

The Graciousness of Glory

Description

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by Trent Wilde

During the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and also on the new moon of the second month (Zif), a number of us Branches met on the conference call¹ to feast on the truth and to study whatever Wisdom placed on our table. The passages to which our attention was drawn include Ezekiel 1-11, Psalm 8, 74, 89, 99, and 104. Though time did not permit us to enter into the study of these passages during our meetings, we want to encourage you all to closely investigate what they have to say in light of present truth.

The passage which we were more specifically directed to, and which dominated our studies during the feast and the new moon, was Isaiah 40-52, or more fully, Isaiah 40-66. Considering the length of this section though, we were not able to cover it in its entirety during our studies. In fact, we were only able to cover chapters 40:1-42:9. What we found is that the truth contained within these verses is both abundant and timely. During the whole feast, from beginning to end, we could not help but praise our Heavenly Family for revealing to us such magnificent realities.

Before entering into the study of the passage itself, we want to briefly mention a need which we have seen, along with the beginnings of what has been done in an attempt to meet that need. Namely, we see a need for new and better translations of scripture. While it is true that most translations give a fair enough representation of the basic meaning of any given passage, it is also true that, in many instances, wonderful truths contained in those passages have been obscured. Additionally, there has been, in recent decades, many archaeological findings and much historical and textual research which enlightens our understanding of scripture. For this reason, we have put together a new translation of the passage under consideration, making use of some of the best available resources.²

Isaiah 40:1-42:9

40 “Comfort, comfort my people,” says your Gods.³ ² “Speak to the heart of Jerusa-lem and tell her that her warfare is fulfilled, that her punishment is accepted for she has received from the hand of Yahweh double for all her sins.” ³ A voice of one calls: “In the wilderness prepare the way of Yahweh! Make in the desert a straight highway for our Gods! ⁴ Every valley must be raised up, and every mountain and hill brought low. The crooked must be made straight and the rugged land-scape a wide valley. ⁵ The glory of Yahweh will be revealed and all flesh shall see her together, for the mouth of Yahweh has spoken.” ⁶ A voice of one speaks, “Call!” Then I said, “What shall I call? All flesh is grass, and all their goodness like the flower of the field. ⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades, for the Spirit of Yahweh blows upon them.” “Truly, the people are grass; ⁸ the grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our Gods will endure forever.”

⁹ “Go up on a high mountain, Zion, you Heraldess.⁴ Lift up your voice with strength, Jerusa-lem, you Heraldess. Lift it up, don’t be afraid! Say to the cities of Judah, ‘Behold your Gods! ¹⁰ Behold the lord Yahweh will come with strength. His arm rules for him. Behold his reward is with him, and his work before him. ¹¹ Like a shepherd does he pasture his flock. He gathers nursing lambs with his arm and carries them in his bosom. He leads the ewe lambs that give suck.

¹² Who has measured the waters of the sea in the hollow of his hand, and estimated the skies with the span of his hand, and who holds the dust of the earth in a third part, and weighs mountains in a scale and hills in balances?¹³ Who has estimated the Spirit of Yahweh and the man of his counsel, whom she teaches? ¹⁴ With whom has he counseled, and to whom has he given understanding, and taught him in the way of

judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shows him the path of insight? ¹⁵ Behold, nations are like a drop from a bucket and are regarded as dust on scales. Behold, the coastlands weigh as much as powder. ¹⁶ And Lebanon is not enough for kindling, its wild beasts are not enough for burnt offering. ¹⁷ All the nations are as nothing before him. And they are regarded by him as at an end and void.

¹⁸ And to whom will you liken God, ⁵ and what image will you compare to him? ¹⁹ A craftsman makes an idol, and a metalsmith overlays it with gold and fashions silver chains. ²⁰ One who is impoverished offers wood that does not rot and seeks for a wise craftsman to set up an idol that will not totter. ²¹ Do you not know? Do you not hear? Has it not been reported to you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? ²² He dwells above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers. He spreads out the skies like a curtain, and they are pitched like a tent to dwell in. ²³ He gives dignitaries over to nothingness; the judges of the earth he has made void. ²⁴ Hard-ly are they planted, hardly are they sown, hardly has their shoot taken root in the earth. He blows on them and they wither, and the tempest will carry them away as chaff. ²⁵ 'To whom will you compare me? Whom do I resemble?' says the Holy One. ²⁶ Lift up your eyes on high and see – Who created these? The One who brings out their host by number and calls all of them by name. Of those great in power and mighty in strength, not one is missing."

²⁷ Why do you say, Jacob, and speak, Israel, "My way is hidden from Yahweh, and from my Goddess ⁶ my case passes away." ²⁸ Do you not know even if you do not hear? The Goddess of all time is Yahweh, creating the ends of the earth, not growing weary, and not growing faint, Whose understanding is unsearchable – ²⁹ the Giver of strength to the weary and might to those lacking in strength. ³⁰ Youths may faint from exhaustion, and picked men may stumble and fall, ³¹ but those who hope for Yahweh will renew their strength and they will rise up with wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.

41 Be silent before me, coastlands, and let peoples renew strength. Let them draw near then speak. Let us draw near together for judgment. ² Who was it that raised up from the rising of the sun one righteous at every step? He will give nations to him, and beat down kings beneath him. He will make their swords like dust and their bows like windblown chaff. ³ And he will pursue them, and he will pass over in peace, and the path of his feet, they will not discern. ⁴ Who has brought this about? Who has done it? – The one who calls the generations from the beginning. I, Yahweh, am the first, and am with the last – it is I. ⁵ See, coastlands, and be afraid. The ends of the earth will draw near together and come.

⁶ Every man helps his friend and says, "Be strong." ⁷ The craftsman encourages the metal-smith, and the one who smooths with the hammer, the one who strikes the mallet, saying of the welding, "It is good!" – and he fastens it with nails so that it will not totter. ⁸ But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, seed of Abraham, my friend ⁹ whom I am bringing from the ends of the earth and from her most distant parts, I have called you saying, "You are my servant." I have chosen you and not rejected you. ¹⁰ Do not be afraid for I am with you. Do not be perplexed for I am your Goddess. I strengthen you. I help you. I hold you up by the right hand of my righteousness. ¹¹ Behold, all who rage against you will be ashamed and humiliated. Those who contend with you will be as nothing, they will perish. ¹² Those who strive with you will be as nothing and those who war against you will come to nought. ¹³ For I am Yahweh, your Goddess, who clasps your right hand and says to you, "Don't be afraid, I am here to help you." ¹⁴ Do not be afraid you worm, Jacob, people of Israel, says Yahweh your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. ¹⁵ Behold, I have appointed you to be a sharp threshing sledge – the new master, for, double-edged, you will thresh mountains and grind them and you will make hills like chaff. ¹⁶ You will sift them, the Spirit will carry them away, and the whirlwind will scatter them. And you will rejoice in Yahweh, and in the Holy One of Israel will you praise.

¹⁷ The needy and the poor seek water, but there is none. Their tongue is dry from thirst. I, Yahweh, will hear them. I, the Goddess of Israel will not forsake them. ¹⁸ I will open streams on the bare hills and in the midst of valleys, springs. I will set in the wilderness a pool of waters and on the dry land waters breaking forth. ¹⁹ I will set in the wilderness cedar, acacia, myrtle, and oil trees. I will set in the desert cypress, fir, and box together. ²⁰ This is for the purpose that they may see, and observe, and consider, and understand that the hand of Yahweh has done this and the Holy One of Israel has created this.

²¹ Present your case, says Yahweh. Bring forth your strong arguments, says the King of Jacob. ²² Let them come forward and tell us what is going to happen. The former things – what are they? Tell us so that we may

examine them and know their outcome, or tell us of things to come. ²³ Tell us what will happen hereafter so that we may know that you are gods. Do anything, be it good or bad, to fill us with awe and fear. ²⁴ Behold, you are nothing and your deeds are nothing. An abomination is the one who chooses you. ²⁵ I have stirred up one from the north, and he comes from the rising of the sun and he calls in my name. He shall trample rulers like mud and as a potter treads clay. ²⁶ Who has declared this from the beginning that we may know? And beforehand, so that we may say, 'He is righteous'? Indeed, none of them declared it! Indeed, none of them announced it! Indeed, no one heard you say anything! ²⁷ I, the First, declared to Zion, "Behold, behold these things!" And I gave to Jerusalem a herald of good news. ²⁸ I look, and there is no one among them; no one counsels or responds when I ask of them. ²⁹ Behold, they are all nothing and their works are nothing. Their molten images are wind and confusion.

42 ¹ Behold, my servant whom I uphold. My chosen, in whom my whole being delights. I have put my Spirit upon him so that he may establish a just order for the nations. ² He will not shout, and he will not raise his voice, and he will not cause it to be heard in the streets. ³ A bruised reed he will not break, and a dim flax he will not quench for truly he will establish a just order. ⁴ He will not be quenched and he will not be broken until he has set up a just order in the land. The islands wait for his decree. ⁵ Thus says the God of the gods, ⁷ who created the skies and pitched them, who pounded out the earth and her produce and gave breath to the people upon her and life to those who walk in her: ⁶ I, Yahweh, have called you in righteousness. I have grasped you by the hand. I keep you and give you for a covenant of the people, for a light to the nations, ⁷ to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out from the dungeon those who are bound, and from the prison house, those who dwell in darkness. ⁸ It is I, Yahweh, my name and my glory I will not give to another, nor my praise to images. ⁹ The former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare. Before they spring up I proclaim them to you.

Seeing as these verses definitely speak of the regathering of the lost tribes of Israel (41:8-9), the overthrow of the nations (40:17; 41:2-3), and the judgment of the wicked gods (40:23-24; 41:21-29), and since none of these things have as yet taken place, we can be assured that if they are to take place at all, they must take place in the future. This too is in harmony with the other prophets, since they all wrote of these things as taking place in the last days (Eze. 36-39; Joel 2-3; Ps. 82). With this in mind, let us diligently search out the meaning of this passage with humility and with remembering to ask the Spirit for guidance each step of the way.

A Message of Comfort

¹ "Comfort, comfort my people," says your Gods. ² "Speak to the heart of Jerusalem and tell her that her warfare is fulfilled, that her punishment is accepted for she has received from the hand of Yahweh double for all her sins." – Isaiah 40:1-2

Our passage begins undoubtably with a message of comfort. Not only does our Heavenly Family give a command to comfort, but They identify Themselves with those who are to be comforted. They do this by employing typical covenant language, such as "you are my people," and "I am your Gods."⁶ Evidently, this message comes at a time when the heart of Jerusalem has been in warfare and under punishment for her sins, thus making it evident that she had broken the covenant and was therefore not Yahweh's people and Yahweh was not her God (see Rom. 6:16). This prophecy, then, must meet fulfillment at about the same time as the prophecy by Hosea:

⁹ Then God said, Call his name Lo-ammi: for you are not my people, and I will not be your God. ¹⁰ Yet the number of the children of Israel will be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, You are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, You are the sons of the living God. ¹¹ Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel. . . 14 Therefore, behold, I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. 15 And I will give her her vineyards from thence and the valley of Achor for a door of hope. And she shall sing there as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. – Hosea 1:9-11; 2:14-15

It is while in the lands of the gentiles (the wilderness)⁹, prior to returning to the land of Israel, that we are to have this message of comfort proclaimed to us and it is there that we are to be invited to enter into a covenant with our Gods, as were the children of Israel while in the wilderness at Mt. Sinai.¹⁰ While it is true that the full establishment of the infant Kingdom takes place in the land and that the majority receive the change of heart and the new covenant there (Eze. 36:24-28), we have the clear declaration in this prophecy of Isaiah, and others, that Heaven offers the new covenant to those who are willing to receive it even now.¹¹

The heart of Jerusalem (Zion) is guilty of sin and thus cannot be the geographical center of Jerusalem, but must represent people. Since this message of comfort is for this people, it is imperative to understand who this people is, for they are the ones to whom the covenant is to be fulfilled. As we have seen in our previous studies,¹² the prophecy of Ezekiel 16 points out for us, with incredible exactness, just who it is that will receive the everlasting covenant. Samaria, Sodom, and Jerusalem the Daughter (represented as sisters) are the three main characters of the last third of that chapter (Eze. 16:44-63). The things said concerning these figures is decidedly contrary to the historical records, which fact was well known to Ezekiel. Ezekiel clearly uses these titles to refer to latter-day groups of people which were typified by those ancient cities and their populations. As has been demonstrated in the aforementioned studies, these three sisters represent three movements – namely, the SDA, the DSDA, and the BDSDA.

The Branch movement has done worse than both the Adventist movement and the Davidian movement. Her sins are described and her punishment prescribed in Ezekiel 16. The prophecy declares that although she has done worse than her sisters, and although she would have to undergo shame and reproach as a result, the mercy of the Lord would be extended to her and with her would be made an everlasting covenant (Eze. 16:60, 62).

In Isaiah 40, we are brought to the time when this movement has undergone enough shame and reproach, when her punishment is satisfactory and her warfare is fulfilled. This is not to say that she will not experience any more reproach or shame, but it is to say that the reproach and the shame which she has received is sufficient for her to learn the lesson and that any reproach or shame she may experience from this point on is as a result of stubbornness and/or fresh rebellion.

Since the time of Zion's reproach (Eze. 16:57) was not brought about until the dreadful events of 1993, and since her experience since that time has been one of shame, both because of the discovering of her wickedness to the nations and because of her seeing her own deplorable state in the sight of God, then this message of comfort must be proclaimed at some point after those events. And since it is only now being unfolded in clarity, the message of comfort is necessarily the present message. This fact will be all the more clearly borne out when considering what it is to be comforted.

⁹ Break forth together into singing, you ruins of Jerusalem, for Yahweh has *comforted* his people, he has *redeemed* Jerusalem. – Isaiah 52:9

³ For Yahweh will *comfort* Zion; he will *comfort* all her waste places. *He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of Yahweh.* Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of music. Sorrow and mourning will flee away. – Isaiah 51:3

¹² I, even I, am the one who *comforts* you. Why are you afraid of men, who will die, and the sons of men, who are like grass? ¹³ You have forgotten Yahweh who made you, who stretched out the skies and founded the earth, and you have been continually afraid all the day of the wrath of your oppressor when he sets himself to destroy. And where is the wrath of your oppressor? ¹⁴ *The captives will be set free. They will not die in prison. They will not go without bread.* – Isaiah 51:12-14

From all these verses we see that to comfort is to redeem (Isa. 52:9), to restore (Isa. 51:3), and to liberate (Isa. 51:12-14). The people who Elohim identifies as Their own, then, are to have all these things take place to them. They have been bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:20) – they have been redeemed. They are offered restoration – the recreation of a pure heart (Ps. 51:10) – the restitution of the moral image of God in man. They are offered liberation from bondage and captivity in sin (Isa. 61:1-3; John 8:32-36). This message of comfort is none other than the message of Justification by Faith which is now being declared unto us in fresh revelations of pure truth.

The repetition of the word “comfort” in verse one is by no means redundant. The latter part of verse two lets us know that the heart of Jerusalem has received double for all her sins. She has done worse than her sisters, and therefore has received double punishment, but in order to be restored she must then be given double comfort. An understanding of the double punishment will help us to understand the double comforting.

¹⁷ Awake, awake, stand up Jerusalem, who drank from the hand of Yahweh the cup of his wrath. You have drunk the goblet, the cup of staggering; you have drained it out. ¹⁸ There is no one who guides her among all the children she has borne, and there is no one who grasps her by the hand among all the children she raised. ¹⁹ *These two things* have come upon you. Who will show you sympathy? Devastation and destruction, and famine, and sword. By whom will I comfort you? ²⁰ Your sons have fainted, they lie at the head of all the streets as a wild bull in a net. They are full of the fury of Yahweh, the rebuke of your Goddess. – Isaiah 51:17-20

Here, Jerusalem is said to have received a double punishment from the hand of Yahweh just as we have already seen in Isaiah 40. The two things that have come upon her relate to how her children are being no children at all to her – they are not guiding her and they are not grasping her hand. Isaiah 54 refers to this curse in terms of barrenness (Isa. 54:1) and widowhood (Isa. 54:4). This becomes all the more clear, however, when the tables are reversed and the curses which have been on Jerusalem are placed upon Babylon.

⁸ Therefore now, hear this, O luxuriant one who sits in security, who says in your heart, “I am, and beside me there is none other. *I shall not sit as a widow, and I shall not know the loss of children.*” ⁹ *But these two things* shall come upon you in a moment, in one day – *the loss of children and widowhood.* They shall come upon you completely, in spite of your many sorceries and in spite of the power of your great enchantments. – Isaiah 47:8-9

This message of double comfort means the end of childlessness and widowhood. It means redemption, restoration, and liberation. It is the reestablishment of Zion, the making of a new covenant, and the sprouting of the Kingdom in the wilderness! Branches, look at what our Heavenly Family is offering to us! Rejoice!

³ A voice of one calls: “In the wilderness prepare the way of Yahweh! Make in the desert a straight highway for our Gods! – Isaiah 40:3

Here, another entity is introduced. The voice which here calls is not the same as the Gods of verse one, for this one says, “Make in the desert a straight highway for *our Gods!*” What is this voice describing? This is the work which is accomplished as Zion receives the everlasting covenant. It is in the wilderness, in the gentile lands, that we are to prepare the way of Yahweh. It is here that we are to make a straight highway for our Gods. Earlier in Isaiah, the language of a “highway” was used to describe the latter-day exodus (Isa. 11:16).

This is the work to be done preparatory to returning to the land of our fathers. This same work is also described in the following passage:

¹ Let the desert and dry region be happy; let the wilderness rejoice and bloom like a lily! ² Let it richly bloom; let it rejoice, yes, with rejoicing and shouting! It is given the glory of Lebanon, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon. They will see the glory of Yahweh, the splendor of our Gods. ³ Strengthen the hands that have gone limp, steady the staggering knees! ⁴ Say to the hasty of heart, "Be strong! Do not fear! Look, your Gods come to avenge! With retribution they come to deliver you." ⁵ Then blind eyes will open, deaf ears will hear. ⁶ Then the lame will leap like a deer, the mute tongue will shout for joy; for water will burst forth in the desert, streams in the wilderness. ⁷ The dry soil will become a pool of water, the parched ground springs of water. Where jackals once lived and sprawled out, grass, reeds, and papyrus will grow. ⁸ And there will be a road, a way, and it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not travel on it. It will be for them – those who walk in the Way. Fools will not stray into it. ⁹ No lions will be there, no ferocious wild animals will go up on it – they will not be found there. Those delivered from bondage will travel on it. ¹⁰ The redeemed will walk on it and those whom Yahweh has ransomed will return on it. They will enter Zion with shouts of happiness. Unending joy will be on their heads. Happiness and joy will overwhelm them; grief and groaning will flee away. – Isaiah 35:1-10

Over the past couple of years, these prophecies have been presented to the branches and you are all well aware of the fact that they speak of the 9T reformation, the revival and reformation, the sealing of the 144,000, etc.¹³ The Way of Holiness which is made in the wilderness is the true faith. John the Baptist proclaimed the message of making "the way" in the wilderness in his day in preparation for the establishment of the Kingdom of God and then subsequently, the followers of Christ and their whole viewpoint and practice were known as "the Way."¹⁴ Since Isaiah 40 has its perfect fulfillment in the last days, however, we can see that "the Way" of the first century, which was the sect of the Nazarenes, was a type for "the Way" of the last days, which is the Branches (Heb. Netzarim – Nazarenes). In both instances, it is the true faith, which is defined by a freshly revealed message of repentance, calling people to righteousness and holiness before our Heavenly Family and before the world.

⁴ Every valley must be raised up, and every mountain and hill brought low. The crooked must be made straight and the rugged landscape a wide valley. – Isaiah 40:4

Evidently, the results of this work today is that those who are low, outcast, and humble are to be made high and exalted, whereas those who are lifting themselves up and are proud will be brought low. The mountains and hills (churches and sects) are to be humbled while those who are drifting in the valleys are to be lifted up. Since that which is crooked is morally polluted (Deut. 32:5; Isa. 59:8; Mic. 3:9), then to be made straight is to be morally upright. This is speaking of the restoration of righteousness. Moreover, in Hebrew there is a word-play which foreshadows what is to come later in the passage. The word for "crooked" is he'aqov (??????)) while the word for "straight" is yeshr (????). Let us now read another passage in Isaiah in order to understand the wordplay:

¹ But hear now, Jacob my servant, and Israel whom I have chosen for myself. ² These are the words of Yahweh who made you, who formed you from the womb, and who will help you – Do not be afraid, Jacob my servant, and Jeshurun whom I have chosen. ³ I will pour out water on the thirsty ground and streams of water on the parched land; I will pour out my spirit on your descendants, my blessings on your offspring. ⁴ They will spring up like that which grows among grass, like willows by watercourses. ⁵ This one will say, "I belong to Yahweh," another will take the name Jacob, and yet another will write Yahweh's name on his hand and take on the name Israel. – Isaiah 44:1-5

This passage describes the reformation in the wilderness using some of the same language we have seen already in previous passages. As it does this, it speaks of the fact that some will be going by one name, while others are going by another. There is a mixture of who has the old name and who has the new, and since a name change represents a change in character, we see that this passage describes the condition of things during a purification in which some are purified but others are not. One of the names which is used to symbolize the new name is Jeshurun, which is a prophetic name indicating uprightness.¹⁵

The wordplay is found when we see that “Jacob,” in Hebrew, is ya’akov (???????) which corresponds phonetically with “crooked” he’aqov (??????). Likewise, “Jeshurun” is yeshurun (???????) which corresponds phonetically to “straight” yeshr (???). Therefore, for the crooked to be made straight is for Jacob to be made Jeshurun; or, to put it another way – for the supplanter to be made upright, or righteous. The imagery of the passage demonstrates that this revival and reformation is to turn everything on its head, so to speak. We can expect changes.

⁵ The glory of Yahweh will be revealed and all flesh shall see her together, for the mouth of Yahweh has spoken.” – Isaiah 40:5

Just as John prepared the way for a manifestation of Yahweh in the person of Jesus Christ, just so those who fulfill this mission are preparing the way for a manifestation of Yahweh, but this time, it is the glory of Yahweh who is revealed. The glory of Yahweh is the Shekinah of Israel, the only begotten Daughter of God.¹⁶ This verse comprehends both the revelation of Her as well as Her own manifestation.¹⁷ Thus, the Shekinah is among this movement just as She was among the children of Israel while they spent their time in the wilderness.¹⁸

⁶ A voice of one speaks, “Call!” Then I said, “What shall I call? All flesh is grass, and all their goodness like the flower of the field. ⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades, for the Spirit of Yahweh blows upon them.” “Truly, the people are grass; ⁸ the grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our Gods will endure forever.” – Isaiah 40:6-8

Here we have another voice introduced. The voice of verse three called, but the one here speaks. The difference is that the first voice is further away whereas the second voice is close to the one being spoken to. Another point of difference is that those being spoken to in verses 1-5 are a plurality of persons, as indicated by the plurals in Hebrew. In these verses, though, the one being spoken to, the one being told to “call,” is a single individual.

The way this individual responds shows that he was a part of the group being spoken to in the first five verses and that he heard the declaration that “all flesh” will see the glory of Yahweh. He responds by declaring that “all flesh” is grass¹⁹ and that they and their goodness are all perishable and that the Spirit of Yahweh blowing upon them will surely cause them to be vanquished. There are a few more things we can learn from this response. First, we can see that the one who is being told to “call” understands that the “glory of Yahweh” and the “Spirit of Yahweh” are the same. Second, we find that he understands that any call that he gives is equivalent to the Spirit of Yahweh blowing upon the grass, which shows that he understands his command to “call” as being a commission to bear an inspired message. Third, we see that he understands that his message is to cause all the goodness and righteousness of men to perish. With that gone, he fears that there will be nothing left.

The one who commissions him then responds and tells him that it is indeed true that people are as grass, and as such, they shall wither, but “the word of our Gods will endure forever.” The message is clear – all the goodness and righteousness of man (which is as filthy rags – Isa. 64:6) is to fade away, but the word of Yahweh, and all who abide in it (and allow it to abide in them), will always stand.

What we see in this passage is what might be called a prophetic installation scene. There are certain characteristics which are common place when a prophet is being called. These include (1) a divine encounter, (2) calling and the giving of the task, and (3) an encouragement, typically following some expression of doubt or fear expressed by the one being called.²⁰ All of these elements are present in this passage. Isaiah 40:1-5

shows a divine encounter, verse 6 shows the calling and declaration of the task, and verse 8 contains the encouragement. The whole thought is further confirmed when it is kept in mind that the one being installed into prophetic office understands the message he is given to bear to be the breath of the Spirit of Yahweh, which naturally indicates that the one speaking to him and telling him what to say is the Spirit Himself.

Before moving on, it will be helpful for us to briefly look at one more aspect of the verses already covered. Keep in mind that we have seen a series of doublets. First, the heart of Jerusalem has committed double sins, then, she received double punishment, and as a result of this, she is offered a double comforting. It is then no accident that we have a doublet of voices conveying that comforting message. We have already seen that the voice of verse six is close to the one being called while the voice of verse three is further away. Isaiah 40:22 tells us where God lives; namely, heaven. Therefore, the Elohim of verse one is pictured in Heaven and since there is no change of scene from verses one and two to verse five, we can know that the voice of verse three is also in heaven. So, we have at least two beings, one male and one female, represented by the Elohim of verse one, and then another being represented by the voice of verse three, and yet another by the voice of verse six. The first three are in heaven, whereas the last one is on earth.

In the light of the New Testament, we know that the Heavenly Father and Mother have given two Comforters to humanity (John 14-16). The first Comforter is Jesus Christ, Branch He, who is now in heaven. The second Comforter is the Holy Spirit Daughter, Branch She, who is now on earth. Since we have already seen that the latter is the one issuing the divine commission in verse six and that both She and the voice of verse three refer to the Elohim of verse one as "our Gods" the subject is made clear. The Elohim of verse one is the Father and Mother; the voice of verse three is our brother, Branch; and the voice of verse six is our Sister, Branch, or, otherwise known as Wisdom (Prov. 7:4).

Zion the Heralding Woman

⁹ "Go up on a high mountain, Zion, you Heraldess. Lift up your voice with strength, Jerusalem,²¹ you Heraldess. Lift it up, don't be afraid! Say to the cities of Judah, 'Behold your Gods! – Isaiah 40:9

Let us briefly summarize what we have already learned: The first two verses of the chapter describe the instruction by Elohim for the heart of Jerusalem to be comforted. This commission was fulfilled by the two Comforters of verses three and six. The message of the first Comforter (vs. 3-5) was given to a group of people of which the one being called in verse six is a part. Since this instruction was to be given to the heart of Jerusalem (the Branch movement), then that is necessarily the group being spoken to. The way in which they are comforted is by being given a mission and being told that they have the opportunity to fulfill the 9T reformation and, to top it off, they will thus be preparing the way for the manifestation of the Shekinah.

In verse six we see the second Comforter turn to an individual within that group and call him to give an inspired message. After this divine encounter, calling, and encouragement, we have the commission for Zion to bear the message that we find starting in verse nine. The section starting here is the answer to the question "What shall I call?" in verse six, and thus is the breath of the Spirit of Yahweh which is proclaimed by the one just called to the heart of Jerusalem (Zion). This passage is written in such a way as to be intentionally ambiguous as to who is speaking so that it can carry both the thought that it is the one who was commissioned in verse six, but also the Spirit who commissioned him speaking through him.

This passage presents the commissioning of Zion by the Spirit through the one told to "call" in verse six. Zion herself is represented as a woman heralding a message of truth as an imager of the Spirit who called her. Her command to go up on a high mountain is a command for her to enter into heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 2:6):

²² But you are come unto mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, ²³ to the general assembly and congregation of the firstborn, who are written in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous, who have been made perfect, ²⁴ and to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel. – Hebrews 12:22-24

Zion is thus invited to come into the very assembly of the Gods and is from there to lift up her voice. This heavenly mission places Zion in a position of responsibility and also advantage. When tests and trials come her way, she can say, as did Nehemiah, “I am engaged in an important work, and I am unable to come down” (Neh. 6:3). Though Zion may be tempted to fear, she is given every reason to lift up her voice with strength and proclaim the truth with holy boldness, saying to the cities of Judah, “Behold your Gods!”

Since we are dealing with latter day entities, the cities of Judah must represent groups of people here in these last days. Since the Adventist Church was denominated by God to be His latter day Israel,²² and since the “kingdom” was divided in the days of Victor Houteff in a similar way to how it was divided after the death of Solomon, then the southern kingdom (Judah) must represent what we today call Davidia.²³ The sad reality is that “the people of Judah [Davidia] have as many gods as they have cities [associations]” (Jer. 11:13). This sad state of things makes it absolutely necessary for the truth of the true Elohim to be proclaimed to them. Thus, the message “Behold your Gods!” is to go to Davidia – declaring to them our Heavenly Family in truth and in righteousness.

¹⁰ Behold the lord Yahweh will come with strength. His arm rules for him. Behold his reward is with him, and his work before him. – Isaiah 40:10

The message which Zion is to proclaim to the cities of Judah continues on to say that Yahweh is coming with strength. He is declared to be lord and he is said to be ruling. This is announcing Yahweh as making his entrance as King of the kingdom. His reward with him is salvation and the kingdom. His work before him indicates that salvation is still to be wrought and the kingdom still needs to grow.

The obvious meaning of Yahweh’s arm in this verse is that it represents the one through whom he is ruling. Victor Houteff commented on a number of scriptures referring to “the arm of the Lord” and in those various contexts he said, “He calls the Exodus Movement His arm,” “His servants, therefore, are His arm,” and “the arm of the Lord that rules for Him must be figurative of those through whom He works.”²⁴ In this context though, Zion is speaking to the cities of Judah of someone distinct from either group and distinct from Yahweh. The next verse will further enlighten us on this point.

¹¹ Like a shepherd does he pasture his flock. He gathers nursing lambs with his arm and carries them in his bosom. He leads the ewe lambs that give suck. – Isaiah 40:11

Here we find that not only does Yahweh rule with his arm, but he also gathers his lambs with his arm. Since later in Isaiah we find that it is Yahweh’s servant who is to gather his people (Isa. 49:5-6), then it is certainly that same servant who is here referred to as his arm. As we shall see, that servant is also called Cyrus and David.

The “certain nobleman” in this parable is Christ, Himself, Who, soon after His resurrection, departed to the heaven of heavens, “the far country,” to be crowned King of kings and Lord of lords. His ten servants, who are to occupy till His coming, represent, mani-festly, the ministry at the closing of the gospel dispensation. And His citizens, accordingly, represent the laity — the subjects of His kingdom. Together, then, His servants and His citizens make up His entire kingdom — church.

As they “sent a message after Him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us,” the only conclusion admissible is that shortly before His return, Christ shall inform His “citizens” that He is taking “the reins in His own hands” to set up His kingdom, and that they, upon hearing the announcement, shall refuse to submit themselves to the one *through whom He is to rule*.

Observe that in the message which they “sent after Him,” his servants did not say, “We will not have You to reign over us,” but rather, “we will not have this man to reign over us.” What they objected to was Christ’s *reigning over them through someone else*. Clearly, then, before He is coronated, and prior to His return to reckon with His servants, He appoints a “man” to reign over them in His stead. Whereupon they say to Him, by their attitude and stand toward His message, “We will not have this man to reign over us,” although “this man,” as we now see, is the antitypical David (the “simple means”), the visible king.²⁵

Most Davidians expect to not witness the appearing of the anti-typical David until he is seen in kingly glory in the land of Israel, where he will be subduing all nations beneath him. The idea is that the Kingdom which Jesus set up in his day was the kingdom of grace, but today we are to expect the establishment of the kingdom of glory. Again, many Davidians think that the Jews of Christ’s day were only wrong as to *when* they expected the establishment of the kingdom. When Adventists object to the Davidian teaching of the premillennial kingdom by saying things like, “You Davidians are expecting the same thing as did the Jews,” Davidians commonly reply by saying that the Jews were right in their expectation, they were only wrong in regard to timing. What we learn in this passage, though, is that that is absolutely not the case.

Christ and his kingdom are the same yesterday, today, and forever. Christ came to show the true nature of his kingdom. He did not operate one way 2000 years ago and is now going to operate in some other way. Here is the truth of the kingdom: Christ’s kingdom is always grace unto glory. It is not true that there are two kingdoms – one of grace; one of glory. His kingdom is the gloriousness of grace and the graciousness of glory. When Christ walked the earth 2000 years ago, he proclaimed that the kingdom of God was at hand, and indeed it was. His kingdom was grace reigning through righteousness unto everlasting life (Rom. 5:21). The new covenant was truly being established in that day (Heb. 8) and if those who had accepted the truth had not fallen away from righteousness, the kingdom would have grown in glory and encompassed the whole earth. Unfortunately though, that is not what happened.

Today, the kingdom is being established the same way it was in the days of Christ. Today, Yahweh is pictured as triumphantly entering Zion as King in the kingdom (Isa. 40:10). Yet, at the same time, He is pictured as a Shepherd, gathering his sheep and even carrying them in his bosom. What gentleness! As he enters his kingdom, then, he is not rushing forward at chariot speed destroying everything in his path; rather, he is traveling “more slowly, at the pace of the herds and the children” (Gen. 33:14). This is the ever abiding character of our Heavenly Family and Their kingdom. The prophecies which met a partial fulfillment at the time of Christ’s first Advent will meet their complete fulfillment with the establishment of this latter-day, pre-millennial kingdom. This is true even of those prophecies which present humility and lowliness as the nature of the kingdom. For example:

¹ An oracle of the word of Yahweh concerning the land of Hadrach, with Damascus its resting place: The eyes of all humanity, especially of the tribes of Israel, are toward Yahweh, ² as are those of Hamath also, which adjoins Damascus, and Tyre and Sidon, though they consider themselves to be very wise. ³ Tyre built herself a fortification and piled up silver like dust and gold like the mud of the streets! ⁴ Nevertheless, the Lord will evict her and shove her fortifications into the sea – she will be consumed by fire. ⁵ Ashkelon will see and be afraid; Gaza will be in great anguish, as will Ekron, for her hope will have been dried up. Gaza will lose her king, and Ashkelon will no longer be inhabited. ⁶ A mongrel people will live in Ashdod, for I will greatly humiliate the Philistines. ⁷ I will take away their blood from their mouth and their abominations from between their teeth, then those who survive will be a remnant for our Gods, like a clan in Judah, and Ekron will be like the Jebusites. ⁸ Then I will surround my house to protect it like a guard from anyone crossing back and forth; so no one will cross over against them anymore as an oppressor, for now I myself have seen it. ⁹ Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout, daughter of Jerusalem! Behold! Your king is coming to you: he is righteous and bringing salvation, humble and riding on a donkey – on a young donkey, the foal of a female donkey. ¹⁰ I will remove the chariot from Ephraim and the warhorse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be removed.

Then he will announce peace to the nations. His dominion will be from sea to sea and from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth. – Zechariah 9:1-10

Who can deny that these things have not yet met their perfect fulfillment? Who can deny that this refers to the establishment of the pre-millennial kingdom? This prophecy, along with the one in Isaiah, declare for us, in unmistakable terms, the nature and character of the kingdom. Let us remember, too, that the ancient king David did not suddenly show up as a conquering king. No, he was a mere shepherd boy, harping with his harp, and singing prophetic songs. He was anointed at a young age, yet remained in obscurity. This is our type, and Davidians should expect nothing different. Read Ezekiel 34:23-25.

¹² Who has measured the waters of the sea in the hollow of his hand, and estimated the skies with the span of his hand, and who holds the dust of the earth in a third part, and weighs mountains in a scale and hills in balances? ¹³ Who has estimated the Spirit of Yahweh and the man of his counsel, whom she ²⁶ teaches? ¹⁴ With whom has he counseled, and to whom has he given understanding, and taught him in the way of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shows him the path of insight? ¹⁵ Behold, nations are like a drop from a bucket and are regarded as dust on scales. Behold, the coastlands weigh as much as powder. ¹⁶ And Lebanon is not enough for kindling, its wild beasts are not enough for burnt offering. ¹⁷ All the nations are as nothing before him. And they are regarded by him as at an end and void. – Isaiah 40:12-17

After the cities of Judah hear what Zion declares to them concerning the character of the kingdom and the nature of the Gods, they are evidently set back at the thought. To put it another way, it seems to them that a kingdom and Gods of this nature and character stand no chance at being established. After all, who would accept such Gods and such humble beginnings for a kingdom? Zion is declaring that the everlasting covenant is being established, that the kingdom has sprouted in the wilderness, and that Yahweh is ruling with his arm, but the cities of Judah say, in short, “It doesn’t look like anything special to us. That won’t ever go anywhere.” Just as Jesus so often replied to the thoughts of those with whom he dealt, here, the Spirit, through the message which Zion is to bear, replies to the thoughts of the cities of Judah.

Let us consider a few of the parallels within this section in order to better understand the reply:

¹² Who has measured the waters of the sea in the hollow of his hand,	¹⁵ Behold, nations are like a drop from a bucket
and estimated the skies with the span of his hand,	¹³ Who has estimated the Spirit of Yahweh and the man of his counsel, whom she teaches...
and who holds the dust of the earth in a third part,	¹⁵ ... and are regarded as dust on scales.
and weighs mountains in a scale and hills in balances?	¹⁶ Behold, the coastlands weigh as much as powder. And Lebanon is not enough for kindling, its wild beasts are not enough for burnt offering.

From this we can see that verses 12-16 have a pattern in which elements from the first part are repeated and explained by the elements from the last part. So, who has measured out the waters in the hollow of his hand? Well, not any man, and not Marduk,²⁷ rather, it is Yahweh, for the nations before him are only as a drop of water from a bucket. This declares that Yahweh is not only able to measure them, but that he has measured them and found them to be only a drop.

The nations are not only as a drop of water from a bucket, but are also as dust on scales. They weigh as nothing. They are held in a third part measure, classifying them as wicked.²⁸ Since wickedness is only a product of lies, and since lies have no part in reality, we can see why wickedness is equated with nothingness.

The last part of verse 12 finds its explanatory parallel with the end of verse 15 and all of verse 16. From this we learn that the mountains and hills (churches and sects) are equated with the coastlands. Lebanon was, in fact, a heavily forested coastal mountain range, elsewhere in Isaiah used as a symbol for Assyria (Isa. 2; 10).

Our Heavenly Family intends to use Lebanon as kindling and for offerings, but even this is not enough. Indeed, the whole world is to be taken as an offering for Yahweh. The whole of verses 12-17 is fitly summed up in the last verse of this section:

¹⁷ All the nations are as nothing before him. And they are regarded by him as at an end and void. – Isaiah 40:17

Note: every element of verse 12 has its parallel in verses 15 and 16, even in its correct order. This is true with but one exception. The second part of verse 12 finds no parallel in verses 15-16, but instead, it finds its parallel in verse 13. This breaks the pattern which the rest of the section follows. A broken pattern such as this is designed to draw our attention to this point,²⁹ which is the central point of this section (vs. 12-17). What is the connection between the questions, “Who has estimated the skies with the span of his hand?” and “Who has estimated the Spirit of Yahweh and the man of his counsel, whom she teaches?” Let us look at the first aspect by considering another related passage:

¹³ You are tired out from listening to so much advice. Let them take their stand – the ones who see omens in the sky, who gaze at the stars, who make monthly predictions – let them rescue you from the disaster that is about to overtake you! – Isaiah 47:13

You see, in Isaiah 40, estimating the sky is parallel with estimating the Spirit, and since the Spirit is the One who gives insight and prophecy, estimating the sky is in some way connected with divining the future. Isaiah 47 only serves to confirm this. The ancient practice of astrology was rooted in the idea that the stars were divine beings, even gods,³⁰ and that by discerning their movements, one could understand the future. So, in our passage, the wicked gods and their false prophecy through their false prophets is set at odds with Yahweh and his Spirit and the man of Yahweh’s counsel, whom his Spirit instructs.

Again, the context of this is the message which Zion is to give to the cities of Judah. Judah is said to be guilty of the worship of wicked gods as well as of false prophecy, which is a product of spurious inspiration from these wicked gods. So, the challenge is:

¹³ Who has estimated the Spirit of Yahweh and the man of his counsel, whom she teaches? ¹⁴ With whom has he counseled, and to whom has he given understanding, and taught him in the way of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shows him the path of insight? – Isaiah 40:13-14

The truth is, no one can figure out the Spirit. She is as the wind, blowing where she will. Likewise, no one can estimate the man whom she teaches.

⁸ The Spirit blows wherever she will, and you hear the sound she makes, but do not know where she comes from and where she is going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit. – John 3:8

That said, who dares think they can limit the Spirit to say that she cannot come in this way or cannot come in that way? This is a challenge to Davidians. Verse 14 asks Davidians to declare who God has counseled with. To whom has He given understanding, and taught the way of judgment, and knowledge, and insight? In other words, the message to Davidians is, “Has God given *you* a knowledge of these things? Are *you* inspired of God? Is the Spirit speaking through *you*? If not – if you make no claim to inspiration, then who has the Spirit inspired? Point him out.” Our Heavenly Family issues these challenges in order to point Davidia to the fact that They have indeed chosen one to inspire, to teach, and to show the way of judgment unto, as well as the path of insight. The fact is though, that among them, there is none who can answer:

²⁸ I look, and there is no one among them, no one counsels or responds when I ask of them. – Isaiah 41:28

Yahweh declares that He is the one “who summons a bird of prey from the rising of the sun. From a distant land, the man of his counsel. Yes, I have spoken it. Yes, I have brought it about. I have conceived it, and yes, I will do it” (Isa. 46:11). Clearly, in context, the man of his counsel is the same in both passages, and that man is none other than the latter-day Cyrus (Isa. 45).

All the various elements of what is said concerning “the man of his counsel” in verses 13 and 14 are later said concerning Cyrus, and that, in addition the phrase “man of his counsel” being applied to Cyrus directly in 46:11. For example, chapter 42:1, 3, 4 speak of Cyrus as having learned the way of judgment and 50:4 speaks of him as being taught knowledge. In Isaiah 40:12-17, the cities of Judah are told that this figure is on the scene. Being Davidians, they should expect this already as the very name Davidian indicates this truth. Unfortunately though, they have given themselves over to other gods and false prophecy, and as a result, must have this message proclaimed to them.

What Image? Why Worship Idols?

¹⁸ And to whom will you liken God, and what image will you compare to him? ¹⁹ A craftsman makes an idol, and a metalsmith overlays it with gold and fashions silver chains. ²⁰ One who is impoverished offers wood that does not rot and seeks for a wise craftsman to set up an idol that will not totter. – Isaiah 40:18-20

The nature and character of God has just been declared to be very different from what the cities of Judah have thought. They have not thought God to be how Zion is telling them God is. Therefore, the question is asked of them, “... to whom will *you* liken God, and what image will *you* compare to him?” Verses 19 and 20 portray the answer given by the craftsman, the metalsmith, and the impoverished in an effort to show the cities of Judah that they are doing the same thing in principle. The hope is that by seeing their own idolatry they will cease and begin to worship the true Gods.

Most today do not literally craft idols to be an image of their god(s). Idolatry, nonetheless, exists today just as much as it did in ancient times, and the ancient idol serves as a type for the modern idol. Both are the product and fashioning of man – only one is a figure, the other, an idea. These idols are inwardly unattractive and so must be covered in such a way as to give it the appearance of outward purity. The lesson of this is that the idolater’s conception of God looks good on the surface, but when one gets beneath the surface, only base material is found. One example of this sort of view (among many) is the idea that God is outside of time and space. On the surface it sounds good and seems as though it is presenting such a pure and exalted view of God, but when examined more thoroughly, it is found to present a perverse and twisted God, if it can be said to truly put forward a God at all.³¹

Ancient idols were sometimes secured with chains to keep them from tipping over. In like manner, people today attempt to secure their idols by fashioning “silver chains” with which to bind them. Silver is a symbol for the word of God (Ps. 12:6), but in this instance the silver chains are fashioned by men and so represent the words of men, or, mere human inspiration. The thought is that people use their words (thinking they are inspired) to prop up their false theories and misperceptions of God (their idols).

It is as easy to make an idol of false doctrines and theories as to fashion an idol of wood or stone. By misrepresenting the attributes of God, Satan leads men to conceive of Him in a false character. With many, a philosophical idol is enthroned in the place of Jehovah; while the living God, as He is revealed in His word, in Christ, and in the works of creation, is worshiped by but few. Thousands deify nature while they deny the God of nature. Though in a different form, idolatry exists in the Christian world today as verily as it existed among ancient Israel in the days of Elijah. The God of many professedly wise men, of philosophers, poets, politicians, journalists—the God of polished fashionable circles, of many colleges and universities, even of some theological institutions—is little better than Baal, the sun-god of Phoenicia.³²

Understanding a little of the “logic” behind ancient idolatry will help us to understand this principle and these verses even more:

Ancient people called both the spiritual entity and its corresponding religious object a god, and they fashioned the idol in the god’s likeness, but they did not necessarily consider the statue or object to be identical with the god itself. Rather, ancients believed the spiritual entity inhabited the idol; in other words, the deity resided in or attached itself to the physical object. The person who fashioned the idol and made offerings or sacrifices to it did so to beckon and localize the deity, so that they could be in communication with it and have a relationship with it.

Ancient idolaters distinguished between the statues themselves and the deities they represented. Ancient texts make this distinction. For example, in an Akkadian inscription, the idol of the god Shamash of Sippar was destroyed. The incident did not, however, spell the death of Shamash, who was still alive. His devotees thus could still worship him, so they simply made another statue—assuming that he would inhabit it as well. For the idol to be destroyed was tragic, but not threatening to the religion.

The parodies and denunciations of the gods and idolatry in the OT function the same way: The Israelites understood that a *statue* of Baal being destroyed did not entail *him* being destroyed. They too believed that idols focused someone’s attention on the otherworldly deity the idolater sought to manipulate or appease. From this perspective, the biblical prohibition against making any likeness of Yahweh takes on an even more pronounced significance: Yahweh could not be brought to earth, cajoled, and tamed. It also brings further significance to the problem of idolatry of other divine beings—worshiping the idols meant calling these gods to Israel, rather than calling on Yahweh; it meant dependence on inferior beings that were in fact evil and enslaving in their rule.³³

The ancient idea of idolatry depended on a mystical or spiritualistic view of reality. It was believed that a god could somehow dwell within an idol. The motives for making an idol were entirely centered on self. The thought was that one could summon a god into an idol and then one could manipulate or appease that god in order to obtain certain blessings. Christians today, including Adventists, Davidians, and even professed Branches, have created images in their minds as to what God is and then try to make God fit into their conception. People hold their views of God near and dear to them because by retaining those certain views, they obtain some benefit for themselves, if even only comfort. For example, the belief that God is immaterial implies an immaterial realm, allowing for the thought that humans have some sort of immaterial component to their being such as a “spirit” or “soul.” Perhaps then, one might think, when the physical body dies, the soul lives on, and therefore my deceased loved one is in “heaven” with “God.” This is a comforting thought, and in order to benefit from the thought, one must retain their view of God. So, they create their image, tie it down as firmly as they can with their words (which they think are God’s words) acting as silver chains, lest it totter. Then they try to call God into their image that they may be comforted. This thought, as this chapter has already revealed, is not where true comfort lies (see vs. 1).

While there are many examples which could be given of false images of God, which are similar to what we have already discussed, we will now turn to another sort of false image, that being the kind mentioned in verse 20. Here, an impoverished person is said to take wood that does not rot and find a wise craftsman to set up an idol that will not shake, or totter. The fact that the person is said to be impoverished is showing that the cities of Judah ought to avoid, or if necessary, put away, similar behavior lest they too be found impoverished.

Interestingly, when the passage says that he “offers” wood, the word used for “offer” is the word for giving an offering. In the ancient world, selecting wood for an idol was not viewed as giving the wood as an offering. There is, though, a context in Jewish thought for wood being given as an offering. Here are some of the relevant passages:

³⁴ We – the priests, the levites, and the people – have cast lots concerning the *wood offerings*, to bring them to the temple of our Gods according to our families *at the appointed times year by year* to burn on the altar of Yahweh our Gods, *as is written in the law*. – Nehemiah 10:34

³⁰ Thus I cleansed them from everything foreign, and I established the duties of the priests and levites, each in his work, ³¹ and *the wood offering at the appointed times*, and for the firstfruits. Remember me, my Goddess, for good. – Nehemiah 13:30-31

?saying, when you come to the land which

?I am giving you for an inheritance, and you dwell upon it securely, you will *bring wood for a burnt offering* and for all the wo[r]k of

?[the H]ouse which you will build for me in the land, to arrange it upon the altar of burnt-offering, and the calv[es

?] for Passover sacrifices and for whole burnt-offerings and for thank offerings and for free-will offerings and for burnt-offerings, daily [

?] and for the doors and for all the work of the House the[y] will br[ing

?] the [fe]stival of fresh oil. They will *bring wood* two [

¹?] the ones who bring on the fir[st] day, Levi [

¹¹Reu]ben and Simeon [and on t]he fou[rth] day [– 4Q365 23:4-11³⁴

These passages speak of some sort of annual wood offering, and more specifically (in 4QRP and *The Temple Scroll*), a festival of wood offerings. 4QRP and *The Temple Scroll* are both within a single line of scripture tradition, along with other books such as *Jubilees*³⁵ and *Aramaic Levi*. One passage from each of these latter works, respectively, is especially of interest. The passage from *Aramaic Levi* is actually a description of Isaac explaining the laws of the priesthood to Levi (which he says he learned from Abraham),³⁶ while the passage from *Jubilees* is a record of the instructions concerning the priestly laws as given to Isaac by Abraham himself.

²²and make the offering splitting logs, and *examine them first for worms*. And then lift them up, for like so did I see Abraham my father taking pains. ²³From all twelve kinds of wood,³⁷ he said to me that it is proper to take of them to the altar, the scent of whose smoke rises sweetly. ²⁴And these are their names: cedar, juniper, almond, fir, acacia, pine, cypress, fig, oleaster, laurel, myrtle, and asphalathos. – *Aramaic Levi*, 22-24

¹² And take caution with the wood of the offering that you do not bring wood for the offering except of such as these: cypress, bay, almond, fir, pine, cedar, juniper, fig, olive, myrtle, laurel, and asphalathos. ¹³ But place some of these trees under the burnt offering on the altar with their appearance tested. *And you will not place any slit or dark wood, but wood strong and pure which has no spots, perfect, and new growth. And you will not place old wood there* because its aroma has gone out because there is not, therefore, an aroma upon it as before. ¹⁴ Except for these trees, there is none other that you will put on the altar because its aroma has separated and the smell of its aroma will go up to heaven. – *Jubilees* 21:12-14

In both of these texts, there is a prohibition against rotten wood being placed upon the altar. The stated reason for this is that the wood must burn to produce a sweet aroma, and therefore cannot be old, but must be new – still containing the sap.

¹⁴ But thanks be to God who always causes us to triumph in the Messiah and who reveals through us *the fragrance that consists of the knowledge of him in every place*. ¹⁵ For we are the sweet aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing – ¹⁶ to the latter an odor from death to death, but to the former a fragrance from life to life. – 2 Corinthians 2:14-16

Notice here that the truth which was revealed through the apostles is referred to as the fragrance which they gave off. Likewise, they themselves were the fragrance which Christ gave off to God. The fragrance of an offering, then, represents the truth and those who embody it. This is why the twelve kinds of wood, which correspond to twelve tribes of Israel,³⁸ were to be the kinds which give off a sweet aroma, for “unto them were committed the oracles of God” (Rom. 3:2).

So, what does all this mean in relation to Isaiah 40:20? It means just this: The wood which does not rot, which the impoverished person offers, represents an acceptable offering, but the fact that he takes it to have it made into an idol shows that it is not put to its proper use. Why is the wood that does not rot a proper sacrifice? Because it can give the sweet aroma, showing that it contains truth (sap). The truth is more specific than even this, however, for the text does not simply say that the wood is not rotten, but that it does not rot. This shows that the truth symbolized here is everlasting truth, the pure truth, which can only come through Inspiration. Sadly though, this truth is not put to use – giving off its aroma to God and to men. Instead, its use is corrupted and it is turned into an idol.

Now that these symbols are understood, let us apply them. And since the message here is to the cities of Judah (Davidia), let us consider an example that is applicable to them. Again, the symbol itself is of an acceptable offering of pure truth being turned into an idol. The most advanced pure truth which Davidians have is the Rod message. The sorrowful reality, which has been testified to by the history of Davidia, is that the thing which holds the truth of the Rod message, namely, the Rod *literature*, has not been put to its proper use – being burned by the fire (Spirit) in order to give off its sweet aroma (a symbol of proclaiming the message in the power of the Spirit), thus pleasing God and men. Davidians have instead made the Rod literature into an idol, taking it to one “wise craftsman” or another (their leaders) and having them set it up in such a way that it becomes as static and unchanging as a piece of stone or wood, and this, in spite of the fact that the message was to be ever unfolding and ever progressive.³⁹

When new truth is presented as a sweet aroma the cry from Davidians is “show me in the Rod” despite the fact that the Rod itself teaches that “the main question therefore is not as to whether Sister White’s or Moses’ or this one’s or that one’s writings contain all the messages for this day, but rather simply as to whether they are found in, and supported by, the Bible.”⁴⁰ (*Answerer Book 2*, p. 82). When the truth of the need for the living Spirit of prophecy is declared to Davidians, the typical response is, “the Rod *literature* is the living Spirit of prophecy.”

While Davidians are the ones specifically being addressed in this passage, the passage itself is referring to those who are impoverished as a group broader than just “the cities of Judah.” In fact, the passage indicates that the cities of Judah are to consider others who are impoverished in order to see their folly that they may avoid the same mistake. Since the impoverished must seek for a “wise” craftsmen, it is apparent that what they are impoverished in is wisdom. Since true wisdom only comes from God, and that, through the Spirit (Wisdom), we can see that they lack present truth as manifested through the living spirit of prophecy. Yes, Davidians are guilty of turning the Rod literature into an idol, but they are not alone. Adventists have done the same thing with the writings of Ellen White, and all the various Christian sects have done the same thing with their various “Bible canons.” Holding a lie as an idol is one thing, but turning the truth into one is an even greater offense. The word to the idolater is:

³⁰ I will destroy your high places and cut down your incense altars, and I will stack your dead bodies on top of the lifeless bodies of your idols. I will abhor you with my whole being. ³¹ I will lay your cities waste and make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will refuse to smell your soothing aromas. – Leviticus 26:30-31 (See also Amos 5:21.)

The True Image

²¹ Do you not know? Do you not hear? Has it not been reported to you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? – Isaiah 40:21

These questions point back to those of verse 18, “And to whom will you liken God, and what image will you compare to him?” The new questions introduced (those of vs. 21) are designed to show people that the answer has already been given – that it has been told from the foundation of the world. This idea is also put forward in Romans 1, and since it also describes the origin of idolatry, it will be beneficial for the purpose of our whole study to at least briefly examine it:

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of people who suppress the truth by means of unrighteousness, ¹⁹ because that which can be known of God is manifest in them, because God made it manifest in them. ²⁰ For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, even his everlasting power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or give him thanks, but they became futile in their thoughts and their senseless hearts were darkened. ²² Thinking themselves to be wise, they became fools ²³ and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image resembling corruptible human beings or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles. ²⁴ Therefore God gave them over in the desires of their hearts to impurity, to dishonor their bodies among themselves. ²⁵ They exchanged the truth of God for the lie and worshiped and served the creation rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. ²⁶ For this reason God gave them over to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged the natural sexual relations for unnatural ones, ²⁷ and likewise the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed in their lusts for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in themselves the due penalty for their error. – Romans 1:18-27

Those “who suppress the truth by means of unrighteousness” are here said to have “exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image resembling corruptible human beings or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles.” By thus doing, they “exchanged the truth of God for the lie.” Notice that these men and women are said to have originally been in possession of the truth, for how else could they exchange it or suppress it? Besides, we are specifically told that “that which may be known of God is manifest in them, because God made it manifest in them.”

The fact that they exchanged the truth for a corrupted image of God makes it clear that the truth which they had is the truth of the image of God. This is specified in verses 19 and 20 since “that which may be known of God” is necessarily the same as that which is “clearly seen” and “understood through what has been made.” This “truth of God,” according to verse 20, is made known by observing the things that were made from the creation of the world, and in verse 19 it is said to be manifested in the men and women who corrupted the image and subsequently went into homosexuality (vs. 26-27).

To put it another way – Paul is in this passage explaining the corruption of the image of God, its wicked results, and the inexcusability of those results. The results of corrupting the truth of the image of God are clearly homosexuality. Paul not only states that this is unnatural and unrighteous, but he explains *why* it is so. He tells us that homosexuality only came about because of the suppression of the truth of the image of God. The reason that he gives as to why there is no excuse for this sin is that the truth of the image of the Godhead can be seen by looking at the things that were made from the creation of the world. Thus, according to Paul, there should be something that we should be able to clearly see and understand by looking at the things which were made from the creation of the world that will teach us the truth of the image of the Godhead that leaves no excuse for homosexuality. The part of creation we should specifically look to is pointed out by the fact that he said that the truth “is manifest in them” (those men and women who later went into

homosexuality). In other words, this truth is manifested in male and female human beings. Let us look at the record of the things that were made from the creation of the world and see what we can learn about the truth of the image of the Godhead that might show us why homosexuality is inexcusable:

²⁶ Then Elohim⁴¹ said, "Let us make humankind in our image, after our likeness, and give them dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move on the earth." ²⁷ Elohim created humankind in their own image, in the image of Elohim they created them, male and female they created them.⁴² – Genesis 1:26-27

This truth really could not be stated more plainly. Human beings, both male and female, were made in the image of Elohim (male and female mighty ones – gods). The truth that we can learn about the image of the Godhead, then, is that the Godhead (Elohim) is male and female. This is the truth which Paul refers to in Romans 1:20 which leaves no excuse for homosexuality. The reason why it leaves no excuse is because morality is based upon reality. The reason why lying is wrong is because it goes against what is true (real). The reason why stealing is wrong is because the object being stolen does not, in reality, belong to the robber. Many more examples could be given, but the point is that everything that is immoral is wrong, not because someone decreed it to be wrong, but because it works against reality. The reality of human sexuality and sexual relationships (Gen. 1:28), then, must be the determining factor for discerning what is right and wrong sexual behavior. The fact is this: according to both revelation and nature, humankind was made in the image of Elohim and Elohim is indeed male and female. So, to have male with male or female with female only distorts and corrupts the image of God.

So again, "... to whom will you liken God, and what image will you compare to him?" (vs. 18). Answer: "Do you not know? Do you not hear? Has it not been reported to you *from the beginning*? Have you not understood *from the foundations of the earth*?" (vs. 21). In other words, "Can you not see that stone and metal and wood are not the image of God, but that the true image of God is humankind – male and female? Do you not see that you are made in the image of Elohim?" The point is to call the attention of the cities of Judah to the truth of God (the Godhead) and to show them their honored place in being made in the image of God. By beholding this true image and by seeing how they have corrupted this image by unrighteousness, the cities of Judah have an opportunity to seek the true Gods and receive Their strength and thus have the fullness of the image of God restored in them.

When Adam came from the Creator's hand, he bore, *in his physical, mental, and spiritual nature*, a likeness to his Maker. "God created man in His own image" (Genesis 1:27), and it was His purpose that the longer man lived the more fully he should reveal this image—the more fully reflect the glory of the Creator. All his faculties were capable of development; their capacity and vigor were continually to increase. Vast was the scope offered for their exercise, glorious the field opened to their research. The mysteries of the visible universe—the "wondrous works of Him which is perfect in knowledge" (Job 37:16)—invited man's study. Face-to-face, heart-to-heart communion with his Maker was his high privilege. Had he remained loyal to God, all this would have been his forever. Throughout eternal ages he would have continued to gain new treasures of knowledge, to discover fresh springs of happiness, and to obtain clearer and yet clearer conceptions of the wisdom, the power, and the love of God. More and more fully would he have fulfilled the object of his creation, more and more fully have reflected the Creator's glory.

But by disobedience this was forfeited. Through sin *the divine likeness was marred*, and well-nigh obliterated. Man's *physical* powers were weakened, his *mental* capacity was lessened, his *spiritual* vision dimmed. He had become subject to death. Yet the race was not left without hope. By infinite love and mercy the plan of salvation had been devised, and a life of probation was granted. *To restore in man the image of his Maker*, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created, to promote the development of *body, mind, and soul*, that the divine purpose in his creation might be realized—this was to be the work of redemption. This is the object of education, the great object of life.⁴³

Elsewhere, Ellen White states:

It was Satan's studied effort to pervert *the marriage institution*, to weaken its obligations and lessen its sacredness; for *in no surer way could he deface the image of God in man* and open the door to misery and

vice.⁴⁴

This statement teaches us that the marriage institution, more than any other institution, was designed to show forth the image of God, for there was “no surer way” Satan could “deface the image of God in man” than to pervert it. Thus, to restore the image of God also means to restore marriage.

All together, what our Heavenly Family here commissions Zion to declare to the cities of Judah is the truth of Themselves and the truth of Their image. This calls to mind the very purpose of redemption as well as the very purpose for humanity and for life. This message declares the truth of God and brings to our awareness the members of the Godhead with whom we have formerly not been acquainted. We must meet the Spirit, for She must become our intimate friend, for She is the life-giver (Prov. 3:18; 8:35-36; John 6:63).

22 He dwells above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers. He spreads out the skies like a curtain, and they are pitched like a tent to dwell in. – Isaiah 40:22

Once again, we are pointed back to creation and to the Creator. Yahweh is not a god that can be brought down to dwell in an idol, as if we were greater than Him and could manipulate Him to our own advantage. No, He dwells above the circle of the earth (see Isa. 66:1; Ps. 2:4; 29:10). He is not an immaterial essence, but is a real being who dwells in a real locality. He is material and glorious! He made the heavens and the earth – He pitched the skies as a tent to dwell in. This touches upon other subjects which are too broad for the scope of this study.⁴⁵ That said, we do want to at least quote Psalm 8 here for your consideration in connection with the above quoted verse:

¹ Yahweh, our Lords, how glorious is your name through all the earth! You reveal your majesty in the heavens above! ² With the lips of children and sucklings you built a fortress for your habitation, having silenced your adversaries, the foe and the avenger. ³ When I see your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you created: ⁴ What is man that you should think of him, or the son of man that you should care for him? ⁵ Yet, you made him a little less than the gods, with honor and glory you crowned him. ⁶ You gave him dominion over the works of your hands and put all things under his feet. ⁷ Small and large cattle – all of them, yes, even the beasts of the steppe. ⁸ The birds of heaven, and the fishes in the sea and everything that moves through the paths of the sea. ⁹ Yahweh, our Lords, how glorious is your name through all the earth. – Psalm 8

²³ He gives dignitaries over to nothingness; the judges of the earth he has made void. ²⁴ Hardly are they planted, hardly are they sown, hardly has their shoot taken root in the earth. He blows on them and they wither, and the tempest will carry them away as chaff. – Isaiah 40:23-24

The first thing one needs to acquire in order to understand this passage is knowledge of who the dignitaries referred to really are. First, we are told that He, God, has given them over to nothingness and that He has made them void. So far, the thing which has been declared to be nothingness and void in this chapter is the nations (vs. 12-17). Second, we learn that these dignitaries are the judges of the earth, even though they have hardly taken root in the earth, implying that their provenance is somewhere other than the earth. This can be better understood by a look at Psalm 82 and the other passages which refer to the divine council and the wicked gods.⁴⁶

¹ Elohim stand in the council of El; in the midst of elohim they render judgment: ² “How long will you act unjustly and lift up the face of the wicked? (Selah) ³ Defend the poor and the orphaned! Vindicate the oppressed and suffering! ⁴ Rescue the poor and needy! Deliver them from the hand of the wicked! ⁵ They neither know nor understand. They wander about in darkness. All the foundations of the earth are shaken. ⁶ I said, ‘You are elohim (gods); and all of you are children of the Most High.’ ⁷ Yet, you will die like humans; you will fall like all the other rulers.” ⁸ Rise up, Elohim, and execute judgment in the earth! For you will inherit all the nations. – Psalm 82

Let us summarize the various elements of this psalm. We have (1) the first Elohim – the ones who stand in the council in the midst of the second elohim, (2) El – who is the Most High God (vs. 6), the one who presides over

the council, (3) the council itself, which includes both the first and second elohim, (4) the first Elohim render judgment against the second elohim (vs. 2-7) for ruling the nations unjustly, and (5) a call for the first Elohim to execute judgment in the earth and to inherit all the nations. The wicked elohim are definitely said to be gods (vs. 6), and children⁴⁷ of the Most High. Since they will die *like* humans, it is clear that they are not humans (see Ps. 89:6-8).

⁸ When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided up the children of humanity, he set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the children of Elohim. ⁹ For Yahweh's allotment is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. – Deuteronomy 32:8-9

At the tower of Babel, the Most High divided the nations according to the number of these gods. Each god was allotted a nation which he (or she) was to rule. Consider a few more passages:

¹⁶ ... this is what the king of Assyria says, "... ¹⁸ Hezekiah is misleading you when he says, 'Yahweh will rescue us.' Has any of *the gods of the nations* rescued *his land* from the hand of the king of Assyria? ¹⁹ Where are *the gods of Hamath and Arpad*? Where are *the gods of Sepharvaim*? ²⁰ Who among *all the gods of these lands* have rescued *their lands* from my hand? So how can Yahweh rescue Jerusalem from my hand?" – Isaiah 36:16, 18-20

He appointed a ruler for every nation, but Israel is Yahweh's own portion. – Sirach 17:17

... But he chose Israel that they might be a people for himself. And he set them apart and gathered them from all the children of humanity because there are many nations and many people and they all belong to him, but over all of them he caused spirits to rule so that they might lead them astray from following him.⁴⁸ But over Israel he did not cause any angel or spirit to rule because he alone is their ruler and he will protect them and he will seek for them at the hand of his angels and at the hand of his spirits and at the hand of all his authorities so that he might guard them and bless them and they might be his and he might be theirs henceforth and forever. – Jubilees 15:30-32

The prince⁴⁹ of the kingdom of Persia opposed me for twenty-one days, and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, and I left him there with the prince of the kingdom of Persia. – Daniel 10:13

... And now I will return to fight with the prince of Persia, and behold, when I go out the prince of Greece will come. – Daniel 10:20

Now that we have identified these dignitaries, we can understand what our passage in Isaiah says concerning them. They are declared to be void, their kingdoms are at an end. It may appear that they have settled and that they are firmly fixed on the earth, never to leave, but Yahweh declares that they are barely rooted and that He is well able to remove them. In their place, Israel will be the ones firmly rooted (Hos. 14:5).

²⁵ "To whom will you compare me? Whom do I resemble?" says the Holy One. ²⁶ Lift up your eyes on high and see – Who created these? The One who brings out their host by number and calls all of them by name. Of those great in power and mighty in strength, not one is missing. – Isaiah 40:25-26

Here, the questions of verse 18 are again asked, but this time, it is not Zion who asks the cities of Judah, it is the Holy One who asks these questions in the first person. Since this still is part of Zion's message to Judah, however, we can see that at first Zion asks the question and then Zion informs the cities of Judah that the Holy One Himself is asking the question.

Lift up your eyes on high and see – what will they see? They will see the sky will they not? The sun, moon, and stars, the whole host of heaven. As we have already seen, this represents the divine council (Deut. 4:19; 32:8-9). Here, the Holy One is said to have created these other gods and calls them all by name (Ps. 19). Not only this, but He brings them out by number and leads them. We are told that among them are those great in power and mighty in strength and none of *them* have gone missing. This once again portrays Yahweh as a Shepherd, but this time in a cosmic context. One of the lessons here is that if Yahweh can rule his cosmic kingdom as a Shepherd, surely he can rule his earthly kingdom as a Shepherd as well, and there is no need to

fear going astray so long as one is great in power and mighty in strength. The question one needs to ask, then, is, "How can I be sure to become great in power and mighty in strength?"

²⁷ Why do you say, Jacob, and speak, Israel, "My way is hidden from Yahweh, and from my Goddess my case passes away." – Isaiah 40:27

The dialog suddenly turns from the specific address to the cities of Judah and speaks to the broader group of Jacob/Israel, of whom the cities of Judah are only a part. In view of the greatness of Yahweh as being the God of the gods and ruler of the universe, the troubles of Jacob seem to shrink into insignificance. Jacob sees that they are not great in power nor mighty in strength and so they see themselves as lost sheep, having gone missing. They think that their way is hidden from Yahweh – they are unable to be found. As such, they think their way of life is hid from Yahweh as well – he is too busy to pay attention to their works. They have come to think that their Goddess, who they only know as "The Holy Spirit" is no longer dealing directly with them. Evidently, they are ignorant of the fact that the message which they have had borne to them is indeed the Spirit speaking to them through Her messenger.

²⁸ Do you not know⁵⁰ even if you do not hear? The Goddess of all time⁵¹ is Yahweh, creating the ends of the earth, not growing weary, and not growing faint, Whose understanding is unsearch-able – ²⁹ the Giver of strength to the weary and might to those lacking in strength. – Isaiah 40:28-29

Even though the message is being borne to Judah and Israel concerning the truth of the image of God, it is implied that they should know this truth even without having to be told. This teaches us that the truth of the female members of the Godhead is evidenced and observable in something other than revelation. As we have seen, humanity (both male and female) was made in the image of Elohim. In the language of Paul, "that which can be known of God is manifest in them, because God made it manifest in them" (Rom. 1:19). Thus, we are expected to come to our conclusions as to what is truth not only by what we are taught through divine revelation, but by what we can observe from nature.

This Goddess is evidently one of those "great in power and mighty in strength" for She is always and ever "not growing weary" and "not growing faint." She is the "Giver of strength to the weary" and the giver of "might to those lacking in strength." She is absolutely the One we need to be acquainted with then, if we are to never go missing – never go astray.

³⁰ Youths may faint from exhaustion, and picked men⁵² may stumble and fall, ³¹ but those who hope for Yahweh will renew their strength and they will rise up with wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint. – Isaiah 40:30-31

Whether youths or picked men, all who have only the strength of fallen humanity will stumble and faint. The only ones who will endure to the end will be those who hope for Yahweh – who put their trust in Her. To hope for Yahweh is to be tense, firm, or strong (as indicated by the Hebrew word) – it means to be persevering.

Though left alone by family and brethren, those long in the service at God may be comforted by communication with the heavenly family that transcends that of the closest of earthly relationships.

None need feel alone and unappreciated while basking in the atmosphere of heavenly communion.

The race is not always to the young and the swift, but to those who persevere regardless of age or infirmity.

Abraham and Sarah realized the promise of God in their later years after severe trial and long waiting. Jacob was not young when he was permitted to return to the promised land. "When John was exiled to the Isle at Patmos, there were many who thought him to be past service; an old and broken reed ready to fall at any time. But the Lord saw fit to use him ..." Christ's servants who are true and faithful may be unrecognized; and unhonored by men ... but ... They will not be forgotten by God. He will honor them by His PRESENCE... (because of their faithfulness). MS 109 1897.⁵³

Our strength lies not in flesh and blood; our work is not accomplished by might nor by power – but by the Spirit (Zech. 4:6). Let us cry, "Grace, Grace unto Her!" (Zech. 4:7). Those who trust in Her will have strength, just like Her; they will run and not grow weary, just like Her; and they will walk and not grow faint, just like Her. Yes indeed, we are to have the image of Elohim restored within us! This is the divine will which the Most High has purposed from the foundation of the world. Read *As An Eagle* by Lois Roden.⁵⁴

Isaiah 41 – Judgment Trials

¹ Be silent before me, coastlands, and let peoples renew strength. Let them draw near then speak. Let us draw near together for judgment. – Isaiah 41:1

The new scene introduced is clearly one of judgment. The coast-lands and the peoples are two different groups as seen from the fact that one was to stay silent while the other was to speak. The coastlands are the religious bodies referred to earlier in 40:12-17, but the peoples are those Israelites who are willing to receive strength from the Goddess of 40:28-31. So, while it is a new scene, it is also a continuation of the subject of the previous chapter.

² Who was it that raised up from the rising of the sun one righteous at every step? He will give nations to him, and beat down kings beneath him. He will make their swords like dust and their bows like windblown chaff. ³ And he will pursue them, and he will pass over in peace, and the path of his feet, they will not discern. – Isaiah 41:2-3

This passage presents three main characters – the one who raises someone up, the one risen up by the first person, and the kings of the earth along with their nations. The primary focus is on the first person, since that is who the question concerns: "*Who was it* that raised up from the rising of the sun one righteous at every step?" Since the next verse explicitly identifies that one as Yahweh, we have no need to either guess about the who it is or examine the issue further till we come to that verse.

What is striking about these verses is that they identify Yahweh by certain actions which He is said to do. The first three actions relate to the second figure of the passage – the one risen up from the rising of the sun. The actions are as follows: raising one up, giving him nations, and beating down kings beneath him. As we have seen, the entire context of this passage is the coming to an end of the nations and their gods and the setting up of the kingdom of Yahweh. In the previous chapter we saw that Yahweh has someone rule for him, though that person was not identified. Here though, the person begins to be identified, but not yet explicitly, as we find later:

²⁸ Concerning Cyrus he says, "He is my shepherd; he will fulfill my purpose – to say about Jerusalem, 'It will be rebuilt' and about the temple 'Its foundations will be laid.'" ¹ This is what Yahweh says concerning his anointed one, Cyrus, "I have grasped him by his right hand, to *beat down* nations before him, depriving kings of their strength, to open doors before him; no gates will be closed to him." – Isaiah 44:28-45:1

What is said covertly concerning Cyrus in chapter 41 is said openly in chapter 45. Though we will not be getting into chapter 45 at this point, we mention it to bring out the truth that the one being referred to here is indeed Cyrus, though, as we shall see, not the ancient Cyrus.

Now, what of the phrase 'from the rising of the sun'? This phrase is also used in relation to Cyrus in 41:25 and 46:11. The latter says, "Calling a bird [Cyrus] from the rising of the sun, the man of my counsel from a distant land." Isaiah 13 speaks of Yahweh calling His army who He will use to destroy Babylon in "the day of the

Lord.” There it says that they will come “from a distant land,” using the same Hebrew phrase as in 46:11 (which is its only other occurrence). Verse 17 tells us that his army is “the Medes.” This is just confirming for us that the distant land (which is parallel to the rising of the sun) is, in the type, the land of the Achaemenide (Medo-Perisan) Empire, which Cyrus founded. Moreover, the symbol of this empire, which was also the symbol of Cyrus, was a bird:

[55](#)

Notice how in the image on the left Cyrus is pictured with a sun disc rising above the bird’s head. In the image on the right Cyrus is depicted wearing an Egyptian crown. According to Isaiah 43:3 and 45:14, Egypt was to be given over to Cyrus. Egypt being a symbol of the world, one can see how Cyrus bore the titles *King of Babylon*, [56](#) *King of Sumer and Akkad*, and *King of the four corners of the world*.[57](#) This is further borne out by the fact that Cyrus’s empire ruled a greater percentage of the population of the world than any known empire before or since.[58](#)

In Egyptian tradition, the rising sun was connected with a falcon, which was also identified with pharaoh, king of Egypt, or, king of the world. Likewise, Near Eastern traditions connected the legendary Anzu bird with the sun and with the ruler.[59](#) Finally, to really make the point clear, the name Cyrus is from the old Persian *K?ruš*, which literally means “like the sun.”

So, what does all this mean? It just goes to show that this passage is, without a doubt, referring to Cyrus – the literary context, the social-historical context, and the linguistic context all testify to this same fact. Since Cyrus is said to be Yahweh’s shepherd (Isa. 44:28), His anointed one (Isa. 45:1), the one through whom He rules (Isa. 40:10), the one He will use to regather the tribes of Israel (Isa. 40:11; 49:6), and the one through whom He will rebuild the temple and the city (Isa. 44:28; 45:13), there can be no doubt that this figure is the anti-typical David, just as Victor Houteff also taught.[60](#) And since David is the “visible king” it shows that he is to be Christ’s represent-ative on earth. Since the sun is a symbol of Christ (Mal. 4:2), Cyrus being “like the sun” is for him to be like Christ. Thus it is said that he is “righteous at every step” (Isa. 41:2).

The idea of Cyrus being like Christ should greatly inform our understanding of the rest of the things it says concerning him. For example, when it says that nations will be given to him and kings will be beaten down beneath him, should we understand that as a violent and harsh rule on his part, or should we understand that as a sort of ruling which exemplifies the character of Christ? The answer is found in what Yahweh is shown doing next.

The next set of Yahweh’s actions are as follows: (1) making the weapons of the foreign kings like dust and windblown chaff, (2) pursuing them, and (3) passing over them in peace. Notice how our Heavenly Family does not respond by pulling out bigger weapons and engaging in war. Instead, they turn weapons of these kings into nothingness – rendering them void. This greatly lessens the chances of combat. Next, They pursue them. Of course, the kings, not understanding the character of our Heavenly Family, will think that they are being pursued to be killed or have something worse happen to them, but instead our Heavenly Family passes over them in peace, giving them an opportunity to see Their true character, and by beholding, becoming changed into the same image. Thus, these kings fail to discern the path of Yahweh’s feet. Since David is Christ’s representative on earth and since Yahweh’s feet represents his prophets (Nah. 1:15), then the not discerning the path of Yahweh’s feet demonstrates their inability to predict the way he leads his prophets, and in particular, David. Everything that Yahweh does is contrary to their expectations.

⁴ Who has brought this about? Who has done it? – The one who calls the generations from the beginning. I, Yahweh, am the first, and am with the last – it is I. – Isaiah 41:4

As we have already mentioned, this verse tells us quite clearly that the one being spoken of in the previous verses as accomplishing all these acts is Yahweh. Since there are four Yahweh's however,⁶¹ it will help if we can be a little more specific. This Yahweh calls the generations from the beginning, and this Yahweh is the first (Heb. sing.) generation and is with the last (Heb. plur.) generations. In the scriptures, a generation is simply one "generating" of offspring. To be the first generation, then, is to be the first "generating" of offspring. In other words, this Yahweh is spoken of as being the offspring of some other. With this in mind, we know that the Yahweh here must be either the Son or the Daughter. The last phrase, "it is I," would be more accurately translated "I am He" or "I am She," but since we do not have the necessary knowledge of Hebrew grammar on this point,⁶² we must, for the time being, refrain from making a judgment.

To say that one *is* with the last generations of the earth rather than *will be* with the last is to say that one is presently with the last generations. Being present truth, this prophecy is simply one more among many that lets us know that we are indeed in the last days, in the final generations.

⁵ See, coastlands, and be afraid. The ends of the earth will draw near together and come. – Isaiah 41:5

The coastlands are told to observe everything which was just spoken of in the previous verses and to be afraid. Evidently then, the events spoken of in the previous verses have their bearing on the coastlands. And how could it be otherwise? The kingdom of God is indeed being set up. Yahweh will gather his elect from the ends of the earth (Isa. 41:8-9).

⁶ Every man helps his friend and says, "Be strong." ⁷ The craftsman encourages the metal-smith, and the one who smooths with the hammer, the one who strikes the mallet, saying of the welding, "It is good!" – and he fastens it with nails so that it will not totter. ⁸ But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, seed of Abraham, my friend ⁹ whom I am bringing from the ends of the earth and from her most distant parts, I have called you saying, "You are my servant." I have chosen you and not rejected you. – Isaiah 41:6-9

Instead of fearing Yahweh and renewing their strength, people foolishly choose to go on in their idolatry. Not only that, but they encourage others to do so, all the while not realizing that they are committing blasphemy declaring "it is good" as if they were gods.

Israel is set in contrast with idolaters in hopes that he will not make himself one of them. The names Israel and Jacob are both used to show a mixed company – some of whom have overcome, and some of whom have not. The message to them is that they are now being gathered, that they have been chosen as Yahweh's servant, and that they have not been rejected. Seeing that this prophecy is applicable to the last days, we can know for a surety that the ones being spoken to here are the latter-day Jacobites, the 144,000. This then, is the message they are to hear, and since we are called to be the first of the first-fruits, then we must be the ones to bear it to them.

¹⁰ Do not be afraid for I am with you. Do not be perplexed for I am your Goddess. I strengthen you. I help you. I hold you up by the right hand of my righteousness. ¹¹ Behold, all who rage against you will be ashamed and humiliated. Those who contend with you will be as nothing, they will perish. ¹² Those who strive with you will be as nothing and those who war against you will come to nought. ¹³ For I am Yahweh, your Goddess, who clasps your right hand and says to you, "Don't be afraid, I am here to help you." – Isaiah 41:10-13

The message is simple. This Spirit-sent message is to repeat and repeat to the Jacobites that their Goddess has not forsaken them, but is strengthening them and helping them. She is holding them up by the right hand of Her righteousness (see Ps. 4), which is the message of justification by faith. They are not to think that their enemies will have victory over them, for it has already been declared that they will come to nought.⁶³ Fear not, our Heavenly Family is with you. Wisdom is here to help you.

¹⁴ Do not be afraid you worm, Jacob, people of Israel, says Yahweh your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. ¹⁵ Behold, I have appointed you to be a sharp threshing-sledge – the new master, for, double-edged, you will thresh mountains and grind them and you will make hills like chaff. ¹⁶ You will sift them, the Spirit will carry them away, and the whirlwind will scatter them. And you will rejoice in Yahweh, and in the Holy One of Israel will you praise. – Isaiah 41:14-16

Jacob is a worm (nothingness and despised), but he will be made into a sharp threshing-sledge. A threshing-sledge is a heavy board with jagged stones embedded on the bottom side of it which an ox would pull around on a threshing-floor ovetop of the grain. This would separate the chaff from the grain. Being made into a threshing-sledge also means that they will be the new master, for they will thresh those who formerly ruled over them.

The mountains and hills, as we saw in the previous chapter, are paralleled with the coastlands, and represent churches and smaller religious sects. To state this more accurately in its ancient context, we must understand that gods were perceived to live on mountains and hills and that those who worshipped them necessarily gathered there, especially for religious festivals. With this understanding, we can see how mountains and hills are symbolic of religious centers rather than civil ones. In modern terms, we can fairly say “churches” and “religious sects.” That said, there is one aspect we lose when we use these modern terms, namely, we lose the thought that the gods themselves dwelt upon the mountains. When one says “churches” today, he thinks of groups of people bound together by certain theologies and creeds. The thought of different gods simply doesn’t come to mind because our modern culture has been greatly influenced by philosophical monotheism, which results in the belief that these other gods do not really exist. Whatever terms we use, let us keep in mind that the gods are included, and that they, along with their worshippers, must be threshed.

The threshing, being double-edged, indicates that those who make up the threshing-sledge have chosen to abide in the word and have the word abide in them, for “the word of God is... sharper than any double-edged sword” (Heb. 4:12). In other words, they and their righteousness have faded away (Isa. 40:6-8), but the Word of Yahweh endures forever, thus they can all say,

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. – Galatians 2:20

By thus witnessing, the 144,000 will be able to accomplish the harvest in the churches, being joined by 200 million and then subsequently, the second fruits from the churches.⁶⁴ The way this takes place is illustrated in verse 16. Israel (144,000) separates the chaff (error and unrighteousness) from the grain (the truth and those who abide in it), the wind (Spirit) carries the chaff away, and the tempest (trouble) scatters them. Thus, the children of Israel shall rejoice.

¹⁷ The needy and the poor seek water, but there is none. Their tongue is dry from thirst. I, Yahweh, will hear them. I, the Goddess of Israel will not forsake them. ¹⁸ I will open streams on the bare hills and in the midst of valleys, springs. I will set in the wilderness a pool of waters and on the dry land waters breaking forth. ¹⁹ I will set in the wilderness cedar, acacia, myrtle, and oil trees. I will set in the desert cypress, fir, and box together. ²⁰ This is for the purpose that they may see, and observe, and consider, and understand that the hand of Yahweh has done this and the Holy One of Israel has created this. – Isaiah 41:17-20

Once again we are brought to a scene which we should all be familiar with by now. This is the 9T reformation, the revival in the desert, the kingdom sprouting in the wilderness prior to our returning to the land of our fathers. Isaiah 35, Isaiah 40, Isaiah 61, Psalm 68, and many more passages all speak of this same thing. Verse 20 is both self explanatory and significant since it declares the purpose of this reformation in plain terms

– it is so that people may know the truth, and that they may know it by an experimental knowledge.

Divine Challenge in the Heavenly Courts

²¹ Present your case, says Yahweh. Bring forth your strong arguments, says the King of Jacob. ²² Let them come forward and tell us what is going to happen. The former things – what are they? Tell us so that we may examine them and know their outcome, or tell us of things to come. ²³ Tell us what will happen hereafter so that we may know that you are gods. Do anything, be it good or bad, to fill us with awe and fear. – Isaiah 41:21-23

We have seen our Heavenly Family give a message of comfort through Their own appointed means (40:1-8). We have seen Them commission Zion to bear a message to the cities of Judah (40:9-26). They have spoken to Jacob (40:27-41:20), and in so doing they have brought a test upon the coastlands (41:1-5). All that we have seen is declaring that the end of the nations, and their gods, is at hand and that our Heavenly Family is now establishing Their kingdom in the lands of the gentiles. They have shown the character of their kingdom to be that of love, grace, peace, and righteousness. Force is not Their mode of operation and therefore, They spend a lot of time pleading with their wayward sheep to hear Their voice.

In this new scene, we are brought from the earthly to the heavenly. The divine council is in session and the King of Jacob is speaking. The gods of the other nations are challenged to bring forth their strong arguments, to present the best evidence that they can that they are indeed gods (mighty ones). Yahweh is called the King of Jacob to indicate that although the Jacobites may not have yet overcome and had their name changed, He has bought them with a price and claimed them as His own.

By the phrase, “Let them come forward and tell us what is going to happen,” Yahweh invites those who have identified themselves with Him and have been seated together with Him in heavenly places (Eph. 2:6) to participate in this courtroom scene and to judge whether or not the gods of the nations are truly mighty.

The issue at hand is whether these gods are able to show the future. If they can, then they prove themselves to be in control of history and should then be considered gods in the full sense of the word. If not though, they reveal themselves to be only frauds – demons putting themselves forward as gods, though not being gods by nature (Gal. 4:8). The test is not simply whether they can tell us what is going to happen, however. The challenge to them is, “The former things, what are they? Tell us so that we may examine them and know their outcome.” The challenge here is not so very different from the challenge Nebuchadnezzar issued to the magicians, astrologers, sorcerers, and wise men of his day. The wise men were not simply expected to tell him what is going to happen, but they were expected to tell him what he had already dreamed along with the interpretation of the dream so that what is going to happen may be known from it. These so-called “wise men” of Babylon replied saying,

What the king is asking is too difficult, and no one exists who can disclose it to the king, *except for the gods* – whose dwelling is not with flesh. – Daniel 2:11

The challenge to the gods here in Isaiah is that if they really are gods, they should be able to do what the magicians of Daniel's day could not do. The former things which these gods are to tell us about include both past events as well as "earlier predictive oracles" (which is how the NET bible translates the phrase). The challenge to show us what the former things *are*, is not merely a challenge to say what happened, for anyone can do that. It means the same thing here as it does in Ezekiel where the same phrase is employed (Eze. 24:15). The situation in Ezekiel is that Ezekiel's wife died and he was to wear certain things and act in a certain way as a sign to the Jews of his day. When they saw him doing what he was doing they said, "Will you not tell us *what these things are* that you are doing?" In asking what they *are*, they were asking what they *mean*. Thus, the wicked gods are challenged to accurately interpret past events and oracles in such a way that their outcome can be clearly seen. In other words, they are supposed to show types and their antitypes as well as prophecies and their fulfillments.

Our Heavenly Family is able to declare the future because they control the future, as is also shown in the book of Daniel:

²⁰ Then in a night vision the mystery was revealed to Daniel. So Daniel praised the God of heaven, saying, "Let the name of God be praised forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to him. ²¹ He changes times and seasons, deposing kings and setting up kings. He gives wisdom to the wise; he imparts knowledge to those with understanding; ²² he reveals deep and hidden things. He knows what is in the darkness, and light resides with him. – Daniel 2:20-22

The very things which They declared to Daniel and Nebuchad-nezzar They later brought about, but it took warfare with the gods of the nations (Dan. 10). In other words, to predict the future, one must be able to bring about the future, and to bring about the future as one desires, one must be able to have victory over his enemies. The challenge to the wicked gods is for them to show that they have done that – that they have shown in types and symbols, or in prophecies, what was to happen and that it subsequently happened. Again, in order to show this they must bring forth the former things and show what they are.

If the wicked gods are unable to do this, perhaps they can tell us what will yet happen in the future. This next part of the challenge is expressed in the words "or tell us of things to come." But if they cannot do that Yahweh says, almost sarcastically, "Do anything, be it good or bad, to fill us with awe and fear." The thought is, "If you can't do that, at least do *something*." The fact that Yahweh had to progressively lower the standards of evidence to give these gods a chance shows that they were not able to meet these standards of evidence. Again, to recapitulate the challenge let us view it in three parts. First, the gods were challenged to declare the former things and show what they mean so that they can be examined and their outcome made known. Evidently, the gods of the nations were unable to do this. Second, they could simply declare the future. Knowing that they were unable to fulfill the first condition of evidence, it would be foolish for them to declare a new prophecy with no evidence that they are able to bring it to pass. Evidently then, in the face of their inability being pointed out to them (and while standing before God in judgment), they remained silent instead of bringing forth a new prophecy. Third, since they were unable to fulfill the first two conditions of evidence, they are given the opportunity to show that they are gods in any way – to simply do something that would show them to be powerful and divine. Their lack of response is shown in Yahweh's next statement:

²⁴ Behold, you are nothing and your deeds are nothing. An abomination is the one who chooses you. – Isaiah 41:24

Now that these so-called gods have failed to produce evidence for their power and might, Yahweh declares evidence concerning Him-self:

²⁵ I have stirred up one from the north, and he comes from the rising of the sun and he calls in my name. He shall trample rulers like mud and as a potter treads clay. ²⁶ Who has declared this from the beginning that we may know? And beforehand, so that we may say, 'He is righteous'? Indeed, none of them declared it! Indeed, none of them announced it! Indeed, no one heard you say anything! ²⁷ I, the First, declared to Zion, "Behold, behold these things!" And I gave to Jerusalem a herald of good news. – Isaiah 41:25-27

This is the evidence that Yahweh presents in the divine council to demonstrate His own might and power, and thus, His Kingship. The reason why it is so important for Yahweh to demonstrate His authority is because by so doing, the so-called authority of these wicked gods is exposed for what it is – a facade. By exposing the wicked gods, our Heavenly Family can regain rulership over the nations, bringing the reign of the wicked gods to an end, and freeing all who are in bondage under their yoke.

As we have already seen, the one risen up from the rising of the sun is Cyrus. Here though, not only is he said to come from the rising of the sun, but also from the north, indicating that he is sent from the throne of God (Isa. 14:13). Isaiah 41:2 had its focus on Yahweh and what he will do in reference to Cyrus, but this verse has its focus on Cyrus and what he will do, as directed by Yahweh. He, as the vicegerent of Yahweh, will trample the vicegerents of the wicked gods.

The focus now turns again to asking, "Who has declared this?" similarly to what we saw in verse two. Whoever declared it ahead of time surely is righteous. Yahweh, turning to those witnessing this judgment scene says, "Indeed none of them [the wicked gods] declared it! Indeed, none of them announced it!" And to the wicked gods he says, "Indeed, no one heard you say anything!" Yahweh indisputably states that He is the one who declared it to Zion by giving a herald to Jerusalem.

The language of verse 27 intentionally mirrors chapter 40:9, but it is also intentionally different. In Isaiah 40:9 Zion herself is called a herald and she declares, "Behold, behold..." But in 41:27, Yahweh declares that He declared to Zion, "Behold, behold..." and sent a herald to Jerusalem. Since in Isaiah 41:26-27 these things were said to be declared "beforehand" and in Isaiah 40:9, Zion declares these same things as a present reality, it is evident that Isaiah 41:27 is looking back to the time Zion initially heard these truths prior to her proclamation of them to others. This is also natural and necessary since one could not proclaim a truth that he had not previously heard and received. Since Isaiah 40:9 is the message which Zion is presently being instructed (by Inspiration) to give to the cities of Judah, the message spoken of in 41:27 is one which came prior to the present message. On the one hand, what is symbolized here is the message of *The Shepherd's Rod*, since it is that message which first announced the coming of the anti-typical David to the church. In a broader sense though, what was declared in vs. 27 is just a more specific declaration of what has been declared "from the beginning" (vs. 26). To put it another way, we understand that what the Rod message declared in the 1930s, '40s, and '50s concerning the anti-typical David (vs. 27) was actually declared by Yahweh from the beginning (vs. 26).

²⁸ I look, and there is no one among them; no one counsels or responds when I ask of them. ²⁹ Behold, they are all nothing and their works are nothing. Their molten images are wind and confusion. – Isaiah 41:28-29

These verses state plainly what has been implied all along. The gods of the nations are speechless. They have no way to gainsay that Yahweh is God. The evidences that Yahweh had required of these other gods, He has now put forward to prove Himself. The raising up of Cyrus, one righteous at every step, who calls on the name of Yahweh, demonstrates Yahweh's ability to have victory over the other gods. This is truly so, and here is why it is so:

²³ for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. – Romans 3:23

¹⁶ Don't you know that if you yield yourselves as servants to obey someone, you are indeed servants to the one you obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience, unto righteousness? – Romans 6:16

⁸ Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to beings that by nature are not gods at all. – Galatians 4:8

All, including Cyrus, have been in bondage to wicked gods. While serving wicked gods, one necessarily serves sin and is thus free from righteousness (Rom. 6:20). But now, these scriptures declare that Cyrus is righteous at every step – free from sin (Rom. 6:7, 18, 22). Thus, he is a servant of righteousness and of Christ and is no longer in the dominion of the wicked gods for, “no man can serve two masters” (Matt. 6:24).

Taking Israel out of Egypt is one thing, but taking sin out of a man is another. By this act – redeeming a sinner among sinners – Yahweh has shown that He can redeem the human race; He has shown that He has power over the wicked gods – they cannot keep sinful man locked up in the grave. Thus, these verses declare that Yahweh has proven himself in the heavenly council: First, He has shown the former things (both types and prophecies) and has declared what they are (their true interpretation) that we may all know their outcome (their fulfillment). Second, He has declared the future – He has shown what is to come to pass as a result of what has already been fulfilled, and has used the fact of their fulfillment as evidence that what is to come will likewise be fulfilled (Isa. 42:9). Third, He has done everything to fill us with awe that we may fear. Yahweh is indeed Mighty – our Heavenly Family are the true Gods. They have created a new thing in the earth, they have appointed a new order. In contrast, all that the wicked gods have is smoke and mirrors.

Isaiah 42 – The New Order

Still in the divine council, Yahweh declares:

¹ Behold, my servant whom I uphold. My chosen, in whom my whole being delights. I have put my Spirit upon him so that he may establish a just order for the nations. – Isaiah 42:1

Read Isaiah 45 and 49 along with this passage and you will see without a doubt that they are all speaking of the same person. Also, in Isaiah 61 he speaks in first person:

¹ The Spirit of the lord, Yahweh, is upon me; because Yahweh has anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek: He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; ² to proclaim the acceptable year of Yahweh, and the day of vengeance of our Gods; to comfort all that mourn; ³ to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them a turban instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of Yahweh, that he might be glorified. – Isaiah 61:1-3⁶⁵

This just order is established not by might, nor by power, but by the the Spirit of Yahweh (Zech. 4:6). Our Heavenly Family will finally have Their nation of priests (Ex. 19:6) who will serve the people by bringing them liberty, truth, and righteousness.

² He will not shout, and he will not raise his voice, and he will not cause it to be heard in the streets. ³ A bruised reed he will not break, and a dim flax he will not quench for truly he will establish a just order. – Isaiah 42:2-3

The character here portrayed is none other than the character of our Heavenly Family. It is the character of Their kingdom. Read again Isaiah 40 and Zechariah 9.

⁴ He will not be quenched and he will not be broken until he has set up a just order in the land. The islands wait for his decree. – Isaiah 42:4

The only sure victory is to reign in grace and righteousness. In the gentleness of Christ there is strength that lasts forever. Cyrus will not quench a dimly lit wick and so he will not be quenched. He will not break a bruised reed and so he will not be broken. So let it be with all those who profess the name of Christ. The islands wait for an order such as this.

⁵ Thus says the God of the gods,⁶⁶ who created the skies and pitched them, who pounded out the earth and her produce and gave breath to the people upon her and life to those who walk in her: ⁶ I, Yahweh, have called you in righteousness. I have grasped you by the hand. I keep you and give you for a covenant of the people, for a light to the nations, ⁷ to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out from the dungeon those who are bound, and from the prison house, those who dwell in darkness. – Isaiah 42:5-7

Here, the God of the gods, the Creator of the world and the Giver of life speaks to Cyrus. The commission he is given is to fulfill the work we have already seen in Isaiah 61. Cyrus is given as a covenant for the people (Isa. 49:8). This is a new order with a new and everlasting covenant (Isa. 55:3-4; 61:8). The everlasting covenant includes Yahweh being our Gods and us being Their people, the reception of a new heart, the restoration of the priesthood that all the nations of the earth might be blessed, the return to the land of Israel, and the re-establishment of theocracy under our Heavenly Family through Their appointed vicegerent – the anti-typical David.⁶⁷ Thus understanding the new covenant, one can easily see how Cyrus is himself said to be a covenant of the people, for his experience is to be their experience. Indeed, just as the ancient Cyrus was the new heart of the world empire in ancient times,⁶⁸ just so will the latter-day Cyrus be the new heart (covenant) of the new order today.

⁸ It is I, Yahweh, my name and my glory I will not give to another, nor my praise to images. ⁹ The former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare. Before they spring up I proclaim them to you. – Isaiah 42:8-9

Amen!

¹⁰ ... O Yahweh, Goddess of our father Israel, you deserve praise forevermore! ¹¹ O Yahweh, you are great, mighty, majestic, magnificent, glorious, and sovereign over all the sky and earth! You have dominion and exalt yourself as the head of all. ¹² You are the source of wealth and honor; you rule over all. You possess strength and might to magnify and give strength to all. ¹³ Now, our Gods, we give thanks to you and praise your majestic name! – 1 Chronicles 29:10-13

¹See p. 79.

²These include *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible*, *The New English Translation* (with footnotes), *Isaiah 40-55: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Yale) by Blenkinsopp (translation and textual notes), *Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 40-55* (Hermeneia) by Baltzer (translation and textual notes), *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (MT of Hebrew Bible), *The Hebrew Bible: Anderson-Forbes Analyzed Text*, *Biblical Dead Sea Scrolls* (Lexham Press) (DSS transcriptions), *The Great Isaiah Scroll* (dss.collections.imj.org.il/isaiah), and *The Lexham English Septuagint*.

³The word here is *elohikem* (????????), which is a variation of *elohim* (????????) and simply means “your elohim.” This word is plural and contains a combination of the masculine and feminine grammatical genders. For more on why we have here, and throughout this article, translated it in the plural, please see our study *Divine Plurality*, Vol. 1, No. 1.

[4](#)This is the feminine form of “herald.”

[5](#)Heb. el (???) (sing. masc.)

[6](#)The word in Hebrew is elohi (????????), which is the possessive form of the word elah (???), the feminine form of el (???), meaning Goddess. See *Divine Plurality*, Vol. 1, No. 2 for our reasons for translating this word as feminine here and elsewhere.

[7](#)Heb. ha-el ha-elohim (??? ????????)

[8](#)See Ex. 6:7; Lev. 26:12; Jer. 30:22; 31:31-34; 32:36-44; and Eze. 37:23, 26-27.

[9](#)See Isa. 14:17; Rev. 12:6; 17:3; *The World Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*, p. 40-41 by Victor Houteff.

[10](#)See *The Pentecost* by Ben Roden.

[11](#)See also Isa. 55 and our studies on Ps. 139.

[12](#)See *Ezekiel 16 – Three Sisters and Their Mother* by Doug Mitchell and the following videos:

[Ezekiel 16 Pt 1 Jerusalem the Mother, Worse Than a Whore](#)

[Ezekiel 16 Pt 2 Like Mother, Like Daughter](#)

[13](#)See our videos [Shekinah on the Move part 1](#) and [Shekinah on the Move part 2](#).

[14](#)See Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22 (Compare Acts 24:5 with 24:14 to see how “the Way” and “the Nazarenes” are spoken of synonymously).

[15](#)See also Deut. 32:5; 33:5, 26.

[16](#)See our video studies [Tabernacle Among Us](#) and [The Only Begotten Daughter](#).

[17](#)See Eze. 20:35; 43:7; Zech. 2:5, 10-11; Joel 2:27; 3:16-17; Zech. 8:3, 22; Isa. 4:5; 2 Esdras 7:26; 2 Mac. 2:8; Rev. 10:1

[18](#)See Ex. 16:7, 10; Num. 14:10; 16:19; 20:6.

[19](#)See also Ps. 37:2; 90:4-6; 103:15; 129:6.

[20](#)For more examples of prophetic installations, see Isa. 6, Jer. 1, and Eze. 1.

[21](#)The poetic parallelism here shows that Zion and Jerusalem, in this context, are equated.

[22](#)See 5T 455; 9T 17-18; 19MR 38-39.

[23](#)See our studies on Ezekiel 16 mentioned in fn. 12.

[24](#)See *Timely Greetings*, Vol. 1, No. 37, p. 14-15 and *Timely Greetings*, Vol. 2, No. 9, p. 6.

[25](#)*Mount Sion at the Eleventh Hour*, p. 70-71 by Victor Houteff

[26](#)Feminine in 1QIsa^a (Dead Sea Scrolls)

[27](#)Marduk, commonly known as Bel (Isa. 46:1) is said to be the one “who measures the waters of the sea and cultivates the fields.” – ANET 332, II. 240-41

[28](#)See *Final Warning*, p. 43 by Victor Houteff.

[29](#)Another example of breaking a pattern for the purpose of drawing one’s attention is found in the parable of Matthew 20 where laborers are called at three hour intervals, with the exception of the last, which were called only two hours after the laborers before them.

[30](#)The idea that stars are to be equated with gods is even to be found in “biblical” tradition. See Deut. 4:19-20 (cf. Deut. 32:8-9); Job 38:7; Isa. 14:13; Jer. 8:2; 19:13.

[31](#)See *The Silver Trumpet*, Vol. 1, No. 9, pp. 23-28.

[32](#)*The Great Controversy*, p. 583

[33](#)*Faithlife Study Bible*, art. The Logic of Idolatry

[34](#)This is from a document found at Qumran near the Dead Sea in cave 4. It is part of a work known as 4QReworked Pentateuch (4QRP). The quotation as we have it here is taken from Sidnie White Crawford’s

article, *The Rewritten Bible At Qumran*, published as chapter six of *The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Vol. 1 (see p. 143). On page 144, Crawford points out that this festival of wood offerings is also spoken of in *The Temple Scroll*, and gives the following translation of columns 23-24, lines 1-3:

¹[...and on the first day Levi] and Judah, and on [the second day Benjamin]

²[and the sons of Joseph, and on the third day Reuben and Simeon, and] on the fourth day Iss[achar and Zebulon]

³[and on the fifth day Gad and Asher, and on the sixth day Dan] and Naphtali [– 11Q19 23-24:1-3 (See also column 43:4)]

[35](#)It is worth noting that *Jubilees* is from the same tradition as *Enoch*.

[36](#)See *Aramaic Levi 22*, 57.

[37](#)The lists of the twelve kinds of trees here and in *Jubilees* differ slightly. This is most likely due to the two-fold fact that (1) they are being translated from different languages, and (2) the exact identity of the trees referred to by many of these words in their respective languages is unknown. That said, the parallels between these two works, together with the fact that the lists are nearly identical, leaves one with the inevitable conclusion that they are indeed the same list.

[38](#)This thought is also seen in the wood festival of *The Temple Scroll* and 4QRP, where the wood is offered according to the tribes.

[39](#)See *The Shepherd's Rod Tract*, p. 85; *Timely Greetings*, Vol. 1, No. 26, p. 17; *Timely Greetings*, Vol. 1, No. 44, p. 10; *Timely Greetings*, Vol. 1, No. 49, p. 9; *Timely Greetings*, Vol. 2, No. 5, p. 11; *Timely Greetings*, Vol. 2, No. 45, p. 7; *Symbolic Code*, Vol. 1, No. 6, p. 10; and *The White-House Recruiter*, p. 29.

[40](#)The word "Bible" here is best understood in light of the Rod's teaching of Joseph typology where the grain put into the storehouse represents the truth gathered into the scriptures before the time of Christ and John the Baptist. In contrast with this, the prophets after John the Baptist were simply to take the grain (truth) out of the storehouse (the writings of the prophets prior to John). Therefore, to say we should ask whether "they are found in, and supported by, the Bible" is more scripturally understood as in "the writings of the prophets prior to John the Baptist."

[41](#)We have here transliterated the word Elohim rather than translating it for the following reason: There is no one English word which fully captures the thought of Elohim. Most simply translate it as God, but this makes no distinction between El, Elim, Elah/Eloah, Elohot, and Elohim. If we translate it as Gods, as we have elsewhere, we at least gain the benefit of the plural, thus distinguishing it from El and Elah/Eloah, but since Elim and Elohot are also plural we are still left with less precision than what actually exists in the Hebrew text. Elohot can be accurately translated as Goddesses since it is feminine plural and Elim can be translated as Gods since it is masculine plural, so long as one understands that grammatical masculine simply means "not specifically feminine" (females may be included), but Elohim is plural in number and in gender. The most accurate way that we know of to translate the meaning of Elohim is "male and female mighty ones" or "male and female gods" since both of those convey the idea that there is more than one being, at least one of whom is male, and the other of whom is female. But, since this translation would be very new and surprising to most readers, we have simply transliterated Elohim to keep the flow of the passage. For more information on the nuances of the various forms of the word El, see *Divine Plurality*, Vol. 1, Nos. 1-2.

42This verse contains many pronouns referring to either Elohim or humankind. Many translators accurately render the pronouns referring to mankind as “them” even though the Hebrew is singular and masculine (“he”). The NET Bible footnotes give the following explanation as to why “them” is an accurate translation: “The third person suffix on the participle ??? (’et) is singular here, but *collective*.” Collective masculine singular pronouns are extremely common in Hebrew and any ancient Hebrew reader would have immediately understood them as a collective and inclusive of both genders depending on context. The English translation “he created him” does not convey the same thought to a modern English reader as what the ancient Hebrew reader would have understood reading the passage in Hebrew. To illustrate this principle, we will look at another example from Psalm 7:1-2 where David says, “Deliver me from all who chase me [clearly a plurality of persons]... otherwise he [Heb. – sing. masc.] will rip me to shreds...” The NET Bible renders the latter phrase, “they will rip me to shreds” and offers the following footnote:

“The verb is singular in the Hebrew text, even though “all who chase me” in v. 1 refers to a whole group of enemies. The singular is also used in vv. 4–5, but the psalmist returns to the plural in v. 6. The singular is probably collective, emphasizing the united front that the psalmist’s enemies present. This same alternation between a collective singular and a plural referring to enemies appears in Pss 9:3, 6; 13:4; 31:4, 8; 41:6, 10–11; 42:9–10; 55:3; 64:1–2; 74:3–4; 89:22–23; 106:10–11; 143:3, 6, 9.”

What the ancient Hebrew reader would have understood when reading Psalm 7 is far better translated into English as “they will rip” rather than “he will rip” since the singular masculine “he” simply does not convey the thought that one male individual is being spoken of. It is a generic usage which is designed to point to a collective of individuals (which may or may not include females).

Where our translation differs from most is that we also translate the pronouns referring to Elohim as “they” rather than “he.” We do so simply by following the same principles used to translate other collective pronouns. The only objection which may be raised is that Elohim should be understood as singular, but this is demonstrably not the case (See *Divine Plurality*, Vol. 1, Nos. 1-2). Elohim is indeed plural and the “us” of Gen. 1:26 is also plural. Scholars have noted the various interpretations of the word “us” as follows: (1) it refers to the trinity, (2) it is a plurality of majesty, (3) it is a plurality of “deliberation, (4) it is a reference to the divine council. The reasons why none of these explanations work is (in order), (1) this would be imposing later trinitarian theology back onto a time when it did not exist, (2) as the NET bible points out, “plurality of majesty is not used with verbs,” (3) this is simply unsupported, and (4) this interpretation contradicts the understanding of early Jewish and Israelite thought (even though they accepted the notion of the divine council) as well as the passage itself. Just one example of the contradiction with early Israelite thought is Isaiah 40-55 where one of the key things which distinguished Yahweh from the other lesser gods of the divine council is that Yahweh created, whereas these other gods were themselves created. Other examples can be found in the statements from “biblical” and “non-canonical” material that puts forward the idea that we were made in the image of God (Gen. 5:1; 9:6; Sir. 17:3; Test. Isaac. 6:34; 2 En. 44:1; Jub. 6:8; James 3:9), and the lack of material stating that we were made in the image of angels or other divine beings. One of these lines of tradition such as found in *The Life of Adam and Eve* and *Questions of Bartholomew* even assume that the image of God, which human-kind was created in, and the image of angels (who are part of the heavenly host) are two very different things (see L.A.E. 13-15 And QB 4:25).

Ultimately, Gen. 1:26 tells us that Elohim is the one who said, “Let *us* make...” and it is Elohim (the same Elohim) in whose image humankind was made in 1:27. It does not say that humankind was made in the image of Elohim *and* the divine council or “*and* those to whom he was speaking when he said ‘Let *us* make...’” The simple and straightforward interpretation is that Elohim is a word which describes multiple distinct beings, some of whom are male and some of whom are female, and that it is in Their image that we are made. This all just goes to show with more clarity that the translation “he created them” (“he” referring to Elohim) does not do justice to the meaning of the phrase. In order to capture the thought of the Hebrew singular *collective* pronoun with its gender inclusiveness, one must necessarily translate the phrase “*they* created them” for the English word “they” is not gender specific, and rightly conveys the plurality of Elohim, just as “them” conveys the plurality and gender inclusiveness of humankind.

[43](#) *Education*, p. 15

[44](#) *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 338

[45](#) Please study the scriptural creation accounts in the light of the wilderness tabernacle and the temples (and vice versa). Consider also Isa. 42:5; 44:24; 51:13; Job 9:8; 37:18; 28:4-9; Ps. 102:25-26; 104:2; Jer. 10:12; Zech. 12:1; Heb. 1:10-12; and the whole of Psalm 8, 74, 89, and 104.

[46](#) See our video studies [11QMelchizedek and The Wicked Gods](#) and [Gods of the Council of El](#) on youtube.

[47](#) In the scriptures, one can be a child of God in at least three different ways: (1) by being begotten, such as the Son (Ps. 2) and the Daughter (Prov. 8); (2) by being created, such as Adam (Luke 3:38); and (3) by being adopted (Eph. 1:5). Since there are only two begotten children of God and since being adopted means to serve God in righteousness, also, since these wicked gods are said to be created (Ps. 33:6; Neh. 9:6), it is apparent that they are only children in the second sense, that is, by creation.

[48](#) The idea here is that after the flood people began to worship these wicked gods and so the Most High gave them over to them. This is not supposed to be taken as a statement of Yahweh's wish for the nations, for all the scriptures testify to the fact that They intend to use Israel to rescue the other nations and free them from the dominion of their gods.

[49](#) The "prince" of Persia here is definitely some sort of divine being, or god. We know this from the fact that the being who is speaking (along with Michael) contended with this prince and from the fact that Michael is said to be "one of the chief princes." Also, 8:11 refers to Christ as the "prince of the host" and Josh. 5:14 uses the title to refer to the Angel of Yahweh.

[50](#) The word for "know" means to know, observe, learn, etc. It communicates the idea of learning by observation. Thus, we are to gain an experimental knowledge.

[51](#) The word here translated "of all time" is *olam* and means a long duration. It could be translated "of the distant past," "of the distant future," "of eternity," etc. We chose the translation "of all time" since it encompasses the distant past and the distant future, which is in harmony with the intention of the words usage here, but we want to qualify the phrase by stating that it does not need to be translated with that exact phrase and does not literally mean "of *all* time." It is our duty to mention this lest anyone receive the mistaken impression that this verse conveys the thought that this Goddess has existed as long as time has existed. As we have seen in previous studies, time has always existed, but this Goddess was at one point brought forth (Prov. 8).

[52](#) "Picked men" is a phrase that is used especially of those who are chosen because of exceptional strength, agility, and stamina.

[53](#) *Monthly Field Letter*, March/April 1986, p. 13 by Lois Roden

[54](#)See also 2 Sam. 1:23; Ps. 103:5; Ex. 19:4; Deut. 32:11.

[55](#)The image on the left is the *Standard of Cyrus the Great* and the image on the right is an illustration of a bas-relief found at Pasargadae which shows Cyrus as a four-winged guardian.

[56](#)See Ben Roden's study *11th Hour Extra – Riddle #1*.

[57http://www.iranchamber.com/history/cyrus/cyrus_charter.php](http://www.iranchamber.com/history/cyrus/cyrus_charter.php)

[58http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/largest-empire-by-percentage-of-world-population/](http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/largest-empire-by-percentage-of-world-population/)

[59](#)See *Deutero-Isaiah* (Hermeneia), p. 263 by Baltzer.

[60](#)See *Mount Sion at the 11th Hour*, p. 60-61 where Houteff quotes Isaiah 41:2, 3, 25 and then immediately quotes Isaiah 55:4-6 for the specific reason of connecting the one called from the rising of the sun with the anti-typical David.

[61](#)See our video [FOT'13 S4 Multiple Yahwehs?](#)

[62](#)This is mostly due to the reading of this passage in the Dead Sea Scrolls. There, the form of the word which usually means "he" has a *hey* (?) at the end of it, which commonly indicates a feminine noun, but we are hesitant to come to conclusions, knowing that the Qumran scrolls sometimes go by different spelling rules than later Masoretic Hebrew. Due to our lack of knowledge about these differences, we think it is best to translate the phrase with the more generic, "It is I," until we have a better understanding of the principles involved.

[63](#)For more on this subject, please study Psalm 2.

[64](#)See *Merkabah 3* by Lois Roden.

[65](#)See *The Silver Trumpet*, Vol. 1, No. 3, p. 5.

[66](#)Heb. ha-el ha-elohim (??? ??????)

[67](#)Read Gen. 17:7-8; 23:5; 1 Chron. 16:16-18; Ps. 105:8-11; Isa. 55:3-4; 61:8; Jer. 32:40; 50:5; Eze. 37:26, their surrounding contexts, and other connecting verses.

[68](#)See *The Shepherd's Rod*, Vol. 2, p. 44-48.