

## Isaiah Chapter 51, Hebrew Text with Translation and Footnotes

51:1' שְׁמַעוּ אֵלַי רְדָפֵי צְדָק

מִבְּקֵשֵׁי יְהוָה

הַבְּיָטוּ אֶל-צֹר חֲצַבְתָּם

וְאֶל-מִקְבַּת בּוֹר נִקְרְתָם:

Listen to me, those pursuing righteousness,

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<sup>1</sup>Oswalt entitles **verses 1-8** “The righteous listen to him,” meaning they listen to the servant / prophet who (we understand) has been speaking in the previous chapter beginning in **verse 4**.

Slotki comments that in these verses “The prophet’s address of consolation to the true believers, interrupted by the speech of the servant (**50:4-9**), is now resumed.” He comments on **verses 1-3** that “Though the faithful are few in number, they need have no fear that they are too insignificant to receive the promised blessings. They have but to look to Abraham and Sarah to realize that a whole nation may arise from one small family.”

He comments on **verse 1** that “The ancestors of the nation are compared to a quarry and its members to the stones hewn therefrom.” (P. 250)

North entitles **verses 1-8** “Victory, Deliverance, and Righteousness.”

He comments that “This passage contains three short strophes (**verses 1-3, 4-6, 7-8**) beginning ‘Listen to me’ (**verses 1, 7**) and ‘Attend to me’ (**verse 4**). The vocabulary in **verses 4-6** has similarities to that of the first Servant Song [**Isaiah 42:1-9**].” (P. 207)

Knight comments that “Before this point Deutero-Isaiah has made two opposing statements. First, he has shown that Israel, called to be Yahweh’s servant, has signally failed in her calling. But second, he has outlined what the calling of the servant could be; and so he has pictured for us the perfect servant, that is, one who is wholly obedient to the will of God. Here [in **chapter 51, verse 1**] he reconciles these two disparate [essentially different in kind] statements in a remarkable manner. For he now calls upon the actual, empirical, historical, wholly sinful Israel, composed of the exiles in Babylon, to trust and believe in God as Abraham had done of old. Obviously Yahweh intends to accept sinful Israel’s act of faith, and through her faith to impute to her the power really to be the servant, even though she is far from being like the ideal picture that Deutero-Isaiah has drawn.” (P. 149)

those seekers of YHWH:<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>The first two lines of **verse 1** give a two-fold description of the people **Second Isaiah** is addressing, both lines using the plural imperative, leading Knight to remark that “God here no longer addresses Israel as He has been doing in the singular feminine, thus regarding her as a corporate personality: now He addresses her in the [masculine] plural. For Israel is also an aggregation of individuals. God accepts these individuals as purposeful personalities.” (P. 149) They are:

(1) those who are seeking, or pursuing, righteousness—they are people who want to make their lives count for what is genuinely “righteous.” And as the later **chapter 58** will show, this means caring deeply and sacrificially for the hungry, the naked, etc. North states that “Hebrew **רָדַף**, always implies strenuous activity on the part of the subject. The closes literary parallel is in **Deuteronomy 16:20.**” (P. 208)

Righteousness, righteousness you shall pursue,  
so that you will live,  
and will dispossess the land which YHWH your God is giving to you!

In addition, they are (2) those who are seeking YHWH, who want to know YHWH and do His will.

Of course, if you are not deeply desirous for, longing for genuine righteousness, the message of **Second Isaiah** will not speak to you. If you want to go through life without seeking to open your life to God, without finding Divine purpose and meaning for your life, read no further [you wouldn’t have gotten this far anyway!].

But if you are tired of the lies, the compromises, the empty life-styles that surround us in this life; if you want to find something solid, something truly good and meaningful, something that will give purpose and direction to your entire life, keep reading **Second and Third Isaiah!**

North goes on to say that “When all has been said, the ethical and soteriological threads in Deutero-Isaiah’s concept of Yahweh’s [righteousness] cannot be neatly disentangled. Men may endeavor to do what is right [righteous] but in the end they are saved by faith.” (P. 209)

That is, of course, what North’s basic theology says, but it is difficult to hold to that view in the light of **Matthew 25:31-46**, where people who have practiced righteousness to “the least of these,” but had no idea that they were serving the Lord, are told to enter into eternal life.

What do you think?

Look to (the) rock<sup>3</sup> you were hewn (from),  
and to the hammered out pit<sup>4</sup> you were dug out of!

51:2 הַבִּיטוּ אֶל-אַבְרָהָם אֲבִיכֶם  
וְאֶל-שָׂרָה תַחֲוֹלְלֵכֶם  
כִּי-אַחַד קָרָאתִיו  
וְאַבְרָכָהוּ וְאַרְבָּהוּ:

Look to Abraham your (plural) father,  
and to Sarah, who with labor pains gives you people birth!<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>The Hebrew text has simply “rock,” without capital letters to indicate it is meant to refer to YHWH. North takes it to be pointing to YHWH, and comments that “there are some thirty passages in which Yahweh is called ‘the Rock,’ the most notable in relation to the present passage being **Deuteronomy 32:18**,

Rock gave you birth—you (singular) forget;  
and you forgot God, who birthed you with labor pains!” (P. 209)

But here in **Isaiah 51:2** the phrase in **verse 1**, הַבִּיטוּ אֶל-צֹר, “Look to a rock,” is followed by the phrase הַבִּיטוּ אֶל-אַבְרָהָם אֲבִיכֶם וְאֶל-שָׂרָה תַחֲוֹלְלֵכֶם, “Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah, she will bear you (with labor-pains)”-- yes, the imperfect, future tense. We think the “rock” in this passage is not YHWH but “father Abraham and mother Sarah.” The same masculine plural imperative phrase “look to the rock” in **verse 1** is followed in **verse 2** by “look to Abraham your father and to Sarah, who...gives you birth!”

<sup>4</sup>Slotki notes that “The Hebrew word for ‘hole’ [מִקְבֵּת] elsewhere means ‘hammer’; hence the cavity made by the use of the hammer.” (P. 250)

The phrase used here, מִקְבֵּת בּוֹר is literally “hammer of a pit / cistern / well.” **King James** translates by “the hole of the pit,” while the other English translations we normally refer to all have “quarry” [a large, deep pit from which stones have been extracted].

<sup>5</sup>Slotki comments that in **verse 2** the names Abraham and Sarah “define ‘rock’ and ‘pit’ in the preceding verse. ‘He was but one...[I] made him many.’ So will the faithful few increase and live to see the restoration and rehabilitation of Zion. God’s

(continued...)

Because one<sup>6</sup> I called him,  
and I blessed him and I multiplied him!<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>(...continued)  
promise to Abraham (**Genesis 12:2**) was fulfilled; similarly the promises made to them would be carried out.” (P. 250)

Knight comments that here Second Isaiah “mentions Sarah, the only time her name occurs [in the **Hebrew Bible**] outside **Genesis**...Deutero-Isaiah did not need to mention Sarah at all...Then why did he draw attention to her...? Evidently for two reasons:

(1) Despite the fact that Abraham was *one* when he received his call, he was not one in the mathematical sense of the word...The word used here for ‘one’ is that employed for the oneness of husband and wife together, also found in **Genesis at 2:24** ...Abraham would not have been the Abraham that we—and God—knew if he had not had Sarah for his wife...Her part in their joint act of faith is the expression of ‘loyalty-in-love [*chesedh*]’...

(2) The second reason for mentioning Sarah is this: Sarah, the *quarry from which you were digged*, had a barren womb. It was a miracle of God that she bore a son at all. Deutero-Isaiah wants us to recognize that what God has done once he can naturally do again. He can raise Israel up out of the womb of death, for new life can spring forth for Israel now in Babylon as truly as new life once came from Sarah’s womb.” (Pp. 150-51)

<sup>6</sup>Translations of the Hebrew word , “one,” vary, from “alone,” to “only one,” to “but one,” to “the only one.”

We take the statement to mean that Abraham started out as one single person; joined with Sarah, they were one small, aged, childless couple. But YHWH sent them the promised son Isaac in their old age, and his descendants became the nation of Israel. The application, we think, is that even if the followers of Second Isaiah are few in number, YHWH can bless them and their future, just as He did Abraham and Sarah.

<sup>7</sup>There can be little doubt that here YHWH is depicted as speaking, as the One Who called Abraham and blessed and multiplied him. But then immediately in **verse 3** YHWH is spoken of in the third person, indicating that once again it is YHWH’s servant who is speaking. But again, immediately in **verse 4** it is YHWH Who is speaking. See our footnote 43 on **Isaiah 50:11**.

North comments on **verse 3** that “here, those who ‘pursue righteousness’—and they were probably a small minority in a small enough community (compare **Isaiah 44:1-5**)—are in effect exhorted to have faith.” (P. 209) That is, the same God Who blessed and multiplied Abraham and Sarah will bless and multiply them as well.”

51:3 כִּי־נָחַם יְהוָה צִיּוֹן  
 נָחַם כָּל־חֲרָבֹתֶיהָ  
 וַיִּשֶׂם מִדְּבָרָהּ כְּעֶדֶן  
 וַעֲרַבְתָּהּ כְּגִן־יְהוּדָה  
 שִׁשׁוֹן וְשִׁמְחָה יִמְצָא בָּהּ  
 תּוֹרָה וְקוֹל זְמֵרָה:

Because YHWH comforted Zion,  
 He comforted all her desolations;<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup>For this twofold use of the root נחם in the piel, meaning “to comfort,” compare:

**Isaiah 12:1,**

And you will say in that day,  
 I will praise YHWH,  
 because You were angry with me;  
 Your anger turned back,  
 and You comforted me.

**Isaiah 22:4,**

Therefore I said, Turn Your gaze away from me;  
 I will be bitter in my weeping.  
 Do not hurry to comfort me

**Isaiah 40:1** (twice),

Comfort! Comfort My people!  
 says your God.  
 (using the 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural imperative; and we ask, to whom is this plural  
 commandment given? Should it be translated “Let them comfort, let them  
 comfort My people”?)

**Isaiah 49:13,**

Cry aloud, heavens!  
 And rejoice, earth!

(continued...)

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<sup>8</sup>(...continued)

And break forth, mountains, (with a) ringing-cry!  
Because YHWH comforted His people,  
and He showed mercy (to) His afflicted-poor people!

**Isaiah 51:3** (here, twice),

Because YHWH comforted Zion,  
He comforted all her desolations.  
And He placed / made her desert like Eden,  
and her Arabah / desert-plain like YHWH's garden.  
Rejoicing and gladness will be found in her;  
thanksgiving and a voice of singing with musical accompaniment.

**Isaiah 51:12**,

I, I (am) He, your (plural) Comforter!  
Who are you,  
and you were afraid of a man?  
He will die!  
And (you were afraid) of a son of a human?  
He will be given (to the) grass!

**Isaiah 51:19**

These two things are encountering you--  
who will lament for you?--  
the destruction and the shattering,  
and the famine and the sword--  
who will comfort you?

**Isaiah 52:9**,

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

**Isaiah 61:1-2**,

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

(continued...)

and He made her desert like Eden,<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>(...continued)

- to proclaim to captives freedom,  
and to prisoners certain opening (of locked doors);  
2 to proclaim a year of acceptance for the YHWH,  
and a day of vengeance for our God;  
to comfort all who are mourning.

**Isaiah 66:13** (twice),

Like a man, whose mother comforts him,  
in this way I, I will comfort you;  
and in Jerusalem, you will be comforted.

It is obvious from these passages how for **Second Isaiah** especially, and **Third Isaiah** as well, YHWH is the great Comforter of His people. Indeed, we could well identify this matter of YHWH's having comforted His people Zion one of the major themes, if not the major theme of their writings.

And we are reminded of the **Gospel of John's** depiction of the Spirit Jesus promised to His followers as their παράκλητος, "Comforter" (**King James**), "Advocate," "Helper" (**John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7**).

<sup>9</sup>Knight states that here, "Deutero-Isaiah opens a door on to the cosmic hope that his great predecessor Isaiah had held. Compare **Isaiah 11:6-9**,

- 6 And the wolf will live temporarily with the lamb;  
and the leopard will lie down with the young goat;  
and a calf and young lion and fatted animal (will be) together;  
and a small youth will lead them.  
7 And the cow and the bear will graze;  
together, their young will lie down;  
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.  
8 And the nursing-baby will play beside the venomous serpent's hole;  
and the little child will reach out his hand beside the poisonous snake's  
den.  
9 They will not do wrong, and they will not destroy,  
in all My set-apart mountain!  
Because the earth has been filled with the knowledge of YHWH,  
like the waters cover the oceans!

This hope is that the end of Yahweh's plan through His servant will be much more than just the redemption of individual men. Deutero-Isaiah actually looks for the redemption of this whole fallen universe, and in saying so in lyrical vein he again uses the language

(continued...)

and her Arabah / desert-plain like YHWH's garden;<sup>10</sup>  
rejoicing and gladness will be found in her;  
thanksgiving and a voice of melody / song.

51:4<sup>11</sup> הַקְּשִׁיבוּ אֵלַי עַמִּי

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

of that great passage, **Isaiah 35:1-10**...That is to say, he uses the mythology connected with the concept of the return of the garden of Eden or paradise regained...

“This was a very widely held theme in the ancient Fertile Crescent. The prophets took it over, but they used it to serve a theological [having to do with humanity's relationship with God] not a cosmogonic [having to do with the origin of the earth] end... [Deutero-Isaiah] is soon to describe Zion in terms of the garden of Eden restored (**54:11-14**).” (P. 151)

<sup>10</sup>Slotki comments that the qal perfect / past tense verbs here in **verse 3** “are prophetic perfects...or perfects of certainty, signifying ‘shall surely comfort...shall surely make.’” (P. 250) We agree with Slotki that these past tense verbs must be understood as “prophetic perfects.”

He adds that “Such a transformation of the Land of Israel is in fact taking place now [1949] as a result of the idealism, self-sacrifice and devotion of Jewish settlers.” (**ibid.**) What do you think? Do you understand the return of Jews to the Land of Palestine in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the fulfillment of Second Isaiah's promise?

<sup>11</sup>Slotki comments on **verses 4-6** that they depict how “Divine instruction, justice and salvation will be a light to the world. The nations will seek guidance from God and the righteous will be assured of His everlasting salvation and favor.” (P. 251)

Again we emphasize how the worship of YHWH, and the biblical writings connected with Him, are deeply eschatological—“standing on tip-toe,” looking out into the future, eagerly awaiting the “good times coming”—over against the other religions and Gods of the ancient Near East, which to my knowledge have no such eschatology.

Knight comments on **verse 4** that “This explicit universalism—compare **Isaiah 54:5**,

Because (the) One marrying you (is) your Maker--  
YHWH of Armies (is) His name;  
and your Next-of-Kin / Redeemer (is) Israel's Set-apart One--  
“God all the earth” He will be called!

This ultimate redemption of the whole cosmos, was dependent on something about to happen at that moment in history. Deutero-Isaiah pinned the moment to the events of 539 B.C.E. This whole cosmic movement was dependent on Israel's giving *ear* or att-

(continued...)



וְלְאַנְשֵׁי אֱלֹהֵי הָאָדָמָה  
כִּי תוֹרָה מֵאֵתִי תֵצֵא  
וּמִשְׁפָּטֵי לְאוֹר עַמִּים אֲרַגִּיעַ:

Pay attention to Me, My people!

And My people (synonym),<sup>12</sup> give ear to Me!

Because teaching / *torah* will go forth from Me,<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup>(...continued)

ention to Yahweh.. Such a little act of obedience, at such an obscure moment in the obscure history of an obscure people! And yet in the providence of God that little act of obedience meant that God could act for the salvation of the whole world. Without it, God could not act, as He could not act without the faith of Abraham.” (Pp. 151-52)

We think it is unwise for human beings to say what Almighty God can or cannot do. But on the other hand, it seems obvious from the biblical teaching that God chooses to act for the blessing of the world through people of faith, like Abraham. What do you think?

<sup>12</sup>Two words for “people” occur in this verse. In line 1, it is the common עַמִּי, “My people” (which occurs some 211 times in the **Hebrew Bible**). In line 2, it is the much less common לְאַנְשֵׁי, “My people” (this precise form of the word לְאָם, “people,” occurs only here in the **Hebrew Bible**). Whereas עַמִּי, “My people,” commonly refers to YHWH’s people Israel, the 31 occurrences of לְאָם, “people,” usually refer to other people than Israel. We think that this strange wording indicates that YHWH is depicted as calling other people than Israel “My people,” meaning those in other nations to whom YHWH’s *Torah* is being sent. Our English translations all have “My nation,” as does Slotki, but we see no justification for such a translation. **Rahfs** translates by “the kings,” or “O kings.”

North notes that “A few Hebrew manuscripts have the plural עַמִּים וְלְאַנְשֵׁי, literally “peoples and peoples (synonym),” in place of the singular עַמִּי וְלְאַנְשֵׁי, “My people and My people (synonym).” North translates by “Attend to me, O peoples, and, you nations, give ear to me.” The English translations we normally refer to all have “my people...and my nation.”

<sup>13</sup>Knight states that “*Torah* is the revelation that was given in the days of Moses, and that subsequently developed into what we today wrongly call the law of Moses. For the noun *torah* comes from the word ‘to teach.’ Deutero-Isaiah, with all the prophets,

(continued...)

and My justice for a light of peoples,<sup>14</sup> I will cause to rest<sup>15</sup> (upon them)!<sup>16</sup>

51:5 קָרוֹב צְדִקָּי

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

used the word as a technical term for the revealed knowledge of God delivered to Israel in the form of instructions on how to live together as the people of God in obedience to His will. Through Israel's obedience, Torah will go forth 'from within God' (as the Hebrew says), not from Israel; for Israel is the mere *pied-a-terre* [French, a residence, as an apartment, for part-time or temporary use] where the glory of God will be revealed. See **Isaiah 49:3**,

And He said to me, You (singular) (are) My servant, Israel;  
in whom I will be glorified!

The double Hebrew preposition 'from with' [מֵאִתִּי], literally 'from with Me', in connection with **Torah**, is reminiscent of the language used to describe the relationship between wisdom and God in **Proverbs 8**, and between the creative word of God and God Himself in **Genesis** and **John (Genesis 1:3; John 1:1-3)**." (P. 152)

<sup>14</sup>Knight comments that "Parallel with God's **Torah**, His *mishpot* [מִשְׁפֹּט], His 'way of life'...'true religion'...'total way of life'...shall become a *light to the peoples*... God's *mishpot* can be expressed only in and through Israel's life and obedience. Deutero-Isaiah sees therefore that Israel is more than the *pied-a-terre* [see footnote 13] God will use on earth. Israel has actually become the 'body' which the **Torah** and the *mishpot* of God occupy while the process develops even as the word becomes incarnate before the eyes of the gentiles [non-Jews]." (P. 152)

But we wonder if this is actually what the text means, especially if the verb translated "to rest" only means "to twinkle," i.e., for a little while (see the next footnote). And we are reminded of how the glory of God was seen in the ministry of Eli, Israel's high priest before Samuel, but tragically that "glory" departed, largely as a result of his sons' rebellious natures and the capture of the ark of the covenant by the Philistines, leading to the naming of Eli's grandson Ichabod, "Where is the glory"? (See **1 Samuel 4**.) And we ask, is Knight reading Christian theology into **Second Isaiah**?

<sup>15</sup>The 1<sup>st</sup> person hiphil imperfect verb אֲרַגֵּיעַ, "I will cause to rest," has been understood by some to mean "I will suddenly (draw near)." Slotki's translation has "And my right on a sudden for a light of the peoples." **Tanakh** has "In a moment I will bring it..." The reason for this variation in understanding is based on the fact that the root רָגַע has two meanings: (1) "disturb," or "twinkle," and (2) "be at rest."

<sup>16</sup>We say, the light of God will be seen in His people Israel if they will truly listen to and obey His word; but otherwise, it will not.

יֵצֵא יִשְׁעִי  
 וְזָרְעִי עַמִּים יִשְׁפְּטוּ  
 אֵלֵי אֲיִים יִקְוּ  
 וְאֶל-זָרְעִי יִיחַלְוּ:

My righteousness (is) near;<sup>17</sup>

My salvation / deliverance went forth.<sup>18</sup>

And My arms will judge peoples!<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup>Translations of this first line of verse 5 vary:

**King James**, “My righteousness *is* near”;

**Tanakh**, “The triumph I grant is near”;

**New Revised Standard**, “I will bring near my deliverance swiftly”;

**New International**, “My righteousness draws near speedily”;

**New Jerusalem**, “My justice is suddenly approaching”

**Rahlf’s**, “It is drawing near quickly, the righteousness of Mine.”

(And we wonder at the various translations for “righteousness.” The Hebrew word for “near” (קָרוֹב) is an adjective, not a verb.)

If we understand the word “righteousness” in terms of its description in **chapter 58**, it is clear what YHWH means by “My righteousness is near.” It is His coming to the despondent exiles in Babylon through Cyrus, to release them, allowing them to return home, no longer in bonds. His freeing of their bonds is a demonstration of the kind of “righteousness” that He expects them to practice in their dealings with the “people of the land” and with foreigners—reaching out to them in loving, self-sacrificial service—just the opposite of the ideas of legalistic, separatist tendencies.

<sup>18</sup>Translations of this second line of **verse 5** vary:

**King James**, “my salvation is gone forth”;

**Tanakh**, “The success I give has gone forth.”

**New Revised Standard**, “my salvation has gone out “;

**New International**, “my salvation is on the way”;

**New Jerusalem**, “my salvation appears”;

**Rahlf’s**, “and it will go forth like light—the salvation / deliverance of Mine.”

<sup>19</sup>There are three tenses in **verse 5**: “My righteousness (is) near” (present tense); “My salvation / deliverance went forth” (past tense); “My arms will judge peoples” (future tense). YHWH’s justice is something coastlands await; His arm (of

(continued...)

For Me coastlands wait,  
and for My arm / power they hope.<sup>20</sup>

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

power) is something they hope for. Again, translations of this third line in **verse 5** vary:

**King James**, “and mine arms shall judge the people”;

**Tanakh**, “My arms shall provide for the peoples”;

**New Revised Standard**, “and my arms will rule the peoples”;

**New International**, “and my arm will bring justice to the nations.”

**New Jerusalem**, “my arm is about to judge the peoples.”

**Rahfs**, “and for the arm of Mine nations will hope.”

(It is frustrating to see the many varying translations given to simple, easily read statements such as this. Perhaps here the variations are due to the varying understanding of translators as to the work of “judges.”)

Knight translates by “rule,” and comments that “*Rule* is the verb connected with the noun *mishpot* and thus means something like ‘rule with the application of that justice which will regulate the whole of life.’” (P. 153) We say that what is meant by YHWH’s “judging peoples” is that YHWH will become their Leader and Defender, leading them to victory over their enemies, and leading them into righteousness of life. What the nations most need and long for, they will find in YHWH! There can be no better “Judge”!

<sup>20</sup>**Verse 5** is a depiction of YHWH’s reaching out to all the peoples and nations of the earth—both in the past, the present, and the future—with His righteousness, salvation / deliverance and justice, fulfilling their deep hopes and desires.

Knight comments on **verse 5** that “God is about to act at any moment, as Deutero-Isaiah knew. Compare **Isaiah 46:13**,

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

For Deutero-Isaiah was convinced that Cyrus’ capture of Babylon, obviously now only a matter of days away, was the historical moment that God would use for His Own mighty ends. Not that God would confine Himself to that relatively unimportant historical incident. Deutero-Isaiah thought of God’s use of the fall of Babylon in terms that we today can best understand as a chain reaction. The capture of Babylon by Cyrus was not all that Yahweh planned to do. The first effect of the fall of the city would be the rescue of the exiles. But then the rescue of the exiles would initiate a new understanding by Israel of the ways of God with man. That new understanding would thereupon interpret the suffering which Israel had newly undergone. Israel would then give herself in the saving

(continued...)

51:6<sup>21</sup> שֶׂאוּ לְשָׁמַיִם עֵינֵיכֶם

וְהִבִּיטוּ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת

כִּי־שָׁמַיִם כָּעָשָׁן נִמְלָחוּ

וְהָאָרֶץ כַּבֶּגֶד תִּבְלֶה

וַיִּשְׁבֵּיהָ כְּמוֹ־כֶן יָמוּתוּן

וַיִּשׁוּעַתִּי לְעוֹלָם תְּהִיָּה

וְצַדִּיקְתִּי לֹא תִחַת:

Lift up to the heavens your eyes,  
and look to earth below!<sup>22</sup>

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

plan for her neighbors till the redemption of all the peoples and even of the cosmos would finally be reached. Yet it was all to begin like a flash of lightning or, to use our idiom, like an atomic reactor's first explosion." (Pp. 152-53)

He adds that "It is most interesting to recognize that Deutero-Isaiah evidently believed that in their heart of hearts all men, even in the chaos and turmoil of their short and brutish lives, desire above all else the revelation—arm—of the living God." (P. 153) Yes, but of course YHWH's "arm" stands for all that YHWH is—power, light, life, salvation, guidance, hope, etc. etc.

<sup>21</sup>Slotki comments on **verse 6** that "All nature is transitory, but God's salvation and favor are eternal." (P. 251)

Yes, everything that the eyes can see—in the heavens and on the earth, is aging and passing away—including all human beings—but in YHWH there is salvation / deliverance and righteousness that will endure. That is, we take the text to be teaching, Seek that which is truly enduring! Don't let your life be caught up in what is only temporary, fleeting, soon to be gone! Seek YHWH!

<sup>22</sup>It is a Divine command (note the two imperative verbs, "lift up!" and "observe!") for all who hear to observe carefully the transient nature of the heavens above and the earth beneath—all of which are constantly in change and dissolution, growing old and dying. But by contrast to all this transiency, YHWH is offering permanence—salvation /

(continued...)

Because heavens like smoke are dispersed;<sup>23</sup>  
and the earth like the garment wears out,  
and its inhabitants like a gnat / in like manner<sup>24</sup> will die.  
But / and My salvation / deliverance will be for long-lasting time,<sup>25</sup>  
and My righteousness will not be dismayed!<sup>26</sup>

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

deliverance that is long-lasting, and righteousness that will prove enduring, never to be shattered or destroyed.

<sup>23</sup>The verb נִמְלָחַן occurs only here in the **Hebrew Bible**, and that makes its meaning difficult to determine. **Brown-Driver-Briggs** say it means “be dispersed in fragments,” “be dissipated.” **Holladay** says it means “be torn to pieces,” “flutter away.” **North** says “be torn to shreds.” The English translations we normally refer to have “shall vanish away or melt like smoke.”

What happens to “smoke”? We see a fire from which smoke ascends into the sky, and in very large fires, turning the skies black—think about the destruction of New York City’s twin towers in 2011. It was terrifying. But in the hours and days following, as the burning remnants were put out, and the smoke no longer arose, the skies cleared and the smoke was no longer seen. Where did it go? It was dispersed, dissipated into the atmosphere and environment. In biblical times, there was no knowledge

of the various compounds and elements contained in smoke—and the biblical descriptions are confined to what is visible to the eye.

<sup>24</sup>The phrase כְּמוֹ-כֵן יָמוּתוּן is given varying translations, from “shall die in like manner,” to “die out as well,” to “will die like gnats / flies / vermin,” to “just like these things will die.” The reason for these differences in translation is that the word כֵּן, is ambiguous, usually meaning “so,” “in this way,” but also sometimes meaning “gnat,” or “gnat-swarm.” Slotki notes, “The Hebrew כֵּן, **khen**, might bear either meaning.” (P. 251)

<sup>25</sup>Whereas everything in the heavens and earth is transient and dying, to share in YHWH’s salvation / deliverance is to participate in something that is quite different—it is permanent, lasting! We are reminded of **Isaiah 24-27**, with its affirmation that those who share in YHWH’s purpose will come to know the swallowing up of death, and the resurrection of the body.

<sup>26</sup>**Rahlf’s** translation of this last line of **verse 6** is “but then the righteousness of Mine will certainly not fail / cease / come to an end.” The way of life which YHWH both embodies and commands—“righteousness”—is a way of life that will never grow invalid or be replaced by some better way of life. See the description of this righteousness in

(continued...)

51:7<sup>27</sup> שְׁמַעוּ אֵלַי יְדַעֵי צְדָקָה

עִם תּוֹרָתִי בְּלִבָּם

אֶל-תִּירְאוּ חֲרַפַּת אָנוּשׁ

וּמִגְדַּפְתֶּם אֶל-תַּחַתּוֹ:

Listen to Me, those knowing righteousness,

a people (with) My teaching / *torah* in their heart,<sup>28</sup>

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

**Isaiah 58**—it is the way of self-giving, sacrificial love for neighbors, including those most in need of help, all done out of deep reverence for YHWH.

<sup>27</sup>Slotki comments on **verses 7-8** that “The eternal salvation and favor promised should provide the faithful with moral courage and strength to withstand the ephemeral [transitory, fleeting] taunts and abuse of the ungodly.” (P. 252)

<sup>28</sup>Compare footnote 2, with its description of those whom Second Isaiah is addressing. The language of **verse 1** appears again in **verse 7**, only with the difference that those same people are depicted as those who know righteousness, and who live with YHWH’s *torah* / instruction in their heart, whereas in **verse 1** they were described as pursuing righteousness and seeking YHWH—that means, they have reached their

goal! Here in this life, people who follow Second Isaiah’s teaching, can know YHWH and know what it means to truly be “righteous”!

North reminds his readers that the phrase “a people with YHWH’s *torah* in their heart,” recalls the language of **Jeremiah 31:33-34**,

33 Because this (is) the covenant which I will cut with Israel’s household  
after those days--a saying of YHWH--

I will place My *torah* in their midst,  
and upon their heart I will write it.

And I will belong to them for a God,  
and they will belong to Me for a people!

34 And they will not again teach, each man his neighbor,  
and each man his brother,  
saying Know YHWH!

Because all of them will know Me,  
to their least one and as far as their great one--  
(it is) a saying of YHWH--

because I will forgive their iniquity / guilt,  
and their missing-of-the-mark I will not remember again!

(continued...)

you (plural) shall not be afraid of man's reproach;  
and from their revilings you shall not be dismayed!<sup>29</sup>

51:8 כִּי כַבְּגֵד יֹאכְלֵם עֵשׂ  
וְכִצְמֹר יֹאכְלֵם סָס  
וְצִדְקָתִי לְעוֹלָם תִּהְיֶה  
וְיִשׁוּעָתִי לְדוֹר הַדּוֹרִים:

Because like the garment a moth will devour them,

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

And they will not again teach, each man his neighbor,  
and each man his brother,  
saying Know YHWH!

It seem apparent that Second Isaiah is acquainted with the teaching of Jeremiah, and that in this passage he affirms that his followers are participants in that new covenant promised by Jeremiah! They know YHWH, and His **torah** is in their heart!

Christians will quickly call to mind that the **New Testament** claims that **Jeremiah 31:33-34** is fulfilled in Jesus Christ and in His church. See **Hebrews 8:8-12**, and **10:16-17**. We agree that this is the case. But does this mean that Jeremiah's words were not also fulfilled earlier in the experience of the returned exiles to Jerusalem who followed Second Isaiah's teaching? They too had experienced Divine forgiveness and redemption--see **Isaiah 40:2; 43:1, 25; 44:22**. They knew YHWH, and His **torah** was in their heart.

What do you think? Is it not a mark of our anti-Semitism when we deny, or fail to affirm that this is the case?

<sup>29</sup>Obviously the followers of Second Isaiah are being reproached and reviled, and we ask, "By whom?" We respond that it is those who upon the return to Jerusalem will want to build a wall of segregation between themselves and the people of the land / foreigners / non-Jews, a program that will be championed by Ezra / Nehemiah and their followers, demanding segregation from all others who failed to live by their legalistic interpretation of the **Five Books of Moses**--the early beginnings of Pharisaism--and who reproached and reviled those fellow-Jews who followed the teaching of Second and Third Isaiah, reaching out to the "half-breed" Jews and their children in loving, self-sacrificial love. What do you think? Did you suppose that the Jewish exiles were all of one mind, with no sharp divisions in their midst? We think that even in exile the differing attitudes towards foreigners were already developing, and Ezra / Nehemiah, instead of starting the program of legalistic segregation from others, only brought that movement to a head, taking leadership of it.



and like the wool a moth (synonym) will devour them!<sup>30</sup>

But / and My right-relationship will be to long-lasting time,  
and My salvation / deliverance to all generations!<sup>31</sup>

51:9<sup>32</sup> עֲוֵרִי עֲוֵרִי

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<sup>30</sup>Second Isaiah believes that the later Ezra / Nehemiah program and its followers will not endure. Like woolen garments, they will be moth-eaten. We say that is the truth of legalistic, separatist religion, which will become Pharisaism in the later centuries. Such religion is out of touch with reality, and with God's intention for His servant / servants!

<sup>31</sup>In contrast to the later Ezra / Nehemiah program and its followers, the followers of Second Isaiah, who have come to know genuine righteousness, and are experiencing the salvation of YHWH, are participants in a program that will be lasting and permanent—as they become YHWH's servants, reaching out to all subsequent generations!

<sup>32</sup>Slotki comments on **verses 9-10** that they are “The prophet's prayer to God. Others interpret it as a prayer by the faithful in Israel.” (P. 252) Whether the prophet's prayer or the people's, it is no longer the language of YHWH that we hear in **verses 9-11**, but is language that is addressed to YHWH in the second person.

The two verses contain an appeal to YHWH and His strong arm to work in the present as the Near-Eastern religious traditions affirmed God / Marduk / Baal (but in truth, YHWH) had acted in the far-distant past, cutting the Monster Rahab in pieces, piercing the fleeing Dragon.

Slotki holds that “Rahab” is only a poetical name for Egypt, meaning “the proud,” and that the “dragon” means “Pharaoh” (P. 252). But while it is true that the ancient myth concerning Baal Marduk is sometimes “historicized” to mean Egypt and Pharaoh, and Israel's crossing of the Reed Sea, it most probably is referring to the ancient myth here and in other passages, the background of which is to be found in the Mesopotamian **Enuma Elish** and its Canaanite adaptation.

We agree with Oswald's comment that “Most scholars today are in agreement that while the exodus events are in the center of the writer's thinking, they are not by any means all that is there. *Rahab* is clearly a term for Egypt (compare **30:7**; and **Psalms 87:4**, where Rahab and Babylon are paired); so also the *monster* (or ‘dragon’) is a term for Pharaoh (**Ezekiel 29:3**)...

“But it is also clear that those terms are not limited to those historical referents. As is known from Ugaritic studies, *the twisting monster* is a figure in the struggles of Baal with the God of the sea, Yam, as is ‘Leviathan,’ which is equated with the monster in **Isaiah 27:1**. Given these facts, and the evidence that the myth of the struggle of the Gods with the sea monster was known in one form or another all over the ancient Near

(continued...)

לְבַשֵּׁי-עוֹזְרוּעַ יְהוָה  
 עוֹרֵי כִימֵי קָדָם  
 דְּרוֹת עוֹלָמִים  
 הֲלוֹא אַתָּה־יָא  
 הַמְחַצֵּבֶת רַהַב  
 מִחוֹלְלֵת תַּנְיִן:

Raise up! Raise up! / Awake! Awake!

Dress (yourself with) strength, arm of YHWH!<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup>(...continued)

East, one has reason to believe that Isaiah is here, as in **27:1**, utilizing this acquaintance among the people for his own purposes.” (P. 341)

North entitles **verses 9-11** “History and Myth.”

He comments that “The original associations of ‘Rahab, the sea-monster, the sea’ (in Ugaritic the God *Yam*) and ‘the great deep,’ were with the creation-myth. [See **Job 7:12; 9:13; 26:12; Psalm 74:13; 89:10-11; Isaiah 27:1**]... ‘Rahab,’ ‘the sea-monster,’ ‘the sea,’ and ‘the deep’ are all synonyms for the original chaos. The fullest form of the creation-myth is the Babylonian, in which [the God] Marduk slew Tiamat, ‘split her like a shell-fish into two parts...and with one half made a covering...over the earth, to keep the waters of the original chaos from deluging the inhabited world...If **verse 9b** refers to the creation, **verse 10** refers to the exodus and the deliverance at the Red Sea...Rahab is Egypt in **Psalm 87:4**...and **Isaiah 30:7**...The Hebrews took the fragments from the creation-myth, like broken pieces of stained glass, and used them to embellish the story of the exodus. They ‘historicized’ the myth, and it is broadly true to say that God’s revelation in history was His answer to the human need that had found

expression in what, to us, is crude mythology. Passages like the present [**Isaiah 51:9-11**] and **Psalm 74:12-17** refer equally to creation and redemption.” (Pp. 211-12)

<sup>33</sup>In what is almost irreverent language, Second Isaiah calls upon YHWH’s arm to wake up, as if YHWH, or at least His arm / power, had fallen asleep, and had to be awakened. North states that “the picture is probably of a heavily gauntleted forearm brandishing a sword.” (P. 212)

The word gauntlet means “a stout glove with a long, loose wrist.” Gauntleted, then means a fighting man who has put on such stout gloves, in order to protect his

(continued...)

Awake as (in) days of old / ancient time,  
(in) generations of long-lasting (past) times!

Are You not She,  
the One cutting Rahab in pieces,  
piercing a Dragon?<sup>34</sup>

51:10 הֲלוֹא אַתְּ־הִיא הַמַּחַרְבֶּת יָם

מִי תְהוֹם רַבָּה

הַשְּׂמָה מֵעַמְקֵי־יָם

דֶּרֶךְ לְעֵבֵר גְּאוּלָּיִם:

Are You not She, the One / one making Yam / a sea dry,  
waters of a great ocean?,  
That placed Yam's / sea's depths  
a way to pass / cross over (for) redeemed ones?<sup>35</sup>

51:11<sup>36</sup> וּפְדוּיֵי יְהוָה יִשׁוּבוּן

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

hands while fighting with a sword.

<sup>34</sup>The last three lines in Hebrew are: הֲלוֹא אַתְּ־הִיא הַמַּחַרְבֶּת רַבָּה מִי תְהוֹם רַבָּה, “Are you (feminine singular) not she (הִיא, She, not הוּא, He), the One cutting Rahab in pieces (feminine participle), piercing (feminine participle) a Dragon?” For the meaning of these phrases, see footnote 27.

<sup>35</sup>Here again in **verse 10** the author uses feminine pronouns and participles in describing what YHWH has done. The opening phrase is הֲלוֹא אַתְּ־הִיא, “Are You (feminine singular, 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronoun) not She (again, הִיא, She, not הוּא, He),” followed by the feminine singular definite participle, הַמַּחַרְבֶּת, “the One making dry,” and a feminine singular definite perfect verb, הַשְּׂמָה, “the One Who placed.”

**Rahifs** avoids the feminine language for YHWH by changing the subject from “YHWH’s arm” to “Jerusalem,” the city, which is feminine.

<sup>36</sup>Slotki comments that **verse 11** is “The Divine reply to the prayer in **verses 9-**

(continued...)

וּבָאוּ צִיּוֹן בְּרִנָּה  
 וּשְׂמֵחַת עוֹלָם עַל־רֵאשֵׁם  
 שִׁשּׁוֹן וּשְׂמֵחָה יִשְׂיָגוּן  
 נִסּוּ יָגוֹן וְאַנְחָה:

And YHWH's ransomed ones<sup>37</sup> will return,  
 and they will enter Zion with a ringing-cry,  
 and long-lasting joy upon their head(s),  
 rejoicing and joy they shall attain;  
 grief and sighing fled!

51:12<sup>38</sup> אֲנֹכִי אֲנֹכִי הוּא

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

**10.**" (P. 253) Compare **Isaiah 35:10**,

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

<sup>37</sup>Slotki notes that this means "The Babylonian exiles returning to Zion." (P. 253)

<sup>38</sup>Here in **verses 12-16** we again here the language of YHWH.

Slotki comments on these verses that "The Comforter of Israel is the Creator of the universe. Israel, therefore, need have no fear of his puny mortal oppressors. The passage may be regarded as continuing the Divine answer to the prayer in **verses 9-10.**" (P. 253)

North entitles **verses 12-16** "Fear Not, You Are My People."

He comments that "These verses form a bridge between two 'Awake, awake' passages. As they stand they must be taken as Yahweh's response to the appeal to His 'arm'...The address is presumably to the exiles, thought of either as a community of individuals (**12a**), or personified as a woman (compare **41:14**) or as a man (compare **41:8**)." (Pp. 213-14)

Slotki comments on **verse 12** that "The people or the faithful remnant [is] at first addressed as individuals...then collectively as one frightened woman...In the next verse

(continued...)

מְנַחֵמְכֶם  
 מִי־אַתָּה וּתְיָרָאִי מֵאֲנוּשׁ  
 יְמוֹת  
 וּמִבֶּן־אָדָם  
 חֲצִיר יִנְתֵן:

I, I (am) He--

your (plural) Comforter!<sup>39</sup>

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

this is changed to the masculine.” (**Ibid.**)

<sup>39</sup>This is another “Self-identification” by YHWH. Similar expressions occur in:

**Isaiah 37:16c,d,**

אַתָּה־הוּא  
 הָאֱלֹהִים לְבַדְּךָ לְכֹל מַמְלְכוֹת הָאָרֶץ  
 You are He,  
 the God by Yourself / alone for all kingdoms of the earth;

**Isaiah 43:25a, b**

אֲנֹכִי אֲנֹכִי הוּא  
 מַחֶה פְשָׁעֶיךָ לְמַעַנִי  
 I, I (am) He--  
 One wiping away your transgressions for My sake...

**2 Samuel 7:28a,b,**

וְעַתָּה | אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה  
 אַתָּה־הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים  
 And now, my Lord YHWH,  
 You (are) He, the God!...

(continued...)

Who are you, and you were afraid of a man?

He will die!

And (you were afraid) of a son of a human? He will be given (to the) grass!

51:13 וַתִּשְׁכַּח יְהוָה עֲשֶׂךָ

נוֹטָה שָׁמַיִם וְיִסַּד אֲרֶץ

וַתִּפְחַד תְּמִיד כָּל־הַיּוֹם

מִפְּנֵי חֶמֶת הַמְצִיק

כַּאֲשֶׁר כּוֹנֵן לַהֲשִׁיחַ

וְאַיֶּה חֶמֶת הַמְצִיק:

And you forgot<sup>40</sup> YHWH your Maker--

Who stretches out (the) heavens, and plants / establishes (the) earth.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>(...continued)

**Nehemiah 9:6a, b,**

אַתָּה־הוּא יְהוָה

לְבַדְּךָ

You (are) He--YHWH

by Yourself! / only You!

**Psalms 44:5<sup>Heb</sup> / 4<sup>Eng</sup> a, b,**

אַתָּה־הוּא

מֶלֶךְ אֱלֹהִים

You (are) He,

my King, O God!...

<sup>40</sup>Where our Hebrew text reads וַתִּשְׁכַּח, and you (2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular), 1QIsa has וַתִּשְׁכַּחַי (2<sup>nd</sup> person feminine singular).

<sup>41</sup>This is yet another “Self-identification” by YHWH.

And you were constantly in dread all the day from before (the) rage of the oppressor,<sup>42</sup>  
just like one setting himself<sup>43</sup> to destroy--<sup>44</sup>  
and where (is) the oppressor's rage?<sup>45</sup>

51:14 מִהֵרָ צִעָה לְהִפְתָּח  
וְלֹא-יִמּוּת לְשַׁחַת  
וְלֹא יִחְסַר לְחַמוֹ:

One bowed down<sup>46</sup> made haste to be released;<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Slotki notes that the “oppressor” may mean “Babylon; or Cyrus the conqueror of Babylon, before his friendliness toward Israel was known.” (P. 253)

<sup>43</sup>North translates by “he sets about,” and comments that the qal participle כּוֹנֵן “is used of taking aim with bow and arrow” in **Psalms 7:12**<sup>Heb</sup> / **13**<sup>Eng</sup> and **11:2**. (P. 2`15)

<sup>44</sup>Slotki notes that “the object [to be destroyed is] to be understood as Israel. If by ‘oppressor’ Babylon is meant, the intention is clear. If the reference is to Cyrus, it may be explained that Israel feared destruction at his hands when he was making ready (literally ‘aiming’) to destroy Babylon.” (Pp. 253-54)

<sup>45</sup>Slotki comments on this last line of **verse 13** that “The answer [to the question, Where is the fury of the oppressor?] is ‘Nowhere.’ Babylon was unable to destroy Israel, and Cyrus proved himself a friend and benefactor.” (P. 254)

<sup>46</sup>North translates צִעָה by “the burdened slave,” and comments that it is literally “‘stooping,’ an unusual word best illustrated from **Jeremiah 48:12**, which pictures cellarers [persons in a monastery who are responsible for provisioning and catering] bending over jars of wine to empty them:

Therefore look—days (are) coming, (it is) a saying of YHWH,  
and I will send forth for him those stooping / cellarers,  
and they will pour him out,  
and they will empty his vessels;  
and their skin-bottles they will shatter!

<sup>47</sup>Slotki holds that the perfect / past tense used in this line is the “prophetic perfect.” (P. 254)

and he will not die in the pit,<sup>48</sup>

and he will not lack (for) his bread!

51:15 וְאַנְכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ

רָגַע הַיָּם וַיִּהְמוּ גַלָּיו

יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ:

And I (am) YHWH our God--

Who disturbs / stirs up the sea, and its waves roar--

YHWH of Armies (is) His name!<sup>49</sup>

51:16 וְאֲשִׁים דְּבַרִּי בְּפִיךָ

<sup>48</sup>North translates by “he shall not die and go down to the pit,” but states that literally it is “he shall not die to the pit.” He comments that “The pit (שְׁחַת) is a synonym of Sheol, with which it is parallel in **Psalm 16:10**,

For You will not forsake my innermost-being to Sheol / the grave / underworld!

You will not allow Your faithful servant to see שְׁחַת / the pit / destruction!

and to which men descend at death” (P. 215)

See **Genesis 37:35**, where it is said of Jacob, who was grieving over the story that Joseph had been killed,

And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him;  
and he refused to be comforted.

And he said, Because I will go down to my son mourning to Sheol!  
And his father (Jacob) wept (for) him.

<sup>49</sup>**Verse 15** contains another of YHWH’s “Self-identifications,” only here it is combined with a third person identification of YHWH.

Slotki comments that it teaches “God has full control over nature. He can stir the sea to make its waves roar, and so also He can restrain its fury and still it.” (P. 254) Compare **Jeremiah 31:35**,

In this way YHWH spoke,

One giving / placing a sun for light by day,  
statutes of a moon and stars for light by night;  
disturbing / stirring up the sea, and its waves roar--  
YHWH of Armies (is) His name!



וּבְצֵל יָדַי כָּסִיתִיךָ  
 לְנַטַע שָׁמַיִם וְלִיסֹד אֲרֶץ  
 וְלֵאמֹר לְצִיּוֹן עַמִּי-אַתָּה:

And I placed My words in your mouth,  
 and with My hand's shadow I covered you--  
 to plant / establish (?) heavens,  
 and to found earth;  
 and saying to Zion,  
 You (singular) (are) My people!<sup>50</sup>

51:17<sup>51</sup> הַתְּעוֹרְרֵי הַתְּעוֹרְרֵי

<sup>50</sup>Slotki comments on **verse 16** that “God’s message to the nations was given through Israel...A new epoch of morality and righteousness will begin with the destruction of the idolatrous system and restoration of Israel to his material and spiritual inheritance...[Israel will] ‘plant the heavens,’ that is, [by] the teaching of the principles of truth and justice...and ‘lay the foundations of the earth,’ [that is, by] the realization of the moral and religious instruction in the life of the nations.” (P. 254)

<sup>51</sup>We understand **verses 17-23** and **52:1-12** as returning to the language of the prophet, who is speaking the Divine message, but now speaking of YHWH in the third person. Then in **52:13-15** we think the language returns to that of YHWH, while throughout **53:1-10a, b**, the language is obviously that of Israelites. But in **53:10c-12** the language is once again that of YHWH.

Slotki comments on **51:17-52:12** that it depicts “The end of the captivity and the glorious restoration of Zion.” (P. 255)

He comments on **verses 17-20** that they are “A call to Jerusalem to awaken from the stupor of her affliction and degradation.” (**ibid.**)

North entitles **verses 17-23** “The Cup Of Wrath.”

He comments that the passage is “an appeal to Jerusalem to rouse herself from the despair into which she has sunk. The speaker is presumably the Prophet, since Yahweh is referred to in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person (**verse 17**) and [YHWH] Himself speaks in **verses 22-23**...

“Jerusalem’s condition is due to Yahweh’s having, with His Own hand, given her ‘the cup of His wrath’ to drink. The ruinous state of the city during the years of the exile

(continued...)

קוּמִי יְרוּשָׁלַם  
 אֲשֶׁר שָׁתִית מִיַּד יְהוָה  
 אֶת-כּוֹס חַמְתּוֹ  
 אֶת-קַבְעֶת כּוֹס הַתַּרְעֵלָה שָׁתִית מִצִּית:

Rouse yourself, rouse yourself!<sup>52</sup>

Get up, Jerusalem--  
 who drank from YHWH's hand

<sup>51</sup>(...continued)

had only deepened the despair which found expression in the **Book of Lamentations**. None of Jerusalem's 'sons,' who must include the citizens born in her as well as her scattered children (**49:20-22**), extends a helping hand to her (**verse 18**), nor is sympathy forthcoming from those who have laid her waste or those who have been passive spectators of her misery (**verse 19**)...

"The passage closes with Yahweh's assurance that He has taken the cup from Jerusalem's hand and will give it to the tormentors who have arrogantly trampled on her." (P. 216)

Ortlund states that in **51:17-23** "God rouses His defeated people to renewed comforts...In **verse 9**, the people think God needs to be awakened to action; but in reality, they need to wake themselves. It was God, not their Babylonian captors, Who force-fed Jerusalem the cup of wrath... Now God invites His people to rise up from their stupor of despair." (P. 1335)

YHWH will not awaken the people by Himself. He requires that they themselves take action, that they rouse themselves, that they exercise their own strength to get up!

<sup>52</sup>This is the second of three calls to Jerusalem to wake up—the first is **Isaiah 51:9**; the second is here, **51:17**; the third is **52:1**.

**51:9**—עוּרִי עוּרִי, "Raise up! Raise up!" (Qal feminine imperative)

**51:17**—הִתְעוּרִי הִתְעוּרִי, "Rouse yourself! Rouse yourself!" (Hithpoel feminine imperative; more intensive than the Qal)

**52:1**--עוּרִי עוּרִי, "Raise up! Raise up!" (Qal feminine imperative)

(the) cup of His rage,<sup>53</sup>  
(the) goblet (?) cup (synonym) of the reeling / staggering you drank, you drained (it) out  
(completely)!<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>North comments that “Yahweh’s ‘cup’ is described in...**Psalm 75:8**<sup>Heb</sup> / **9**<sup>Eng</sup> as ‘a cup in Yahweh’s hand, with foaming wine, well mixed (with toxic ingredients). He pours out its contents and all the wicked of the world drink from it and drain it to the dregs,’ and become demented. Most **Old Testament** references to the cup date from the time immediately preceding the exile: **Jeremiah 25:15-28; Lamentations 4:21; Ezekiel 33:31-33; Habakkuk 2:16...**

“Very relevant to [**Isaiah 51:17**] is **Jeremiah 51:7**: ‘Babylon is a gold cup in Yahweh’s hand, making the whole earth drunk; the nations drank of her wine and so became mad.’ For **New Testament** continuations of the theme compare **Mark 10:38-39** and parallels, **14:36** and parallels; **John 18:11; Revelation 14:10; 16:19**. The thought is always present that those to whom God gives the cup are powerless to refuse it.” (P. 216)

<sup>54</sup>Slotki states that **verse 17** means Israel has “suffered the full measure of punishment.” (P. 255). We are reminded of the opening words of **Isaiah 40:1-2**,

1 Comfort! Comfort My people,  
says your (plural) God!  
2 Speak to Jerusalem’s heart,  
and cry out to her,  
that her warfare is complete,  
that her iniquity / guilt was accepted / forgiven,  
that she received from YHWH’s hand double (punishment)  
for all her missings-of-the-mark!

Translations of **verse 17** vary:

**King James**, “Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of his fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, *and wrung them* out.”

**Tanakh**, “Rouse, rouse yourself! Arise, O Jerusalem, You who from the LORD’s hand Have drunk the cup of His wrath, You who have drained to the dregs The bowl, the cup of reeling!”

**New Revised Standard**, “Rouse yourself, rouse yourself! Stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of his wrath, who have drunk to the dregs the bowl of staggering.”

**New International**, “Awake, awake! Rise up, Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the LORD the cup of his wrath, you who have drained to its dregs the goblet that makes people stagger.”

**New Jerusalem**, “Awake, awake! To your feet, Jerusalem! You who from Yahweh’s

(continued...)

51:18 אֵין־מְנַהֵל לָהּ

מִכָּל־בָּנִים יִלְדָהּ

וְאֵין מַחְזִיק בְּיָדָהּ

מִכָּל־בָּנִים גְּדָלָהּ:

There is no one guiding her,  
from all (the) children she bore;  
and there is no one taking firm hold by her hand,  
from all (the) children she reared.<sup>55</sup>

51:19 שִׁתִּים הִנָּה קָרְאֲתֶיךָ

מִי יִנּוּד לָךְ

הַשֵּׁד וְהַשֵּׁבֶר

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<sup>54</sup>(...continued)

hand have drunk the cup of his wrath. The chalice, the stupefying cup, you have drained to the dregs.”

**Rahfs**, “Raise up! Raise up! Stand up, Jerusalem, the one drinking the cup of the wrath out of Lord’s hand! For the cup of the falling, the *kondū* (drinking-vessel) of the wrath, you drank out of, and you emptied it!” NETS has “Awake, awake! Stand up, O Ierousalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the Lord the cup of his wrath, for you have drained dry and emptied the cup of ruin, the goblet of wrath.”

<sup>55</sup>Slotki comments on **verse 18** that “The nation has suffered loss of leadership and support.” (P. 255)

North states, “Jerusalem is pictured as groping about under the toxic effects of the ‘cup.’” (P. 217)

The mother city, Jerusalem is staggering drunkenly, unable to guide her own footsteps—and none of her children are able to help her. There is no Moses, no Joshua, no Deborah to take her by the hand and guide her!

Alexander notes that whereas Zion has been addressed “in the second person, [the prophet] now proceeds to speak of her in the third [person]...The sense is not that no one will, but that no one can protect or guide her.” (P. 269)

וְהָרַעַב וְהַחֲרִיב

מִי אֲנַחְמֶיךָ:

These two things<sup>56</sup> are encountering you—<sup>57</sup>  
who will lament for you?—<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>The prophet says “two things” are encountering Israel, and then mentions four things—“the destruction and the shattering, and the famine and the sword.” Are we to understand this as meaning the two things are destruction and shattering, which are produced by famine and sword? Or does it mean “two pairs,” i.e., “destruction and shattering; famine and sword”?

<sup>57</sup>The verb used here is qal feminine plural present active participle, קָרַאתֶיךָ, “confronting you,” or “encountering you,” which sounds like they are present difficulties facing the exiles in Babylon. English translations vary from “are come to you,” to “have befallen you,” to “have come to you.” **Rahlf**s has ἀντικείμενά σοι, the present active participle, “are standing against / opposing you,” but it seems obvious that they are referring to events in Jerusalem’s past. What do you think?

<sup>58</sup>The phrase is מִי יִנּוּד לְךָ, literally, “who will move to and fro (for you).” North holds that this means “nod the head to and fro for you,” and comments that it is “the same gesture of sympathetic grief as shown by Job’s friends and relatives” as depicted in **Job 2:11**,

And three friends of Job heard  
all this evil that came upon him,  
and they came, each one from his place—  
Eliphaz the Teymanite,  
and Bildad the Shuchite,  
and Zophar, the Naamathite;  
and they made an appointment together  
to come to lament for him, and to give him compassion.

George Buchanan Gray comments on the phrase “to lament for him,” לְ-לִי-  
לְנִיד,” that it means “‘to show their grief,’ from the primary sense ‘to move to and  
fro’...The verb נִיד seems to have come to mean ‘to make gestures (of grief)’ for  
him...and then, with a weakening or loss of the physical sense, ‘to manifest grief,’ ‘to  
solace.’” (P. 27)

**Job 42:11**,

(continued...)

the destruction and the shattering,  
and the famine and the sword—<sup>59</sup>  
who will comfort you?

51:20 בְּנֵיךָ עָלְפוּ

שָׁכְבוּ בְּרֹאשׁ כָּל־חֻצוֹת

פֶּתוֹא מִכֶּמֶר

הַמְּלֵאִים חֲמַת־יְהוָה

נִעְרַת אֱלֹהֶיךָ:

Your sons / children were enraptured / swooned;

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<sup>58</sup>(...continued)

And they came to him—all his brothers and all his sisters, and all his former acquaintances;  
and they ate with him in his house,  
and they showed grief (וַיִּנְדְּוּ לוֹ) for him;  
and they comforted him over all the evil which YHWH brought upon him.  
And they gave to him, each one, one piece of money,  
and each one, one gold ring.

and compare **Psalm 69:21**<sup>Heb</sup> / **20**<sup>Eng</sup>,

Reproach broke my heart, and I was sick.

And I waited eagerly for the nodding of grief (לְנִדְוֹ), and there was none;  
and for those comforting—and I did not find anyone!

North adds, “There had been no one since the stricken city had cried, ‘No one consoles me’ (**Lamentations 1:2, 9, 16-17, 21**).” (P. 217)

<sup>59</sup>Oswalt comments that “However one understands ‘these two things,’ the verse further emphasizes Zion’s hopeless state and God’s understanding of that state. Who is there who can offer any real sympathy or encouragement tone in such a condition as this? Terrible things have been suffered; all the resources that might offer some hope of recovery on a naturalistic basis are gone; what is left? Any human words of sympathy or encouragement at a time like that can only sound hollow. Is there hope? Yes, for it is God Who is speaking these words. In speaking them, He communicates both

His understanding and His experience of our situation. But, at the same time, the hope is not some easy glossing over of the grim reality.” (P. 353)

they lay at (the) head of all (the) streets,<sup>60</sup>  
like an antelope (caught in) a net—<sup>61</sup>  
the ones filled with YHWH's rage,  
your God's rebuke.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>North states that the phrase “at the top of every street” “may be a gloss from **Lamentations 2:19, 4:1**...The meaning is ‘conspicuously,’ ‘in full view.’” (P. 217)

2:19 Arise! Gve a ringing cry in the night, at (the) beginning of (the) night-watches!  
Pour out your heart like the water before my Lord's face!  
Lift up your hands to Him over (the) life of your children, the ones fainting from  
hunger,  
at (the) head of all (the) streets!

4:1 How (the) gold has been dimmed, the good gold (synonym) changes!  
Set-apart stones are poured out at (the) head of all (the) streets!

<sup>61</sup>North comments that the antelope [תַּאֲוִי] is mentioned “only here and in a list of ‘clean’ wild deer in **Deuteronomy 14:5**. The point of the comparison is that such animals are shy and defenseless, with no means of safety except in flight.” (P. 217)

The phrase in Hebrew is כְּתֹאֵוִי מִכְמָר, literally “like an antelope of a net.” Translations vary from “as a wild bull in a net” (**King James**) to “caught in a net,” to “in a net,” to **Rahfs**' ὡς σευτλίον ἡμίεφθον, “like a half-cooked beet”! North comments that “The historical situation is that of the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem (2 Kings 25:1-4) but the exact meaning of the word מִכְמָר [which occurs only here in the **Hebrew**

**Bible**] is not certain...Perhaps we are to think of an enclosure or even a pit...into which driven animals fell, breaking their limbs in their terror.” (P. 217) Compare

**Psalm 141:10,**

Let wicked people fall into his [the wicked person's] net [מִכְמָר, a synonym],  
while at the same time, I, I pass by!

**Ezekiel 19:8,** where it is said of the “mother lioness” Israel,

And surrounding nations from (the) provinces placed over him,  
and spread out over him their net (רְשֵׁתָם), a synonym);  
in their pit he was seized.

<sup>62</sup>Slotki comments on **verse 20** that the people suffering the Divine fury are

(continued...)

51:21<sup>63</sup> לִכְן שְׁמַעֲנָא זֹאת עֲנִיָּה

וּשְׁכָרָת וְלֹא מִיַּיִן:

Therefore<sup>64</sup> hear / listen to this now, afflicted poor one,  
and drunk one—and not from wine.<sup>65</sup>

51:22 כֹּה־אָמַר אֲדַנְיָהּ יְהוָה וְאַל־תִּהְיֶה

יָרִיב עִמּוֹ

תִּנְהַל לְקַחְתִּי מִיַּדְךָ אֶת־כּוֹס הַתַּרְעִילָה

אֶת־קַבְלֶעֶת כּוֹס חַמְתִּי

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

depicted “as an antelope in a net.” He takes that to mean “exhausted and helpless,” and states that “the comparison may go deeper: Zion’s graceful children, reared on the mountains of Judah, now swooning with exhaustion at the feet of the invaders, are like the mountain gazelle, an elegantly formed species of antelope, graceful and swift, lying exhausted after its vain efforts to free itself from the net of its hunters...Their sad plight is entirely due to the *fury of the Lord*.” (Pp. 255-56)

Is this intended as depicting the condition of the exiles in Babylon, or is it looking back to 587 B.C.E., describing the condition of the Jewish people at the hands of their Babylonian captors? We are reminded here of the **Book of Lamentations** (for example, **1:6, 13**).

<sup>63</sup>Ortlund notes that in **verses 21-23**, “The same Divine power that humiliated Jerusalem turns the tables on her enemies.” (P. 1336)

Slotki likewise states “Israel’s suffering will pass over to his oppressors.” (P. 256)

<sup>64</sup>North comments that “Every word from this initial ‘Therefore’ to ‘Behold’ (הִנֵּה), **verse 22**) is calculated to emphasize the coming reversal of Jerusalem’s fortunes... Jerusalem had suffered ‘double’ (**Isaiah 40:2**) and Babylon had exceeded her commission (**Isaiah 47:6**). It was a case of the wicked swallowing up the man more righteous than himself (**Habakkuk 1:13**; compare **Isaiah 10:5-19**). So much can power coarsen those who possess it.” (P. 217)

<sup>65</sup>Slotki comments that the drunkenness is not with wine, “but with misery and tribulation, or with *the fury of the Lord*.” (P. 256)



לֹא־תוֹסִיף לְשִׁתּוֹתָהּ עוֹד:

In this way your Lord YHWH and your God spoke:

Who pleads the cause<sup>66</sup> of His people:

Look—I took<sup>67</sup> from your hand (the) cup of the reeling / staggering,  
the goblet (?) cup of My rage.<sup>68</sup>

You will not repeat again to drink it!

51:23 וְשִׁמְתִּיהָ בְיַד־מוֹגִיף

אֲשֶׁר־אָמְרוּ לְנַפְשׁךָ

שְׁחִי וְנַעֲבֶרְהָ

וְתִשְׁיַמֵּי כְּאֶרֶץ גּוֹף

וְכַחֲוִיץ לְעֹבְרִים:

And I will place it in your oppressors' hand,

who said to your innermost-being,

Bow down! And we will pass over!<sup>69</sup>

And you placed your back like the land,  
and like the street for those passing over.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>North translates the qal imperfect verb יִרְיֵב "champions," or "pleads," and comments that "The verb is used of going to law with someone (**Isaiah 45:9; 49:25; 50:8**), here of initiating or conducting an action on behalf of another." (P. 217)

<sup>67</sup>Slotki notes that the perfect / past tense verb should be understood as meaning "I am about to take"—i.e., another "prophetic perfect." (P. 256)

<sup>68</sup>For this and the preceding line, compare **verse 17**.

<sup>69</sup>North translates by "Lie down for us to trample over you." He states that it is literally "Bow down that we may pass over," and comments that "For such barbarity compare **Joshua 10:24** and **Zechariah 10:5**." (P. 217)

<sup>70</sup>Slotki comments that "History records instances of conquerors who literally trod or even rode over the backs of vanquished enemies." (P. 256)

(continued...)

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<sup>70</sup>(...continued)

North translates by “and you lay full length on the ground...”, and says that it is literally “And you placed your back like the ground and like the street to the passers-by.”