all the prophets Isaiah is the one most likely to have known that art." (P. 110)

⁵Translations of the phrase תַּרְטָא אֲנוּשׁ, vary, from "a man's pen," to "common script," to "common characters," to "an ordinary pen," to "an ordinary stylus," to "a stylus of disaster."

Slotki translates by "in common script," and says that this means "easily legible by the ordinary man" but adds that others take it to mean "an inscription the size of a man." (P. 38)

Watts suggests "a man's stylus." He notes that "This is a strange usage...It is common to translate 'an ordinary stylus'...[some] have suggested a form of writing

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known to the common man. But the word here is 'stylus,' not 'writing.'

"Another [suggestion is to change the pointing / spelling to] אָנָשׁ...[which] means 'incurable,' [suggesting the meaning] 'a writing that cannot be erased'...[Another explanation is to take this last spelling to mean] 'a broad, soft pen which should make the writing more legible.'" (P. 111)

Oswalt comments that "It is not clear what is meant by an ordinary stylus (literally, 'the stylus of a man')...Many commentators assume it to be a figure of speech for a common style of script that could be easily read (compare the English expression 'he wrote a clear hand')." (P. 221)

Gray states that "the exact force of אָנָשׁ אֶרֶט is uncertain, but the general sense seems to be, write so that every one who sees this conspicuous tablet may be able to read it." (Pp. 142-43)

Watts notes that "Translations of the name have varied. The two verbs, מָהַר and אָשׁ, may be understood as imperatives, as perfects, or as participles. מָהַר has also been read as a foreign term for a 'soldier' [leading to the translation] 'Soldier of Booty, Hastening to Plunder'...The use of participles is clearly the best with the translation: 'Swift-Plunder, Hastening-Booty.'" (P. 111)

He adds that "The name is preceded by לְ ['to,' or 'for'] like that on seals [and in many **Psalm** titles] which indicate the owner [i.e., 'belonging to,' or 'authored by']. But this does not quite fit here. **Gesenius-Kautzsch-Cowley** # 119u speaks of a meaning like 'in relation to' or 'of' in the sense of 'concerning.' This is more likely." (P. 112)

Slotki notes that some prefer the translation "speeding (to the) spoil, hastening (to the) prey." (P. 38)

Motyer states that "The name is impressionistic rather than grammatical: 'Speed-spoil-haste-booty.' It is intended to provoke questions, not to answer them. It combines 'Speed'...with such an assurance of conquest that the oncoming foe does not think of the fight but only of the booty." (P. 90)

Kaiser translates by "One hastens to spoil, speeds to prey!"

Alexander comments on **verse 1** that "The prediction of the overthrow of Syria and [Northern] Israel, contained in **chapter 7:8-9**, is here repeated, and as before in a symbolical form. In order to excite immediate attention, and at the same time to verify the prophecy, Isaiah is required to inscribe an enigmatical name on a large tablet in a

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8:2⁷ וְאֶעֱיֵדָה לִי עֵדִים נֶאֱמָנִים

אֵת אֹרְיָהּ תִּכְתֹּב

וְאֶת־זְכָרֶיהָ בֵּן יִבְרָכְיָהוּ:

And I called as witness⁸ for myself trustworthy witnesses,⁹

⁶(...continued)

legible character, with a view to present exhibition and to subsequent preservation. The name itself includes a prophecy of speedy spoilation. *And Jehovah said to me, take thee (or for thyself) a great tablet*, i.e., great in proportion to the length of the inscription), *and write upon it with a man's pen (or stylus*, i.e. in an ordinary and familiar hand), *To Maher-shalal-chash-baz* (i.e. Haste-spoil-quick-prey). The name may also be read as a sentence—*Hasten spoil! Prey hastens.*” (Pp. 183-84)

⁷Gray notes that “The inscription is to be witnessed by credible witnesses...It is generally inferred (1) that Isaiah put up his inscription in some public place for all to read, and (2) that he had it witnessed, so that when events proved his forecast correct, the prophet might be believed to have spoken the word of Yahweh.” (Pp. 143-44)

⁸Where our Hebrew text has וְאֶעֱיֵדָה, “and I called as witness (Oswalt translates this as a future, ‘I will call as witness’), 1QIs^a reads וְהֵעֵד, “and he called as witness.” **Rahlf's** has the imperative “and make witnesses for Me,” which reflects a Hebrew text with וְהֵעֵיֵדָה. English translation of the phrase vary:

King James, “And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record”;

Tanakh, “and call reliable witnesses”;

New American Standard, “and have it attested for me by reliable witnesses”;

New International, “So I called in [Uriah the priest and Zechariah son of Jeberekiah] as reliable witnesses for me.”

New Jerusalem, “And take reliable witnesses”;

Slotki, “and I will take...faithful witnesses”;

Watts, “And so I took witnesses.”

Alexander, “And I (Jehovah) will take to witness for Me credible witnesses...”

Alexander comments that “The [Latin] Vulgate takes the verb as a preterite [past tense]...with *waw conversive* [*consecutive*]. The Septuagint [our **Rahlf's**], Targum and Peshito [Syriac] make it imperative...The true construction is no doubt the obvious one, and I will cite as witnesses...God still being the Speaker.” (P. 185) Slotki likewise holds that **verse 2** is “the continuation of God’s speech beginning with ‘take thee in the preceding verse.” (P. 38)

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The questions leading to the variances in translation are: first, whether or not to read the imperfect verb as conversive / consecutive, i.e., as future or perfect tense; second, whether to translate with the Hebrew or the Greek, Latin and Syriac, which have the imperative verb; and third, whether the phrase is to be taken as a continuation of the Divine speech in **verse 1**, or as the words of Isaiah the prophet.

We translate the Hebrew text as a conversive / consecutive perfect, “And I called as witness,” understanding it to be the words of the prophet Isaiah. These are decisions which have to be made by the translator, and there is no room for dogmatic certainty as to which translation is correct. It is foolish for Alexander to say that his translation is “no doubt the obvious one.” Perhaps to him, but obviously not for others.

Oswalt comments that “The purpose of having the writing witnessed is not clear...There is no other instance where a prophetic writing was witnessed, and thus it is certainly possible that the document was some sort of legal instrument...Just as Ahaz was forced to become party to the sign of Immanuel, so Ahaz’s priest...is made party to the sign of Maher-shalal-chash-baz...That the writing had been witnessed by men of public stature made it impossible to level a charge of ‘prophecy after the fact’ against Isaiah in coming years.” (P. 222)

Watts states that “The practice of taking witnesses is regulated by law:

Deuteronomy 17:6,

Upon (the) mouth / testimony of two witnesses,
or three witnesses,
the one dying shall be put to death;
he shall not be put to death upon (the) mouth / testimony of one witness.

Deuteronomy 19:15,

One witness shall not stand up against a man for any iniquity,
and for any sin,
among every sin which he may sin.
Upon (the) mouth of two witnesses,
or upon (the) mouth of three witnesses
will a matter stand / be established!

⁹Alexander comments that “In order to preclude all suspicion of its having been uttered after the event, the prophecy is not only recorded, but attested by two witnesses ...These were not to be witnesses to the prophet’s marriage (Luther, Grotius), but of his having written written and exhibited the prophecy long before the event.” (P. 184)

Motyer states that the two witnesses “would subsequently testify that Isaiah had set up the placard and vouch for the date.” (P. 90)

and Zekaryahu, son of Yeberkeyahu.¹¹

8:3¹² וַאֲקָרַב אֶל-הַנְּבִיאָה

וַתֵּהָר וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי

קְרָא שְׁמוֹ מֵהַר-שְׁלֵל-חֵשׁ-בִּז:

And I, I drew near to the prophetess;¹³

¹⁰Slotki notes that Uriah the priest is “mentioned again in **2 Kings 16:11**; the name of the other witness is otherwise unknown.” (P. 38) See also **2 Kings 18:2**.

¹¹Where our Hebrew text has **יְבֵר כִּיָּהוּ**, **Rahlfs** has the shorter “Barachiou.”

Kaiser comments that “The involvement of the two high-placed witnesses, the senior priest of the Jerusalem temple, Uriah (compare **2 Kings 16:10**), and the father-in-law of King Zechariah (compare **2 Kings 18:2**), is evidently intended to guarantee the truth of the first sign, which occurs at least nine months before the second.” (P. 180)

¹²Alexander comments on **verse 3** that “The significant name, before inscribed upon the tablet, is now applied to the prophet’s new-born son, that this child, as well as the inscription, might remind all who saw them of the prophecy.” (P. 185)

¹³Watts notes that **הַנְּבִיאָה**, ‘the prophetess’ is used of:

Miriam	Exodus 15:20
Deborah	Judges 4:4
Huldah	2 Kings 22:14; 2 Chronicles 34:22
Noadiah	Nehemiah 6:14

He comments that this last one named, Noadiah, “is the only instance referring to a prophet’s wife. There is no record that she was an active prophet in her own right. Here, by conceiving the child of the ominous name, [‘the prophetess’] is a direct participant in God’s revelation and deserves the title.” (P. 111)

Oswalt comments that “While it is possible that Isaiah’s wife is so titled merely because she was the wife of a prophet, it is also entirely possible that she was a prophetess in her own right.” (Pp. 222-23)

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and she conceived, and she bore a son.

And YHWH said to me,

Call his name Maher-Shalal-Chash-Baz!¹⁴

8:4 כִּי בְטָרִם יָדַע הַנְּעֵר קָרָא

אָבִי וְאִמִּי

יִשְׂאֵל אֶת-חֵיל דְּמִשְׁק

וְאֵת שְׁלַל שְׁמֶרוֹן

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Alexander mentions the “strange opinion of Tertulian, Basil, Cyril and Jerome, that the prophetess is the virgin Mary, and that this verse is the language of the Holy Spirit, though adopted by Oecolampadius [a German theologian and religious reformer who worked with Erasmus and Zwingli, and influenced a later generation of Protestants, including John Calvin; he was friendly towards Marian veneration. **Wikipedia** (5/30/2016)] and others, is rejected even by Thomas Aquinas.” (P. 185)

¹⁴The strange sounding name "Maher-Shalal-Chash-Baz" means something like "Quick-to-the-Plunder; Swift to the Spoil," or "Spoil Speeds, Prey Hastens." This child, with such an ominous name, would serve as an "acted parable" to Judah; before the age of about two (compare the name "Immanuel" in **chapter 7**; it seems obvious to us that Isaiah intends this new son of his as the fulfillment of the Immanuel prophecy), both Damascus (the capital city of Aram or Syria) and Samaria (the capital city of the northern Kingdom of Israel) would have been carried away into captivity!

As Motyer says, “This verse makes the boy a time-indicator in the approach of that which his name declares.” (P. 90)

The ominous, symbolic names causes Kaiser to comment that “In a time of crisis Yahweh did not fail to give plenty of opportune and impressive public signs which guaranteed the downfall of the two enemy kingdoms, no matter how their significance was read by the people of Jerusalem.” (P. 181)

Alexander comments that “The date of the event is determined by a reference to the infant’s growth, as in the case of Immanuel...The time fixed is that of the child’s capacity not to recognize its parents, or to talk, but to utter the simple labial sounds by which in Hebrew, as in many other languages, *father* [אָבִי, **abhi**] and *mother* [אִמִּי, **jimmi**] are expressed...The description was intended to be somewhat indefinite, equivalent perhaps to our familiar phrase *a year or two*, within which time we have reason to believe that the event occurred.” (Pp. 185-86)

לפני מלך אשור:

Because before the youth will know to call out

My father and My mother,¹⁵

He¹⁶ will lift up (the) wealth of Damascus

and Samaria's spoil / plunder,

before Assyria's king!¹⁷

¹⁵Slotki notes that this means when “the child has the ability to distinguish his parents from other persons. This he would be able to do at a very early age; so the threatened invasion would soon come to pass.” (P. 38)

Oswalt comments that “Exactly when a child can say ‘my father’ and ‘my mother’ is not clear. If the first gurgled ‘papa’ or ‘mama’ is intended, then certainly the devastation of Damascus and the stripping away of Samaria’s provinces that took place in 732 B.C.E. happened within a year of Maher-shalal-chash-baz’s birth. If a more careful articulation is supposed then the birth may have taken place two or three years prior to 732 B.C.E.. Possibly Isaiah did not intend to give an entirely precise indication, but only to say that the events were imminent.” (P. 223)

Again we note, the language of the text is not concise, clear, exact. Rather, it is enigmatic, inexact, puzzling, calling for clarification.

¹⁶Again, the text is ambiguous. Does the “he” refer to the child, or to God, or to the King of Assyria? But the two or three year-old child would hardly be capable of leading an army to victory, or of receiving the booty of victory—therefore we assume the 3rd person masculine pronoun refers either to YHWH or to the King of Assyria. Our English translations avoid the problem by turning the verb into a passive, referring to the wealth of Damascus—it will be carried away.

¹⁷Oswalt comments that “Here the initial meaning of the words first published at least nine months earlier (**verse 1**) becomes apparent. God’s word is sure. Not only will Ephraim and Syria withdraw from Judah, they will be themselves plundered...

“Although the name seems ominous in the extreme it is precisely like Immanuel in its initial implications: Judah’s enemies will be destroyed, and God can be trusted. Within a short time, these events will take place. Again, as in **7:17** and **20**, it is not merely Assyria as a nation, but the king of Assyria [Slotki identifies the king as Tiglath-pileser III, 745-727 B.C.E., p. 38], the one with whom Ahaz has entered into alliance, whose rapacity is identified.” (P. 223)

Motyer states that “In 734 B.C.E. Tiglath-pileser marched down the Israelite sea-coast, through Philistia, to the Egyptian border, cutting off Egyptian aid to the treaty powers. In 733 B.C.E. Israel lost Galilee, Transjordan (**2 Kings 15:29**), Megiddo and

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other cities and it was only the hasty submission of Hoshea which saved the kingdom for a few years more. Damascus fell to Assyria in 732 B.C.E.” (P. 91)

Translations of the last two lines of **verse 4** vary:

King James, “the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria.”

Tanakh, “the wealth of Damascus and the spoils of Samaria, and the delights of Rezin and of the son of Remaliah, shall be carried off before the king of Assyria.”

New Revised Standard, “the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away by the king of Assyria.” **New International**, almost the same.

New Jerusalem, “the wealth of Damascus and the booty of Samaria will be carried away while the king of Assyria looks on.”

Rahlf, λήψεται δύναμιν Δαμασκοῦ καὶ τὰ σκῦλα Σαμαρείας ἔναντι βασιλέως Ἀσσυρίων, “it [the child] will receive the power of Damascus and the spoils of Samaria before the king of the Assyrians.”

Alexander, “one (or *they* indefinitely) shall take away the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria before the king of Assyria.”

These differing translations demonstrate how unclear Isaiah’s language is. It is anything but precise, exact, clearly understood. It is enigmatic, puzzling, and translators are challenged to make sense of it! However, there can be no doubt that it means the wealth of Syria / Aram and Northern Israel will soon be gone, carried away!

¹⁸Gray entitles **8:5-10** “The Extreme Peril and Complete Security of Judah.”

He claims that “Textual corruption, the intrusion of glosses...and, probably, the juxtaposition of passages of different origin, have obscured the meaning of these verses.” (P. 145)

Whether we agree with this conclusion or not, it is obvious that the text is by no means “clear,” and easily understood. Rather, as we have stated again and again, it is a puzzling, “enigmatic” message, that raises many questions on the part of the translator and the interpreter.

Gray states that “**Verses 6-8b** predict, under the figure of a vast flood, due to the rise of the Euphrates, which is to inundate the land of Judah to a dangerous depth, the devastation of Judah by Assyria; **verses 8c-10** [predict] the complete security of Judah owing to the presence of God, which frustrates the hostile plans of the nations of the world. There is no transition from the one theme to the other...**Verses 8c-10** are probably post-exilic.” (*Ibid.*)

Oswalt entitles **8:5-10** “Assyria at the flood, yet God is with us.”

(continued...)

And YHWH added to speak to me again, saying:

8:6¹⁹ יֵעַן כִּי מֵאֵסׁ הָעַם הַזֶּה אֶת מַי הַשִּׁלּוֹחַ

הַהֹלְכִים לָאֵט

וּמִשׁוֹשׁ אֶת־רִצִּין וּבֶן־רַמְלִיָּהוּ:

Since this the people²⁰ rejected²¹ (the) waters of the Shiloach,²²

¹⁸(...continued)

He comments that “As with **7:18-25**, the same sign which is a testimony to God’s faithfulness is also a word of destruction to those who will not believe...So a Judah, delighting over the spoliation of her enemies, learns to her horror that Maher-shalal-chash-baz applies to her as well as them.” (P. 224)

Slotki comments that in **verses 5-8** “The Assyrian invasion of Judah is threatened in symbolic language.” (P. 39) Kaiser calls the language “deliberately obscure oracular style” (P. 184)

Symbolic language, indeed! “Waters of Shiloach that run quietly,” “rejoicing over Rezin and Remalyahu’s son [omitting his name],” the strong, mighty waters of the Euphrates = the Assyrian King, “waters that overflow their banks, and its outspread wings covering Judah, reaching to its ‘neck’”...combined with the depiction of the statement’s being made to the child Immanuel, and the flood’s waters filling his land!

Motyer states that “In **verses 1-4** Isaiah redrafted **7:16** in terms of Maher-Shalal-Chash-Baz; the boy’s birth would signal the imminent elimination of the northern powers before Assyria. In **verses 5-8** he elaborates **7:17**; the Assyrian domination of Israel (**verses 6-7**) would be but a prelude to its domination of Judah (**verse 8**).” (P. 91)

¹⁹Alexander comments on **verse 6** that “The Assyrian invasion is now represented as a punishment of Judah for distrusting the Divine protection and seeking that of the Assyrians themselves. The immediate relief thus secured was to be followed by a worse calamity produced by those in whom they now confided.” (P. 186)

²⁰Motyer states that “Following the natural sequence from verse 4, *this people* is Samaria, the northern kingdom.” (P. 91)

²¹Oswalt comments that “The people cannot blame their fate upon their king. They have been as much terrified by the enemy (**7:2**) as he and as little willing to commit themselves to God.” (P. 225)

²²The Hebrew phrase מַי הַשִּׁלּוֹחַ הַהֹלְכִים לָאֵט is literally “waters of the Shiloach, the ones walking / flowing to / according to gentleness.” Translations vary slightly:

(continued...)

²²(...continued)

King James, “the waters of Shiloah that go softly”;

Tanakh, “The gently flowing waters of Siloam”;

New Revised Standard, “the waters of Shiloah that flow gently”;

New International, “the gently flowing waters of Shiloah”;

New Jerusalem, “the waters of Shiloah which flow smoothly”;

Rahfs, τὸ ὕδωρ τοῦ Σιλωαμ τὸ πορευόμενον ἡσυχῆ, “the water of the Siloam, the one going / flowing quietly.”

From the Greek translation, we understand the phrase to be referring to a pool of water on the southwest side of the old City of David, which received all of its waters from the Gihon Spring on the eastern side of the old City. That is at least the way the Greek translator understood it. From **Wikipedia** we quote:

“The Gihon Spring...or ‘Fountain of the Virgin’ in the Kidron Valley was the main source of water for the Pool of Siloam in the City of David, the original site of Jerusalem. One of the world's major intermittent springs--and a reliable water source that made human settlement possible in ancient Jerusalem--the spring was not only used for drinking water, but also initially for irrigation of gardens in the adjacent Kidron Valley which provided a food source for the ancient settlement.”

“The spring rises in a cave 20 feet by 7. Being intermittent, it required the excavation of the Pool of Siloam which stored the large amount of water needed for the town when the spring was not flowing. The spring has the singular characteristic of being intermittent, flowing from three to five times daily in winter, twice daily in summer, and only once daily in autumn.” (1/26/2018)

Kaiser, quite differently, claims that “The Siloah or ‘Sender’ is to be understood as the canal which draws off the water of Gihon.” (P. 184) And Motyer, likewise, states that “*Shiloah* was the stream from the Gihon spring into Jerusalem.” (P. 91)

This is the only place where the noun שִׁלְחַ, **shiloach** occurs in the **Hebrew Bible**, here with the definite article, “The Shiloach.” Kaiser is assuming that it is a participle from the verb, but a qal active participle would be spelled שֹׁלֵךְ, **sholek**, “one sending,” and a piel active participle would be הַמְּשַׁלֵּחַ, “the One sending forth,” of YHWH, in **Psalm 104:10**.

In contrast to the fast moving waters of the Euphrates, the waters from the Gihon Spring flow very gently and slowly—before the time of Hezekiah, through a man-made canal around the southern end of the hill on which the old City of David rested; and after Hezekiah’s time through a tunnel dug out by Hezekiah’s engineers underneath the hill (Ophel).

(continued...)

the ones running quietly,²³

²²(...continued)

Alexander states that “*the waters of Shiloah* [the Hebrew name] (or Siloam [the Greek name], the only perennial fountain of Jerusalem [but the pool Siloam is not a ‘perennial fountain’—it is only a pool which receives all its water from the spring Gihon, which is the ‘perennial fountain’], here used as a symbol of the Divine protection) *that go softly* (or flow gently, unaccompanied by noise or danger).”

Oswalt comments that “With a lovely figure of speech Isaiah compares the help of God to an apparently ineffectual little stream, whereas the help of the mighty nations of the world seems like the Euphrates. What we do not realize is that the supposedly mighty river can sweep over us and swallow us up for its own devices. This paradox, that what is mightiest seems least so in appearance, is found throughout Scripture [code-word for the Judeo-Christian-Protestant canon of the **Bible**]...

“Those who trust in God must look deeper than appearance. It seems likely that the stream referred to came from the Gihon spring on the west side of the Kidron Valley and flowed around by conduits to pools at the lower end of the city where the Kidron and Tyropoeon valleys met.” (P. 225)

Gray states that “Isaiah is obviously speaking in metaphor. The most probable explanation of the metaphor seems to be that the living waters of Shiloah rising under Zion stand for Yahweh, who in **Jeremiah 2:13** is compared to a ‘fountain of living waters.’ The waters of Shiloah, ‘however beneficent, are to outward appearance insignificant’ (Cheyne); so the power of Yahweh, which had been the source of Judah’s welfare...and to Isaiah seemed an all-sufficient ground for quiet confidence (**Isaiah 7:4; 30:15**), was in the eyes of the people insignificant, not to be trusted, but forsaken for other sources of strength (compare **Isaiah 30:2, 12, 16; 31:1-3**).” (P. 146)

Calvin understands by the waters of Siloam the mild and peaceful government of God, compared with the powerful military sway of foreign monarchs. Quite differently, Slotki holds that the “waters of Siloam” is “a metaphor for the house of David.”

And we ask, Does the text conceive of the conquering armies of the Assyrians as the “rushing floods of the Euphrates” coming with devastating force against Judah, while the Israelite kings, the house of David, are conceived of as the quiet, gently flowing waters of Gihon that flow into the pool Siloam? Slotki would probably respond that the house of David is the expression of God’s government. What do you think?

²³What does it mean to say the waters of the Shiloach “run quietly”? We would re-word the statement to “the waters of the Gihon Spring that run quietly or flow gently into the Shiloach / Siloam pool, with hardly a sound.”

For thirteen years, I served a church just a few miles from Fort Bragg in North Carolina. Because of there being so many military people in our congregation, I became an honorary chaplain at Fort Bragg, and was able to attend many military

(continued...)

and (chose) rejoicing / exultation²⁴ over Rezin and Remalyahu's son—²⁵

²³(...continued)

ceremonies, with their banners and flags, their marching, and on one occasion the presence of Lyndon Johnson, President of the United States, with his ringing speech calling on the Special Forces leaving for Vietnam to go “bag some coons,” and “nail some skins to the wall.”

It was so different from our church—which was much quieter, with little or none of the fanfare. But I often thought that what was happening there—in the quiet, still worship, as resolutions were being made to commit life to the love of God and neighbor—that perhaps there was more spiritual power there than in the marching troops with all their banners and weapons, headed for Vietnam to “bag coons.”

And I ask, Is Isaiah thinking of such spiritual power, that comes to us in places of worship, as the Divine vision is seen, and the Divine voice is heard, calling to a life-time mission of loving service and self-giving? What do you think?

²⁴Slotki notes that “The Hebrew has a noun instead of the verb, ‘and joy with.’ Perhaps a party is indicated which desired to come to terms with the enemy.” (P. 39)

The noun is מְשׂוֹשׂ, which we understand to be in the construct state, meaning “rejoicing / exultation of / over.”

²⁵Oswalt comments that this line “presents a serious problem of interpretation. In what sense did the people of Judah rejoice over the two kings? In fact, the Masoretic Text at its most literal seems to say they rejoiced *with* them...”

“This problem has caused some scholars to believe that *this people* refers to Ephraim [i.e., Northern Israel], stating that she has rejected the God of Jerusalem and the house of David (so the Targum), and has chosen the two kings as her leader...”

“Although such an interpretation is possible, both ‘this people’ and the reference to ‘Shilooah (Siloam)’ seem to indicate that the focus is upon Judah...”

“In this light, and noting 7:2 [the hearts of the Judeans shook like trees of the forest before the wind, upon hearing of Syria and Israel’s attack on Jerusalem]... perhaps... מְסֹס, ‘rejoice’ [our ‘rejoicing,’ ‘exultation’] should be emended to מְסֹס, ‘melt’ (in fear)... This fits the situation well and can be easily explained since the words are homophones [sound alike].” (P. 225)

Oswalt turns from this suggested change of the text, and states that “On balance, it seems best to remain with the Masoretic Text and understand that the rejoicing...is over the discomfiture of their enemies, either actual or as predicted by Isaiah. It may well be that the Judeans were congratulating themselves over Ahaz’s diplomatic coup in allying himself with Assyria. It was not God Who had delivered

(continued...)

8:7²⁶ וּלְכֹן הִנֵּה

אֲדֹנָי מֵעַלָּה עֲלֵיהֶם

אֶת־מֵי הַנָּהָר הַעֲצוּמִים וְהַרְבֵּים

אֶת־מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר וְאֶת־כָּל־כְּבוֹדוֹ

וְעַלָּה עַל־כָּל־אֲפִיקָיו

וְהִלֵּךְ עַל־כָּל־גְּדוֹתָיו:

And therefore, look—²⁷

²⁵(...continued)

them, but their own wisdom...To all of this Isaiah says that the celebration is too early. The same River upon which they depended to engulf their enemies will shortly sweep over them.” (P. 226)

Gray states that “The last words of **verse 6** [which he omits from his translation] are awkward and difficult. If they have any meaning...the meaning is *and a rejoicing* (or, *and because they rejoice*) with Retson and the son of Remaliah; which is inconsistent with the context, for the Jews, so far from rejoicing [with these two], stood in dread of them (**Isaiah 7:3ff.**).” (P. 146)

²⁶Gray comments that **verse 7** means “Yahweh will punish His disloyal people by causing a fateful rise of the Euphrates, i.e. by an Assyrian invasion...An early annotator explained *the River* as *the king of Assyria and all his glory.*” (P. 147)

²⁷Motyer comments that “With the words ‘Therefore, behold’ Isaiah calls dramatic attention to the consequence of choosing an alternative salvation. The people had chosen on a wordly basis: the collective security of military alliance (Rezin) and the leadership of men who rose to power not by Divine appointment but by human artifice (**2 Kings 15:25ff.**). The nemesis of choosing the world is to get the world, in full and plenty: here, ‘the mighty and abundant waters of the River’ that is, the Euphrates. The motif of the two rivers Shiloah (**verse 6**) and Euphrates (**verse 7**) offers a telling contrast between the seeming weakness of faith and the seeming power of the world. To the human eye the way of faith (Jerusalem and its vulnerable water supply) is full of insecurity and hazard, but the believer sees all this and says, ‘He is faithful Who promised’ (**Hebrews 10:23**). But to choose the world is to be overwhelmed by the world.” (P. 91)

my Lord is raising up²⁸ against them
(the) waters of the River / Euphrates, the mighty and numerous—
Assyria's king, and all his abundance;
and it will go up over all its channels,
and it will flow over all its banks.²⁹

²⁸Oswalt notes that the use of the participle here, מַעֲלֶה, indicates imminence, “and the flood was much more imminent than anyone knew. It had taken 125 years (beginning with Shalmaneser’s first great push about 860 B.C.) for Assyria to reach from the Euphrates to Galilee. Now within 60 years [that push] would be in Egypt.” (P. 223)

²⁹Slotki holds that here “the river” means “the Euphrates,” and is here “a metaphor for Assyria, as explained later in the verse. The picture of the invading army as a rising river is suggested by the summer overflow of the banks of the Euphrates.” (P. 39)

Alexander comments on **verse 7**: “*Therefore* (because the people had thus ceased to trust in the Divine protection, and rejoiced in the success of their application to Assyria), *behold* (as if the event were actually present), *the Lord (is) bringing up upon them the waters of the river* (i.e., the Euphrates, as an emblem of the Assyrian power), *its strong and many waters* here contrasted with the gently flowing waters of Siloam), *to wit, the king of Assyria and all his glory* (with particular reference to military strength and display), *and it* (this river) *shall come up over all its channels and go over all its banks*, which may either mean, that it shall transcend its usual limits, or that, after submerging Israel, it shall overflow Judah also...

“The figure of an overflowing river is peculiarly appropriate, not only as affording a striking antithesis to the fountain mentioned in the **sixth verse**, but because [‘the river’] is often used absolutely to denote the Euphrates, the great river of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires...

“The beauty of the metaphor is rendered still more striking by the frequent allusions, both in ancient and modern writers, to the actual inundations of this river.” (P. 187)

Oswalt comments that “*Therefore, behold* is the messenger formula introducing the announcement section of the judgment speech...Assyria does not inundate God’s land in spite of God. No, if she comes, it is because God brings her...

“The use of the Euphrates as the metaphor here is very satisfying for several reasons...

Assyria came from across the Euphrates;

(continued...)

8:8 וַחֲלַף בִּיהוּדָה׃

שָׁטַף וְעָבַר׃

עַד־צוּאֵר יִגִּיעַ׃

וְהָיָה מַטּוֹת כְּנַפְיָו׃

מְלֵא רֶחֶב־אֶרֶץ עַמְנוּ-אֵל׃

And it will flow against Judah,³⁰

it overflowed and will pass over,

as far as (the) neck it will reach.³¹

²⁹(...continued)

it was a mighty river compared to anything the Israelites had seen in their home territory;

its floods are swift and devastating.

So was Assyria. Like Germany in 1939 and 1940, the Assyrians seemed almost superhuman. They could strike anywhere, it seemed, with speed and power. The majesty of their massive armies must have been stunning in itself...

“Like a mighty river rushing against a bank, they must have seemed inexorable [couldn’t be stopped]. Ahaz had let loose the torrent, and did he think that it would meekly subside when it came to a national boundary? No, once out of its banks, the river would reach as far as it possibly could.” (P. 226)

³⁰Gray comments that “into Judah” [our “against Judah”] is “the destination of the desolating flow of waters: nothing is said of the flood affecting Ephraim on the way.” (P. 147)

³¹Oswalt comments that “Yet the flood will not destroy Judah; it will stop short of total destruction. Just when the tide seems about to engulf the mouth and nose, cutting off the breath, it halts. This seems to be the sense of *reaching to the neck*. Isaiah is not here offering much hope. Rather, he is telling what a near thing it will be. But he does imply that Assyria will not annihilate Judah.” (P. 226)

Motyer says it this way: “Immanuel’s land is swamped but remains with its ‘head above water.’ Unlike Israel, which was swept away by Assyria, Judah survived the flood.” (P. 92)

For this phrase, “up to the neck,” compare **Isaiah 30:28**, where YHWH’s breath is compared to “an overflowing stream that reaches up to the neck.”

And its spreading wings--
fullness of your land's breadth, Emmanuel!³²

³²Slotki notes that "Modern commentators suppose a change of metaphor to a bird of prey with outstretched wings; but some Jewish expositors understand *wings* as a military term for sections of the army." (P. 39)

Oswalt states that "The final phrase of the verse probably makes the same point, although its exact meaning is much debated...Has Isaiah changed metaphors? Has he moved from flood to bird? And is it bird of prey...or bird of protection...? Probably he has switched metaphors, but it is one suggested by the situation. An army fans out over the land like the fingers of a flood pouring through depressions and reaching up valleys. This spreading out of army or flood suggests the spreading of wings, and that suggests a bird, in this case a bird of prey, extending its wings as it whistles down upon a victim..."

"The land over which the bird hovers is Immanuel's land. Nothing can change that. [Yes—Judah is the home of Immanuel; and **Isaiah 7:14-17** has predicted, before his reaching moral responsibility, the King of Assyria will have come upon Syria, Israel, and Judah. And Gray argues that the 'outstretched wings' far more naturally imply protection, i.e., dwelling under the shadow of YHWH's 'wings,' p. 148.]

But Oswalt goes further: "Thus, just as the flood may reach the neck but no further, so those hovering wings will not carry off the lamb [Where is anything said in the text about Immanuel being 'the lamb'?]. Why? Because Judah is so wise and powerful? No, because of Immanuel who is pictured as a helpless child. What can stop the flood? Only the trickling waters of Shiloah, which the Judeans had rejected as being of no use [But there is nothing in the text thus far about stopping the Assyrian flood!]..."

"O, *Immanuel* comes rather abruptly here...If it is correct that Maher-shalal-chash-baz was the initial fulfillment of the Immanuel prophecy, as seems very likely, then the inclusion of the name here becomes more understandable.. This is especially true in the light of the similar structures of **7:13-25** and **8:1-10**, which makes it appear that the points of the Immanuel and Maher-shalal-chash-baz signs are identical... Ultimately, Immanuel is the owner of the land, the one against whom Assyria's threats are ultimately lodged, the one upon whom deliverance finally depends..."

"That cannot be Isaiah's son, nor even some unknown son of Ahaz. It can only be the Messiah, in whom all hope resides. It is as if Isaiah, plunging deeper and deeper into the dark implications of his sign, is suddenly brought up short by the deepest implication: God *is* with us and, best of all, will be with us, not merely in the impersonal developments of history, but somehow as a person." (Pp. 226-27)

But if Immanuel is the Messiah, he was born before the Assyrian invasion, which would come after his reaching the age of moral responsibility.

(continued...)

³²(...continued)

What do you think? Do you agree with Oswalt and Alexander (see below) that the use of Immanuel here can only be a reference to the Messiah? We think this is being read into the text, and what Isaiah wants his readers to know is that since God is with us ("Immanuel"), all will be well in the long-run! He will be with us in judgment over the evil in our midst; but He will also be with us in deliverance / salvation!

Alexander translates **verse 8** by *And it (the river) shall pass over (from Syria and [Northern] Israel) into Judah, overflow and pass through (so as nearly to submerge it), to the neck shall it reach (but not above the head), and the spreadings of its wings shall be the filling of the breadths of thy land, O Immanuel!*"

He comments that "By the neck, the [Aramaic] Targum understands Jerusalem ...Most probably, however, the expression was intended to denote nothing more than the imminency of the danger by figures borrowed from a case of drowning, the head alone being left above the water [would that mean 'drowning'? Perhaps 'near drowning']..."

"Most writers suppose the figure of a stream to be exchanged in the last clause for that of a bird, or for the description of an army; but Umbreit and Knobel understand *wings* to be used here, as often elsewhere, in the sense of sides or lateral extremities, and applied to the river itself..."

"Those who regard *Immanuel* as the name of a contemporary child, understand by *thy land* thy native land...and to the question why this child should be specially addressed, reply because he was a *sign* to the people, and his name prophetic. But as we have seen that *Immanuel* is the Messiah, *thy land* must mean *the land belonging to thee*, thy dominion...Thus understood, this brief apostrophe [figure of speech] involves a prayer and promise of deliverance...(Calvin)." (P. 188)

Instead of referring Immanuel to the Messiah, Ortlund comments on **verses 8-10** that "In view of Immanuel's future triumph, Isaiah announces that the enemies of God who gather against His people will be shattered...At all times, in all conditions, even prior to the first coming of Christ, *God is with us* (Hebrew 'Immanuel')." (P. 1256) We agree with Ortlund, over against Oswalt and Alexander.

But again we observe, such differences in interpretation demonstrate the puzzling, enigmatic nature of Isaiah's message. What do you think? Is Isaiah's language, clear, easily understood? Or is it rather "puzzling, enigmatic"?

Motyer states that "'Your land, O Immanuel' sums up the tragedy of Ahaz's decision. Immanuel is caught up in the ruination brought about by his unbelief. His kingship is stripped of earthly glory and he comes as a suffering king. Historically (compare **2 Kings 16**), Ahaz's appeal to Assyria and his submission to Assyrian overlordship brought peace and the cessation of the northern threat. Isaiah, however, saw through to the reality: the glory had departed and David's throne was now a hollow

(continued...)

³²(...continued)

unreality, never to return to sovereignty again. There was nothing now for Immanuel to inherit except suffering and loss.” (P. 92)

But was this the case? **2 Kings 16** depicts the end of Ahaz’s reign, but not the end of David’s throne. The story continues until **2 Kings 24**, and includes the stories of Hezekiah and Josiah, both of them worthy sons of David!

³³Motyer entitles **verses 9-22** “The Remnant.” He comments that “Immanuel is a truth as well as a name—the truth of the Lord’s presence with His people and the security which it brings.

“But who is kept secure? Isaiah’s confrontation with Ahaz brought the issue of personal faith and commitment to the fore and exposed leader and nation alike as informed by a spirit of worldly reliance and lacking spiritual conviction. The importance of the present section is that it brings this to the point of definition in the doctrine of the remnant [are we to understand Isaiah as setting forth ‘doctrines’?]. ‘A remnant shall return’ (Shear-Jashub; compare **7:3; 20:20-21**) no longer means simply that there will always be survivors to continue the nation on earth but that there is a distinction within that people, who turn to Him in repentance and faith, who look to His word and obey it.” (P. 92)

Oswalt comments on **verses 9-10** that “In these verses the tone shifts dramatically. Isaiah is no longer envisioning a helpless Judah floundering in the overpowering Assyrian flood. He is expressing the very faith, on a long-term basis, that he asked of Ahaz. It appears that the memory that Judah is Immanuel’s land has changed his perspective. It is in that light that he brings the direct treatment of the Immanuel sign to a close. Here he comes with that penetrating vision which can see beyond near disaster and judgment to ultimate victory and hope...

“Yes, Judah may now be the pawn of the great nations, her sins may have plunged her into the midst of their plottings and machinations. Yet, when all is said and done, all those plots and plans must eventually come to nothing, except as they coincide with those of the God Who has chosen to be with us in the contingencies of our existence.” (Pp. 227-28)

Motyer states that “The ideas expressed in **verses 9-10** recall **Psalms 2:1-6** and **Psalms 46-48**. In those **Psalms**, we hear the confident faith expressed that YHWH and His anointed king will not be conquered by earth’s rulers; in the midst of life’s storms, God is our refuge and strength, “a very present help in trouble”; “YHWH of Armies is with us!” God is King over all the earth; the earth’s shields belong to Him! Mount Zion, in the far north, is the city of the great King—it will be established for long-lasting time! We agree with Motyer—these ideas of **verses 9-10** do recall those **Psalms!**

(continued...)

³³(...continued)

Alexander comments on **verse 9** that Isaiah “now turns to the enemies of Judah, and assures them of the failure of their hostile plans. The prediction, as in **chapter 6:9**, is clothed in the form of an ironical command or exhortation. *Be wicked* (i.e. indulge your malice, do your worst) *and be broken* (disappointed and confounded), *and* (that not only Syria and [Northern] Israel, but) *give ear all remote parts of the earth* (whoever may attack the chosen people), *gird yourselves* (i.e. arm and equip yourself for action), *and be broken, gird yourselves and be broken* (the repetition implying the certainty of the event)...

“The failure or disappointment threatened is of course that of their ultimate design to overthrow the kingdom of Judah, and does not exclude the possibility of partial and temporary successes.” (Pp. 188-89)

Why do you think Alexander included this last sentence? Because, taken at face value, **verses 9-10** seem to proclaim that following the Assyrian flood, all of Judah’s enemies would be shattered, because “God is with us!”

But modern readers of the **Book of Isaiah** know that this was not at all the case. Following the Assyrians would come the Babylonians, with even more destructive power against Judah and Jerusalem. And then would come the Greeks, and the Romans, the latter with an even more devastating destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, with the dispersion of the Jews all across the known world.

Alexander calls all of this “partial and temporary successes”—but they seem like far greater successes than that of Assyria! Amazingly, the people of YHWH God still exist after more than 2,000 years, in spite of all attempts to demolish them!

And the fact is that Isaiah looks out into the future with his visionary eyes, and sees that ultimately YHWH’s purposes will be victorious, and the military conquests of the world’s greatest nations will fade away into obscurity—as only “partial and temporary successes.” Immanuel, “God Is With Us”—both in judgment, and in salvation / deliverance! We share in that faith / hope—do you?

Kaiser comments that “Only when men wait in trust on God for the future which they cannot see, do they achieve a free community. And where that happens, God is always already present. However, in the conflict between faith and a force which excludes faith, the believer knows himself to be secure in the God Who ultimately awaits him. The way of Jesus shows that despite the text, this trust in God’s never-ending presence has no guarantee of survival [no—Jesus went to Golgotha, crying out, ‘My God, my God, Why have You forsaken me?’. But faith is distinguished from fatalism in that it believes that God can save even in this world [using the suffering of His servants to further His kingdom], and so at all events maintains its hope. One characteristic of this faith is that it does not fade with future generations, because like their fathers, believers experience that God is with those who hope in Him.” (P. 189)

הַתְּאַזְרֵנוּ וְהִתְּנֵנוּ

הַתְּאַזְרֵנוּ וְהִתְּנֵנוּ:

Be broken,³⁴ peoples, and be shattered!³⁵

And give ear, all distant places of earth / land!³⁶

³⁴Where our Hebrew text has the imperative verb רָעַו, “break / be broken,” or “be evil,” the Greek translation (**Rahfs**) has γνῶτε, “know!”, probably translating a Hebrew text with רָעַו, with the *resh* mistaken for a *daleth*, a very common occurrence in Hebrew. Gray calls the Greek text’s “Take knowledge” “a suitable parallel to *give ear* in the next line.” (P. 149)

³⁵Translations of this first line of **verse 9** vary:

King James, “Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces”;

Tanakh, “Band together, O peoples -- you shall be broken!”

New Revised Standard, “Band together, you peoples, and be dismayed”;

New International, “Raise the war cry, you nations, and be shattered!”;

New Jerusalem, “Realise this, peoples, and be afraid”;

Rahfs, γνῶτε ἔθνη καὶ ἡττᾶσθε, “Know, nations! And be defeated!”

Oswalt, “Break forth, O peoples, and be shattered...”

Oswalt comments that this opening line of **verse 9** “begins a series of commands to the nations. They are invited to do everything they can to make ready for war against God’s people. Nevertheless, after each imperative, as here, the prophet announces with supreme confidence and heavy irony that the results of their preparation will be their own destruction.” (P. 228)

Would you understand **verses 9-10** as a sort of “philosophy of history”? That is, can you conceive of world history as the story of the nations, being tested by whether or not they will choose to go by the gentle spiritual waters of righteousness and justice, of love and peace, or choose the flooding waters of war and violence, of oppression and destruction? Compare **Isaiah 2:2-4**, with its hopeful prediction of a time when the nations will come to uplifted Zion, to learn YHWH’s ways, and let Him bring them into a world of peace.

³⁶Isaiah’s message here is addressed universally, to “all distant places of earth / land!” The **Psalms** Motyer has referred to have this same sense of universality (see footnote 33), as, for example, when Jerusalem is depicted as God’s city in the far north!

Prepare for battle,³⁷ and be shattered;
prepare for battle and be shattered!³⁸

8:10 עֲצוּ עֵצָה וְתִפְרָו

דְּבַרְוּ דְבַר וְלֹא יִקְוּם

כִּי עֲמֹנֵי אֵל:

Take counsel, and it will be frustrated;
speak a word, and it will not stand;³⁹

³⁷The Hebrew verb is הִתְאַזְרוּ, “gird yourselves,” or “get ready for battle.”

Oswalt comments that “Soldiers wore a wide belt (girdle) which carried the sword and a dagger, and in addition the breastplate was fastened on with belting around the back. In these ways a man preparing for war ‘girded’ himself. There was also another sense in which girding represented preparation for action. This was ‘girding up the loins’...It evidently refers to tucking the hem of one’s robe into the belt in order to free the legs (compare Elijah running before Ahab, **1 Kings 18:46**).” (P. 228)

³⁸Lines 4 of **verse 9** simply repeats line 3, we think, for emphasis and urgency. No matter how well they may be prepared for battle, they will not be victorious, but will be shattered.

³⁹Oswalt comments on this line, “it shall not stand,” that this is “a fitting conclusion to the segment **7:1-8:10**, because it reverts to the note upon which Isaiah began. He had said that Ephraim’s and Syria’s boastful plans would not stand (**7:7**). Indeed, they did not...But now larger figures have moved onto the stage, at least one of them at God’s specific command. What of them? Isaiah gladly announces that the truth still holds. To the extent that the plans of the nations are the result of their own rapacious arrogance, they will not stand, for God is with us...It means that judgment and destruction are not the final *word*. Judgment is unto salvation when God is with us...It is hard to overstress the philosophical significance of *God is with us* [Immanuel].” (Pp. 228-29)

What do you think Oswalt means by “the philosophical significance”? Is he thinking in terms of what we have mentioned in footnote 35? Is the history of the world a story about whether or not the nations (as well as individuals) will choose God’s ways, and His teachings, rather than follow their own limited ideas and dreams?

Alexander states that “Not only their strength but their sagacity should be confounded. *Devise a plan, and it shall be defeated* (nullified or brought to nought); *speak a word* (whether a proposition or an order), *and it shall not stand* (or be carried into execution.” (P. 189)

because Immanuel / God (is) with us!⁴⁰

8:11⁴¹ כִּי כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ

⁴⁰Alexander comments, “As if he had said, ‘The assurance of your safety is the great truth expressed by the name of your deliverer, to wit, that God is with us.’ The mere retention of the Hebrew word could not convey its sense in this connection to the English reader.” (P. 189)

Readers of the **Hebrew Bible** will know that the initial revelation to Moses was the Divine Name, “I Will Be,” and its meaning in that context was “I will be with you, Moses.” Moses, having God with him, would bring deliverance from slavery to his people, give them the Ten Commandments, and the teaching of righteousness and justice.

And, Isaiah assures his hearers and readers, That Divine promise accompanies the people of God throughout all of history– not something awaiting the coming of the Messiah–but certainly fulfilled in that coming! God being with us guarantees that if we will recognize that Divine presence, and follow its teaching, we will become God’s servant-people, bringing righteousness and justice to the world. And no matter what terrifying invasions the people of God may undergo, the truth remains that God is with us, both in judgment and in deliverance / salvation! What do you think?

⁴¹Oswalt entitles **8:11-9:6**^{Heb} / **7**^{Eng} “Our Way–Darkness; His Way--Light.”

He entitles **8:11-23**^{Heb} / **9:1**^{Eng} “Pay attention to God.”

He comments on **verses 8:11-23 / 9:1**^{Eng} that they “constitute a reflection upon all which has preceded from **7:1** onward. As such they prepare the way for the final annunciation of the child in **9:1-6**^{Heb} / **2-7**^{Eng}. They make plain the central theme of the segment, as well as that of the entire division: In what, or in whom, shall we trust? One possibility, when faced with potential calamities or disasters, is to forget God’s sovereignty and proceed accordingly (**verses 11, 12**), but to do so is to invite calamity of a more profound nature, for God is the one Fact we dare not overlook (**verses 13-15**)...

“It is sheer foolishness, when He has made His way (which is also our way) clear (**verses 16-18, 20**), to resort to some other means (**verse 19**) to find a path out of darkness. Such other means can only make the darkness, and our anguish, more intense, for they lead away from Him Who is light. Nevertheless, God will not be defeated. He will shed His light upon His people, and it is typical of His grace that the location of that light will be in the very part of the land which first felt the hand of His wrath, namely, Galilee.

“It is not difficult to see how the phrase ‘the way of this people’ supplies the unifying theme of the segment. Faced with the great political and military upheavals of their time, how easily the people focused upon the various human machinations

(continued...)

⁴¹(...continued)

(‘conspiracy!’) as the source of their troubles and as that which needed their primary attention. Similarly, faced with a myriad of choices, none of them very good, how easily the people resorted to magical means of divination to learn the future and to find guidance...

“Isaiah’s response is that given God’s terrifying holiness, His written revelation [not ‘the **Bible**,’ but the written prophecies of Isaiah and whatever other writings of Moses and the prophets existed at the time; see our footnote 75], and His desires to give His people light, dependence upon anything other than Him is sheer insanity.” (Pp. 231-32)

Gray entitles **verses 11-15** “The way of the prophet and his disciples and the way of the people.”

He comments that “In an autobiographical note, Isaiah records that Yahweh made a communication to him warning him not to share the standpoint of his fellow-countrymen. The lines that follow are not addressed to Isaiah only, for the 2nd person plural is used throughout...[Isaiah and his disciples] are not to fear what the people at large fear, for danger does not lie where the people fear it, but in Yahweh, Whom [the people] have ceased to fear (compare **Isaiah 31:1-3**): He will destroy ‘many’ of the two houses of Israel and of Jerusalem, but, so it is implied, will save those who fear Him.” (P. 150)

Kaiser comments on **verses 11-15** that they are “prophetic teaching to disciples ...The characterizing mark of authentic prophetic disciples and pupils lies in a fear of God which takes Yahweh’s rule of the world seriously, and accordingly fears Him more than all earthly powers.” (Pp. 190-91)

Alexander comments on **verse 11** that the triumphant statement in **verse 10** “is now justified by an appeal to the Divine authority. I have reason to address our enemies in this tone, *for thus said Jehovah to me in strength of hand* (i.e. when His hand was strong upon me, when I was under the influence of inspiration), *and instructed me away from walking in the way of this people* (i.e. warned me not to follow the example of the unbelieving Jews).” (P. 189)

Kaiser holds that **verse 11** is “a reference back to the special connection which exists between God and the prophet. This relationship is mysteriously indicated, more than described, as a strengthening of Yahweh’s hand...That the hand of Yahweh comes upon the prophet, or falls on him, indicates that Yahweh has taken hold of him in a special way...

“The instruction extended to Isaiah by Yahweh Himself demands to be taken seriously not only by him but by all those who hear it. It has prompted the prophet to adopt another course and therefore to lead a life based on other standards than those of the mass of people who are handed over to God’s judgment. Those with faith will not

(continued...)

כְּחֹזֶקֶת הַיָּד
וַיִּסְרְנֵי מִלֶּכֶת בְּדַרְךְ הָעַם־הַזֶּה
לֵאמֹר:

Because in this way⁴² YHWH spoke to me,
according to strength of the hand;⁴³
and He warned me against walking in this people's way,
saying:

⁴¹(...continued)

be assimilated to the majority, but will exercise the freedom of their most authentic insights. That comes about by taking God seriously, and can be maintained on this basis." (Pp. 191-92)

⁴²Oswalt comments that "The opening *for thus* (Hebrew כִּי כֹה) suggests an intended linkage with the preceding segment...The reason why the plans of the nations will be thwarted is that they rest on all the wrong assumptions, which Isaiah's own people in fact share." (P. 232)

⁴³Oswalt comments that the phrase כְּחֹזֶקֶת הַיָּד, literally "like strength of the hand," or "according to strength of hand," here "suggests that this experience of God's inspiration was especially intense and direct." (P. 232) The text says nothing about "experience of God's inspiration," but does claim that Isaiah sensed the Divine "strength of the hand." We think that it means Isaiah had an unusually strong conviction concerning the message that YHWH would have him speak at that time.

Compare the following language at the opening and close of Ezekiel's inaugural vision:

Ezekiel 1:3b,

and YHWH's hand was upon him there.

Ezekiel 3:14,

And a Spirit / wind lifted me, and took me,
and I went bitterly—in the heat of my spirit;
and YHWH's hand (was) strong upon me.

Gray comments that "The sense of prophetic inspiration was traced not only to the invasion of the personality by the Spirit of God, but also to the hand of God." (P. 151)

⁴⁴Gray states that **verses 12** and **13** “are negative and positive complements of one another. Not the way of the people (**verse 12**), but of Yahweh (**verse 13**), are Isaiah and his disciples to follow. Not the baseless objects of the people’s fear, but Yahweh, Who alone has power to destroy (**verses 14-15**), are they to fear. Compare the antithesis in **Luke 12:4-5**, [where Jesus is depicted as saying:

- 4 I tell you, my friends,
do not fear those who kill the body,
and after that have nothing more that they can do.
- 5 But I will warn you whom to fear:
fear Him who, after He has killed,
has authority to cast into (the) Valley of Hinnom!
Yes, I tell you, fear Him!].” (P. 151)

Oswalt comments on **verses 12-13** that “While the general sense of these verses is clear, namely, give attention first to God, not to human affairs, the precise sense has occasioned a good deal of controversy...

“This controversy has centered upon the meaning of קִשְׁר, ‘conspiracy,’ in **verse 12** and its relation to תִּקְדְּשֵׁנִי [‘you shall set apart’] in **verse 13** and מִקְדָּשׁ [‘sanctuary’] in **verse 14**. If ‘conspiracy’ is the correct rendering, to what does it refer? Suggestions have included a fifth column [any group of people who undermine a larger group from within, usually in favor of an enemy group or nation] of Judeans supporting the Syro-Ephraimite coalition...or the coalition itself...and even Isaiah and his disciples... The prophet may be talking about a general approach to the explanation of events, especially unpleasant and trying events. How easy it is, when situations go against us, to become paranoid and react accordingly. Amid the shocks of our own time, the ‘conspiracy theory’ of history keeps emerging, as, for instance, in the Kennedy assassination...

“Isaiah challenges his people to reject paranoia [i.e., blaming everything on ‘conspiracies’] and see God’s hand in the events of their time. To refuse to do so is to become more and more fearful, more and more unstable, for it means that our lives are ultimately in the hands of unknown powers, too devious for us to know or control. This in turn leads us toward the occult in an effort to gain control over these unknown and devious powers.” (P. 233)

Yes, but in fact there are “conspiracies” in history that can lead to disastrous consequences. Think of Adolf Hitler's inner circle--the most powerful men in the Third Reich. It was a finely balanced team of military commanders, administrative leaders and Ministers of the Nazi Party. But rather than trembling in fear before that “conspiracy,” Isaiah would advise to consecrate YHWH as your Guide and Hope, believing that in spite of the evil Nazi power, it was not in control of history, and would

(continued...)

⁴⁴(...continued)

come crumbling down in a few short years. Many who would not yield to the Nazi demands, would die in their resistance, but their deaths would not be in vain; their cause would be victorious. As Isaiah insists, God is with us—visiting judgment upon the evil powers, and visiting grace and victory to those trembling in awe before Him. So, consecrate YHWH as Lord of your life, and look to the future with confidence!

Do you agree? Is this what the **Book of Isaiah** is teaching?

Kaiser comments on **verses 12-13** that “If the freedom of faith, as freedom from public opinion, that vague something for which all and none are responsible, is also to express itself in a different assessment of political facts as well; if it is not to term a ‘conspiracy’ everything tht is so named by public opinion, it cannot ignore public facts like, in the situation of the Syro-Ephraimite war...the alliance and the intentions of the kings of Damascus and Samaria...

“The most important thing is the right estimation of such events. This comes about when those affected fear God first and foremost, instead of their earthly enemies ...

“God’s transcendence over the world and His rule of it are presented through the deliberate choice of the title Yahweh Sebaoth [our YHWH of Armies]. Here alone lies Israel’s future and therein its sole reason to hope that Yahweh Himself will ultimately have mercy on those who escape His judgment.” (P. 192)

Alexander comments on **verse 12** that “The words of God Himself are now recorded. *Saying, ye shall not call conspiracy (or treason) everything which this people calleth conspiracy (or treason), and its fear ye shall not fear nor be afraid.* קִשְׁרָה, according to etymology and usage, is a treasonable conspiracy. It is elsewhere constantly applied to such a combination on the part of subjects against their rulers (**2 Kings 11:14; 12:21; 14:19; 15:30**)...

“The unbelieving fears of the people led them to seek foreign aid. From this they were dissuaded by the prophet and his followers, who regarded it as a violation of their duty to Jehovah. This opposition, like the conduct of Jeremiah during the Babylonish siege, was regarded by the king and his adherents as a treasonable combination to betray them to their enemies. But God Himself commands the prophet and the true believers not to be affected by this false reproach, not to regard the cry of treason or conspiracy, nor share in the real or pretended terrors of the unbelievers.” (Pp. 189-90)

Do you agree with Alexander, that the “conspiracy” is referring to Isaiah and his followers, who are being charged with “treason”?

Again we observe that the words of Isaiah are not free of ambiguity, but rather are words that can be taken in differing senses, and his message is “enigmatic,”

(continued...)

לְכֹל אֲשֶׁר-יֹאמַר הָעָם הַזֶּה קִשָּׁר
וְאֶת-מִוְרָאוֹ לֹא-תִירָאוּ
וְלֹא תִעְרִיצוּ:

You (plural) shall not say Conspiracy!,
to whatever this people says Conspiracy!;⁴⁵
and its fear, you shall not fear,
and you shall not be frightened!

8:13 אֶת-יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֲתוּ תִקְדִּישׁוּ
וְהוּא מִוְרָאֲכֶם
וְהוּא מִעֲרִצְכֶם:

⁴⁴(...continued)

“puzzling,” easily understood in different ways—just as we would expect in the light of **Numbers 12:6-8** and **1 Corinthians 13:9-12!**

Motyer comments on **verse 12** that “The verbs now become plural. Isaiah has others with him in the separated life. This is now explained as touching how they appraise the facts of contemporary life (**verse 12a**) and how they react to its dangers (**verse 12b**).” (P. 94)

⁴⁵Gray comments that “On the first news of the Syro-Ephraimitish invasion there was a cry, קִשָּׁר, **qesher!**, Conspiracy! I.e., the enemies of Judah are confederated against it. But Isaiah is warned by a strong impulse from above that this is an abuse of terms. Syria and Israel are but ‘two stumps of smoking fire-brands.’ How can such feeble powers be said to have formed a קִשָּׁר?...To Isaiah a קִשָּׁר only becomes worthy of its name when Yahweh is the Chief Member of the league...”

“The combination of Syria and Ephraim was a *fact*; it was no part of Isaiah’s work to quibble over the use of terms, whether to call this combination a conspiracy or something else. He differed from the people not as to the fact, nor as to the name by which it should be called, but as to the interpretation of it. To them it was dangerous, in Isaiah’s judgment it was not. They feared that the ‘destructive object’ of the league would be attained. Isaiah, without denying that the league had a destructive object, was convinced that it would fail.” (Pp. 152-53)

YHWH of Armies—Him you people shall set-apart / consecrate;⁴⁶
and He (shall be) your Fear / Awe-inspiring One,

⁴⁶Oswalt comments that the phrase אֱתוֹ תִקְדִישׁוּ, *Him you shall sanctify* “seems out of touch with the previous thought; for what does sanctity have to do with conspiracy? That the verses form an antithetic parallelism is plain from the duplication of fear and dread: do not fear what they fear—He shall be your fear, etc...”

“Duhm, noting this parallelism and seeing no connection between sanctity and conspiracy, argued that תִקְדִישׁוּ [‘you shall set-apart / sanctify’] was an error for תִקְשִירוּ [‘you shall not form a conspiracy’] and that the meaning was: if you are looking for a conspirator to explain your problems, then look to God. This emendation is very neat and has been adopted by numerous commentators...”

“It raises a rather serious theological problem, however, for while God is sometimes seen as the ultimate source of tragedy and disaster (45:7), He is not depicted as doing so in a devious, conspiratorial manner...”

“Noting this problem (and that **verse 14** makes a play on מִקְדָּשׁ with קֹדֶשׁ, ‘sanctuary’), Cheyne opted to emend in the opposite direction, changing קִשְׁר [‘conspiracy’] in **verse 12** to קֹדֶשׁ, ‘holy,’ in the sense of awesome and terrifying...”

“But the lack of any textual evidence for either emendation should drive us back to the text, which has less severe difficulties than might appear at first glance. In order to understand the thought, it is necessary to understand what it means to sanctify God...To sanctify God is to demonstrate that He is ‘high and lifted up’ (6:1) in power and in character, as well as in His very essence. To fail to sanctify Him is to make Him appear helpless, indifferent, and unimportant...This is exactly what the Judeans did when they sought to solve the riddles of their times according to human explanations and means: they made God appear insignificant. Rather, Isaiah calls upon them to make God the most significant fact of their existence, demonstrating by their attitudes and behavior that God is indeed holy.” (Pp. 233-34)

Alexander in like manner states that “If they felt as they ought towards God, as supreme and almighty, and as their own peculiar God, with Whom they were united in a national covenant, they could not so distrust Him as to be alarmed at the approach of any danger...The passage is at once a condemnation of the terror inspired by the approach of the two kings, and of the application, which it had occasioned, to Assyria for aid against them.” (P. 190)

and He (shall be) your Object of Trembling!⁴⁷

8:14⁴⁸ וְהָיָה לְמִקְדָּשׁ

⁴⁷Motyer states that “In the midst of a fearful people, Isaiah and his disciples are not fearless, but their fear is differently directed. Their lives are to be governed by a theological awareness of the Lord, Yahweh, the exodus God (**Exodus 3:13-15; 6:6-8**), Who redeems His people and overthrows His foes.” (P. 95)

⁴⁸Oswalt comments on **verses 14-15** that “The attitude we take toward God will determine what aspect of Him we will experience. To those who sanctify Him, who give Him a place of [ultimate] importance in their lives, who seek to allow His character to be duplicated in them, He becomes a sanctuary, a place of refuge and peace...

“But to those who will not give Him such a place in their lives, He becomes a stone to trip over...As the **New Testament** makes plain, it is in Jesus that the double-edged nature of God’s Self-revelation becomes most pointed: to those who accept Him as God’s sufficient sacrifice, He is life and peace; to those who refuse to do so, He becomes a fact over which to stumble again and again (**Matthew 21:44; Luke 2:34; Romans 9:33**)...

“Those who choose to sanctify God will take refuge in His character as revealed in His word and have reason for hope [as He becomes their ‘sanctuary’]. Those who refuse to do so will be driven to magic and the occult and thus into deeper darkness and despair.” (Pp. 234-35)

But God will be “with them”—present in their midst—whether they take refuge in Him, making Him their “sanctuary,” or reject Him, refusing to listen to His word through His prophet. To those who make YHWH their “Hiding-Place,” their “Sanctuary,” His presence will be a “visitation of grace”; to those who reject Him, His presence will be a “visitation of judgment.” None can avoid or escape the Divine presence!

Alexander translates **verse 14** by “*And He (Jehovah) shall be for (or become) a holy thing (an object to be sanctified) and for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence (i.e. a stone to strike against and stumble over) to the two houses of Israel (Ephraim and Judah); for a gin (or trap) and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.*”

He comments that “God was the only proper object to be dreaded, feared, and sanctified, i.e. regarded as a holy being in the widest and most emphatic sense...The doctrine of this text is, that even the most glorious exhibitions of God’s holiness, i.e. of His infinite perfection, may occasion the destruction of the unbeliever. [It was exemplified] by the conduct of the unbelieving Jews in the reign of Ahaz, to whom the only power that could save them was converted by their own unbelief into a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. The same idea is then expressed by another simple and familiar figure, that of a snare or trap...

(continued...)

וְלֵאבֹן נֶגֶד
וְלְצֹר מִכְשׁוֹל
לְשְׁנֵי בְתֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
לְפַח וְלְמוֹקֵשׁ
לְיוֹשְׁבֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם:

And He will be for a Sacred Place / Sanctuary,⁴⁹
and for a Stone of Striking,
and for a Rock of Stumbling,
for (the) two houses of Israel,⁵⁰

⁴⁸(...continued)

“The two houses of Israel are not the two schools of Hillel and Shammai, or the kingdom of Israel and the faction that favored it in Judah, both of which are rabbinical conceits [fanciful interpretations], but the two rival kingdoms of Judah and Ephraim, here put together to describe the whole race or nation of Israel. The sense is not that Jehovah would be sanctified by Judah, and become a stumbling-block to Israel; but that to some in either house or family these opposite events would happen.” (P. 191)

I have seen this truth in my own family. To some, God has become the very center of their life, their highest goal to Whom they commit their hearts and worship. But to others, the very mention of God becomes obnoxious, and is treated with disdain and disrespect. The same thing happens with respect to Jesus Christ. What about you—have you experienced such?

⁴⁹Motyer comments that “Sanctuary is not a place of asylum but ‘a holy place’ (מִקְדָּשׁ, **miqdash**), a place where God dwells in all His holiness. The sanctuary is the coming of the Lord to dwell among His people...The holy presence marks off the remnant from the people. But while to some His presence offers a glad opportunity to repent...to others His presence spells doom. To them He is ‘a stone of tripping, a rock of stumbling...a trap and a snare’...The same God in His unchanging nature is both sanctuary and snare; it depends on how people respond to His holiness.” (P. 95)

⁵⁰Kaiser comments on **verses 14-15** that “This prophecy is in truth a retrospective judgment on the causes of the decline of the ‘two houses of Israel’: the northern kingdom, which ceased to exist in 722 B.C.E., and the southern kingdom, which had followed its brother in 587 B.C.E...Both have failed in the fear of Yahweh through what in the end has proved to be their disastrous foreign policy...

(continued...)

for a Trap and for a Snare,
for (the) inhabitant of Jerusalem.⁵¹

8:15 וְכַשְׁלוּ בָם רַבִּים

וְנָפְלוּ וְנִשְׁבְּרוּ

וְנִקְשְׁוּ וְנִלְכְּדוּ:

And many shall stumble against them;
and they will fall and be broken,
and will be ensnared and captured.⁵²

⁵⁰(...continued)

“How was the people of God, some of whom had been scattered to the winds, some of whom were in the province of Judaea and some in exile in Mesopotamia, firmly in the hands of the world powers, to escape this domination and regain their freedom? Only if it was accepted that this situation had been introduced by Yahweh Himself and was His answer to the people’s lack of trust could the survivors gain new hope in God and confidently look forward to His transformation of the situation...

“Israel as a whole has been brought low by its God, and not by the world powers, whom He merely used as His instrument. The God Who could have been Israel’s Rock of refuge in all dangers has become...a stone of offence or a stumbling block to a blind man or a nocturnal traveler. And, as the poet puts it...He has become a snare and a trap which has seized the inhabitants of the city. An incalculable number of people have been caught in them, in fact by Yahweh, and delivered over to the whim of the victors. So the victory won by the enemy over Israel is in fact a victory of Yahweh rather than a defeat.” (Pp. 192-94)

⁵¹Alexander comments on this last line of **verse 14** that “The inhabitants of Jerusalem are distinctly mentioned as the most conspicuous and influential members of the nation.” (P. 191)

Yes, you may be an inhabitant of Jerusalem / Zion, but that doesn’t make you a worshiper of YHWH! Only you can determine whether or not you will worship and tremble in awe before God! Or, as we often say, being born in the parsonage, or having grown up in the church, doesn’t mean that you will take your religious inheritance seriously, and make it your own!

⁵²Alexander comments on **verse 15** that “This verse completes the threatening by an explicit declaration that Jehovah would not only be a stumbling-block and snare to the houses of Israel, but that many should actually fall and be ensnared and broken.” (P. 191)

⁵³Motyer states that in **verses 16-22** “Contrasting attitudes to the Lord are now worked out in a fresh direction. The contrast is between *I will wait for the Lord* (**verse 17**) and *they will curse their God* (**verse 21**); between patient faith and impatient unbelief.” (P. 95)

Gray entitles **verses 16-18** “The Epilogue to Isaiah’s Memoir.”

He comments that “In spite of some ambiguity in **verse 16** [he translates ‘I will tie up the testimony and seal the teaching in my disciples’], these words read like the conclusion of the autobiographical memoir which recorded Isaiah’s teaching during the Syro-Ephraimitish war...

“They also give the impression that a stage in his ministry was closed; that for an indefinite time to come he might speak to his people no more as he had been speaking ...[it would be] a time of waiting for Yahweh—of waiting in perfect confidence—that lay before him. And during this time his teaching would be with (? incorporated in) his disciples, and perpetually eloquent in himself and the names of his children...

“Those are not wrong who see here an important epoch in the history of religion—the emergence of a spiritual, as distinct from a national, religious society. Isaiah, unlike Amos and Hosea, is not a voice crying unheeded; his distinction lies less in a doctrine of the remnant than in the practical step of creating the remnant in which he believed.” (Pp. 154-55)

Kaiser comments on **verses 16-18** that “These verses were originally the culmination and end of the ‘memorial’ [**Isaiah 6:1-9:6**, ‘The so-called memorial of the prophet Isaiah from the time of the Syro-Ephraimite War’]. The prophet’s proclamation had brought about the object of his mission in accordance with its beginning in **chapter 6**. It had hardened the people’s heart and thus led them inexorably to Yahweh’s judgment...The king and the people had not been willing to be deterred from their attempt to secure the dynasty and the nation by political means. They had rejected the sign which had been offered them (**Isaiah 7:10ff.**), or failed to heed the message of the symbolic actions which had been performed in their midst (**Isaiah 8:1ff.**). Thus they had failed to trust God as they had been required to do (**Isaiah 7:9b; 8:6**)...

“In His Own way, God had to teach a dynasty and people who feared men more than God, to fear Him, so that He could show Himself to be God. The prophet, however, instructed by Yahweh Himself (**Isaiah 8:11-12**) stands on God’s side, and so do his sons and his disciples...

“So the narrator in conclusion finally makes him concerned to preserve the words of God which have been addressed to him and the instruction he has been given... Along the lines of **Isaiah 30:8**,

(continued...)

חֲתוּם תּוֹרָה בְּלִמְדֵי:

Bind up⁵⁴ a testimony,⁵⁵

⁵³(...continued)

Now come—write it upon a tablet to them,
and upon a scroll inscribe it.
And it will be for a later day,
for the until, until long-lasting time!

we may see that the prophet is concerned to preserve his message because it is evidence of the power of Yahweh for the survivors after the catastrophe which he announced has taken place, and at the same time makes it possible to hope for a new future. None other than Yahweh, Who had prophesied the misfortune long before it took place, as a punishment for their ancestors' lack of trust in God, had brought this catastrophe upon His people...In accordance with this, the memorial as a whole is meant to be understood as testimony in the strict legal sense (compare also **Ruth 4:7**)." (Pp. 195-96)

⁵⁴צִוֶּר, **tsor**, is the qal imperative, masculine singular of the root צָרַר, which means "to bind up," according to **Brown-Driver-Briggs**. But there are Hebrew students such as Vittinga (mentioned by Alexander, p. 191), who explain צִוֶּר as the imperative of the root צָוַר, 'to form,' 'delineate,' 'inscribe.' The command will then be to "inscribe the revelation in the hearts of the disciples."

Gray notes that "the verbal forms are ambiguous...They may be assertive ['I will tie up...I will seal']...or they may be imperative, 'tie up!' **Verse 17** favors the former view. If the words were a command, Yahweh would be the Speaker; *My disciples*... would then mean 'those taught by My prophet,' i.e., Isaiah's disciples."

Alexander states that "The act described is not that of literally binding and sealing up a material record, but that of spiritually closing and depositing the revelation of God's will in the hearts of those who were able and willing to receive it, with allusion at the same time to its concealment from all others."

But nothing is said about "spiritually closing and depositing," or "in the hearts" in the text.

Alexander goes on to say that "It is commonly agreed, however, that the root is צָרַר, to bind, and that the prophet is commanded to tie up a roll or volume, and to seal it, thereby closing it." (Pp. 191-92)

The sentence is obviously spoken by Isaiah, and we ask, To whom is the imperative addressed? Is it to the leader of Isaiah's disciples? We think that is most

(continued...)

⁵⁴(...continued)

probable, and that Isaiah means for the leader of his disciples to gather together the written records of Isaiah's prophetic sayings, and to bind them together into one or more leather scrolls, tie them with leather cords, and seal them with wax, to be preserved as legal documents. As such, they would serve as legal witnesses to the teaching of Isaiah. And probably unbound copies would be made as well, to be read and studied by Isaiah's disciples.

Kaiser states that "The binding up of the document serves to preserve its content, and the sealing is a guarantee of the authenticity...To keep a writing with complete safety, one might put it in an earthenware jar and seal that as well, as is recorded in **Jeremiah 32:14** and confirmed by the finds at Qumran [the 'Dead Sea Scrolls'] and in the wilderness of Judah." (P. 196)

Gray notes that "To the sealing of documents there are several allusions in the **Old Testament**: see **Isaiah 29:11**; **Jeremiah 32:10-11**; **1 Kings 21:8** and **Daniel 12:4**. The Jewish Aramaic papyri of Assouan (5th century B.C.E.) Were found tied with string and sealed." (P. 155)

⁵⁵The Hebrew text has no definite article with the noun: **צֹרֵר תְּעוּדָה**, "bind / tie up a testimony," but all of our English translations interpolate the definite article.

The noun **תְּעוּדָה** occurs only three times in the **Hebrew Bible**:

Isaiah 8:16 (here),

צֹרֵר תְּעוּדָה
חֲתוּם תּוֹרָה
בְּלִמְדָי:
Bind up a witness,
seal teaching,
in / among my taught ones!

Isaiah 8:20,

לְתוֹרָה וְלִתְעוּדָה
אִם-לֹא יֹאמְרוּ כִּדְבַר הַזֶּה
אֲשֶׁר אֵין-לוֹ שָׁחַר:
To teaching and to testimony!
If they will not speak like this word,
then there is no dawn for it!

(continued...)

⁵⁵(...continued)

Ruth 4:7,

וְזֹאת לְפָנִים בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל עַל־הַגְּאוּלָּה
וְעַל־הַתְּמוּרָה
לְקַיֵּם כָּל־דְּבָר
שֶׁלֹּף אִישׁ נִעְלוֹ
וְנָתַן לְרֵעֵהוּ
וְזֹאת הַתְּעוּדָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל:

Now this (was) formerly in Israel (the practice) with regard to the responsibility of redemption,
and concerning the exchanging (of responsibilities):
In order to confirm every matter,
a man took off his sandal,
and gave [it] to his neighbor.
And this [was the symbol for] sworn evidence in Israel.

Oswalt states that תְּעוּדָה, “testimony” is a synonym of the word עֵדוּת, and devotes his comment to listing the passages where עֵדוּת occurs, drawing the conclusion that תְּעוּדָה is a synonym of תּוֹרָה, “teaching” or “law,” and in fact the two words are referring to “Scripture,” i.e., the **Bible**. (Pp. 235-36)

But תְּעוּדָה does not occur in any of the passages he refers to.

We think the noun is a legal term, referring to “sworn evidence” or “testimony” given in legal cases. Isaiah has sworn himself to be telling the truth about his experience and the messages / teaching / torah he has given. He wants those teachings which have been written down to be preserved, like legal documents—as proof of what he believed and taught.

Gray holds that “The testimony (תְּעוּדָה)...more particularly refers to such sides of Isaiah’s public utterances as his assertions that Ephraim and Syria would do Judah no harm, but would be speedily destroyed...The teaching (תּוֹרָה)...is more particularly his insistence on the need for quiet confidence and faith in Yahweh.” (P. 155)

⁵⁶Motyer comments that “If a distinction is intended between *bind up* and *seal*, ‘bind’ means to ‘wrap up,’ to safeguard from tampering and ‘seal’ means to attest as

(continued...)

⁵⁶(...continued)

final and therefore guard from addition. The imperatives suggest a definite act, a precise (even legal) securing of Isaiah's message against any accusation that he did not say this or that and against any subsequent tampering or addition by others." (Pp. 95-96)

⁵⁷Gray notes that in the phrase *in my disciples*, the preposition **בְּ**, read differently by the Greek / **Rahlfs** [τότε φανεροὶ ἔσονται οἱ σφραγιζόμενοι τὸν νόμον τοῦ μὴ μαθεῖν, 'Then they will be manifest, the ones sealing the law, to not learn'] is difficult, and has called forth many interpretations:

- (1) deposited in the custody of...
- (2) with, i.e. having my disciples present...
- (3) by means of...
- (4) = **עַל לֵב**, 'upon (the) heart...

This last interpretation "makes the tying and sealing of the law figurative; Isaiah on this view determines to place his teaching in the hearts of his disciples and to make of them 'living oracles.' Compare Jeremiah's 'law written upon the heart (**Jeremiah 31:33**), and St. Paul's figure, 'Ye are an epistle of Christ...written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God' (**2 Corinthians 3:2**)." (Pp. 155-56)

Kaiser comments that "The Hebrew preposition **בְּ**, which describes the way in which the disciples or pupils of the prophet are involved, is ambiguous. It can be understood in such a way that the whole statement is a metaphor for the handing on of tradition, without the actual sealing of a document being involved. What would be meant would be rather that the testimony was preserved in and through the disciples, who would in turn hand it on to their pupils and so on down the generations until the message had been fulfilled..."

"However, in the light of **Isaiah 8:2** and **Ruth 4:7**, it seems more likely that **verse 16** should be connected with real sealing of the memorial [**Isaiah 6:1-9:6**] in the presence of the disciples, who would be present as witnesses to this legal act." (P. 196) We agree. What do you think?

For this matter of a "sealed" testimony used as legal proof, see the story of Jeremiah's purchase of a field, and his making and sealing legal documents to certify the purchase, in **Jeremiah 32:6-15**.

⁵⁸The Hebrew phrase **בְּלִמּוּדֵי** is literally "in / among my taught ones." **לִמּוּד**, **limmudh**, is an adjective meaning "taught." Here, in the masculine plural, it means "my taught ones," "my students," "my disciples."

(continued...)

⁵⁸(...continued)

We assume that as Isaiah told of his experience in the temple, and the Divine call he had responded to, and as he gave the messages that he claimed YHWH was giving him, there were those who listened to him and believed him—becoming his followers or disciples, some of them writing down those teachings / messages on leather scrolls, one of which was to be preserved / sealed as a legal document.

Alexander states that “The *disciples* are supposed by some to be Uriah and Zechariah, the two witnesses named in **verse 2**; by others, the sons of the prophets, or literal disciples of Isaiah; but it probably means the better portion of the people, those truly enlightened because taught of God. (Pp. 191-92)

We think Isaiah may well include the tablet with his son’s name on it, witnessed to by Uriah and Zechariah, but what is being described here consists of far more than that—the messages Isaiah had spoken to the people of Judah / Jerusalem—all of which would serve as witnesses to the facts of Isaiah’s ministry.

Our English translations of **verse 16** vary with one another, but especially the Greek:

King James, “Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.”

Tanakh, “Bind up the message, Seal the instruction with My disciples.” (We think the capitalized ‘My’ refers to YHWH. But Isaiah is the speaker, and in the next sentence he says he will wait for YHWH.)

New Revised Standard, “Bind up the testimony, seal the teaching among my disciples.”

New International, “Bind up this testimony of warning and seal up God’s instruction among my disciples.”

New Jerusalem, “Bind up the testimony, seal the instruction in the heart of my disciples.”

Rahlfs, τότε φανεροὶ ἔσονται οἱ σφραγιζόμενοι τὸν νόμον τοῦ μὴ μαθεῖν, “Then they will be manifest, the ones sealing the law in order not to learn.” (How different from the Hebrew text!)

Alexander, “Bind up the testimony, seal the law, in my disciples.”

Again we note how these differing translations indicate the enigmatic nature of Isaiah’s sayings, which call for interpretation and “solving.”

Alexander comments that “These are not the words of the prophet, speaking in his own person, but a command addressed to him by God” (**Ibid.**) We say, No, they are Isaiah’s words. Notice how in the following sentence he mentions he will wait for YHWH.

(continued...)

8:17⁵⁹ וְחָכַמְתִּי לַיהוָה

הַמִּסְתִּיר פָּנָיו מִבֵּית יַעֲקֹב

וְקִנִּיתִי-לּוֹ:

And I will wait⁶⁰ for the YHWH,

⁵⁸(...continued)

Oswalt comments that **verse 16** “is commonly interpreted to refer to a withdrawal of Isaiah from public ministry when he perceived that he had been unsuccessful in altering the course of the nation during the Syro-Ephraimite crisis. According to this position, his oracles were sealed up and committed to his disciples to be published at some later date when events would have vindicated him and them.” (P. 235) Oswalt disagrees with this view, but we think it is the best interpretation.

⁵⁹Gray comments on **verse 17** that “Isaiah will rest firm in his belief in Yahweh, though troubled for his people who have caused Yahweh to hide His face, i.e. withdraw His favor, from them, and have thereby exposed themselves to destruction.” (P. 156)

⁶⁰Here the Hebrew verb for “wait” is וְחָכַמְתִּי, a piel form from the root חָכַח. C. Barth, in his article on this root in **Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament** IV, pp. 359-6, states that “The phrase ‘wait for Yahweh’ appears almost exclusively in the **Psalms** and the prophetic books; the same is true of ‘trust in Yahweh’ and ‘hope in Yahweh’...It derives from an idiom of the **Psalms**, more particularly from the ‘confession of confidence,’ an ‘expression of trust’...

“The verb **chakkah**, used in narrative texts as a neutral term for ‘wait,’ entered into the language of sacral poetry at a date that cannot now be determined. Here, together with יָחַל, קָוָה, בָּטַח, and other words for waiting, trusting, and hoping, it was used initially in the expression of confidence addressed to God in the ‘Psalms of Lament’ (‘I / we wait for You’); later it was used in communal confession of confidence (‘I waited for Yahweh’ in thanksgivings), in exhortation (‘wait for Yahweh!’), and in macarism (‘blessed is he who waits for Yahweh’). Referring to the devout as ‘those who wait for Yahweh’ also derives from the language of the **Psalms**...

“The prophets beginning with Isaiah made use of the expression; here ‘waiting for Yahweh’ often means waiting for the fulfilment of the prophetic message. What distinguishes **chakkah** from other words for waiting and hoping is just this prophetic use of the idiom: what is needed is patient ‘waiting’ and ‘endurance’ with Yahweh.” (Pp. 362-63)

the One hiding His face / appearance⁶¹ from Jacob's house-hold;
and I will wait⁶² for Him.⁶³

⁶¹What does this description of YHWH as הַמְסַתֵּיר פָּנָיו “the One hiding His faces / appearances” in **Isaiah 8:17** mean? See the following passages:

Deuteronomy 31:17-18, YHWH's “hiding His face” from Israel will be because of their “spiritual adultery,” worshiping idol-Gods, and doing evil;
Deuteronomy 32:20, YHWH will hide His face from Israel for their perversity and lack of faithfulness;
Micah 3:4, YHWH will hide His face from Jacob / Israel because of their evil deeds;
Isaiah 54:8, no reason given, YHWH states that “For a brief moment I hid My face from you”;
Isaiah 57:17, because of iniquity YHWH hid His face;
Isaiah 59:2, “your sins have hidden His face from you”;
Isaiah 64:6^{Heb} / **7**^{Eng}, YHWH's face hidden because of iniquities;
Jeremiah 33:5, YHWH has hidden His face from Jerusalem / Judah because of all their evil;
Ezekiel 39:23-24, iniquity, treachery, uncleanness and transgression caused the hiding of YHWH face;
Ezekiel 39:29, when YHWH pours out His Spirit on Jacob / Northern Israel, His face will no longer be hidden;
Job 13:24, Job's question—Why does El hide His face from him?;
Job 34:29, Elihu asks, When El hides His face, who can see Him?;
Psalms 13:1^{Heb} / **2**^{Eng}, the psalmist asks, How long will YHWH hide His face from him;
Psalms 22:24^{Heb} / **25**^{Eng}, YHWH has not hidden His face from the despised and afflicted;
Psalms 27:9, it is a prayer, Do not hide Your face from me!;
Psalms 30:7^{Heb} / **8**^{Eng}, the psalmist tells how YHWH hid His face from him, and he was dismayed;
Psalms 44:24^{Heb} / **25**^{Eng}, disgraced, innocent Israel asks, Why has YHWH hidden His face; why does He forget their affliction and oppression?;
Psalms 69:18, similar to **Psalms 27:9**;
Psalms 88:15, similar to **Psalms 44:24**^{Heb} / **25**^{Eng}; **Psalms 102:2**^{Heb} / **3**^{Eng}, similar;
Psalms 104:29, when YHWH hides His face, animals and humans are dismayed;
Psalms 143:7, similar to **Psalms 27:9**.

We answer our question in the light of these passages—YHWH's hiding His faces / appearances is because of His people's sinfulness—a sinfulness that they oftentimes do not recognize or acknowledge. It does not mean that YHWH is absent from their midst, but means that He is withdrawing from communicating with them.

Do you agree?

⁶²Here the Hebrew verb for “wait” is וַיִּקְוֶינִי, a piel form from the root קוּוּה. G. Waschke, in his article on this root in **Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament**

(continued...)

⁶²(...continued)

XII, pp. 564-73) states that “The verb **qwh** piel means ‘wait for’ especially when used in a hostile sense...The notion of ‘hope’ generally emerges when Yahweh is either directly or indirectly the object of the verb, a situation applying to the majority of the passages. In more than half of all occurrences...Yahweh is directly named as the object.” (P. 568)

⁶³Oswalt comments that **verse 17** “is Isaiah’s affirmation of dependence upon God. Although God seemed to be hiding His face from Judah and Israel, Isaiah would not lose his faith in Him nor turn to some other source for his own strength and courage...

“In words reminiscent of **40:31**, he says that God’s timing is best and that he will wait for His action, knowing that all other action in defiance of Him is futile. This waiting upon God is often a prerequisite to receiving His blessing, for in the act of waiting we confess our own helplessness and our complete dependence upon Him. Without these characteristics, God’s work is both hindered and misappropriated.” (P. 236)

Isaiah 40.31,

And those who wait for YHWH (וְקִוּי יְהוָה)
will renew (their) strength;
they will lift up (their) wing(s) like the griffon-vultures;
they will run and will not be weary,
they will walk, and will not grow tired!

Motyer comments on **verse 17** that “Gathered round the written word of God (**verse 16** [many today will read this as meaning ‘the **Bible**’—but this is completely anachronistic—see our footnote 75), each testifies to an expectant faith which patiently awaits what the Lord will do. Wait...and trust...are both words of ‘waiting,’ combining patience with confidence... Ahaz alienated the favor of the Lord, and Isaiah and his disciples were not immune from the ensuing calamities. But within the gathering darkness they had a sustaining, expectant faith and a sure hope.” (P. 97)

Kaiser comments that “Although Yahweh has turned His face from the people, and accordingly will give them over to destruction without hearing their prayers, the prophet will nevertheless wait and hope on him. That in fact means that the prophet counts on the possibility that Yahweh will turn to them again with salvation beyond the catastrophe...

“However, according to **Isaiah 7:9b** and **8:12-13**, whether this possibility becomes a reality depends on whether the survivors of the catastrophe fear their God more than the powers of this world, and accordingly trust Him unconditionally. Here the group formed by the community of disciples, separate from ‘this people,’ forms as it were the pledge for the remnant who will repent beyond the catastrophe.” (P. 197)

(continued...)

תִּנְה אֲנֹכִי וְהַיְלָדִים אֲשֶׁר נָתַן-לִי יְהוָה 8:18⁶⁴

לְאִתּוֹת וּלְמוֹפְתִים בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל

מֵעַם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת

הַשֹּׁכֵן בְּתֵר צִיּוֹן:

Look–I,⁶⁵ and the children whom YHWH gave to me,⁶⁶
for signs and for portents / wonders⁶⁷ in Israel,

⁶³(...continued)

We say, When God's face is hidden, wait for Him! Don't try to force God to act. Join with Isaiah and his disciples, determined to faithfully and patiently wait upon God for His action, in His time, in His way. Lock what you have learned about God in your heart, and never, never give up! Let your faithful patience and waiting upon God become your witness to those around you—and never ever give up!

⁶⁴Gray comments on **verse 18** that “Isaiah’s children are signs and portents in virtue of their names; he himself as the prophet and representative of Yahweh...

“Isaiah closes his memoir with words which recall the great experience recorded at the outset (**chapter 6**).” (P. 156)

⁶⁵Motyer comments that “An initial ‘Behold’ commands attention as Isaiah offers himself as an example of the faith of the remnant in the dark hour. He fortifies himself by recalling first, the personal dealings of God with him and his family, and secondly, the objective reality of God’s choice of Zion and the Divine promise which that imparts.” (P. 96)

⁶⁶Who is Isaiah referring to by “the children whom YHWH gave to me”? Could he mean his “taught ones,” his “disciples / followers”? At first glance, this seems possible. But as Isaiah continues, it becomes obvious that he means the children to whom were given the ominous names—Shear-Yashubh (“A Remnant Shall Return”) and Maher-Shalal-Chash-Baz (“Spoil-Speeds-Prey-Hastens”) Isaiah’s own children, and perhaps Immanuel (“With Us God”).

⁶⁷The two Hebrew words here are **אִתּוֹת**, “signs,” and **מוֹפְתִים**, “wonders.”

For the first, **אִתּוֹת**, see the article by F. J. Helfmeyer in **Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament** I, pp. 167-88. He states that “**אִתּוֹת**, ‘sign,’ is an object, an occurrence, an event through which a person is to recognize, learn, remember, or

(continued...)

from YHWH of Armies,⁶⁸

the One dwelling on Mount Zion.⁶⁹

⁶⁷(...continued)

perceive the credibility of something...That which is crucial in a sign is not the sign itself or its execution, but its function and its meaning.” (P. 170)

He calls the names of Isaiah’s children “Sign-Acts (Symbolic Acts)...These signs do not attract attention because they are miraculous, but because they are peculiar. Without an appropriate interpretation, they remain largely unintelligible. A sign-act and verbal interpretation belong together...

“Thus the names of Isaiah’s sons, ‘A Remnant Shall Return’...and ‘The Spoil Speeds, The Prey Hastes’...are intended to clarify or confirm the prophetic oracles with which they were associated...Their names and the name of Isaiah himself, which means ‘Yahweh Is (Works) Salvation,’ are signs and portents in Israel...Also, the name of the prophet himself confirms the oracles associated with it, especially the oracle handed down in **Isaiah 12:2-3**, which speaks of God’s ‘salvation.’” (P. 186)

For the second, מוֹפֵת, “portent,” see the article by S. Wagner, in **Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament** VIII, pp. 174-81. He states that in the Prophetic Literature, “The oldest occurrences of מוֹפֵת are found in **Proto-Isaiah (Isaiah 8:18; 20:3)**. **Isaiah 8:18** is generally considered to be authentic and to be a product of a period of withdrawal the prophet entered after his message during the Syro-Ephraimite War was not officially accepted in Jerusalem and Judah. This message is now passed on and entrusted to his circle of disciples (**8:16**). For now, attention is directed to the signs and portents which Yahweh established in ‘Israel’ and which are still visible, namely, the children (presumably the physical ones) as an ‘element of proclamation’ whose symbolic names (Shear-Yashubh...Maher-Shalal-Chash-Baz)...and perhaps Immanuel (if the young woman can be identified as the prophet’s wife), who is explicitly designated as אֹת represent the substance of the proclamation. The notion that the prophet himself is also a מוֹפֵת or אֹת is not so easy to comprehend; this can only refer to the very fact of his existence, albeit his existence s a prophet (**8:18**).” (P. 178)

⁶⁸Motyer comments that “The preposition ‘from’ in *from the Lord* is (literally) ‘from with’ [מֵעַם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת, ‘from with YHWH of Armies’] frequently used to stress ‘from the very presence of.’ This is Isaiah’s confidence in the Divine origin and communication to him of the message he and his sons embody.” (P. 96)

⁶⁹Isaiah’s physical children became with him "signs" and "portents" in Israel from YHWH--their very names embodied the message of Isaiah, and the teaching of YHWH which came through His authoritative messengers. That Divinely given word would be the basis of Israel's judgment and life!

(continued...)

⁶⁹(...continued)

It is possible to understand “the children whom YHWH gave Isaiah” to include the group of Isaiah's “taught-ones,” or disciples--the beginnings of the "School of Isaiah," from which came both "Deutero" and "Trito" Isaiah, who would speak Isaiah's message to their later generations in the sixth and fifth centuries.

Oswalt comments that “While ‘the children’ might refer to the disciples (so, John Calvin), the mention of ‘signs and symbols’ makes it likely that he is thinking of Shear-Jashub and Maher-Shalal-Chash-Baz. Their very existence, as well as the strangely evocative names he had felt led to give them, was testimony of God’s working among His people. Furthermore, they were evidence that although God’s face might be hidden for a time, it was still true that His dwelling was upon Mount Zion (**2:2**). They were thus an indication that the coming upheaval and destruction was ultimately only temporary.” (P. 236)

We suggest that this need not be an either / or. Yes, Isaiah’s two sons, with the strange sounding names, were certainly signs in Judah, ominous signs. But those students of Isaiah, who had learned his teaching (*torah*), and who hid that teaching in their heart, joining with Isaiah in waiting for YHWH’s action, would also become signs and symbols in Judah, testifying by their faith and words to the Divine reality.

Alexander comments on **verse 18** that “Of the whole verse there are two distinct interpretations.

1. According to Kimchi...and others, Isaiah is the speaker, and the children meant are his two sons, *Shear-Yashubh* and *Maher-Shalal-Chash-Baz* to which some add *Immanuel*. As all these names, and that of the prophet himself, are significant, it is supposed that for this reason he and his children are said to be signs and wonders, personified prophecies to Israel, from Jehovah, Who had caused the names to be imposed.

2. According to Henderson and many older writers, these are the words of the Messiah, and the children are his spiritual seed (**Isaiah 53:10**), whom the Father had given him (**John 6:37, 39; 10:29; 17:6, 7, 9, 11, 12**). The great argument in favor of this last interpretation is the application of the verse to Christ by Paul (**Hebrews 2:13** [assuming Paul to be the author of **Hebrews!**]...It is not necessary, however, to restrict the terms, with Henderson, to the period of the advent, and to our Savior’s personal followers. Even before he came in the flesh, he and his disciples, i.e., all who looked for his appearing, were signs and wonders, objects of contemptuous astonishment, and at the same time pledges of the promise.” (Pp. 192-93)

We say, there are undoubtedly reminiscences of this text in the **New Testament**, in terms of Jesus and his disciples. But it is anachronistic [out of proper historical order] to try to read all of these later developments into the centuries earlier text, especially to understand the text as the words of the Messiah.

(continued...)

⁶⁹(...continued)

Kaiser holds that **verse 18** depicts the prophet Isaiah looking “far into the future,” and setting “his hope on an event which neither he nor his sons are to experience, though they point to it with their whole person, by testifying with their actions and their words, or with their names, to the power of God over the history of His people...

“If the word of the prophet promising salvation was confirmed when the danger from Syria and Ephraim was averted and the hostile kingdoms were destroyed, and the fulfilment of his message of judgment is there for all to see, it is now in God’s power to open a new chapter of history with His people...”

Kaiser adds that in later generations of Israel’s history, those legal documents, and the sealed scroll, would come to light—and they would “bear witness clearly and simply that the downfall of the two kingdoms of the people of Israel was neither a consequence of the weakness of its God nor the fault of its prophets...

“The kings and the people of Judah could have let the fulfilment of the promise of rescue from danger in the Syro-Ephraimite war stand as a warning for all times that instead of continuing the course begun by Ahaz and following it to destruction, they should have feared Yahweh more than all human powers and trusted in Him alone...

“But because Yahweh knew that His people would fail to heed the prophet’s word, He had sent Isaiah to harden their hearts instead of to convert them, and in this way to bring about all the more certainly the catastrophe, the consequences of which had now brought such unspeakable suffering, and which nevertheless at the same time contained...the offer of a new beginning, if people finally repented...

“Therefore it was now important, following the prophet and his disciples, to hope in the God Whose omnipotence was once again recalled by His name Yahweh Sebaoth, and Whose presence on the temple mount of Zion amongst the community of the second temple [i.e., in post-exilic times] was assured.” (Pp. 198-99)

⁷⁰Kaiser states that **Isaiah 8:19-23^{Heb} / 19-9:1^{Eng}** “forms an appendix to the so-called memorial [**chapters 6-8^{Heb}**] on the activity of the prophet Isaiah at the time of the Syro-Ephraimite war. With **verse 19**, it is addressed to the disciples of the prophet mentioned in **verse 16**, and in **verse 20** it takes up the terms ‘testimony’ and ‘teaching’ [*torah*] mentioned there, but gives them in the reverse order, thus showing that here teaching is understood to be *Torah*, the written Divine law...

“The writer knows that he has the law behind him in his polemic against necromancy, illuminating and ascertaining the future by conjuring up of the spirits of the dead...

(continued...)

⁷⁰(...continued)

“There is unmistakably a break in thought between **verse 20** and **verse 21**. **Verses 19** and **20** require the pupils of the prophet in the present (that is, those who read and hear the Isaiah scroll) not to be led astray by resorting to conjuring up the spirits of the dead, and in so doing refers to the prophetic heritage...

“The fact that the editor has inserted his warning against conjuring up the dead, and his call to be faithful to the law and to preserve the prophetic word, in such a prominent place as the end of the so-called memorial shows how great the temptation was to the people of Jerusalem and Judah...to seek an interpretation of the future from the spirits of the dead, in view of the fact that their God was silent and did not intervene. This corresponds with the evidence in the so-called Holiness Code, in which necromancy is punishable with death...What was possible and usual among the nations had therefore been long forbidden in Israel...

“To the ears of later generations, the way in which the spirits of ancestors were designated ‘Gods,’ as in **1 Samuel 28:13**, may have also seemed an offence against the first commandment of the decalogue, against the ‘Yahweh alone’ teaching, which was the basic and decisive factor for Israel’s faith and life...

“The attempt to master the future by means of the spirits of the dead is not energetically rejected because everything is supposed to end with death, but because people should wait for their future from their God, and in the meantime observe His will as it has been revealed. **Verse 20b** seems to say that deliverance and help do not come from spirits and those who conjure up spirits, but only from Yahweh and from obedience to His will as it has been revealed.” (Pp. 200-02)

Gray entitles **verses 19-23** “Three Fragments.” He comments that “These are:

- (1) a warning against necromancy and magic (**verses 19-20**);
- (2) a picture of some person, or people, starved and encompassed by darkness (**verses 21-22**, and probably the last words of **verse 20**);
- (3) a promise of a better day for Galilee (**verse 23**)...

[Gray claims that these verses are unconnected fragments, which is] strongly suggested by the inability of interpreters, who assume their unity, to establish a probable as distinct from an ingenious connection between the verses themselves, or between the verse and what precedes or follows them...

“The verses are in several respects ambiguous, and probably contain more than one corruption. Under the circumstances it cannot be expected that the Isaianic authorship or the date of any or all of them can be either maintained or denied with certainty.” (P. 157)

(continued...)

⁷⁰(...continued)

Motyer comments on **verses 19-22** that “Isaiah’s disciples have already been warned to avoid popular opinions and alarms (**verse 12**); now he warns them against popular religion and superstition.” (P. 96)

Gray entitles **verses 19-20** “A warning against necromancy and magic.”

Translations of **verses 19-20** vary greatly:

King James, “And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? ²⁰ To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”

Tanakh, “Now, should people say to you, ‘Inquire of the ghosts and familiar spirits that chirp and moan; for a people may inquire of its divine beings -- of the dead on behalf of the living – ²⁰ for instruction and message,’ surely, for one who speaks thus there shall be no dawn.”

New Revised Standard, “Now if people say to you, ‘Consult the ghosts and the familiar spirits that chirp and mutter; should not a people consult their gods, the dead on behalf of the living, ²⁰ for teaching and for instruction?’ Surely, those who speak like this will have no dawn!”

New International, “When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? ²⁰ To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.”

New Jerusalem, “And should people say to you, ‘Go and consult ghosts and wizards that whisper and mutter’ -- a people should certainly consult its gods and the dead on behalf of the living! ²⁰ As regards instruction and testimony, without doubt this is how they will talk, and hence there will be no dawn for them.”

Rahfs, ¹⁹ καὶ ἐὰν εἴπωσιν πρὸς ὑμᾶς ζητήσατε τοὺς ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς φωνοῦντας καὶ τοὺς ἐγγαστριμύθους τοὺς κενολογοῦντας οἳ ἐκ τῆς κοιλίας φωνοῦσιν οὐκ ἔθνος πρὸς θεὸν αὐτοῦ τί ἐκζητοῦσιν περὶ τῶν ζώντων τοὺς νεκρούς

²⁰ νόμον γὰρ εἰς βοήθειαν ἔδωκεν, ἵνα εἴπωσιν οὐχ ὡς τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦτο περὶ οὗ οὐκ ἐστὶν δῶρα δοῦναι περὶ αὐτοῦ “And if they should say to you (plural)

Seek those speaking from the earth, and the ventriloquists, those speaking emptily--those who speak out of the belly--not a nation to its God--why do they seek the dead people concerning the living? ²⁰ For He gave law for help, so that they should speak not as this the word-- concerning whom there is no gift to give concerning it.”

It is difficult to determine which of these translations is the more accurate, but the many differences demonstrate how “enigmatic,” “puzzling” Isaiah’s words are. In our translation, we have sided with **King James** and **New International**; but we understand how **Tanakh**, **New Revised Standard** and **New Jerusalem** have differed, making the people’s advice continue on into **verse 20** rather than ending with **verse 19**.

(continued...)

דַּרְשׁוּ אֶל-הָאֲבוֹת׃
 וְאֶל-הַיְדֵעָנִים
 הַמְצַפְצְפִים וְהַמְהַגִּים
 הַלּוֹא-עִם אֶל-אֱלֹהֵיו יִדְרֹשׁ
 בְּעֵד הַחַיִּים אֶל-הַמֵּתִים׃

And when they shall say to you people,
 Seek the ones who communicate with the dead,
 and those familiar with spirits (of the dead)--
 those who chirp, and those who murmur / mutter--⁷¹

⁷⁰(...continued)

In situations such as this, where the biblical text can be translated in quite different ways, it is foolish to become dogmatic on the basis of one translation, completely disregarding the other possible translation / translations.

I had a professor of **Bible** in Christian College who used this passage as a ringing call of “Back to the **Bible!**” “Don’t listen to the fortune-tellers or the unbelievers, but listen to the **Bible**—the law and the testimony!

But as **Tanakh, New Revised Standard** and **New Jerusalem** have it, the text may mean that those calling for listening to the voices of the dead mean listening to them to give law / teaching and testimony—the very opposite of my professor’s view!

Oswalt comments on **verse 19** that “It is difficult to determine how much of this verse is intended to be enticement of the spiritists and how much, if any, is intended as response...Most modern commentators see the entire verse as part of the enticement.” (P. 237)

Oswalt observes, “It is ridiculous to consult the dead on behalf of the living, yet how easily those who reject life turn to the dead to discover the meaning of life.” (P. 237)

⁷¹Oswalt comments that “It was apparently a common belief in the ancient Near East that the dead spoke in bird-like, whispered voices, and it is to this that Isaiah refers (compare also **29:4**).” (P. 237) Motyer holds that Isaiah’s statement is “used in a derogatory way, ‘squeak and moan’ mocks alike the behavior of the medium and the absurdity of relying on such guidance.” (P. 97)

(continued...)

should not a people seek to its Gods,
on behalf of the living to the dead,⁷²

8:20 לְתוֹרָה וְלִתְעוּדָה

אִם-לֹא יֹאמְרוּ כְּדִבְרֵי הַזֶּה

אֲשֶׁר אֵין-לוֹ שַׁחַר:

for *torah* / teaching and for testimony?⁷³

⁷¹(...continued)

Oswalt states that “The Greek [**Rahlfs**]’ translation of יִדְעָנִים, ‘mediums’ [‘knowing ones,’ ‘intimate acquaintances of the dead’] as τοὺς ἐγγαστριμύθους, ‘the ventriloquists’ [or, ‘the ones speaking from their belly’] gives a good idea of a devout Jew’s estimate of the real source of the chirping and muttering.” (P. 237)

⁷²Isaiah predicts that people will say to his disciples, דַּרְשׁוּ אֶל-הָאֲבוֹת וְאֶל-הַיִּדְעָנִים “seek those who consult the dead and those who communicate with familiar spirits...” Instead, Isaiah asks וְהֲלוֹא-עַם אֶל-אֱלֹהֵיוּ, “should not a people seek to its God?” The next verse begins, לְתוֹרָה וְלִתְעוּדָה, “to *torah* / teaching and to testimony,” that is, Isaiah implies they should seek the teaching of YHWH, instead of humanly manufactured attempts at communication with the dead / spirits.

Oswalt comments that “for those who did not have the certainty Isaiah had, the temptation was strong to turn to spiritism. Having lost the only real source of confidence, belief in an all-wise and all-loving Creator, they turned to more limited but supposedly less demanding sources. Mauchline is undoubtedly correct when he points out that the revival of superstition is concomitant with the loss of faith. Our own age confirms this. We have proclaimed ourselves as being ‘of age’ and thus no longer in need of the supernatural. But in fact the cosmos cannot be explained on purely physical or natural terms. Thus if we will not have the Spirit Who asks for our commitment to Him, we must sooner or later have the spirits, who appear to ask for nothing, but in fact intend to make us slaves.” (Pp. 236-37)

⁷³This translation follows that of **Tanakh, New Revised Standard and New Jerusalem**, taking the first two phrases of **verse 20** as a continuation of **verse 19**. According to **King James, New International and English Standard**, **verse 20** begins a new thought, with the imperative mood implied: “To the teaching / torah and to the testimony!” Perhaps...if it means “to the testimony and teaching of Isaiah,” mentioned

(continued...)

If they do not speak according to this, the word,⁷⁴
then there is no dawn for it!⁷⁵

⁷³(...continued)
in **verse 16**, but certainly not if it is claimed to mean a call for “back to the **Bible**”! See our footnote 75.

Motyer takes no notice of this different possibility of translation, and states that “This verse begins with another telling exclamation. The *law* and *testimony* (see **verse 16**) are the sufficient resource of true disciples. As when the dead are sought a mediator is needed (*mediums and spiritists*), so when the remnant consult their God they have a mediator—the truth He has attested and taught, sealed and safeguarded among them.” (P. 97) .

⁷⁴What do you think “this, the word” means? We take it to mean the same thing as the opening two lines in **verse 16**, “Bind up a testimony; seal *torah* / teaching among my students,” which we think means the basic message of Isaiah which he had preached in Judah, and which he had committed to his students, his “taught ones.”

⁷⁵Alexander comments on **verse 20** that “Instead of resorting to these unprofitable and forbidden sources, the disciples of Jehovah are instructed to resort *to the law and to the testimony* (i.e. to Divine revelation, considered as a system of belief and as a rule of duty)—*if they speak* (i.e. if any speak) *not according to this word* (another name for the revealed will of God), *it is he to whom there is no dawn or morning* (i.e. no relief from the dark night of calamity).” (P. 193)

Oswalt comments that “The prophet bursts out against occult knowledge. One does not have to go to the occult to discover the meaning and destiny of one’s life. It is not hidden to those who will look in the right place. God has been shouting it from the rooftops and recording it for all future generations...The way of life is only hidden (**Isaiah 8:16**) from those who refuse to hear what God has made plain...

“In every age the Church needs to hear this word anew. For apart from the recorded word of God any light Christianity has is but darkness...

“So this was a favorite phrase of John Wesley’s as he sought to implement his dictum that every teaching must be tested by Scripture. This is still true. Unless the Christian Church can agree that the **Bible**, as it stands, is the very word of God it is without consensus authority, or light.” (Pp. 237-38)

What do you take the phrase “the **Bible**, as it stands,” means? We take it to mean the **Hebrew Bible (Old Testament)**, translated into English and the **New Testament**, translated into English, bound together in one book, without the **Apocrypha** (for Protestants) and with the **Apocrypha** (for Catholics). Think about the span of history that this took.

(continued...)

⁷⁵(...continued)

“Rabbinic Judaism recognizes the 24 books of the Masoretic Text, commonly called the **Tanakh** or **Hebrew Bible**, as authoritative. Modern scholarship suggests that the most recently written are the books of **Jonah**, **Lamentations**, and **Daniel**, all of which may have been composed as late as the second century B.C.E. [i.e., long after the time of Isaiah].

“The **Book of Deuteronomy** includes a prohibition against adding or subtracting, which might apply to the book itself (i.e. a "closed book", a prohibition against future scribal editing) or to the instruction received by Moses on Mt. Sinai.

“The book of **2 Maccabees**, itself not a part of the Jewish canon [it is included in the **Apocrypha**], describes Nehemiah (around 400 B.C.E.) as having ‘founded a library and collected books about the kings and prophets, and the writings of David, and letters of kings about votive offerings (**2:13–15**). The **Book of Nehemiah** suggests that the priest-scribe Ezra brought the **Torah** back from Babylon to Jerusalem and the Second Temple...around the same time period. Both **1 and 2 Maccabees** suggest that Judas Maccabeus (around 167 B.C.E. also collected sacred books (**3:42–50, 2:13–15, 15:6–9**).

“There is no scholarly consensus as to when the **Hebrew Bible** canon was fixed: some scholars argue that it was fixed by the Hasmonean dynasty (140–40 B.C.E. [long after the time of Isaiah]), while others argue it was not fixed until the second century C.E. or even later. The Catholic Pontifical Biblical Commission says that "the more restricted Hebrew canon is later than the formation of the **New Testament**."

“The canon of the **New Testament** is the set of books Christians regard as divinely inspired and constituting the **New Testament** of the Christian **Bible**. For most, it is an agreed-upon list of twenty-seven books that includes the Canonical **Gospels**, **Acts**, letters of the Apostles, and **Revelation**. The books of the canon of the **New Testament** were written before 120 AD.

“For the Orthodox, the recognition of these writings as authoritative was formalized in the Second Council of Trullan of 692 C.E.. The Catholic Church made dogmatic definition upon its Biblical canon in 382 C.E. at the Council of Rome as well as at the Council of Trent of 1546 C.E., reaffirming the Canons of Florence of 1442 C.E. and North African Councils (Hippo and Carthage) of 393–419 C.E. For the Church of England, it was made dogmatic in the Thirty-Nine Articles of 1563 C.E.; for Calvinism, in the Westminster Confession of Faith of 1647 C.E.” (**Wikipedia**, 1/29/2018)

The fact of history is that the Prophet Isaiah spoke for God long before the formation of any canon of “Scripture,” or “the **Bible**”—whether Jewish or Christian. We can agree that Israel and the Church must listen to the voice of God—whether through Moses and his **Torah**, or the Ten Commandments—or through spokespersons like

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⁷⁵(...continued)

Isaiah and the other prophets—and now through Jesus Christ and His followers who have recorded His life’s ministry and teaching, or though the living voice of God as they share in experiences like that of Isaiah.

But YHWH and Jesus Christ are the light of the world, not the **Old and New Testaments** in themselves, nor our religious experiences. It is the One to Whom they point—YHWH and His Son Jesus Christ—who give light to the world.

In addition, we have to honestly admit that the **Bible** in itself has spread much darkness—being quoted as endorsing human slavery, as teaching male superiority to women, as commanding genocide, and even depicting God as a Murderer worse than Hitler or Stalin, committing mass genocide in a universal flood. There are parts of the **Bible**—both **Old Testament** and **New**, which are confusing and misleading, instead of being the source of Divine light and hope and goodness and justice and mercy—which when followed easily lead to fanatical predictions of the “end of the world,” or the killing of women identified as witches, or the cold-blooded murder of other races such as Negroes and Jews, or the bullying of effeminate males and lesbians, or narrow sectarianism with hatred for all other believers other than the one narrow group, etc. etc.

Those of us who have lived and ministered in the “Old South,” and have heard the poisonous preaching of racial hatred and white supremacy based on the **Bible (Ezra and Nehemiah)**, know full well that simply saying the **Bible** is the light of the world will not do.

No, Oswalt is not telling the truth when he writes “the **Bible** as it stands is the very word of God.” We insist that the **Bible** as it stands is in need of life-long, dedicated study and relentless honest theological interpretation and evaluation. In an amazing way, the **Bible** can bring the word of God to those who with humble hearts seek the God to Whom it points, but its words can also easily be interpreted in ways to turn people away from God, and to become the enemies of Jesus Christ and His mission of loving acceptance and mission to all the nations and races of the earth. What do you think?

Oswalt goes on to say that “The creation is unable to provide the reason and destiny of its own existence.” (P. 238)

While we are inclined to partially agree with Oswalt, we have been impressed with the biblical teaching that the whole creation points to God the Creator—for example **Psalm 8** with its claim that God’s name is majestic in all the earth, or **Psalm 19**, with its statement that the heavens declare the glory of God and the sky proclaims His handiwork—that day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge—and that even without words their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

(continued...)

⁷⁵(...continued)

Paul says in **Romans 1:19-20** that what can be known about God is plain to humanity, because God has shown it to them—His invisible attributes, Divine power and nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. That is not all there is to be said, and humanity desperately needs more than just nature to know and understand God’s will, but nature can teach us much!

Oswalt draws close to the neo-orthodoxy of Karl Barth in saying that the creation is unable to provide the reason and destiny of its own existence—a view which easily denies the biblical teaching of Divine revelation throughout the earth, the heavens and the sky.

Those of us who have loved and proclaimed the biblical teaching throughout long lives do not need to claim that only the **Bible** teaches us of God! God’s Self-revelation is much deeper and broader than that! When we hear such claims, we remember YHWH’s giving Job a lesson in zoology (an early “science” course!) to cause him to bow in humility before Him (**Job 38-41**). And we believe that the Hubble telescope can teach Christian believers today much concerning the greatness of our Creator God and His universe!

Gray comments on the last line of **verse 20** that it means the one who does not speak according to Isaiah’s word / teaching, “there is no dawn.” His “state is desperate, because no morning will ever break on his present night of distress.” (P. 159)

⁷⁶Gray states concerning **verses 21-22** that the poetic fragment “appears to picture a man—whether Jew of Ephraimite or even foreigner, cannot, of course, be determined—passing through a country, probably his own (? in search of food...), distressed and famishing; angry at his plight, he curses his king and his God, from Whom he can gain no help; whether he looks up or down there is no ray of light to be seen. He is surrounded by impenetrable gloom.” (P. 160)

Oswalt comments on **verses 21-22**, that “These verses, along with **verse 23**^{Heb} / **9:1**^{Eng}, grow technically more and more difficult, but the general sense is clear. Those who lack a truly transcendent perspective on their affairs, who succumb to the occult for their guidance, plunge themselves further and further into gloom, spiritual famine, and despair.” (P. 238)

The difficulties in verses are seen in their varying translations:

King James, ²¹“And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry: and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward. ²²And they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness. ^{9:1}Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her

(continued...)

⁷⁶(...continued)

vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations.” (‘Bestead’ is Middle English for ‘caught in a trap.’]

Tanakh, “²¹ And he shall go about in it wretched and hungry; and when he is hungry, he shall rage and revolt against his king and his divine beings. He may turn his face upward ²² or he may look below, but behold, Distress and darkness, with no daybreak; Straitness and gloom, with no dawn. ²³ For if there were to be any break of day for that land which is in straits, only the former king would have brought abasement to the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali -- while the later one would have brought honor to the Way of the Sea, the other side of the Jordan, and Galilee of the Nations.

New Revised Standard, “²¹ They will pass through the land, greatly distressed and hungry; when they are hungry, they will be enraged and will curse their king and their gods. They will turn their faces upward, ²² or they will look to the earth, but will see only distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and they will be thrust into thick darkness. ^{9:1} But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

New International, “²¹ Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land; when they are famished, they will become enraged and, looking upward, will curse their king and their God. ²² Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness. ^{9:1} Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan--

New Jerusalem, “²¹ Oppressed and starving he will wander the country; and, once starving, he will become frenzied and curse his king and his God; turning his gaze upward, ²² then down to earth, there will be only anguish, gloom, the confusion of night, swirling darkness. ²³ For is not everything dark as night for a country in distress? As the past humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, so the future will glorify the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan, the territory of the nations.

Rahfs, ²¹ καὶ ἕξει ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς σκληρὰ λιμός καὶ ἔσται ὡς ἂν πεινάσητε λυπηθήσεσθε καὶ κακῶς ἐρεῖτε τὸν ἄρχοντα καὶ τὰ παταχρα καὶ ἀναβλέψονται εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἄνω ²² καὶ εἰς τὴν γῆν κάτω ἐμβλέψονται καὶ ἰδοὺ θλίψις καὶ στενοχωρία καὶ σκότος ἀπορία στενὴ καὶ σκότος ὥστε μὴ βλέπειν ²³ καὶ οὐκ ἀπορηθήσεται ὁ ἐν στενοχωρία ὢν ἕως καιροῦ τοῦτο πρῶτον ποιεῖ ταχὺ ποιεῖ χώρα Ζαβουλων ἢ γῆ Νεφθαλιμ ὁδὸν θαλάσσης καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ οἱ τὴν παραλίαν κατοικοῦντες καὶ πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου Γαλιλαία τῶν ἐθνῶν τὰ μέρη τῆς Ἰουδαίας ²¹ And hard famine shall come upon you, and it will be, whenever you hunger, you will be irritated, you will

(continued...)

נִקְשָׁה וְרָעַב
 וְהָיָה כִּי יֵרָעַב וְהִתְקַצֵּף
 וְקָלַל בְּמִלְכּוֹ וּבֵאלֹהָיו
 וּפְנָה לְמַעַלָּה:

And he will pass through it,⁷⁷
 hard pressed and hungry
 and it will happen when he is hungry, and angers himself,
 and he will curse his King and his God / Gods,⁷⁸

⁷⁶(...continued)

speak in an evil manner of the ruler and the fathers' ordinances (?); and they shall look up to the heaven above,²² and they shall look into the earth below, and look-tribulation, distress, and darkness, narrow anxiety, and darkness so that no one can see;²³ and the one being in distress shall not be perplexed-until this time. First He quickly makes, He makes a land of Zebulun, the land of Naphtali, a way (to the) sea, and the remaining ones, the ones dwelling beside (the) sea and beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations / non-Jews, the parts of the Judea.

Again we point out that the many differences in these translations demonstrate the “enigmatic / puzzling nature” of the prophetic word. It is anything but “clear, distinct, easily understood”—exactly what we should expect if we take **Numbers 12:6-8** and **1 Corinthians 13:9-12** seriously, which teach that the prophetic message is not like a face-to-face message, but rather one that comes through dreams and visions, and that is filled with riddles / enigma!

⁷⁷Or, the line **וְעָבַר בָּהּ** can be translated “and he will cross over in / through it.” English translations commonly have the plural “they will pass through,” but **Tanakh** has the singular “And he shall go about in it .” English translations commonly interpolate “the land” at the end of the line.

The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) is quite different: καὶ ἥξει ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς σκληρὰ λιμός, “And a hard famine will come upon you (plural).”

⁷⁸**Tanakh** translates this line by “he shall rage and revolt against his king and his divine beings.” **New Revised Standard** similarly has “they will be enraged and will curse their king and their gods.” Both **New International** and **New Jerusalem** have similar translations, but the singular “their God.” The Hebrew is ambiguous, and can be taken either way.

(continued...)

and will turn upwards.⁷⁹

8:22 וְאֶל-אֲרֶץ יְבֵיט

וְהִנֵּה צָרָה וַחֲשֹׁכָה

מִעוֹף צוֹקָה

וְאִפְלָה מִנִּדְחָ:

And he will look to (the) land / earth,
and look—a tight place and darkness,
gloom, distress,
and darkness (synonym), thrust out!⁸⁰

⁷⁸(...continued)

Kaiser comments that “Cursing of king and God, which was obviously prohibited according to **Exodus 22:27** (compare **1 Kings 21:10, 13**), and was punishable by death, is at all events to be understood as an expression of insensate [completely lacking sense or reason] despair. In the utter perplexity in which no direction comes from above or below, from prophet or from those who conjure up the dead...people will curse the powers from which they expected protection and preservation, the political power represented by the monarchy and the God Who has all powers under His control.” (P. 202)

⁷⁹The closing phrase in **verse 21**, וּפְנָה לְמַעְלָה, “and he will turn upwards,” is puzzling. Translations vary from “and look upward,” to “He may turn his face upward,” to “They will turn their faces upward,” to “looking upward.” The Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) has καὶ ἀναβλέψονται εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἄνω, “and they will look up into the heaven above.”

⁸⁰We translate the last two lines of **verse 22**, מִעוֹף צוֹקָה וְאִפְלָה מִנִּדְחָ by “gloom, distress, and darkness, thrust out!” Other translations have “dimness of anguish; and *they shall be* driven to darkness,” or “with no daybreak; Straitness and gloom, with no dawn,” or “the gloom of anguish; and they will be thrust into thick darkness,” or “and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness,” or “dimness of anguish; and *they shall be* driven to darkness.” In the Hebrew text there are no plural pronouns.

Oswalt comments that “The specific cause of their [his?] distress is their emptiness. Empty, sensing themselves in darkness, their natural response is anger... which vents itself on every object which crosses their path, but especially toward those

(continued...)

⁸⁰(...continued)

who are deemed in some way able to relieve their problems but unwilling to do so, hence they curse their king and their God.

“Having looked upward and found no help, they look downward and find the same...Those who depend upon earth for solutions to the earth’s problems only compound their darkness. Light for our darkness must come from outside ourselves if it is to come at all. Darkness can swallow up failing light, but it can never produce light.” (P. 239)

There can be no doubt that this is a depiction of unrelieved darkness!

Kaiser comments that “It is the conviction of the eschatological prophet that a violent catastrophe awaits the people of God and the nations of the world, which no one can escape. However, in view of the prophetic word of hope in **Isaiah 8:17** [‘I will hope in Him!'] and the promises standing over obedience to the law [**Deuteronomy 28:1ff.** and **Leviticus 26:3ff.**], those who hear this message had to ask whether for a more faithful Israel there would be no hope for a new beginning beyond this catastrophe.” (P. 202)

⁸¹In **Isaiah 8:23-9:6^{Heb} / 9:1-7^{Eng}**, we read the amazing promise that was made to Israel by the prophet Isaiah, in the midst of one of the darkest periods in its history, that a child, a son would be born in Israel’s midst, whose birth would bring hope and joy for God’s people, as he reigns as their king for long lasting time.

The prediction is made that a great light will shine upon those walking in darkness, specifically, in Galilee of the nations, the northern part of Israel—a child, a son, will be given to them, who will reign as king into long-lasting time, and who will be given Divine names, or titles, every one of which imparts hope for the future. This one will reign on the throne of David in an unending Kingdom of peace--this is, according to Isaiah, the promise of the Divine Warrior who is at work in Israel’s history and in human history!

Kaiser entitles this section “The Savior of the People.” Motyer entitles it “The Glorious Hope.”

Motyer comments that “This hope is sure. **9:1-7^{Eng} / 8:23-9:6^{Heb}** is couched in past tenses; the future is written as something which has already happened, for it belonged to the prophetic consciousness of men like Isaiah to cast themselves forward in time and then look back on the mighty acts of God, saying to us: ‘Look forward to it, it is certain, He has already done it!’ Because of this confidence, Isaiah can place the light of **8:23ff.^{Heb} / 9:1ff.^{Eng}** in immediate proximity to the darkness of **8:22**, not because it will immediately happen but because it is immediately evident to the eye of faith; those walking in darkness can see the light ahead and are sustained by hope.” (P. 98)

(continued...)

⁸¹(...continued)

Translations of **verse 23^{Heb} / 9:1^{Eng}** vary:

King James, “Nevertheless the dimness *shall not be* such as *was* in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict *her by* the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations.”

Tanakh, “For if there were to be any break of day for that *land* which is in straits, only the former *king* would have brought abasement to the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali -- while the later one would have brought honor to the Way of the Sea, the other side of the Jordan, and Galilee of the Nations.”

New Revised Standard, “But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.”

New International, “Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan—“

New Jerusalem, “Nevertheless the dimness *shall not be* such as *was* in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict *her by* the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations.”

Rahfs, καὶ οὐκ ἀπορηθήσεται ὁ ἐν στενοχωρίᾳ ὧν ἕως καιροῦ τοῦτο πρῶτον ποίει ταχὺ ποίει χώρα Ζαβουλων ἢ γῆ Νεφθαλιμ ὁδὸν θαλάσσης καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ οἱ τὴν παραλίαν κατοικοῦντες καὶ πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου Γαλιλαία τῶν ἐθνῶν τὰ μέρη τῆς Ἰουδαίας, “And the one who is in distress will not be perplexed for a time. Do this first; do it quickly, O country of Zaboulon, the land of Nephthalim, a sea road, and the rest who inhabit the seashore and beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations, the parts of the Judea.”

Alexander comments on **verse 23^{Heb} / 9:1^{Eng}**: “This darkness is to be dispelled, *for* (there shall) *not* (be) *darkness* (forever) *to her who is now distressed* (literally, to whom there is distress). The present calamity, or that just predicted, is not to be perpetual. The future state of things shall exhibit a strange contrast with the former. *As the former time degraded the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, so the latter glorifies the way of the sea, the bank of the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles*. The same region is described in both clauses, namely, the northern extremity of the land of Israel...

“This part of the country, from being the most degraded and afflicted, should receive peculiar honor. Its debasement and distress both arose from its remote and frontier situation, proximity to the heathen, intercourse and mixture with them, and constant exposure to the first attacks of enemies, who usually entered Canaan from the north.” (P. 197)

(continued...)

כַּעַת הָרֵאשׁוֹן הַקָּל אֶרְצָה זְבֻלוֹן

וְאֶרְצָה נַפְתָּלַי

וְהָאֲחֵרוֹן הַכָּבִיד

הַרְדָּף תִּימָם

עֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן

גְּלִיל הַגּוֹיִם:

Because--no gloom for her who had distress.⁸²

⁸¹(...continued)

Gray comments on this verse that “Apart from the opening sentence...this verse is a prose note explaining that the darkened land of the poetical fragment (**Isaiah 8:21-22**), to wit, the northern and north-eastern territory of Israel...will be compensated for its former distress by a corresponding glory (**9:1-6^{Heb} / 2-7^{Eng}**).

“[The verse] looks back on the humiliation of *Naphtali*, which took place in 734 B.C.E. as long past; it belongs to the *former time*. *The land of Zebulon and the land of Naphtali* [are] northern and north-eastern Palestine... *The way of the sea, the land beyond Jordan, Galilee of the nations* [is] more extensive than those in the previous clause, for they include the country east of Jordan (=Gilead)...

“*The way of the sea* [is variously explained as meaning] the Lake of Galilee...but more frequently הַיָּם ‘the sea’ means the Mediterranean; and so here the way of (i.e. leading to) the sea probably is, like the ‘Via Maris’ of the Crusaders, the caravan route which ran from Damascus to the Mediterranean Sea at Acre. *The land beyond Jordan, עֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן*, as frequently, [means] the country east of the Jordan...

“*The Galil of the nations* [compare **1 Maccabees 5:15**, Γαλιλαίαν ἀλλοφύλων, ‘Galilee of foreigners’]; elsewhere in the **Old Testament** הַגְּלִיל, ‘the Galil,’ or הַגְּלִילָה [‘the Galilee’ mentioned alongside Gilead in **2 Kings 15:29**]...The term means ‘circuit,’ but is always used specifically of a district in Northern Palestine... [Galilee of the nations] reflects the mixed population which was at all periods more or less characteristic of this northern territory.” (Pp. 161-62)

⁸²Oswalt comments that “The gloom is not final. God will not be satisfied that His people have experienced the just results of their rebellion. That experience is not an end in itself but a means, a means whereby God’s goodness can be manifested in the

(continued...)

As at the first time,⁸³ He brought dishonor to Zebulun's land,
and to Naphtali's land;⁸⁴
and (at) the last,
He brought honor–
(on) the Highway (to) the Sea,
beside the Jordan,

⁸²(...continued)

salvation of a land now aware of the true source of its life...It is part of that grace that the source of the light will be in the very part of the land which first felt the lash of Assyria—the area around the Sea of Galilee.” (P. 239)

⁸³Gray states that the phrase כְּעֵת , **ka(eth)**, which we translate by “as / like the time,” only means “at the time,” and that the prefixed כִּ means “point of time.” (P. 163) He refers to **Brown-Driver-Briggs** 453b, where instances are given where the prefixed כִּ means “like,” or “about,” but where it is said that in the phrase כְּעֵת = “at the present time,” or “now.”

⁸⁴The first part of the passage proclaims the good news that the darkness of gloom and distress which has filled the northern half of Israel (Zebulun and Naphtali) “at the first (following the terrible destruction by Assyrian invasion, and the carrying away of a large number of the leading citizens into captivity),” is to be no more because of what YHWH is going to accomplish.

Out in the future--“at the last”--that very area of Israel– the Highway to the Sea (meaning we think, the “Via Maris,” the highway running from Damascus, Syria, through the area just to the north of the Sea of Galilee (through Capernaum), and then passing by Megiddo, to the Mediterranean, and to Egypt), specifically the area “beside the Jordan,” “Galilee of the nations,” will be the scene of YHWH’s revelation of a great light that disperses the darkness of death’s shadow.

By “Naphtali” Isaiah refers to that area of ancient Israel on the northwest of the Sea of Galilee, all the way north to the slopes of Mount Hermon, with “Zebulun” directly to the west and south of Naphtali—the area we would describe today simply as “Galilee.”

Watts comments that “The laments of the doomsayers of **8:19-22** are interrupted by a claim of hope. The speech denies that gloom and anguish are the inevitable results of the events. While recognizing the bitterness of the moment, it reminds them of a hope based on God’s intervention.” (P. 133)

⁸⁵Oswalt comments that “The area between the Sea of Chinnereth [Sea of Galilee] and the Mediterranean north of the Jezreel Valley had always been something of a melting pot, with Hebrews, Canaanites, Arameans, Hittites, and Mesopotamians all contributing to the mix. It was in this region, through which the various inland powers [Assyria, Babylon, etc.] reached westward and southward toward the seacoast, that Israel commonly encountered the rest of the world (hence the name [Galilee of the nations / non-Jews]...

“But the area was destined to see an even more intense mixing after 735 B.C.E. for this was the first part of Israel to be stripped away by Tiglath-pileser, with its inhabitants resettled in Mesopotamia and new settlers from that area brought in [see **2 Kings 15:29**; compare also the annals of Tiglath-pileser III in Pritchard, **Ancient Near Eastern Texts**, pp. 283-84]...

“The humbling of Israel was begun. She had thought the land was hers. Now she was to begin to see that she was only a tenant by the permission of the true landlord (This interpretation is based upon the traditional reading of the text. However, it must be admitted that there are numerous problems in the verse which are not easily resolved).

“Isaiah’s concern over the fate of Northern Israel’s most northern provinces and his prophecy concerning their future destiny are more indications that his outlook was not narrowly Judean or Jerusalemite in scope. All Israel was involved in rebellion against God (**8:14**) and all Israel would participate in the redemption and restoration, if only in remnant form.” (Pp. 239-40)

⁸⁶Alexander writes concerning **chapter 9**, that “The change for the better, which was promised at the close of the **eighth chapter**, is described in the **ninth chapter** as consisting in the rise of the great light upon the darkness, in the increase of the nation and their joy, excited by deliverance from bondage and the universal prevalence of peace, arising from the advent of a Divine successor to David, who should restore, establish, and enlarge his kingdom without any limitation (**verses 1-6**^{Heb} / **2-7**^{Eng}).

“From the times of the Messiah [the Divine successor to David], the prophet suddenly reverts to his own, and again predicts the punishment of Ephraim by repeated strokes. The people had been warned both by messages from God and by experience, but had continued to indulge their proud self-confidence, in consequence of which God allowed the Assyrians, after overthrowing Rezin, to attack them also, while at the same time they were harassed by perpetual assaults from their hostile neighbors (**verses 7-11**^{Heb} / **8-12**^{Eng}).

“Still they did not repent and return to God, Who therefore cut off suddenly many of all classes, but especially the rulers of the nation and the false prophets, the flattering

(continued...)

⁸⁶(...continued)

seducers of the wretched people, from whom He must now withhold even the ordinary proofs of His compassion (**verses 12-16^{Heb} / 13-17^{Eng}**).

“All this was the natural effect of sin, like a fire in a thicket, which at last consumes the forest, and involves the land in smoke and flame. Yet amidst these strokes of the Divine displeasure, they were still indulging mutual animosities and jealousies, insomuch that Israel was like a famished man devouring his own flesh. Manasseh thus devoured Ephraim and Ephraim Manasseh, while the two together tried to devour Judah (**verses 17-20^{Heb} / 18-21^{Eng}**.” (Pp. 197-98)

A survey of the literature written on this passage (**verses 1-6^{Heb} / 2-7^{Eng}**) is highly confusing, as all sorts of differing interpretations have been given to it—Jewish and Christian, skeptical and believing.

However, the text itself is not overly difficult to translate, and an overall observation can be made: The passage contains a strange combination of past and present tenses. The most common tense is the “perfect” or “past” tense: “he brought dishonor” (**8:23^{Heb} / 9:1^{Eng}**); “he brought honor” (**8:23^{Heb} / 9:1^{Eng}**); “the people...saw a great light” (**9:1^{Heb} / 2^{Eng}**); “light shined upon them” (**9:1^{Heb} / 2^{Eng}**); “you multiplied the nation,” (**9:2^{Heb} / 3^{Eng}**); you made the gladness great” (**9:2^{Heb} / 3^{Eng}**); “they were glad before you” (**9:2^{Heb} / 3^{Eng}**); “the club of the oppressor you shattered” (**9:3^{Heb} / 4^{Eng}**); “a child was born” (**9:5^{Heb} / 6^{Eng}**); “a son was given” (**9:5^{Heb} / 6^{Eng}**); “the rule was upon his shoulder” (**9:5^{Heb} / 6^{Eng}**); “and he called his name...” (**9:5^{Heb} / 6^{Eng}**).

But there are also future verbs in the depiction: “(war’s uniforms)...will be for burning” (**9:4^{Heb} / 5^{Eng}**); “YHWH of Armies’ zeal will do this” (**9:6^{Heb} / 7^{Eng}**)

Especially this last statement is important, for it says that the things described in the vision by past tense verbs are something that YHWH of Armies “will do,” that is, in the future..

Gray comments that “Except in **verses 4 and 6** the tenses used throughout the poem are perfects and imperfects with waw conversive, i.e. tenses naturally used in historical narrative. But the situation described in **verses 1-3 and 5** in no way correspond to any known circumstances, and the name in **verse 5** has no appearance of being one borne by an actual person. It has therefore been widely and correctly held that the poem is, at least in part, prophetic.” (P. 165)

Motyer comments that the passage “...is couched in past tenses; the future is written as something which has already happened, for it belonged to the prophetic consciousness of men like Isaiah to cast themselves forward in time and then look back on the mighty acts of God, saying to us: ‘Look forward to it, it is certain, he has already done it!’” (P. 98)

(continued...)

⁸⁶(...continued)

The biblical teaching concerning the prophets is that they were taken into the Divine council, and in ecstatic vision or dream were enabled to see what it is that YHWH is planning to do. For example, in **Genesis 18:17**, we are told how YHWH decided to take Abraham into his confidence, revealing to him (as a spokesperson / prophet) what He was doing in human history.

In addition, see **Job 1:3-12; 2:1-6** and **Jeremiah 23:18**, where it is taught that YHWH allows chosen ones of his creatures into his intimate relationship (such as Abraham), giving them access to Divine information unknown to others. **Amos 3:7** states, "...My Lord YHWH will not do a thing, unless He uncovered His counsel to His servants the prophets." It is only those to whom YHWH has "uncovered" or "revealed" His counsel who can truly speak for YHWH, and declare His will--and that is why in their writings they can honestly claim to know YHWH's will, and speak for YHWH. But we must remember **Numbers 12:6-8** and **1 Corinthians 13:9-12**, which state that the prophetic vision will not be immediate, face-to-face in nature, but will rather be by means of vision / dream, and filled with enigma / puzzle.

Motyer goes on to state that "Because of this confidence [that YHWH has revealed to them what He is doing], **Isaiah** can place the light of [this passage] in immediate proximity to the darkness of [**chapter 8**], not because it will immediately happen [its fulfillment would only happen some seven centuries later!] but because it is immediately evident to the eye of faith; those walking in the darkness can see the light ahead and are sustained by hope." (P. 98)

Again Motyer states, "The eye of faith looks at all this [gloom and anguish] but affirms that, real though it is, it is not the 'real' reality. As always, the people of God must decide what reading of their experiences they will live by. Are they to look at the darkness, the hopelessness, the dreams shattered and conclude that God has forgotten them? Or are they to recall His past mercies, to remember His present promises and to make great affirmations of faith?...Isaiah insists here that hope is a present reality, part of the constitution of the 'now.' The darkness is true but it is not the whole truth and certainly is not the fundamental truth." (P. 99)

We say that the prophet Isaiah, having been taken into the Divine council, and having received the Divine Self-revelation of the coming future through prophetic vision, is able to describe what he has seen in the past tense, even though its fulfillment still lies in the distant future.

But we would also emphasize that Isaiah, like all other prophets, did not see everything clearly--rather, the prophets saw in visions and dreams, enigmatically. Yes, Isaiah and the other prophets dared to tell their visions and dreams, and speak as clearly as they could for God and His message. But we do not need to claim more for their abilities than the **Bible** itself claims--as Motyer does, and many others.

(continued...)

⁸⁶(...continued)

Slotki entitles **9:1-6^{Heb} / 2-7^{Eng}** “Deliverance and joy,” as it depicts “The fall of Assyria and the announcement of the birth of Hezekiah.” (P. 43) And we ask, does the text in fact identify the name of the child that is born? Or is this being read into the text by those who want to deny its “Messianic” interpretation by Christians?

Oswalt entitles **9:1-6^{Heb} / 2-7^{Eng}** “Unto us a child is born.” He comments that “In this segment Isaiah reaches the climax of the section begun at **7:1**. In place of an unfaithful monarch whose shortsighted defensive policies will actually plunge the nation into more desperate straits, there is lifted up the ideal Monarch who, though a child, will bring an end to all wars and establish an eternal kingdom based upon justice and righteousness. As a child, he is the culmination of Isaiah’s use of children to indicate God’s providential mastery of history...

“Here, however, the names no longer express some future event or situation as do Shear-yashubh and Maher-shalal-chash-baz. Neither do they directly express the relation between God and His people, as does [the name] Immanuel. Rather, they express the remarkable nature of this individual and thus, indirectly, the saving character of his reign. In this respect, he is the ultimate expression of the truth that God is indeed with us (Immanuel), not for our destruction, but for our redemption.

“As an expression of God’s ultimate purpose, **9:1-6^{Heb} / 2-7^{Eng}** forms the conclusion to the reflections which began at **8:11**. The dependence upon our own resources and perspectives for guidance can only lead further into darkness. That had been the way of Ahaz, refusing the instructions and testimonies of God. But into this helpless-ness of that darkness, God would, through the coming King, will yet shine the light of His Own delivering power.” (Pp. 241-42)

And we ask, just as we have asked of Slotki, does the text identify the child as “Immanuel”? Or is this a Christian’s reading that name into the text, as the Jewish scholar has read “Hezekiah” into the text?

Ackerman comments that “In Christian tradition, this oracle is commonly regarded as a description of the messianic king to come...In its original context, however, it celebrated the coronation of a king of First Isaiah’s day, probably Hezekiah (who ruled 715-687 B.C.E.). While other biblical prophets tended to view the institution of kingship with some suspicion (see, e.g., **Hosea 8:4**), First Isaiah here and elsewhere (most notably **11:1-9**; see also **16:4b-5**; **32:1-8**) speaks positively of the Judean monarchy, regarding the king as exalted on earth in the same way that First Isaiah imagines the Deity to be exalted in the heavens.” (P. 970)

Gray entitles **verses 1-6^{Heb} / 2-7^{Eng}** “The glorious Future of Yahweh’s now enslaved People.”

(continued...)

⁸⁶(...continued)

He summarizes the passage by stating: “Light now shines on the people that have been (long) in darkness (**verse 1**), and they rejoice before Yahweh with great joy (**verse 2**). For

- (1) Yahweh has delivered the people from the yoke of a foreign oppressor (**verse 3**);
- (2) He has also made an end of war (**verse 4**); moreover,
- (3) a child has been born, who, as a native ruler in contrast to the (foreign) oppressor of **verse 3**, will exercise dominion, and is marked out as exceptional by the name which he receives (**verse 5**). He will rule justly and righteously from the throne of David over a vast dominion undisturbed to its furthest bound by any breach of peace; this righteous government by the will and act of Yahweh is to be endless (**verse 6**)...

[Gray asks,] Has the great deliverance from foreign oppression actually taken place? Has some birth awakened the poet’s hopes, but the actual present not yet fulfilled them by bringing the child born to the throne of David? Many have held that the birth is historic, and that the poet refers in particular to the birth of Hezekiah; but this view is now [1912] generally and rightly abandoned.

“It is more probable that the poem is prophetic throughout in all its direct statements—the light has not yet actually shined, the people have not yet actually rejoiced, the child has not yet actually been born; all these things are past, not in reality, but only in the hopeful vision of the poet. The circumstances under which the poem

was written can only, but may probably, be detected in the implicit statements; from these we may infer two things:

- (1) the people were at the time in ‘darkness,’ i.e. distress; and
- (2) under a foreign yoke...

If all we can infer are these two circumstances, the historical situation presupposed is obviously one that occurred even in Isaiah’s lifetime, for Judah felt the pressure of Assyria and paid tribute; but it also frequently recurred later, when the yoke of Babylon, Persia, the Ptolemies or the Seleucids rested on the Jews.” (P. 165-66)

Gray adds that “If Isaiah did look forward to a king in the future and had wished to describe him, he must have described him much as he is here described—righteous, just, mighty in defense of the weak...This ideal of the kingdom established in righteousness and of the peace-loving, justice-securing king is anything but ignoble...

“On the whole, if the passage was not written by Isaiah, it may be best regarded as a lyrical counterpart of **chapters 40-55**...written towards the close of the Exile, when the people had long been walking in the darkness of captivity, long dwelling in the land of the shadow of death—Babylon.” (Pp. 167-68)

(continued...)

הָעַם הַהֹלְכִים בְּחֹשֶׁךְ

רָאוּ אֹרֶן גָּדוֹל

יֹשְׁבֵי בְּאֶרֶץ צְלִמּוֹת

אֹרֶן נִגְהָ עֲלֵיהֶם:

The people,⁸⁷ the ones walking in the darkness⁸⁸

⁸⁶(...continued)

Kaiser entitles **verses 1-2**^{Heb} / **2-3**^{Eng} “The Joy of the Redeemed.”

He comments that “As a traveler joyfully greets the sunrise after a long and sorry night, so the people will welcome the salvation given them by Yahweh. The light which shines on them and gives freedom and joy to illuminate their world is the very presence of God, which is reflected in His actions.” (P. 208)

⁸⁷Gray comments that “the people” meant is “the entire people of Israel, descendants of those who had constituted the kingdom of David (**verse 6**).” (P. 168) Perhaps, but the text itself does not make this clear.

Slotki states that the phrase “the people” is to be understood as “the inhabitants of Jerusalem who were besieged by the Assyrian army.” (P. 43) And we have to agree that this is certainly the context in which this passage occurs in the **Book of Isaiah**. But Alexander claims that “the people” refers to “the people of Galilee.” (P. 198)

⁸⁸Gray states that “Darkness signifies, in particular, captivity.” He refers to **Isaiah 42:7** (but it describes the darkness of a prison), **49:9** (again, of prisoners), **Micah 7:8-9** (one sitting in darkness) and **Psalms 107:10, 14** (which speak of the darkness of prison). We think “darkness” can signify much more than captivity—but agree that life in exile may have felt like being imprisoned. Gray adds that “What is meant is either the land of Israel temporarily obscured by calamity, or Babylon, the land of captivity.” (P. 169)

Alexander translates and comments on **verse 1**^{Heb} / **2**^{Eng}: “*The people* (just described, i.e. the people of Galilee) *those walking in the dark* (expressive of spiritual blindness and extreme distress), *have seen a great light* (the change being presented to the prophet’s view as already past): *the dwellers in the land of the shadow of death* (i.e. of intense darkness), *light has beamed upon them.*”

He comments that “These words in a general sense, may be descriptive of any great and sudden change in the condition of the people, especially of one from ignorance and misery to illumination and enjoyment. They are still more appropriate to Christ as the light of the world (**John 8:12**), a light to the nations (**Isaiah 43:6; 49:6**), and the Sun of righteousness (**Malachi 4:2**) which rose upon the world when he

(continued...)

saw⁸⁹ a great light;⁹⁰
those living in a land of death's shadow,
light shined upon them.⁹¹

⁸⁸(...continued)

manifested forth his glory by his teachings and his miracles in Galilee (**John 2:11**). It was in this benighted and degraded region that he first appeared as a messenger from God; and in that appearance we are expressly taught that this prediction was fulfilled (**Matthew 4:12-17** [see the quotation of this passage in footnote 91])." (P. 198)

We agree. Notice that Alexander only states that the words of the passage are "appropriate" to Christ, especially as he began his ministry in Galilee and the light of God shined brightly through him in the specific area depicted in this passage. It is an amazing and convincing fact—whatever it may be that Isaiah saw in vision, it fits hand in glove with the what happened when Jesus began his ministry in Galilee!

⁸⁹Slotki's translation is "have seen," and he comments that "This and the following perfect [verbs] are 'prophetic,' the prophet seeing the future so vividly that to him it seems an event of the past." (P. 43)

Christian interpreters likewise view the past tense verbs as "prophetic perfects," claiming that the prophet is seeing the birth of Jesus the Messiah some seven centuries in the future.

⁹⁰Slotki identifies the "great light" as "the effect of the destruction of the Assyrian hosts (compare **Isaiah 37:36-37**)." (P. 43)

36 And YHWH's messenger / angel went forth,
and it struck in Assyria's camp a hundred and eighty and five thousand.
And they arose in the morning,
and look—all of them dead corpses!
37 And Sennacherib, Assyria's King, pulled up, and went, and he returned,
and he dwelt in Nineveh
(where, as the text goes on to tell, as he worshiped in the temple of his God
Nisrok, his two sons murdered him).

But was this a "great light" shining in Galilee of the nations? Is that the way a prophet would describe what happened when the Assyrian attack on Jerusalem collapsed? Perhaps—since the northern area of Israel had been occupied and controlled by the Assyrians since their taking Northern Israel into captivity in 721 B.C.E., and the retreat of Sennacherib to Nineveh would bring hope for the removal of the Assyrian yoke that burdened those northern areas. And there is much in the following verses that imply just this.

⁹¹Compare **Matthew 4:12-17**, where this passage from **Isaiah** is quoted:

(continued...)

⁹¹(...continued)

¹² Now when [Jesus] heard that John had been arrested,
 he withdrew into Galilee;

¹³ And leaving the (city of) Nazareth
 he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea [located on the ‘Via Maris’],
 in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali,
¹⁴ so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:
¹⁵ ‘(The) land of Zebulun and (the) land of Naphtali,
 the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan,
 Galilee of the Gentiles--
¹⁶ the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light,
 and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death,
 on them a light has dawned.’

¹⁷ From that time Jesus began to preach, saying,
 ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’

Can this quotation of **Isaiah** by **Matthew** be another case in which Israel’s history is being repeated in the life of Jesus, as is oftentimes the case in **Matthew**? If, as Slotki insists, the passage is rooted in the gaining of freedom for Galilee, and the northern areas of Israel that had been under Assyrian bondage, then can we not understand **Matthew** as stating that a much brighter light has shined out in Galilee with the coming and ministry of the Messiah?

Oswalt comments on **verse 1^{Heb} / 2^{Eng}** that “Following the lead of the previous verse, this verse explains why there will be no gloom where in fact the darkness had been absolute. With the suddenness of dawn (compare **60:1**) comes the announcement that light has appeared to these people. They did not produce it nor are they responsible for it. Where they had been groping in darkness, or sitting in the land of death’s shadow, they suddenly find themselves blinking in the light...Their sin and rebellion are not enough to keep God from manifesting Himself to them...

“All these events are manifestly in the future from the prophet’s point of view, yet the verbs are all in the perfect tense. Apparently these are prophetic perfects. Isaiah has a point of view different from the normal one. In the uncertainty of his own milieu he nonetheless can look at a future moment and describe its events with the certainty of completed actions. No medium or spiritist could do that...But God could give that kind of insight to His prophet.” (Pp. 242-43)

Motyer comments that “Isaiah turns from lands transformed by Divine blessing to *people* entering into the light of God’s favor. *Walking* means living out their lives. The remnant, caught up in the toils of national calamity, have been walking in darkness, enduring the hiding of the Lord’s face (**8:17**)...The darkness-light motif points to a creative work of God, Who alone can make such a transformation (compare **Isaiah 4:5; Genesis 1:2-3; 2 Corinthians 4:6**).” (P. 100)

הַרְבִּיתָ הַגּוֹי

לֹו הִגְדַּלְתָּ הַשְּׂמֵחָה

שְׂמֵחוּ לְפָנַי כְּשִׂמְחַת בְּקִצֹר

כַּאֲשֶׁר יִגִּילוּ בְּחֶלְקֵם שְׁלָל:

You have multiplied / increased the nation—

You did not make / for it You made⁹³ the gladness great.

⁹²Oswalt comments on **verse 2**^{Heb} / **3**^{Eng} that “As a result of God’s revelation of Himself through His Messiah, joy sweeps over the people, the joy of abundance. Instead of depopulation and dwindling away (**7:20-23**), the nation swells and grows (**49:19-23**); instead of the harvest’s being meager (**5:10**), it is abundant (**35:1, 2**); instead of becoming spoil themselves (**8:1**), they will divide the spoil (**33:23**). What is dealt with here are all the elemental fears of people, and the prophet says that in place of fear there is joy.” (P. 243)

Alexander states that in **verse 2**^{Heb} / **3**^{Eng}, “The prophet now, by a sudden apostrophe [*apostrophe* used in literature is an arrangement of words addressing a non-existent person or an abstract idea in such a way as if it were present and capable of under-standing feelings], addresses God Himself, Who, by bestowing on the Galileans this *great light*, would not only honor them, but afford occasion of great joy to all the true Israel, including those who should be gathered from the gentiles. *Thou has enlarged the nation* (i.e. Israel in general), *Thou hast increased its joy* (literally, to it Thou hast increased the joy): they *rejoice before Thee like the joy in harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil*.

He holds that the increase of the nation “means the increase of the people in their own land, not a mere growth of population...but an increase of the true Israel by the calling of the Gentiles.” (P. 199)

⁹³The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” לֹו, “not,” and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” לוֹ, “to / for him.” In this way, the Masoretes suggest changing the original text—and we agree with them, since the original text does not seem to make sense in the context. Gray comments that the Hebrew text “reads *Thou hast multiplied the nation: Thou hast not iincreased the joy*, which is obviously unsuitable. The *qere* is probably an early conjectural emendation which restores sense at the expense of style and without restoring the parallelism.” (P. 169) We disagree with his statement that the *qere* is out of style and ruins the parallelism.

They were glad before you like gladness in the harvest;⁹⁴
like they rejoice when they divide spoil.⁹⁵

⁹⁴Slotki comments on the phrase “the joy in harvest,” that is referring to “the festival which was the time of national rejoicing (compare **Deuteronomy 16:15; Psalm 126:6**).” (P. 43)

Deuteronomy 16:15,

Seven days you shall (make) a pilgrimage-festival for the YHWH your God,
in the place which YHWH will choose;
because YHWH your God will bless you
in all your produce and in every work of your hands;
and you shall surely be rejoicing.

Psalm 126:6,

Going, he will go, and crying, carrying the seed of sowing;
coming, he will come with a ringing-cry, carrying his sheaves / cut ears of
grain!

See also **Psalm 4:8**^{Heb} / **7**^{Eng}

You have placed rejoicing in my heart--
far greater than their grain and new wine [celebrations]!,

⁹⁵These were two great occasions of national rejoicing in ancient Israel—the time of successful harvest, and the time of victory at the close of a war. Much hard work went into being able to complete a successful harvest; much blood, sweat and tears went into being able to defeat an enemy. But great joy accompanied victory—as we who lived through the Second World War so well remember. Compare **Psalm 119:162**,

I rejoiced over your word / promise
like one finding great spoil.
(That is, when victory had been won in battle; but here in Psalm 119, a spiritual victory is meant.)

Motyer comments that “Two contrasting spheres of joy, *harvest* and *plunder*, express the idea of every sort of joy, joy in its completeness. Both harvest and victory are Divine gifts...Harvest belongs in the sphere of ‘nature,’ plunder in the sphere of history.” (P. 101)

Kaiser likewise states that “The comparisons with joy over the harvest and over the spoil indicate the magnitude of the joy, but at the same time they demonstrate that the act of deliverance will give the people life and unexpected abundance.” (P. 208)

(continued...)

⁹⁵(...continued)

Gray notes that “It no more follows that the poet expected the new era to open after a victorious battle, than that he expected it to begin at the end of harvest.” (P. 169)

⁹⁶Slotki entitles **verses 3-4^{Heb} / 4-5^{Eng}** “The destruction of the besieging army.”

Notice that verses **3^{Heb} / 4^{Eng}**, **4^{Heb} / 5^{Eng}** and **5^{Heb} / 6^{Eng}** all begin with **וְ**, “for,” or “because,” each verse giving a reason for Israel’s joy.

Motyer comments on verse **3^{Heb} / 4^{Eng}** that “There are two sets of historical references in this verse.

First, vocabulary is used which recalls Egypt, e.g. yoke (**Leviticus 26:13**), burdens (**Exodus 3:11; 2:11; 5:4-5; 6:6-7**), shoulders (**Psalms 81:7 3-4^{Heb} / 6:3-4^{Eng}**) and oppressor (**Exodus 3:7; 5:6, 10-14**). The exodus, the preeminent act of God (**Exodus 3:7-8; 2 Samuel 7:23**), offers background to the coming child.

Secondly, the defeat of Midian recorded in **Judges 6-8** is remembered. This is apt, for Gideon was in particular the deliverer of Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali (**Judges 6:35**), and the narrative labors to emphasize the victory as an act of God, excluding human glory (**Judges 7:2-14**), wrought by the sudden burst of light (**7:20**).” (P. 101)

Kaiser states that “Appropriately the poet mentions the destruction of alien rule first: only when the enemy are destroyed can a people who have hitherto been captive occupy themselves with spoil and think of appointing their own king. Thus verse **3^{Heb} / 4^{Eng}** promises that Yahweh will put an end to the servitude of His people who are at present bearing it as an ox bears the yoke! They are at the mercy of the alien ruler and his underlings in the same way that an animal or a prisoner is at the mercy of the whip of its driver...

“A people which, like post-exilic Judaism [Kaiser thinks this material originated in that time-frame], was utterly in the power of a far superior world empire, and in addition expected the onslaught of the nations against Zion, could expect its freedom only in analogy to such a decisive event brought about by Yahweh Himself.” (P. 208-09)

We think the passage fits much better in terms of the Assyrian invasion, than it does the time of Persian rule in post-exilic times. The Persian rule was much less oppressive than was the Assyrian.

Gray comments that here “Israel is compared to an animal with a burdensome yoke resting on its neck and compelled to work by its driver, who uses his stick upon it. In the terms of the figure, Yahweh (not the Messiah) brings Israel’s servitude to an end

(continued...)

כִּי אֶת־עַל סִבְלוֹ
וְאֵת מִטְּהָ שִׁכְמוֹ

שִׁבַּט הַנֹּגֵשׁ בּוֹ
הַחֲתַת כְּיוֹם מִדְיָן:

Because his burden's yoke,⁹⁷
and the rod / staff of his shoulder⁹⁸
the club of the one oppressing him
You shattered, like Midian's day.⁹⁹

⁹⁶(...continued)

by breaking in pieces both the yoke and the driver's stick. Burden and blows are alike done away." (P. 169)

⁹⁷Slotki comments that "the yoke of his burden" means "the oppressive rule of the conqueror." (P. 44)

Oswalt comments that "The Assyrian emperors delighted in telling how they imposed their heavy yokes upon captive peoples [compare Pritchard, **ANET**, pp. 287-88]. Here Isaiah looks to a day when One mightier than the Assyrians of this world will break those yokes to pieces. He, too, will impose a yoke, but paradoxically it will be easy (**Matthew 11:29, 30**). It will not be an expression of arrogance and cruelty but of gentleness and kindness. (Note that the 'heavy yoke' which Solomon had imposed was a central issue in the split of Israel and Judah (**1 Kings 12:4-14**).)" (Pp. 243-44)

⁹⁸Slotki comments that "Ehrlich, a German Jewish commentator, agrees with Rashi who construes מִטְּהָ [staff / rod] not as a noun, but the hiphil participle of נָטָה [sometimes meaning 'to incline,' 'to bend']: 'him who made his (Israel's) shoulder to bow (and receive a burden)." (P. 44) Perhaps, but rather far-fetched!

Gray comments that in the imagery of this passage, "Israel is compared to an animal with a burdensome yoke resting on its neck and compelled to work by its driver, who uses his stick [rod / staff] upon it." (P. 169)

⁹⁹There are two events in Israel's history that are recalled in the language of **9:3-4^{Heb} / 4-5^{Eng}**. Both of these events were Divine actions on behalf of Israel, in which YHWH acted powerfully to deliver his people, completely apart from human abilities—in the time of Gideon and the deliverance from the Midianites (**Judges 6-8**), and in the time of the exodus, when YHWH delivered Israel from its bondage to Pharaoh's Egypt.

(continued...)

⁹⁹(...continued)

Isaiah envisions a similar great Divine victory which will multiply the nation, bringing great joy to its people, joy like that in the time of bumper harvests, or in the jubilation that results following the defeat of enemies.

Isaiah's words concerning "his burden's yoke," and "the rod of his shoulder," and "the club of the one oppressing him," are rooted in the story of **Exodus 1-2**, when the Israelite slaves were subjected to harsh, belittling labor in Egypt, being forced to carry heavy burdens beyond their strength.

The specific reference, "like Midian's day," recalls the story of Gideon's victory over Midian through Divine power (**Judges 6-8**).

Here, in **Isaiah 9**, the reference must be, we think, to the yoke and rod of Assyria.

Oswalt comments on **verse 3^{Heb} / 4^{Eng}** that "Now the immediate cause of the rejoicing is explained. They rejoice because the Lord has freed them...It is final deliverance which is in view. This is what God holds out to His people and that for which they justly pray and believe." (P. 243)

So it will be in this coming Divine victory; it will be accomplished by the "zeal of YHWH," not by any human actions!

Oswalt speaks concerning the nature of the deliverance that YHWH gives: "Two extremes are to be avoided here. One extreme is to take the way that the Christian Church has often taken, saying that true bondage is to personal sin from which Christ frees us, and thus turning a blind eye on actual physical oppressions. The other extreme is the way of certain forms of liberation theology that seem to suggest that the only sin is the sin of political oppression, and that Christ's only purpose in coming was to give human beings political freedom.

"Neither extreme is adequate in itself. To make God's promises primarily political is to overlook the profound insight of the **New Testament** (and the **Old Testament**) that the chief reason for the absence of [peace / shalom] (harmonious relationships) among human beings is the absence of [peace / shalom] between God and human beings through sin. Without [peace / shalom] between persons, freedom cannot long exist. But to act as if the forgiveness of sin and the consequent personal relationship are all that matters is to succumb to a Platonic distinction of existence into a 'real' spiritual world and an 'unreal' physical world, a distinction which is thoroughly unbiblical. The Messiah lifts the yoke of sin in order to lift the yoke of oppression. The Church forgets either yoke at its peril...

"The Assyrian emperors delighted in telling how they imposed their heavy yokes upon captive peoples [see **Pritchard**, pp. 287-88]. Here Isaiah looks to a day when One mightier than the Assyrians of this world will break those yokes to pieces. He, too,

(continued...)

⁹⁹(...continued)

will impose a yoke, but, paradoxically it will be easy (**Matthew 11:29-30**). It will not be an expression of arrogance and cruelty but of gentleness and kindness.” (P. 243)

Alexander comments on **verse 3^{Heb} / 4^{Eng}** that “This verse assigns the reason or occasion of the promised joy. They shall rejoice before Thee, *that* (or because) *the yoke of his burden* (his burdensome yoke), *and the rod of his shoulder* (or back), *and the staff of the one driving him* (his task-master, slave-driver) *Thou has broken like the day* (as in the day) *of Midian*, as Gideon routed Midian, i.e., suddenly, totally, and by special aid from heaven...

“This promise was not fulfilled in the deliverance of the Jews from Babylon (Calvin), which bore no resemblance to the victory of Gideon; nor in the destruction of Sennacherib’s army (Grotius), the benefits of which were only temporary; nor in the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus (J. D. Michaelis), to which there is no allusion in the context; but in the glorious deliverance of the Galileans (the first converts to Christianity), and of all who with them made up the true Israel, from the heavy burden of the covenant of works, the galling yoke of the Mosaic law, the service of the devil, and the bondage of corruption. Outward deliverance is only promised, so far as it accompanied spiritual change or was included in it.” (P. 200)

Oswalt asks, “But is this prophet dream of freedom just a dream? Or is there reason to believe that such a thing might be? With these few words [‘in the day of Midian’] Isaiah calls to mind historic events which would give credence to the eschatological hope. Gideon and his people, faced by an oppressive horde, discovered that in God weakness is strength, and they watched in amazement as God used them to bring deliverance (**Judges 6-7**). So the prophet alludes to those events as evidence that the picture he projects is entirely feasible, given the character and power of their God.” (P. 244)

¹⁰⁰Gray comments that **verse 4^{Heb} / 5^{Eng}** “does not give the reason for **verse 3**, but a further reason for the joy of **verse 2**; men will rejoice because the age of universal and unbroken peace (**Isaiah 2:4**) has begun. War is already abolished, and everything that pertains to it, typically illustrated by the soldier’s dress, will be destroyed by fire...

“Compare especially **Ezekiel 39:9** [the burning of weapons of war for seven years]; also **Isaiah 2:4** [swords beaten into plowshares, spears into pruning hooks]; **Hosea 2:20^{Heb} / 18^{Eng}** [YHWH will abolish bow, sword and war from the land]; **Zechariah 9:10** [chariot, war horse and battle bow cut off; **Psalms 46:10^{Heb} / 9^{Eng}** [bow broken and spear shattered; wars cease to the earth’s end]; **76:4^{Heb} / 3^{Eng}** [God broke the flashing arrows, the shield, the sword, and the weapons of war]...

“In the golden age of peace, war and all that pertains to war will be taboo, and must, as things unclean, be destroyed.” (Pp. 170-71)

כִּי כָל-סָאוֹן סָאֵן בְּרַעַשׁ
 וְשִׁמְלָה מְגוֹלְלָה בְּדָמִים
 וְהִיְתָה לְשִׂרְפָה
 מֵאֲכָלֵת אֵשׁ:

Because every boot¹⁰¹ trampling with tumult,¹⁰²
 and (every) uniform rolled in blood—¹⁰³
 and it will be for burning,
 eaten (by) fire.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹Slotki comments that “The Hebrew word סָאוֹן corresponds to the Assyrian *senu*, ‘shoe, sandal.’ In Aramaic it is more particularly used of a military boot.” (P. 44)

¹⁰²The Hebrew phrase סָאֵן בְּרַעַשׁ is given varying translations, from “with confused noise,” to “put on to stamp with,” to “of the trampling warriors,” to “used in battle,” to “clanking over the ground.”

Rahlfs does not reflect this phrase, but has a very different translation: ὅτι πᾶσαν στολὴν ἐπισυνηγμένην δόλω καὶ ἱμάτιον μετὰ καταλλαγῆς ἀποτείσουσιν καὶ θελήσουσιν εἰ ἐγενήθησαν πυρίκαυστοι, “Because every robe having been gathered by deceit, and garment with radical change / reconciliation they will repay; and they will desire—if they became burned in fire.”

¹⁰³For the phrase מְגוֹלְלָה בְּדָמִים, normally translated “rolled in blood(s),” **Tanakh** has the unusual translation “donned in infamy.” We see no justification for such a translation.

¹⁰⁴As a result of this coming Divine victory, all the paraphernalia of war—the soldiers’ boots, used to trample upon innocent victims, and the military uniforms, covered with blood, will all be burned with fire.

Slotki says, “The equipment of the enemy, clothing as well as footwear, will be used as fuel, and not be required for military purposes in the era of peace which will follow his defeat.” (P. 44)

Oswalt asks, “How will the Lord put an end to oppression? By putting an end to the warfare upon which oppression rests. God will not supplant oppression with greater oppression, nor will He replace warfare with warfare. Instead, He will do away with wars (compare **Psalm 46:10-11**^{Heb} / **9-10**^{Eng}; **2 Corinthians 10:4**) If some Christians

(continued...)

¹⁰⁴(...continued)

feel justified in taking up arms against oppression, that is at it may be, but 'Christian' armies of conquest are surely an abomination...

"The boots whose tread shook the earth are now silent. The cloaks in whose fabric is mixed the blood of conqueror and conquered now feed the flames. Wars have ceased to the end of the earth (**Psalm 46:10**^{Heb} / **9**^{Eng}). Speed the day." (P. 244)

We are reminded by this language of Isaiah's earlier vision in **2:4b**, "...They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Compare **Zechariah 9:10**, which predicts that Israel's coming king "will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall command peace to the nations; his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River (Euphrates) to the ends of the earth."

Alexander comments on **verse 4**^{Heb} / **5**^{Eng}: "The destruction of the oppressing power shall be followed by profound and universal peace. To express this idea, the prophet describes the equipments of the soldier as consumed by fire. *For all the armor of the armed man* (of the man-at-arms, who mingles) *in the tumult* (of battle), *and the garment rolled in blood, shall be for burning* (and for) *food* (or fuel), *of fire*. In other words, the usual accompaniments of battle shall be utterly destroyed, and by implication, war itself shall cease...

"It is not the weapons of the enemy alone, but all weapons of war, that are to be consumed; not merely because they have been used for a bad purpose, but because they are hereafter to be useless. It is not so much a prophecy of conquest as of peace; a peace, however, which is not to be expected till the enemies of God are overcome; and therefore the prediction may be said to include both events, the final overthrow of all opposing powers and the subsequent prevalence of universal peace. This last is uniformly spoken of in Scripture as characteristic of Messiah's reign, both internal and external, in society at large and in the hearts of his people...

"With respect to the latter, the prediction has been verified with more or less distinctness, in every case of true conversion. With respect to the former, its fulfilment is inchoate [just begun, and so not fully formed], but will one day be complete." (Pp. 201-02)

Which is to say, Isaiah's prediction has not come to fulfilment—but only expresses a wish that is universal. We—whether Jews, or Christians, or of whatever religious conviction, long for the coming of universal peace—but still take up arms to defend ourselves from enemies. Christian believers say that the Messiah, Jesus Christ, has brought such peace—at least to them as individuals; but admit that universal peace still awaits the "second coming of Christ." The Jewish expectation of the Messiah makes a similar claim—that universal peace will only come with the coming of the Messiah. What do you say?

(continued...)

¹⁰⁴(...continued)

Kaiser comments that “The second reason for jubilation is that the defeat of the enemy will be annihilating. All the noisy military boots, symbolizing the power of those who wear them, and the cloaks, soaked, not just spattered, with the blood of those who had previously worn them, are already burnt in this imaginary situation...Accordingly, the uniforms of the dead have been treated as spoil. The spoil of war belonged to the Divine leader of the army. The traces of occupation are wiped out.” (P. 210)

Motyer states that “The metaphor of conquest...is brought to its climax with the final act of spoliation [ruination, destruction], but it is a metaphor. Since the vision is couched in kingly terms, the submission of the world to the King is viewed, after the manner of kings, as a conquest. In reality, however, it is a spreading peace and, in its fulfillment (**verse 6^{Heb} / 7^{Eng}**; compare **Acts 15:13ff.** [where the spread of the church to the Gentiles is compared to the rebuilding of the tent of David], the work of evangelism.” (P. 101)

That is, Motyer, like Alexander, admits that the prediction has not been fulfilled literally, and claims the prediction is meant only as a “metaphor,” fulfilled in the work of Christian evangelism. What do you think? Has the work of evangelism brought universal peace to the world?

¹⁰⁵Alexander comments on **verse 5^{Heb} / 6^{Eng}**: “This verse gives a further reason for the joy of the people, by bringing into view the person who was to effect the great deliverance. *For a child is born to us (or for us, i.e. for our benefit)—a son is given to us (i.e. by Jehovah, an expression frequently applied in the **New Testament** to Christ’s incarnation), and the government is upon his shoulder (as a burden or a robe of office)—and his name is called Wonderful (literally Wonder)—Counselor—Mighty God—Everlasting Father—Prince of Peace.*”

He adds that “When it is said that his name should be called, it does not mean that he should actually bear these names in real life, but merely that he should deserve them, and that they would be descriptive of his character.” (P. 203)

Oswalt asks, “But how will He do *that* [i.e. cause wars to cease universally]? This verse [**5^{Heb} / 6^{Eng}**] supplies the answer. It lies in the coming of a person... Ultimately, God’s truth is not merely in the realm of ideas; ultimately, it is meant to be incarnated...Who is this person through whom God intends to bring war to an end and establish true freedom upon the earth? Evidently, he is a royal person (note the references to a kingdom, government, and throne), yet he is never called king. Von Rad and Harrelson conclude that this reference is an intentional slap at the Jerusalem monarchy. If such as these are called ‘kings’ then the title is too tainted for this one to bear. He will be in fact what they were in name only...

“But this person will also be a child, and it is inescapable that the childish aspect of the deliverer is important to Isaiah, for it appears again in **11:6, 8**...Medieval Jewish

(continued...)

כִּי־יֵלֵד יֶלֶד־לָנוּ
 בֶּן נִתָּן־לָנוּ
 וַתְּהִי הַמְּשֻׁרָה עַל־שִׁכְמוֹ
 וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ
 פְּלֵא יוֹעֵץ
 אֵל גִּבּוֹר
 אֲבִיעֵד
 שֵׁר־שָׁלוֹם:

¹⁰⁵(...continued)

commentators, combating the prevailing messianic claims of Christians, argued that all this was simply in recognition of the birth of the crown prince, Hezekiah, and was only a simple royal birth hymn. However, this view flies in the face of the chronology of Hezekiah's birth, and even more seriously, it is evident from the language that no merely human king is being spoken of. This is clearly an eschatological figure, the Messiah." (Pp. 244-45) We agree. Do you?

Kaiser entitles verses **5-6**^{Heb} / **6-7**^{Eng} "The Restoration of the Kingdom of David."

He states that in these two verses "We reach the climax of the prophecy. The people and the land freed by Yahweh are again given their own king, and the kingdom of David is restored..."

"[The poet] makes use of the language of the enthronement ritual of Judah, a recollection of which had been preserved among the circles of the Jerusalem priests and the temple singers who took up the legacy of the cultic prophets even through the period of catastrophe. That mention of the coming king of the time of salvation had to be oriented on the primal image of the ideal king and therefore on the royal ritual which represents a binding promise." (Pp. 210-11)

Gray comments on **verse 5**^{Heb} / **6**^{Eng} that "The third cause of the people's joy is the birth of a prince of their own race...who receives...the dominion and power over them that had been exercised in the days of darkness...by an alien ruler...and who is...to extend his dominion widely but peacefully. This child is Hezekiah according to medieval Jewish interpreters...Simon the Maccabee according to Kennett, the Messiah according to most [including the Aramaic Targum]." (P. 172)

Because a child¹⁰⁶ was born to us,
a son given¹⁰⁸ to us.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶Slotki comments that “The verse has been given a Christological interpretation by the [Christian] Church, but modern non-Jewish exegetes agree that a contemporary person is intended. The **Talmud** and later Jewish commentators understood the allusion to be to the son of Ahaz, viz. Hezekiah.” (P. 44)

Alexander responds to such a claim, stating that “the terms of the description are extravagant and false, if applied to Hezekiah.” (P. 203)

¹⁰⁷With the phrase “to us,” Gray holds that “The poet who has hitherto spoken of his people in the third person here associates himself with them.” (P. 172)

¹⁰⁸Slotki states that a better translation would be, “in agreement with the Hebrew, ‘has been born...has been given.’ Hezekiah as a lad had already given promise of his future greatness as religious and political leader.” (P. 44)

That is, whereas he takes many of the perfect verbs in this passage as “prophetic perfects,” he does not do this with these two phrases, in order to say the birth is that of Ahaz’s son, Hezekiah.

¹⁰⁹Kaiser mentions that Albrecht Alt “thought that he could find the key to the understanding of [the first two lines of this verse] in **Psalm 2:7**,

אֶסְפֹּרָה אֶל חֵק יְהוָה
אֲמַר אֵלַי
בְּנֵי אֲתָהּ
אֲנִי הַיּוֹם יִלְדֶתֶיךָ:

I will speak out concerning YHWH's decree.

He spoke to me:

You are My son!

I Myself this day have given you birth!

where mention of the birth of the king refers to the adoption or...the legitimation of the king as the son of Yahweh on the day of his accession. There the king himself refers to the authority to rule given to him by Yahweh in the so-called royal protocol: ‘Yahweh said to me: You are My son. Today I have begotten you’...

“The fact that the present passage says that a child is given to us and a son is born to us could accordingly be regarded as the consequence of adapting the element taken from the enthronement hymn...

(continued...)

And the rule was upon his shoulder,¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹(...continued)

“The Egyptian mythological idea that the king was the son of God characterized him as God’s representative on earth who, in God’s place, had to sustain Ma’at, the legal ordering which embraced the cosmos and society. According to Psalms **2**; **89:27-28**, in Jerusalem the title ‘son’ seems to have conveyed pretensions to world rule, and at the same time to have suggested a special protective relationship existing between father and son...

“What is to be expected from him as ruler is indicated by his great throne-name which, unlike the five-element title given to the king of Egypt, consists only of four elements...

“The first name characterizes the ruler as a man who, like God, can make extraordinary resolves and then carry them out. Illuminated by Yahweh Himself, he needs no counsel from others...

“The second name stresses his abundance of power, calling men to their God; this makes it possible for him to translate his resolves into action, because no one can withstand him...Elsewhere in the **Old Testament** the king is designated God only in **Psalms 45:7**. However, these two instances may be enough to show that the Egyptian influence on the royal ritual was deeper than the tradition generally wants to suggest...

“Thus the king is the representative and viceregent of God on earth, who, as the one endowed with this spirit (compare **Isaiah 11:1**), shares in His nature and His name as ‘eternal father,’ an interpretation which has notable advocates even today, and according to which, in hyperbolic court language, the king is promised a long life... However...the other translation, ‘father of spoil,’ which is equally possible (compare **Genesis 49:27**), is to be preferred...

“The task with which he is confronted for the future is indicated by the fourth name: he is to secure external peace for the people, and care for law and righteousness throughout his kingdom, without which in the conviction of the **Old Testament** there can be no salvation on this earth.” (Pp. 211-14)

¹¹⁰This line, וַתְּהִי הַמְּשָׁרָה עַל-שִׁכְמוֹ, “and the rule / dominion was (if waw-conversive / consecutive) / will be (if non-conversive / consecutive) upon his shoulder,” is given varying translations, from “and the government shall be upon his shoulder,” to “And authority has settled on his shoulders,” to “authority rests upon his shoulders,” to “and the government will be on his shoulders,” to “and dominion has been laid on his shoulders,” to οὗ ἡ ἀρχὴ ἐγενήθη ἐπὶ τοῦ ὤμου αὐτοῦ, “of whom the rule became upon the shoulder of his.”

Gray comments that this language “may have *originated* in a practice of wearing a royal robe on the shoulder.” (P. 172)

(continued...)

and He / he called his name¹¹¹
“Wonder,¹¹² Counselor,”¹¹³

¹¹⁰(...continued)

Slotki comments that “As the son of Ahaz, he [Hezekiah] was ‘Crown Prince’ during his father’s life-time.” (P. 44)

We think the names given to this one being born go far beyond “Crown Prince”!

Kaiser states that “If the king on the throne of David in **verse 5** is designated ‘Divine hero’ and ‘father of spoil,’ he must have at least some warlike qualities. Therefore it is at any rate *possible* that he is even thought to have a share in the Divine victory, which in the eyes of his people, along with his descent, is to justify his claim to the royal throne.” (P. 210)

¹¹¹This line, וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ, “and he called his name,” has likewise been given varying translations, from “and his name shall be called,” to “He has been named,” to “and he is named,” to “And he will be called,” to “and this is the name he has been given,” to καὶ καλεῖται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, “and the name of his is being called.” These varying translations show that there is no common view as to the verbs being “prophetic perfects.”

Gray comments that “The eight words of the name fall into four clauses, each containing two words closely connected. Less probable views are that the first four...or the first two...words should be taken singly. Some Jewish interpreters distribute the names God and the child, e.g. ‘God Who is marvelous in counsel, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, gave him the name Prince of Peace (Rashi...); but Ibn Ezra insisted that the whole eight words belonged to the child’s name...

“Luzzatto treated the names as a sentence, predicating (like Immanuel...) Something of God, and therefore implying nothing as to the child. Some of the names singly, and even more in combination, are as applied to men unparalleled in the **Old Testament**, and on this account are regarded by Gressmann...as mythological and traditional.” (Pp. 172-73)

¹¹²Here the first name of the child / son is פֶּלֵא, **pele**), “Wonder,” or “Marvel.” For occurrences of this noun elsewhere in the **Hebrew Bible**, see:

Exodus 15:11,

Who is like you, O YHWH, among the Gods?
Who is like you, majestic in set-apartness,
awesome in splendor, doing wonder(s)?”

(The phrase is עֲשֵׂה פֶּלֵא, translated into Greek by ποιῶν τέρατα, changing

(continued...)

¹¹²(...continued)

from the Hebrew singular noun “wonder” to the plural noun “signs,” “portents,” or “wonders.” See also **Psalm 77:14** (using the same Hebrew phrase);

Psalm 78:12, פְּלִא עֲשֵׂהָ, “he did (or ‘worked’) a wonder; **Psalm 88:10** (similar);

Isaiah 25:1,

O YHWH, you are my God; I will exalt you;

I will praise your name; for you have done a wonder (עֲשִׂית פְּלִא),
plans formed of old, faithful and sure”;

Isaiah 29:14,

Therefore look at me—
adding to cause wonders to this people,
causing wonder and a wonder...”

See also related forms of this word at **Judges 13:18** (where it is an adjective);
Psalms 77:12; 88:13; 89:6; 119:129; Lamentations 1:9 and **Daniel 12:6**.

It is obvious from this usage that giving this child / son given to Israel this name, פְּלִא *pele*), “Wonder,” means that his very being is a “wonder,” or a “marvel.” His nature cannot be explained on ordinary human terms; his very existence is a “miracle,” a “wonder,” a “marvel.”

¹¹³The second name of this coming child / son is יוֹעֵץ, *yo(ets*, “Counselor.”

Many, including Gray and Oswalt, hold that these first two names should go together to form one name, “Wonderful Counselor.” But the noun *pele*) is not an adjective, and the two names combined would mean something like “Miracle-Counselor,” which makes little sense. Is this coming King going to counsel people on how to perform miracles, or “miraculously counsel” them?

For occurrences of this noun יוֹעֵץ, see **2 Samuel 15:12** (Ahithophel, David’s counselor); **1 Chronicles 26:14** (Zechariah, a prudent counselor); **27:32** (Jonathan, David’s uncle, a counselor), **33** (Ahithophel); **Proverbs 11:14** (in an abundance of counselors there is safety); **24:6** (similar); **Isaiah 1:26** (Jerusalem’s counselors); **3:3** (similar); **9:5** (here); **19:11** (Pharaoh’s counselors), **17** (the plan that YHWH is counseling against Egypt); **40:13** (who has been YHWH’s counselor?); **41:28** (YHWH finds no counselor among the people); **Ezekiel 11:2** (counselors of bad counsel); **Micah 4:9** (has your counselor perished?); **Nahum 1:11** (one who counsels

(continued...)

¹¹³(...continued)

wickedness); **2 Chronicles 22:3** (Athaliah, Omri’s mother, was his counselor to do evil), **4** (the house of Ahab were also counselors to Omri to do evil); **25:16** (Amaziah rejects YHWH’s spokesperson as a counselor); **Ezra 4:5** (counselors bribed to work against the Jews); **7:28** (counselors of the Persian King); **8:25** (similar); **Job 3:14** (if Job dies, he will be at peace with kings and counselors); **12:17** (YHWH leads counselors away stripped).

This king of peace will be known by the name “Counselor.” He will give true guidance to the people.

Is there any greater need in the world than for a “Counselor” who can give us the truth, who can guide our feet surely into the ways of peace? Isaiah believes that such a counselor either has come (i.e. Hezekiah) or is coming (i.e. the Messiah) to Israel.

Gray comments that “Like God Himself the Messiah will give counsel that will be exceptional, exceeding what has hitherto been known or heard.” (P. 173)

¹¹⁴To say that this child / son who birth is announced will be named אֱלֹהִים, “Supreme God,” is a startling announcement, and there have been many attempts to understand the text as meaning something less than “God,” combining this name with the next word, גִּבּוֹר, *gibbor*, as if it is an adjective, and meaning “God-like Mighty Man,” or “Divine Hero” (this is the interpretation of **Brown-Driver-Briggs**, p. 42; earlier usage in Ugaritic documents shows that *El Gibbor* was a title used to describe the God El’s role as “Divine Warrior”—see F.M. Cross’ article on El in **Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament** 1, p. 251).

Gray translates “Mighty God,” which he calls “the obvious rendering.” He states that to translate “god of a hero”...so that the clause means no more than “mighty hero” is a mistake. “The child is to be more than mighty...more than a mighty man...more than a mighty king...he is to be a mighty אֱלֹהִים, God. This attribution of Divinity, implying that the Messiah is to be a kind of demi-God, is without clear analogy in the **Old Testament**, for **Psalms 45:7^{Heb} / 6^{Eng}** is ambiguous.” (P. 173)

Oswalt comments that “Wherever אֱלֹהִים גִּבּוֹר occurs elsewhere in the **Hebrew Bible** there is no doubt that the term refers to God.” (P. 247)

But in fact the only other place where the phrase occurs is in **Isaiah 10:21**, and the other passages he mentions, **Deuteronomy 10:17** and **Jeremiah 32:18** do not use this phrase, but call YHWH הַגִּבּוֹר, “the Mighty / Strong (One).”

(continued...)

¹¹⁴(...continued)

The Greek translation of the names of the coming child / son / king is strangely,

καὶ καλεῖται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ
μεγάλης βουλῆς ἄγγελος
ἐγὼ γὰρ ἄξω εἰρήνην ἐπὶ τοὺς ἄρχοντας
εἰρήνην καὶ ὑγίειαν αὐτῷ

and his name is called
Messenger / Angel of Great Counsel:
for I will bring peace upon the rulers,
peace and health to (or 'by') him.”

This is obviously not a translation of our Hebrew text, and attributes only one name to the coming one—“Messenger / Angel of Great Counsel.”

By contrast, the Aramaic Targum has

Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God who lives forever,
the Messiah in whose days peace will be great over us.”

The Latin Vulgate has

et vocabitur nomen eius
Admirabilis consiliarius
Deus fortis
Pater futuri saeculi
Princeps pacis,

And his name shall be called
Wonderful counselor
Mighty God,
Father of coming ages,
Prince of peace.

Slotki does not translate the names in its English translation, instead giving them in transliterated Hebrew as one long name, “Pele-joez-el-gibbor-Abi-ad-sar-shalom,” stating in a footnote that “The meaning of the Hebrew words is ‘Wonderful in counsel is God the Mighty, the Everlasting Father, the Ruler of Peace,’ i.e., the combined names are a testimony to the greatness of God, to which this coming King, Hezekiah, will bear witness.” (P. 44). This is not an original translation by Slotki, but is found in previous centuries.

(continued...)

¹¹⁴(...continued)

For example, Alexander in the nineteenth century stated that “The modern Jews, in order to sustain their anti-Christian exegesis, have devised a new construction of the sentence, which applies all these epithets, except the last, to God Himself, as the subject of the verb **וַיִּקְרָא**, [either ‘and he / He called,’ or ‘and he / He will call’]: *And* (he who is) *Wonderful, the Counselor, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, calls his* (i.e. Hezekiah) *name the Prince of peace...*

“This construction, which is given by Jarchi [Rashi? 1040-1105] and Kimchi [Radak, 1160-1235], is supposed by some to have been suggested by the Chaldee Paraphrase, while others cite the latter as a witness in favor of applying all the names to the Messiah...

“But how could even the last of these distinctive titles be applied to Hezekiah? Neither actively nor passively could he be called, at least with any emphasis a Prince of peace. He waged war against others, and was himself invaded and subjected to a foreign power, from which he afterwards revolted...

“To this it is replied by Gesenius and Maurer, that the prophet may have entertained a groundless expectation. But even this bold conjecture is of no avail against a second objection of a different kind, that is, that a long enumeration of titles belong to God Himself is utterly irrelevant in speaking of a name which should be borne by Hezekiah...

“These constructions [and others] are accordingly abandoned now [1875], even by some who still identify the child with Hezekiah. These assume the ground, maintained of old by Aben [Ibn] Ezra [1089-1167 C.E.], that there is nothing in the epithets which might not be applied to Hezekiah...

“In order to maintain this ground, the meaning of the epithets themselves is changed. **פֶּלֶא** is either made to mean nothing more than *remarkable, distinguished...* or is ungrammatically joined with **יֹעֵץ** in the sense of a *wonderful counselor...or wonderfully wise...* **יֹעֵץ** itself is joined with **אֱלֹהֵי גִבּוֹר**, as meaning a *consulter of the mighty God...* Some...explain **אֱלֹהֵי גִבּוֹר** to mean a *mighty hero* or a *godlike hero...* although they grant that in another part of this same prophecy it means the *mighty God...* **אָבִי עֶד** is explained to mean a *father of spoil*, a plunderer, a victor...or a *perpetual father*, i.e. benefactor of the people...or at most, the *founder of a new or everlasting age...* or the *father of a numerous offspring...*

“All this to discredit or evade the obvious meaning of the phrase, which either signifies a *father* (or possessor) of *eternity*, i.e. an eternal being—or an author and bestower of eternal life...

(continued...)

¹¹⁴(...continued)

“This hypothesis has only been adopted to avoid the natural and striking application of the words to Jesus Christ, as the promised child, emphatically *born for us* and *given to us*, as the *Son* of God and the *Son* of man, as being *wonderful* in his person, works, and sufferings—a *counselor*, prophet, or authoritative teacher of the truth, a wise administrator of the church, and confidential adviser of the individual believer—a real man, and yet the *mighty God—eternal* in his own existence, and the *giver of eternal life* to others—the great *peace-maker* between God and man, between Jew and Gentile, the umpire between nations, the abolisher of war, and the giver of internal peace to all who *being justified by faith have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1)*...

“The doctrine that this prophecy relates to the Messiah, was not disputed even by the Jews, until the virulence of anti-Christian controversy drove them from the ground which their own progenitors had steadfastly maintained. In this departure from the truth they have been followed by some learned writers who are Christians only in name.” (Pp. 203-04)

Slotki (along with the earlier Jewish scholars) interpolates a verb into the names, but here in **9:5 / 6** there are no verbs—here we have only a list of six names (nouns), no adjectives, no verbs (one participle), no prepositions.

The name אֱל, “Supreme God,” is not the most common name for God in the **Hebrew Bible**—as is אֱלֹהִים, **elohiyim**—or the personal name, YHWH—but rather, is one of the earliest names for “God,” the name commonly used by Near-eastern religions before and during the time of the Patriarchs, and indeed the proper name of the “Highest God,” the head of the pantheon of lesser Gods, long before the use of “Baal.”

In the **Hebrew Bible**, the plural, אֱלִים, is used to refer to the “Supreme Gods” of the nations surrounding Israel, but the singular אֱל is used a number of times in combination with other names in the patriarchal narratives of **Genesis** to refer to the one true God, names such as אֱל עֲלִיּוֹן, “God Most High,” אֱל עוֹלָם, “God of Long-lasting Time,” אֱל שְׂדֵי, “God Sufficient One,” or “God, My Breast (Mountain),” אֱל רֵאִי, “Supreme God, Seeing Me,” and אֱל אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, “Supreme God, God of Israel.”

In correspondence with these early patriarchal names for Deity, we might understand the two names used here in **Isaiah 9:5^{Heb} / 6^{Eng}** as אֱל גִּבּוֹר, “Supreme God, Mighty One.” Compare **Isaiah 10:21**, where this exact phrase is used of YHWH: “Israel’s remnant will return to El Gibbor, “Supreme God, Mighty One.” If that is the

(continued...)

¹¹⁴(...continued)

case, as we think it is, it would mean that in some mysterious way, this “child / son” is to be YHWH, acting powerfully in human history.

Cross notes that “Late in Israel’s history, for example in the sectarian literature of Qumran, there is a revival of the formation of epithets after the ancient pattern of El plus a substantive, adjective or verbal adjective.” (P. 257)

Compare the language of **Exodus 15:3**, where YHWH is described as

יְהוָה אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה
יְהוָה שְׁמוֹ
YHWH, Man of War,
YHWH His name

and **Isaiah 42:13**,

יְהוָה כְּגִבּוֹר יֵצֵא
כְּאִישׁ מִלְחָמוֹת קִנְיָהּ יַעֲרֵךְ
YHWH like the mighty man will go forth;
like a man of war (his) zeal will awaken.

Gray comments that “The child is to be more than mighty (...Ibn Ezra), more than a mighty man (*iysh gibbor*, **1 Samuel 14:52**), more than a mighty king (*melek gibbor*, **Daniel 11:3**): he is to be a mighty El, Supreme God...

“Yahweh Himself will bring war to an end and so bring in the Messianic age of peace. The Messiah endued with the Spirit of God, ‘a spirit of counsel and might’ will like the mighty God Himself fearlessly defend the right of the weak and poor, and, after judicial process, have the violent and guilty disturbers of civic peace slain (**Isaiah 11:2-4**).” (P. 173)

For “orthodox” Christian interpretation, this attribution of a Divine name to the child / son, saying that his name is אֵל, “Supreme God,” or אֵל גִּבּוֹר, “God, Mighty Man,” is no problem at all, but rather, an indication of the two-fold nature of the Messianic King as both God and human, and if the two names are combined, designating this child / son / king as the “Divine Warrior.” Compare the depiction of (Jesus), “the Word of God,” as the Divine Warrior in **Revelation 19:11-17**.

¹¹⁵The name גִּבּוֹר, *gibbor*, by itself, means “Strong (or Valiant) Man.” This noun occurs some 142 times in the **Hebrew Bible**. If we take the two names separately,
(continued...)

“Long-lasting Father,”¹¹⁶

“Prince of Peace.”¹¹⁷

9.6^{Heb} / 9:7^{Eng} 118

¹¹⁵(...continued)

then just as the preceding name attributes Deity to the coming child / son / king, so now this name attributes humanity to him, much in the way that “orthodox” Christian theology describes Jesus as uniquely the God / Man, who is both fully Divine, and fully human.

¹¹⁶This name, אֲבִיעֵד, *abi(adh)*, is formed from the combination of two nouns, “My Father,” and *(adh)*, which is ambiguous, meaning either “perpetuity,” or “booty.” Thus the name may indicate the Divine nature of this child / son / king, or may indicate his role as “Divine Warrior,” as a great military leader.

Gray translates “Father for ever,” “the benevolent guardian of His people so long as He and they endure...It is necessary to take the phrase as equivalent to “Eternal father”...” (P. 174)

¹¹⁷This last name, שַׁר-שָׁלוֹם, *sar-shalom*, “Prince of Peace,” combines two common Hebrew nouns, *sar*, “chief,” ruler,” “official,” “captain,” or “prince,” with the noun *shalom* which means either “peace” or “prosperity.” It is during the reign of this king that genuine peace will come to earth. So Isaiah believes and proclaims.

Slotki’s view is that “The meaning of the Hebrew words is ‘Wonderful in counsel is God the Mighty, the Everlasting Father, the Ruler of Peace.’ The child will bear these significant names in order to recall to the people the message which they embodied.” (P. 45)

We have often in our study of **Isaiah** criticized Christian scholars for reading their Christian ideas into the ancient text of **Isaiah**. However, here, it appears that the Jewish scholar is reading his anti-Christian convictions into the text. The text consists of a list of names given to the child, and in order to turn this list of names into a sentence, the verb “is” has to be interpolated into the text. This appears to us as little more than an attempt to avoid the obvious Messianic connotations of the text, changing the text to make it an affirmation concerning God rather than the names given to this unique child.

¹¹⁸Alexander translates / comments on **verse 6^{Heb} / 7^{Eng}**: “The reign of this king shall be progressive and perpetual, because founded in justice and secured by the distinguishing favor of Jehovah. *To the increase of the government (or power) and to the peace (or prosperity of this reign) there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to establish it and to confirm it, in justice and in righteousness from henceforth and for ever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts shall do this...*

(continued...)

¹¹⁸(...continued)

“The government or power thus to be enlarged is of course that of the *child*, who is described as born and given in the foregoing verse. A striking parallel is furnished by the prophecy of **Micah 5:3-4^{Heb} / 4-5^{Eng}**,

- 3/4 Therefore He will give them (up) until (the) time one giving birth gave birth;
and (the) rest of his brothers will return to Israel’s children.
- 4/5 And he shall stand, and he shall shepherd by YHWH’s strength,
in (the) exaltation / majesty of YHWH his God’s name.
And they shall dwell—
because now he will be great,
to earth’s ends!

“There, as here, a king is promised who should be the son of David, and should reign over all the earth in peace and righteousness for ever. It is there expressed, and here implied, that this king should re-unite the divided house of Israel, although this is but a small part of the increase promised, which includes the calling of the gentiles also...

“Peace, though included in **שְׁלוֹם**, is not a full equivalent. The Hebrew word denotes not only peace as opposed to war...but welfare and prosperity in general as opposed to want and sorrow. The reign here predicted was to be not only peaceful but in every respect prosperous. And this prosperity, like the reign of which it is predicted, is to have no limit, either temporal or local. It is to be both universal and eternal...

“The endless increase of power and prosperity *on the throne of David* means of course that the Prince, whose reign was to be thus powerful and prosperous, would be a descendant of David. This is indeed a repetition and explanation of a promise given to David (**2 Samuel 7:11-16; 1 Kings 8:25**), and repeatedly referred to by him (**2 Samuel 23:1-5; Psalms 2, 45, 72, 89, 132**). Hence the Messiah is not only called the *Branch* or *Son of David* (**2 Samuel 7:12, 13; Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15**), but David himself (**Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 34:23, 24; 37:24; Hosea 3:5**)...

“Both kings were heads of the same body, the one a temporal head, the other spiritual, the one temporary, the other eternal. The Jewish nation, as a spiritual body, is really continued in the Christian Church. The subject of the prophecy is the reign of the Messiah; the effect predicted, its stability and increase; the means to be employed, judgment and justice; the efficient cause, the zeal of Jehovah...

“All the acts of his administration will be righteous, and the effect of this upon his people will be righteousness on their part and this prevalence of righteousness will naturally generate the increase and stability here promised.” (Pp. 205-06)

Kaiser comments that “This verse (**6^{Heb} / 7^{Eng}**) sums up what the throne-names have promised, with their characterization of the ruling ability, wisdom and power of the

(continued...)

לְמַרְבֵּה הַמְּשָׁרָה וְלִשְׁלוֹם

אִי־קִץ

עַל־כֶּסֶּא דָּוִד וְעַל־מַמְלַכְתּוֹ

לְהַכִּין אֹתָהּ וְלִסְעָרָהּ

בְּמִשְׁפַּט וּבְצַדִּיקָה

מִעַתָּה וְעַד־עוֹלָם

קִנְיַת יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת תַּעֲשֶׂה־זֹאת:

To the / increase¹¹⁹ of the rule / dominion,¹²⁰ and to peace–

¹¹⁸(...continued)

expected king: the newly-founded kingdom of David will remain unshaken during his reign and—we may add, because he is still mortal—during that of his successors.” (P. 214)

But of course, the text says nothing concerning this expected king’s “still being mortal.”

Kaiser adds that “The groups whose voice we hear in this passage [a post-exilic voice], against the background of the second temple, hoped that despite the failure of the dynasty which lost its throne in the catastrophe befalling the kingdom, it would be renewed according to their ideal of kingship, because with their limited experience they could not imagine any other form of government that could achieve a comparable result over the problems which arose within the realm and outside it...

“They did not picture a utopian world free from any form of rule, because they knew that in any human society there is need of an ordered state and authority to resolve the conflicts of individuals and nations.” (Pp. 214-15)

¹¹⁹The Masoretes offer two readings: first, the *kethibh*, “what is written,” לְמַרְבֵּה, with the *mem* a final *mem*; and second, the *qere*, “to be read,” the corrected spelling לְמַרְבֵּה, “to (the) increase / multiplication.”

¹²⁰Slotki’s translation is “the government may be increased,” and he comments that “The kingdom of Ephraim, destroyed by the Assyrians in the reign of Ahaz, passed over to Hezekiah when Assyria was showing signs of weakness. He was thus the first

(continued...)

there is no end—¹²¹
upon David’s throne, and over his Kingdom,¹²²
to establish it, and to sustain it,
with justice and with righteousness,¹²³
from now, and until long-lasting time!¹²⁴

¹²⁰(...continued)

ruler, since the days of the division of the kingdom in the reign of Rehoboam, to combine the entire nation both in the north and the south as in the days of David and Solomon.” (P. 45)

¹²¹We are again reminded by this last name of the child / son / king, and then by this ensuing statement, of the Isaianic vision of peace as the ultimate goal of the Divine Warrior, as depicted in **Isaiah 2:1-4** and **Zechariah 9:10**.

¹²²The child / king is Jewish—he will sit on “David’s throne,” and his kingdom is “his (i.e., David’s) Kingdom.” There is no way to avoid the “Jewishness” of the biblical Messiah!

¹²³It is a common theme in the **Hebrew Bible** that the main characteristic of the society that YHWH desires and demands is one characterized by these two nouns, **מִשְׁפָּט וְצֶדֶקָה**, **mishpot utsedaqah** (given in reverse order in Greek, ἐν δικαιοσύνη καὶ ἐν κρίματι), Hebrew: “in justice and in righteousness” / Greek: “in righteousness and in justice.”

There can no peace where there is no justice; there can be no peace without righteousness! For a powerful depiction of the kind of righteousness that YHWH desires, see **Isaiah 58**! It is a righteousness that reaches out to the hungry and naked poor, with self-sacrificial generosity—the opposite of a kind of religion that is centered on the keeping of legalistic regulations and that segregates itself from those people most in need of help!

For occurrences of these two words together, in this order, see: **1 Kings 10:9; Isaiah 1:27; 5:7, 16; 9:6; 28:17; 32:16; 33:5; 56:1; 59:9, 14; Jeremiah 4:2; 9:23; 22:3, 15; 23:5; 33:15; Ezekiel 18:5, 19, 21, 27; 33:14, 16, 19; 45:9; Amos 5:7, 24; 6:12; Micah 7:9; Psalms 72:1; 99:4; 106:3; Job 37:23; 1 Chronicles 18:14 and 2 Chronicles 9:8**. To read all of these passages gives the reader a beginning understanding of the importance of these two ethical / moral / religious / legal qualities of life—they are all important!

¹²⁴The meaning of this phrase, **מֵעַתָּה וְעַד-עוֹלָם**, **me(atah we(adh-(olam**, “from now (the present time of the vision in this passage, the time of the birth of the child / son / king) and until long-lasting time,” is the affirmation of Isaiah that what YHWH is doing through this coming one is the permanent plan for history, for “all time.”

(continued...)

¹²⁴(...continued)

Slotki notes that the translation “for ever” here should be understood as meaning “during the lifetime of Hezekiah.” He adds that “The Hebrew word עוֹלָם also signifies ‘a considerable time.’” (P. 45) We say it means “long-lasting time.”

Alexander comments that “The reign here described cannot be that of Hezekiah, which was confined to Judah, and was neither peaceful, nor progressive, nor perpetual. It cannot be the joint reign of himself and his successors; for the line was broken at the Babylonish exile. It cannot be the reign of the Maccabees or Hasmonian princes, for these were not the son of David but of Levi. The prediction, if fulfilled at all, could only be fulfilled in a reign which, after it began, was never interrupted, and has ever since been growing in extent and power. Is not this the reign of Christ?...

“The expressions of the verse before us were applied to Christ, before his birth, by Gabriel, when he said to Mary (**Luke 1:32-34**), He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end...

“The objection that Christ’s kingdom is not of this world, and that the mention of the throne of David shows that a temporal monarchy was meant, proceeds upon the supposition that there is no such thing as figurative language, or at least that it is never used in prophecy. The objection of the Jews, that wars have not ceased since Christ came, lies with still greater force against their application of the text to Hezekiah...

“Upon the whole, it may be said with truth that there is no alleged prophecy of Christ, for which it seems so difficult with any plausibility to find another subject; and until that is done which all the Rabbins and a Grotius could not do, we may repose upon the old evangelical interpretation as undoubtedly the true one.” (Pp. 207-08)

Do you agree with Alexander? His statement includes mention of the use of figurative language in prophecy—and we have emphasized throughout these notes the presence of enigma / puzzle throughout Isaiah’s language. In this light, we join with Alexander in believing that this passage is pointing forward to the coming of the Messiah, and has been fulfilled—not exactly, or literally—but fully, and truthfully, in Jesus the Christ!

¹²⁵Slotki holds that “the zeal of the Lord” means “either God’s zeal on behalf of His people, or Hezekiah’s zeal to perform the Divine will by promoting the welfare of his subjects and his passion for justice.” (P. 45)

Alexander states that the noun קִנְיָה, “zeal,” expresses “the complex idea of strong affection, comprehending or attended by a jealous preference for one above another. It is used in the **Old Testament** to signify not only God’s intense love for His

(continued...)

¹²⁵(...continued)

people but His jealousy in their behalf, that is to say, His disposition to protect and favor them at the expense of others.” (P. 206)

Gray comments that “This jealousy, or ardor, or passion, of Yahweh, which will not suffer Him to be deprived of His due, especially of the proper regard for His power and honor, is frequently referred to by Ezekiel and later writers. It led to the punishment by captivity of His people who had been disloyal to Him, but it subsequently necessitated the restoration of Israel, lest the nations should think Yahweh weak. Compare **Ezekiel 39:25-29**; also **5:13**; **16:38**; **23:25**; **36:5ff.**; **Isaiah 42:13**; **59:17**; **Zechariah 1:14-15**; **8:2-3**; **Joel 2:18-19** and **Nahum 1:2**.

“The phrase and the idea expressed by it would be entirely in place if this prophecy is exilic or post-exilic. And it would be difficult to think it earlier, if the main thought is that the jealousy of Yahweh will restore the Jewish monarchy. But if the main thought is that Yahweh will establish and maintain a righteous government, it may be merely a more passionate expression of Isaiah’s idea in **Isaiah 1:26**. The attribution of **הַנְּאִיִּץ**, jealousy, to Yahweh would still remain unique so far as Isaiah’s extant writings are concerned.” (Pp. 174-75)

Oswalt comments that “By this statement Isaiah acknowledges that the picture he has painted will not be realized in the ordinary course of affairs. It will only happen because of God’s passionate involvement with His people.” (P. 248)

Kaiser states that this last line of the verse “is a formula which recurs in **2 Kings 19:31** and **Isaiah 31:31**. In all these passages it is an assurance that the promise will in fact be fulfilled because Yahweh will support it with His ‘zeal,’ i.e. here, probably, with all His strength...

“It is certainly no coincidence that here, as in **37:11**, the Divine name is extended to include the epithet *Sebaoth*, which recalls Yahweh’s omnipotence [we say no—it recalls the biblical motif of the Divine Warrior!]. In its political impotence and servitude, Israel can look for liberation and deliverance only from the almighty power of its God and the raising up of the man whom He will make His instrument in the hour of decision.” (P. 215)

Kaiser adds a statement concerning **9:1-6^{Heb} / 2-7^{Eng}** “as a prophecy of the birth of Christ.” He states that in this passage, “a Divine act and a king were expected, who would decisively alter political conditions on this earth and bring about freedom for the oppressed Jewish people for ever...”

“There is obviously a difference between the king of the time of salvation depicted here and the Christ whose kingdom is not of this world (**John 18:36**). If that is overlooked, it can happen that the expectation expressed here overlays Christian hope and thus falsifies it by turning it, among other things, into a political programme...

(continued...)

¹²⁵(...continued)

“Before the church recognizes in this text a prophecy of Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, it has already recognized him as the pioneer of a trust in God that does not end even in death...

“By asserting that such salvation is only to be expected from God, and that the way to Him is opened by the words and work of Jesus, it relegates all plans for living constructed by individuals and all political programmes to the realm of a penultimate [last but one in a series of things] state of the world...

“In view of the Christmas message and the hope which goes with it, the church may not plan for the perfection of the world in the same way as a political movement. It must constantly see that its political task of warning against the destruction of human society through oppression and violence is at the service of its real task, to announce God’s salvation to all men.” (Pp. 217-18)

John 18:36-37, Greek Text with Translation

18:36, ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς·

ἡ βασιλεία ἡ ἐμὴ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου·
εἰ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου ἦν ἡ βασιλεία ἡ ἐμή,
οἱ ὑπηρέται οἱ ἐμοὶ ἠγωνίζοντο [ἄν]
ἵνα μὴ παραδοθῶ τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις·
νῦν δὲ ἡ βασιλεία ἡ ἐμὴ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐντεῦθεν.

Jesus answered,

My kingdom is not out of this world.
If my kingdom was out of this world,
my attendants / servants would be fighting,
in order that I not be handed over to the Jews.
But then my kingdom is not from here.

18:37 εἶπεν οὖν αὐτῷ ὁ Πιλάτος·

οὐκοῦν βασιλεὺς εἶ σύ;
ἀπεκρίθη ὁ Ἰησοῦς·
σὺ λέγεις ὅτι βασιλεὺς εἰμι.
ἐγὼ εἰς τοῦτο γεγέννημαι
καὶ εἰς τοῦτο ἐλήλυθα εἰς τὸν κόσμον,
ἵνα μαρτυρήσω τῇ ἀληθείᾳ·
πᾶς ὁ ὢν ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας
ἀκούει μου τῆς φωνῆς.

Therefore the Pilate said to him,
Are you not a king then?

The Jesus answered,

You are saying that I am a king—
I have been born for this,

(continued...)

¹²⁵(...continued)

and for this I have come into the world—
in order that I might bear witness to the truth.

Everyone who is being out of the truth
listens to my voice!

Isaiah 8:23-9:6^{Heb} / 9:1-7^{Eng} has depicted a glorious coming kingdom, a renewal of the Davidic Kingdom, with a new king, who wears Divine names or titles, and who brings welfare and peace to the formerly beleaguered people of Jerusalem / Judah.

The first two verses of this text are quoted from the **Book of Isaiah** and applied to Jesus with reference to the location of his opening ministry following the death of John the Baptist—see in the **New Testament, Matthew 4:12-16**, where it is claimed that his ministry fulfilled the prediction of Isaiah that a bright light would shine in the area of Galilee, and immediately Matthew tells how Jesus proclaimed the message, “Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand!” See footnote 91.

But nowhere in the **New Testament** are the names in this **Isaiah** text given to Jesus. And the only other possible reference to this text is found in **Luke 1:32-33**, where the heavenly messenger / angel tells Mary that the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father, David, and predicts that he will reign over the house of Jacob into the ages, with no end to his kingdom.

But what kind of “kingdom” did Jesus reign over? The passage **John 18:36-37** depicts Jesus on trial before the Roman Procurator Pilate, and his being asked by Pilate whether or not he was a king. Jesus does not say directly, Yes, I am a king. But he does claim to have a kingdom—a kingdom “not out of this world,” a kingdom of truth, over which he reigns. He claims to have servants / attendants—but not soldiers with arms to fight on his behalf. His kingdom is made up of those who hear his voice, and who follow his truth.

That means, the kingdom of Jesus is a kingdom of truth—not a political, earthly kingdom with armies that fight for its defense. It is a “spiritual kingdom,” whose soldiers follow Jesus in ministering to others.

What do you think? Is Jesus the fulfillment of this text in **Isaiah**? We say Yes—but not with the kind of earthly, political kingdom that Isaiah’s language may be taken as depicting! His kingdom is not “out of this world”—but is from heaven, spiritual!