

Isaiah 31

Intimately related to ISAIAH 30, this chapter is yet another warning for Judah to lean on the Lord and not upon Egypt.

vv. 1–5. A warning against going to Egypt for support is reiterated. Instead, man ought to lean on the Lord who is able to protect and save.

1 ¶ **WOE** to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because [they are] many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!

WOE to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because [they are] many. The LXX (6) reads, “ALAS! They went down to Egypt for help! They trusted in horses and chariots; for they have many.” In the Masoretic text (מ) the preposition *to* in *to Egypt* is implied (מִצְרַיִם), while in the DSS 1QIsa^a (Q) it is spelled out, לְמִצְרַיִם. Also, in the Masoretic text (מ) we have, *on [the] chariot* (where the *the* is implied), עַל-רֶכֶב, while in the DSS 1QIsa^a (Q) we have *on the chariot*, עַל הַרֶכֶב, spelled out. ¶ The LXX (6) reads, ALAS!, as we have noted, based on the הַי, HOI we have discussed in ISAIAH 18 and elsewhere. ¶ Here we are reminded of the injunction in Deuteronomy 17:16 of not leaning on horses nor on Egypt, “But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way.” Nägelsbach well says: “We must understand by ‘those that go down,’ not only those physically going down to Egypt, but also those that accompanied them in spirit and shared their intention.” For the expression *to go down* to Egypt see discussion in ISAIAH 30:2. ¶ *Upon chariot*, עַל-רֶכֶב. Cowles suggests: “The word rendered chariots is singular. Etymologically it means a *riding*, and as has been noted (ISAIAH 21:7) seems often, as here, to mean cavalry. The ancients placed great reliance on horses of war...” To *stay on horses* means to lean on, to find support and comfort on horses (and chariots). A more sure way is to lean on the Lord: “Who is among you that feareth the

LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God” (ISAIAH 50:10). Several exegetes—including Henderson and Alexander—note that Egypt was well known for her horses, and by implication leaning on Egypt meant leaning on horses. ¶ *And in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!* The Targum (T) has, beginning with the second clause, “But they stay not themselves upon the Word of the Holy One of Israel, neither seek instruction from the Lord (Chaldee, ‘from before the Lord’).” The LXX (6) reads, “And their cavalry is very numerous; and did not rely on the Holy One of Israel, nor did they ask counsel of the Lord.” Instead of *look*, the Peshitta (S) has *trust*. The Douay-Rheims (V) has, “And have not trusted in the Holy One of Israel, and have not sought after the Lord.” As a horse trainer and dressage rider I understand what it is to have a horse sensitive to every twitch in my own musculature, or slight shift in weight or movement of my leg, so the horse is merely a powerful and muscular extension of my own body. The feelings of power and euphoria are pronounced upon training and riding such horses. But what is all that compared to knowing that Heavenly Father has heard my prayer and having Christ speak to me through the Spirit of God—to give instruction, admonition and peace? All have been commanded to: “...stay themselves upon the God of Israel; The LORD of hosts is his name” (ISAIAH 48:2b). This idea that they do not seek the Lord is very close to that also found in ISAIAH 48, that they: “...swear by the name of the LORD, and make mention of the God of Israel, *but* not in truth, nor in righteousness” (ISAIAH 48:1b). Furthermore: “O that cunning plan of the evil one! O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish. But to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God” (2 Nephi 9:28–29). *See also* Jeremiah 9:23–24. There is much danger in leaning on the philosophies of man or intellectual idolatry. Jennings well says, “We each have the danger of that ‘woe’ being on us for we each have our ‘Egypt.’”

2 Yet he also [is] wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back[✓] his words: but will arise against the house of the evildoers, and against the help of them that work iniquity.

✓ remove

Yet he also [is] wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back his words: The Targum (Ⓢ) has, “And also He in His wisdom will bring evil on account of what he is doing (according to the Royal Polyglot, דְּעֵבֶרְהָא, i.e., ‘on account of transgression’); and He will not make to fail His words (Chaldee, ‘to make cease’).” The LXX (Ⓣ) reads, “Therefore he in his wisdom brought evils on them: and that his word may not be slighted.” The Lamsa Peshitta (Ⓛ) has, “Yet in his wisdom, he will bring a calamity, and will not alter his words.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓜ) has, “But he that is the wise one hath brought evil, and hath not removed his words.” ¶ Calvin writes: “By calling God ‘wise,’ he does not merely bestow on him the honour of an attribute which always belongs to him, but censures the craftiness of those whom he saw to be too much delighted with their own wisdom.” ¶ The ‘evil’ spoken about here represents the *consequences* of our moral agency. The Lord here tells us that there are times when he will not call back His words—when the consequences for our actions will be carried out. When the Lord calls back His words, in the KJV, this is unfortunately translated as the Lord *repenting* [נָחַם]. In 13 out of 17 instances where the word *repented* appears in the Old Testament, it is associated with the Lord and means to be *moved with compassion*. In one case, the Hebrew has been corrupted and there gladly is a JST. In two of the remaining instances where נָחַם is used of mortals, it also means to be *moved with compassion*. Only in Jeremiah 8:6 is נָחַם used as a synonym to שׁוּב, *turn* or *return* unto the Lord.¹ The word *repent* (rather than

¹ People cannot just say, “I will repent later.” The Prophet Joseph Smith taught: “We should take warning and not wait for the death-bed to repent; as we see the infant taken away by death, so may the youth and middle aged, as well as the infant be suddenly called into eternity. Let this, then, prove as a warning to all not to procrastinate repentance, or wait till a death-bed, for it is the will of God that man should repent and serve Him in health, and in the strength and power of his mind, in order to secure His blessing, and not wait until he is called to die” (*History of the Church*, 4:553–54; punctuation modernized; from a discourse given by Joseph Smith on March 20, 1842, in Nauvoo, Illinois; reported by Wilford Woodruff). In the Book of Mormon we read: “For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors. And now, as I said unto you before, as ye have had so many witnesses, therefore, I beseech of you that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end; for after this

repented) does have the שׁוּב meaning in both instances. In one of these the Lord complains that He ought not to be misunderstood: “God *is* not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent [נָחַם]: hath he said, and shall he not do *it*? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?” (Numbers 23:19). ¶ The Lord, through His prophets, warns that our choices can bring negative consequences. If we make a path correction, if we turn the right way, we can often avert these consequences. On the way to work this morning,² I saw a sign that caught my attention: “Turn to Jesus.” Well said! So it is that in Jeremiah we read: “If that nation, against whom I have pronounced [spoken against in *warning*], turn [שׁוּב; *and turn*, from שׁוּב] from their evil, I will repent [נָחַמְתִּי; *and I will be moved with compassion*, from נָחַם] of the evil³ that I thought to do unto them” (Jeremiah 18:8). ¶ At our slightest show of repentance the Lord blesses us and forgives us. After all, He taught us to forgive 70 times.⁴ He is the master forgiver. But in this verse it is clear that the Lord’s patience will not last forever. In Ezekiel 24:14, we read “I the LORD have spoken it: it shall come to pass, and I will do it; I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent [*moved with compassion*] ...” Why? Because the Lord, who can see the future as well as the past, knows that in this instance there will be no coming repentance. This is precisely, then, what the expression *and will not call back his words* mean. ¶ *But will arise against the house of the evildoers, and against the help of them that work iniquity.* The Targum (Ⓢ) has, “help the work (literally, ‘the wearisome labor’) of a lie,” rather than *work of iniquity*. The LXX (Ⓣ) reads, “He will rise up against the houses of wicked men and against this hope of theirs which is vain.” Regarding the *house of the evildoers* and them that *work iniquity*, Henderson writes: “The בֵּית מְרָעִים and פְּעֻלַּי אָוֶן are synonymous, and designate the rebellious Jews. By

day of life, which is given us to prepare for eternity, behold, if we do not improve our time while in this life, then cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed” (Alma 34:32–33). So, let us always remember this invitation to *come unto Christ* and turn our hearts and our lives to Him: “Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart and not your garments, and repent, and turn unto the LORD, your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and he will turn away the evil from you” (JST Joel 2:12–13).

² 1 February 2013.

³ Regarding the archaic use of the word *evil* see notes under ISAIAH 30:2.

⁴ This spirit of forgiveness greatly irritated Jonah who was weary of the Lord’s forgiveness of others. Yet, what the Lord wants for us is precisely a turning of our hearts. He never ceases to invite us and call upon us to turn and repent.

עֲזָרָה [help, aid, HAL, from עָזַר] the Egyptians are meant.”

3 Now the Egyptians [are] men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit. When the LORD shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fail together.

Now the Egyptians [are] men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit. The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “And the Egyptians are men, and *none of them* a mighty one, and their horses *are* flesh, and not spirit.” The LXX (Ⓛ) reads, “Against an Egyptian—a man, not a god—against the flesh of horses in which there is no help.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓣ) has, for the first half, “Egypt is man, and not God.” Man, when he fears man, makes giants or gods of men. So it was when Moses sent twelve spies into Canaan. While Caleb came back ready to trust in the Lord and go into battle, the rest were filled with cowardice: “But the men that went up with him [Caleb] said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight” (Numbers 13:31–33). Redak, following Psalm 33:17 has (in Rabbi Rosenberg): “A horse is a vain thing for safety.” ¶ Regarding *spirit*, רִיחַ, it is not just spirit, but the *Spirit of God*, רִיחַ אֱלֹהִים. The expression is in contraposition to mortal beings such as men and beasts. It is in no way meant to indicate that *God is a Spirit* (John 4:24a) as our AV incorrectly translates—through a false ellipsis—our received Greek text⁵ πνευμα ο θεος. Instead read: *God is spirit* (see also ESV, HCSB, ISV, NASB), just as *God is love* and mercy and numerous other qualities. ¶ *When the LORD shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fail together.* The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “And the Lord shall deal the stroke of His power, and he that helpeth shall stumble, and he that is holpen shall fall, and all of them together shall be destroyed.” The LXX (Ⓛ) reads, “When the Lord shall lay his hand upon them, then shall these

⁵ But see the JST restoration: “For unto such hath God promised his Spirit. And they who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.”

helpers fail and be all destroyed together.” The Peshitta (Ⓢ) has *annihilated* (Lamsa) / *exterminated* (BPE). The Douay-Rheims (Ⓣ) has, “And the Lord shall put down his hand, and the helper shall fall, and he that is helped shall fall, and they shall all be confounded together.” ¶ In other words, Egypt (who *helpeth*) would extend a hand to help but would fall along with Israel (the *holpen*). The Lord *stretching forth His hand* is equivalent to the manifesting of His power. Once again, it is best to liken these scriptures unto us by thinking of Egypt as any force representing the arm of flesh and leaning on the learning of man. Regarding the words *helpeth* and *holpen* [both from the same root, *help*, עָזַר] Henderson writes: “In עֲזָרָה and עָזַר is an elegant paronomasia.” The KJV retains this paronomasia in English.

4 For thus hath the LORD spoken unto me, Like as the lion and the young lion roaring on his prey, when a multitude of shepherds is called forth against him, [he] will not be afraid of their voice, nor abase himself for the noise[✓] of them: so shall the LORD of hosts come down to fight for mount Zion, and for the hill thereof.

✓ or, multitude

For thus hath the LORD spoken unto me, Like as the lion and the young lion roaring on his prey, when a multitude of shepherds is called forth against him. The LXX (Ⓛ) reads, “Because the Lord hath thus said to me, ‘As the lion or the young lion will roar over the prey which he hath taken; and will repeat his roaring over it, until the mountains are filled with his voice.’” Instead of *called forth against him*, The Peshitta (Ⓢ) has *shout at him*. The Douay-Rheims (Ⓣ) has, “For thus saith the Lord to me: Like as the lion roareth, and the lion’s whelp upon his prey, and when a multitude of shepherds shall come against him.” ¶ A lion is not easily deterred or frightened by a bunch of shepherds when he has gotten himself a prey to eat. If anything, these shepherds could represent the next meal. Alexander writes: “*Growl* is to be preferred to *roar*, not only for the reason given by Bochart, that the lion roars before, not after it has seized its prey, but because הִנָּהּ more properly denotes a suppressed or feeble sound.” So also Cowles: “[The lion] has his lamb already by him and *growls* over it (so the Hebrew); bidding defiance to [whatever number of] shepherds would fain rescue the lamb. So God covers his people and defies all foreign assailants.” Henderson says, “The image of a lion, to represent the power of God, is not infrequent, Hosea 5:14; 11:10; 13:7–8; Amos 3:8; Revelation 5:5.” ¶ [*He*

will not be afraid of their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them: so shall the LORD of hosts come down to fight for mount Zion, and for the hill thereof. The Targum (Ⓣ) has in the second clause, “Thus shall the kingdom of the Lord of hosts be revealed encamping upon the mountain of Zion, and upon its hill.” The LXX (ⓖ) reads, “And the multitude are subdued and terrified at his wrath: so will the Lord of Hosts descend to encamp on this mountain—on this Sion—on the summits thereof.” The Douay-Rheims (Ⓟ) has, “He will not fear at their voice, nor be afraid of their multitude: so shall the Lord of hosts come down to fight upon mount Sion, and upon the hill thereof.” ¶ The Lord will not be any more afraid of men than a lion is frightened by shepherds when He *defends* Jerusalem against the nations (to be applied as well to Hezekiah’s time as to the end of days—in that last great siege. It is not uncommon for Isaiah to give us a comforting scene from *that day* or the *end of days* in the middle of prophecies on other topics.

5 As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver [it; and] passing over he will preserve it.

As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem. The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “As a bird by flying, so the power of the Lord of hosts shall be revealed.” The LXX (ⓖ) reads, “As birds hover over their young, so will the Lord of Hosts protect Jerusalem.” Instead of *defend* Jerusalem, the Peshitta (Ⓢ) has *alight* (Lamsa) / *descend* (BPE) upon Jerusalem. The Douay-Rheims (Ⓟ) has, in some versions, incorrectly translated *as birds dying* when the Vulgate (Ⓟ) clearly has *flying*, “Sicut aves volantes.” Ibn Ezra writes regarding *defend* or מִגִּן [from מָגַן, HAL]: “*He will cover*. Compare מָגַן ‘shield’⁶ (Genesis 15:1). As the birds cover with their wings their young ones, in order to protect them, so will the Lord, etc.” Cheyne says: “Jehovah is like a lion to his foes, but like a mother-bird to his own. Strong and bold and courageous as the lion, tender and provident as the bird, but, unlike even the eagle, able under all circumstances to repel the assailant.” ¶ *As birds fly*, כְּצִפְרִים עֹפֹת, אֵלֶּיךָ יָבֹאוּ. A number of exegetes make a point that these are mother birds with motherly instincts. Young says, “It is probably correct to say that the feminine form of the particle⁷ alludes to the care of mothers for their young. God cares for Jerusalem as mother birds watch over their young in the nests.” Henderson explains regarding

עֹפֹת, [from עוֹף] or *hover over something* (HAL) “עוֹף is here used in the sense of *covering*, compare עֹב [to make dark, cloud, HAL]; and not in that of *flying*, as given in our common version, which does not furnish a suitable point of comparison. The image is taken from the protection which birds afford to their young, by throwing their wings over them.” Henderson, Wildberger and Nägelsbach point us to Deuteronomy 32:11. In context, this beautiful scripture reads: “For the LORD’s portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: So the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him. He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock”

Deuteronomy 32:9–13.” And once again, we hear in our minds Matthew 23:37b. I daily see our queltchues (southern lapwing or *Vanellus chilensis*) who fiercely defend their territory, their nest and their chicks against much larger birds such as the bandurria (*Theristicus melanopis melanopis* or black-faced ibis) and even people. They look quite aggressive as they spread their wings in warning (although the ones in the front of our yard have come to know me and accept my presence). ¶ *Defending also he will deliver [it; and] passing over he will preserve it.* The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “He shall protect, He shall deliver, He shall save, and He shall make to pass away.” The LXX (ⓖ) reads, “He will hover over it and spring forward, and will protect and save it.” The Peshitta (Ⓢ) has “he shall alight to deliver, rescue, and help” (Lamsa) / “he shall protect, liberate, rescue and sustain” (BPE). The Douay-Rheims (Ⓟ) has, “Protecting and delivering, passing over and saving.”

Alexander writes, “פָּסַח is the verb used to denote the passing over of the houses in Egypt by the destroying angel (hence פֶּסַח, *passover*), to which there may be an allusion here.” In the DSS 1QIsa^a (Ⓣ) we have *and deliver*, וְהִקְלִיט, while the Masoretic text (Ⓜ) has *and preserve*, וְהִמְלִיט.

vv. 6–9. Men are commanded to turn to the Lord and cease from their apostasy and revolt. The Assyrian will fall, not because of man, but because of the might of the Lord. The King of Asshur will flee in terror. The Lord will protect Jerusalem.

⁶ See HAL מָגַן, *shield, protection, or covering*.

⁷ עֹפֹת is *feminine* for fly, while עָפִים is the *masculine*.

6 ¶ Turn ye unto [him from] whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted.

The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “Return to the law; for you have multiplied sin (or, ‘greatly sinned’ or ‘added sin to sin,’ the Royal Polyglot has אַתְּגִיתוּן לְמַטְעִי, ‘you have greatly erred’), O sons of Israel!” The LXX (Ⓢ) reads, “Therefore turn to him, O children of Israel, who are taking deep and wicked counsel.” The Lamsa Peshitta (Ⓟ) has, “Repent, O children of Israel, for you have made your punishment severe.” The Douay-Rheims (ⓓ) has, “Return as you had deeply revolted, O children of Israel.” Here we have a lovely invitation to *turn unto* [לְאַשֶׁר] *Christ*, He whom the children of Israel had turned their backs to then. And as we liken it to today, let us *turn unto Christ* who the nations have turned their back to. שׁוּבוּ is the command form—*turn ye!*

7 For in that day every man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made unto you [for] a sin.

✓ the idols of his gold

The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “At that time each man shall abhor the idols of their silver and the idols of their gold, which your hands have made for you for a god (literally, ‘sin’).” The LXX (Ⓢ) reads, “Because men will in that day reject the works of their hands—their idols of silver and gold which their hands have made.” Instead of *cast away*, the Peshitta (Ⓟ) has, *despise*. The day would come when Israel would indeed put away and despise her idols to embrace the Lord. Anything that separates us from our God is our idol. Henderson writes: “This verse contains an assurance that such conversion [as mentioned in ISAIAH 31:6] would take place; and that the Jews would bring forth fruits meet for repentance.” ¶ *Sin*, חַטָּא [offence, sin, HAL). Cowles has: “‘Made for yourselves as a sin,’ implies that this was their great sin and occasion of more sinning. This abbreviated expression calls the idol *their sin* occurs (Deuteronomy 9:21) where Moses said, ‘I took *your sin*, the calf which ye had made, burnt if with fire’ etc. Also Amos 8:14 ‘They that swear by the sin of Samaria,’ *i.e.*, her idol god.”

8 Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword, not of a mighty man; and the sword, not of a mean man, shall devour him: but he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall be discomfited.

- ✓ or, for fear of
- ✓ ✓ or, tributary, HEB., for metling, or, tribute

Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword, not of a mighty man; and the sword, not of a mean⁸ man, shall devour him: The Targum (Ⓣ) correctly has, “not of man,” and adds, “not of a man.” The LXX (Ⓢ) likewise reads, “Therefore Asshur shall fall—not by the sword of a man of valour, nor shall the sword of a mortal devour him.” The Douay-Rheims (ⓓ) has, “And the Assyrian shall fall by the sword not of a man, not a human sword.” Indeed, the AV is far from being literal here, as neither the words *mighty* or *mean* appear in this verse. Rather, there are two negations, the first is that Assyrian will *not* fall by the sword of *man* (לֹא-אִישׁ), and repeated again, with a different term for *man* (לֹא-אָדָם). Most exegetes have correctly suggested that in this instance לֹא-אָדָם means *not human*. This seems to be a double emphatic exclamation that Assyria would fall, but not by the sword of man but by the instrumentality of God. ESV has a literal translation: “And the Assyrian shall fall by a sword, not of man; and a sword, not of man, shall devour him” AMP has, “Then the Assyrian shall fall by a sword not of man; and a sword, not of men [*but of God*], shall devour him.” HCSB has: “Then Assyria will fall, but not by human sword.” We read of the Assyrian defeat: “Then the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they [the Israelites] arose early in the morning, behold, they [the Assyrians] were all dead corpses” (ISAIAH 37:36; also see 2 Kings 19:35) ¶ *But he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall be discomfited.* The Targum (Ⓣ) has, “And he shall betake himself to flight as from before those who slay with the sword, and his heroes shall be for destruction.” The LXX (Ⓢ) reads, “And he shall flee—(not from the face of the sword) and the young men shall be for destruction.” The Douay-Rheims (ⓓ) has, “And he shall flee not at the face of the sword: and his young men shall be tributaries.” ¶ *But for he shall flee from face of the sword.* The Masoretic text (Ⓜ) reads וּנְסָ לִוּ מִפְּנֵי חֶרֶב while the DSS 1QIsa^a (Ⓢ) has, וּנְסָ וּלְוָא מִפְּנֵי חֶרֶב. There are no real differences⁹ between these two expressions, although there is a question as to whether (1) *he shall flee* is meant (most

⁸ The word *mean* here signifies, insignificant, but as we have said, it is not in the Hebrew text, but rather, an unfortunate gloss.

⁹ Emanuel Tov explained, in a personal letter dated 31 January 2013: “These two words [are] pronounced in the same way and interchange all the time. In this verse in particular such an interchange is expected, 2x lo’ [לו’], especially in the large Isaiah scroll. The reading of the scroll looks like a variant, a secondary one.”

translators) or (2) *not flee* (ABP {LXX (6)}) / or (3) *flee but not escape the sword* (DRB, NASB). If the first interpretation is accepted, it seems to refer to the King of Asshur (see ISAIAH 30:33). The King of Assyria did flee back to his home. If the second, it may refer to the Assyrian army who would not flee but instead perish by the sword of the angel of the Lord. If the third, it fits the idea that those who did not flee would be put to work as forced labor, slaves or tributaries (לְמִסֵּי). Alexander says, regarding the third option (but without favoring it): “For לוֹ, a few manuscripts and one of the earliest editions read לֹא, *not from the sword*, i.e. he shall flee when no man pursueth (Proverbs 28:1).” A strong argument for the first, or most common interpretation, that the King of Asshur would flee, is that the same idea is contained in the next verse, “And he shall pass over to his strong hold for fear.” ¶ *And his young men shall be discomfited*. Or, as most translators have, tributaries. Regarding the issue of tributaries, Alexander has: “... in every other case the expression [i.e., לְמִסֵּי] means to become tributary, with a special reference to the rendering of service to a superior. The objection that the prophecy, as thus explained [i.e., that Assyria’s young men would become tributaries], was not fulfilled, proceeds upon the false assumption that it refers exclusively to the overthrow of Sennacherib’s host, whereas it describes the decline and fall of the Assyrian power after that catastrophe.” The young men may have become tributaries to Babylon, or other nation.

9 And he shall pass over to his strong hold for fear, ✓ ✓ and his princes shall be afraid of the ensign, saith the LORD, whose fire [is] in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem.

✓ his rock shall pass away for fear ✓ ✓ or, his strength

And he shall pass over to his strong hold for fear. The Targum (T) has, “And his princes shall flee through fear, they shall move away.” The LXX (6) reads, “For with a rock they shall be enclosed as with a rampart.” The Peshitta (S) has something like, “And he shall abide in his rocky abode.” The Douay-Rheims (V) has, “And his strength shall pass away with dread.”

¶ יַעְבֹּר, *to travel, move* (HAL). Bullinger’s Companion Bible Notes does well in pointing out that the expression pass over (“cross over, or retreat”) in this verse comes from a different source than in ISAIAH 31:5. Here it is יַעְבֹּר, from עָבַר; there it is פָּסַח. We read that after *the angel of the LORD* killed the Assyrian army, that then: “So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.”

This is what is meant by *he shall pass to his strong hold for fear*. Cowles suggests: “The words for ‘strong hold’ means primarily a rock; sometimes a fortress built (as they often were) upon a high rock.” Barnes likewise observes: “The word rendered ‘stronghold’ (Hebrew, ‘His rock’) denotes his fortifications, or the places of strength in which he trusted ... This appears to have been most strikingly fulfilled (see ISAIAH 37:37).”

¶ *And his princes shall be afraid of the ensign, saith the LORD.* The Targum (T) has, “And his princes shall be broken on account of the miracle, saith the Lord.” The LXX (6) reads, “And shall be subdued; and he who fleeth shall be taken.” The Peshitta (S) has something like, “And his princes shall be defeated from before the ensign.” The Douay-Rheims (V) has, “And his princes fleeing shall be afraid: the Lord hath said it.” Jennings suggests: “ISAIAH 11¹⁰ of our prophet will be enough to tell us who is thus symbolized. It is Messiah! It is Christ whose Feet are now again on Olivet. Well may even the victorious besiegers of Jerusalem flee!” ¶ *Whose fire [is] in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem.* The Targum (T) has, “Whose splendour is in Zion to them that obey the law, and whose burning furnace of fire is in Jerusalem for them who transgress His word.” The LXX (6) reads, “Thus saith the Lord, ‘Happy he who hath a seed in Sion and a family in Jerusalem!’”

Alexander writes, “The true explanation of the clause seems to be that which supposes an allusion both to the sacred fire on the altar, and to the consuming fire of God’s presence, whose altar flames in Zion and whose wrath shall thence flame to destroy his enemies.

Compare the explanation of the mystical name *Ariel* in the note on ISAIAH 29:1.” Delitzsch sees an allusion to the Passover: “We cannot suppose that the allusion here is to the fire and hearth of the sacrifices; for תַּנּוּר does not mean a hearth, but a furnace (from נָוַר, to burn).

The reference is to the light of the divine presence, which was outwardly a devouring fire for the enemies of Jerusalem, an unapproachable red-hot furnace.”

Keith, regarding *fire [is] in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem* suggests: “[This] refers to the fact that it is there that by fire the Lord shall plead with all flesh, when he will come with the fire of a devouring flame. It is equivalent with the last clause of the previous chapter which makes Tophet, beside Jerusalem, the scene of the outpouring of the vial of divine wrath.”

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¹⁰ ISAIAH 11:10, נִסִּי, *ensign*.

