

ISAIAH

ISAIAH 51:17-23, THE CUP OF REELING REMOVED

In Isaiah 51:9, the Israelites called on God to awaken and remember that He was the God who delivered them out of slavery in Egypt and created them to be a nation of redeemed people that is exclusively His own. Here, Yahweh is calling on the Israelites to themselves awaken. These verses are eschatological in nature and will not be fulfilled until the Second Coming. "The fact that the Babylonian Captivity continues to lie unmentioned specifically in the text, strengthens the impression that God had more than that historic deliverance in view in what He promised. A greater future redemption is also in view, namely, the one that the Servant would effect" [Thomas L. Constable, "Isaiah" in *Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible, Volume IV: Isaiah-Daniel*, 4:147]. The Israelites are to wake up and realize that God's divine disciplinary program for the nation has finally ended. These verses are in two parts. First, is the revelation of the cup of God's anger from which the nation has had to drink. Second, is the revelation of the cup removed from the nation. These verses are leading up to the revelation of the Suffering Servant who is the Person through whom the promises made earlier in this chapter will be fulfilled.

The first promise related to the removal of the curse on earth and the restoration of the Garden of Eden throughout the planet (Is. 51:1-3). The second promise relates to the establishment of righteousness and salvation to all generations (Is. 51:4-8). The third promise is the revelation of a second Exodus that will get the people back into the land where they will enjoy covenant fulfillment (Is. 51:9-11).

Isaiah 51:17 ¹⁷Rouse [עור] yourself! Rouse yourself! Arise [קום], O Jerusalem, You who have drunk from the LORD'S hand the cup of His anger [הַמָּוֶה]; The chalice [אֶת קַבְעֵת כּוֹס] of reeling [תִּרְעָלָה] you have drained to the dregs.

Rouse, עור, means to awake and to rouse oneself which is the context here. This verb is in the imperative verb form meaning it is a command. It is reflexive which relates to something those called upon do themselves, which is why the NASB correctly translates this "rouse yourself." It is intensive indicating that the people really need to be about the business of rousing themselves from the effects of the divine temporal discipline that has been poured out on them. The repetition is an indication of emphasis.

The reflexive action the verb identifies seems to be important and the translation really should reflect that. "The reflexive nature of the verb, *wake yourself*, may be significant at this point as it calls on Israel to pay attention to its own condition" [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 352]. Other versions that recognize that situation and incorporate the reflexive sense of the verb into the English translation are the CSB, LEB, LSV, TANAKH, ESV, YLT. The nation is going to have to come to faith themselves in order for their situation to finally and completely end. God is not going to give them the faith; they have to believe and express that faith themselves, hence, the reflexive nature of the verb used here. We know that will happen when the nation appears to be on the brink of annihilation at the hands of

the antichrist and his army, and the nation cries out to the Messiah to save them, which He will, of course, do (Mt. 23:39).

The command to arise is issued to Jerusalem which is used as a figure of speech, a metonymy, to refer to the nation, Israel. Arise, קום, means to arise, to stand, or to stand up, in this case, for the purpose of taking action. The people are to rise up from their beaten down condition and prepare to cry out for deliverance at the hands of the Messiah. This is a signal that God's judgment of Israel is coming to an end and that national restoration is about to begin in the Messianic Kingdom.

Israel has been suffering, to one degree or another, under God's divine disciplinary program for the entire history of the nation. They were rebellious in the wilderness and suffered discipline there. They were rebellious in the early period in Canaan during the times of the judges and suffered discipline there. Assyria was used by God to judge Israel, and Babylon was used to judge Judah. Greece and Rome kept the nation subdued during the times of the Gentiles, and the *diaspora* has scattered them throughout the world where they have been subjected to horrendous persecution. Now they are partially back in the land in unbelief, and they are still being persecuted and attacked, this time by Muslims, and, in reality the rest of the world as well. Finally, antichrist and his worldwide coalition will try to destroy every Jew on the planet in his satanic attempt to destroy God's plan for history. This is a brief and very minimal recitation of what this Scripture means for the nation to drink "from the Lord's hand the cup of His anger." This situation represents the practical implementation of God's disciplinary program that He promised Israel for rebellion and disobedience in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. It is harsh, but it is nothing less than the nation was warned was going to happen if they rebelled.

Anger, חמה, means heat, rage, anger, wrath, and fury referring to a very strong feeling of displeasure, hostility, and antagonism, usually in relation to a wrong, real or imagined, as an extension of the heat and burning one can have when one is emotionally worked up and in strife and turmoil. Anger has been an unfortunate part of Yahweh's relationship with Israel since the beginning. The end of His anger with the nation does not occur until the end of history when the rebels are purged out of Israel and the remnant inherits the covenant promises.

Exodus 32:10–12 ¹⁰"Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation." ¹¹Then Moses entreated the LORD his God, and said, "O LORD, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? ¹²"Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, 'With evil *intent* He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your burning anger and change Your mind about *doing* harm to Your people.

Isaiah 9:12, 17, 19, 21 ¹²The Arameans on the east and the Philistines on the west; And they devour Israel with gaping jaws. In *spite of* all this, His anger does not turn away And His hand is still stretched out.... ¹⁷Therefore the Lord does not take pleasure in their young men, Nor does He have pity on their orphans or their widows; For every one of them is godless and an evildoer, And every mouth is speaking foolishness. In *spite of* all this, His anger does not turn away And His hand is still stretched out.... ¹⁹By the fury of the LORD of

hosts the land is burned up, And the people are like fuel for the fire; No man spares his brother.... ²¹Manasseh devours Ephraim, and Ephraim Manasseh, And together they are against Judah. In spite of all this, His anger does not turn away And His hand is still stretched out.

Ezekiel 20:33–35 ³³“As I live,” declares the Lord GOD, “surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out, I shall be king over you. ³⁴“I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out; ³⁵and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face.

The judgment of the Tribulation that the prophet Ezekiel wrote about is the time period that the prophet Isaiah is referring to here when Israel will finally come to faith and God's disciplinary action against her will cease.

The metaphor used here is that of drinking and suffering the resulting effects of being drunk. Instead of alcohol, it is God's anger that is causing the nation to reel and suffer as though drunk. This is from the Lord's hand. Many different peoples and nations have been used to impose His divine temporal discipline on the nation, but it is at His direction that these things have happened just as He promised it so very long ago.

The concept of a cup in relation to God's wrath is prominent in the Scriptures. “The ‘cup of His anger,’ ‘cup of reeling,’ and ‘cup of horror and desolation’ are figures representing the effects of Jehovah's wrath upon the wicked. God is represented as the master of a banquet, dealing madness and stupor of vengeance to guilty guests. There is in the prophets no more frequent or terrifying image, and is repeated with no more pathetic force in the language of our Lord's agony” [Merrill F. Unger, s.v. “cup,” *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, 266-267].

Jeremiah spoke of it in relation to the nations as well as to Judah.

Jeremiah 25:15–16 ¹⁵For thus the LORD, the God of Israel, says to me, “Take this cup of the wine of wrath from My hand and cause all the nations to whom I send you to drink it. ¹⁶“They will drink and stagger and go mad because of the sword that I will send among them.”

Jesus prayed to have the cup of God's wrath removed from Him, but He submitted to the Father's will in the matter.

Matthew 26:39, 42 ³⁹And He went a little beyond *them*, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.”... ⁴²He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, “My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done.”

Israel will drink of this cup until it is completely drained. The cup is a metaphor for the wrath contained therein. Cup, *קִיבָּעַת כּוֹס*, is unusual. “The word *kos* (cup) possibly refers specifically to the interior, and *qubba* to the convex surface. It is possible that the

construction is pleonastic [the use of more words than are necessary to convey meaning, either as a fault of style or for emphasis], and that we should render *goblet-cup*, a poetic amplification of *kos*" [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:319].

Young made a curious, and I think false, statement suggesting that God's wrath was not as complete as it could have been. "The *cup of his wrath* is the cup that contains his wrath. When it refers to the elect, *cup* indicates the moderation of the divine judgment. It is only a cup of wrath, not an oceanful [sic]" [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:319]. That is not the point; a full cup of wrath is the point and the size of the container is immaterial. No matter the size of the container, it symbolizes the full extent of the wrath God intended to pour out on Israel until the end. After all, we just read Matthew 26:39 which is referring to the cup of the full fury of God's wrath being poured out on the Messiah as He was being crucified.

The cup of wrath causes behavior that is quite similar to that of a staggering drunk. Reeling, תרעלה, means reeling, staggering, tottering, and wobbling, i.e., the condition of the stumbling, bumbling, half-falling motion of a drunken person as they try to walk. It indicates an unsteady walk or a swagger of body and mind brought on by wine, but in this context, it is a condition brought about by the wrath of God being imposed on His rebellious people.

A major problem for Israel is that they have no leader. They have rejected Yahweh as their leader, and they will ultimately reject the Messiah when He makes His first appearance in the land and offers the Messianic Kingdom to them. Since the time that Babylon destroyed the Temple, the nation has had no true leadership. They have had puppet leaders under the Greeks and the Romans, but they have had no leaders except for a few rabbis of the diaspora who became well-known, and now they have politically elected unbelievers to lead them which is ineffective leadership that is conducted apart from God.

"... Zion is challenged to rouse itself, like a drunkard awakening from a binge. In this case, however, the cup of His anger, not alcohol, has caused Jerusalem's senselessness. Israel's experience of God's discipline has left the nation's sense dull, its reactions slow. Not only is Jerusalem drunk, but she is also alone—there is no one to help guide Jerusalem home. None of Jerusalem's children are available to help their drunken parent!" [Michael Rydelnik and James Spencer, "Isaiah" in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, 1085].

Isaiah 51:18 ¹⁸There is none [אֵין] to guide [בְּהַל] her among all the sons she has borne, Nor [אֵין] is there one to take [תִּקַּח] her by the hand among all the sons she has reared.

This is an emphatic statement that no leader is to be found among the Israelites; therefore, they have no guidance. Grammatically, "none" and "nor are" in emphatic positions in both of the clauses in which the word is used in this verse (subject preceding verb is a marker of emphasis in Hebrew syntax). None, אֵין, means nothing, non-existence, emptiness, not, there is no, nothing, or without which is referring to a marker of negation in a declaration or proposition. The use of this word is a very clear indication that leadership in the nation is absent at the time in question. This is not a reference to the time frame around Isaiah's ministry because Judah had leadership at the time; some of it was good

(Hezekiah, Josiah) some of it was mixed (Amaziah, Jotham) and most of it was bad (Ahaz, Manasseh). Every Israelite is existing under the effects of God's disciplinary hand and, with the exception of the believing remnant, are living in unbelief. "She is left without anyone to feel sorry or mourn for her, particularly under the fury of Antichrist" [Merrill F. Unger, "Isaiah" in *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1289].

There is no one among them who can rise up and lead them out of the disciplinary stupor into which they have been existing for so many centuries. Of course, they had One, a capable, qualified leader, even the Messiah, come up out of the "sons she has borne," but they rejected Him at that time. There is no one other than the Messiah who will be able to lead them out of their situation, and He will do that, but not yet. Before the Babylonian destruction of the nation, the priests, prophets, and kings of Judah and Israel, with only a few exceptions, were derelict in their duties and failed to provide godly, sound leadership.

"To guide her" and "to take her by the hand" are figures of speech for leadership.

Guide, *נָהַל*, means to lead, to guide, to refresh, and to guide to a watering place and cause to rest there. The sense is to lead by taking or guiding somewhere. This verb has the sense of intensity, but since it is negated, the intensity refers to no one guiding the nation. Most translations use "guide" to translate this word in this place, but "none to lead" fits the context better (NET Bible, YLT, LSV) and makes the author's meaning clearer.

Take, *תָּיַק*, means to be strong, to strengthen, or to overpower. This verb form suggests causation, but it too is negated and therefore refers to the fact that there is no strong leader of the people who can cause them to be strengthened and led on the right path and help them stay there.

Both of these words are active participles which "indicates a person or thing conceived as being in the continual uninterrupted exercise of an activity" [Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, sec. 116a, 356]. Because these words are negated, the activity is revealed to be continually halted rather than continually ongoing.

The metaphor of sons "borne" and "reared" is a picture of derelict sons who refuse and/or are incapable of caring for their drunken mother ("her"). Ultimately, it is God Himself who will finally and permanently restore the nation, and, at that point, His wrath will cease and Israel will finally be relieved of the misery under which she has existed for so long.

"Duplication is an idiom of totality, and Jerusalem's troubles come in twos: *ruin and destruction* destroying the fabric of the city, *famine and sword* destroying its population" [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 326].

Isaiah 51:19 ¹⁹These two things have befallen you; Who will mourn [בִּיַד] for you? The devastation and destruction, famine and sword; How shall I comfort [נִחַם] you?

Just as there is no help available for Israel among the sons of Israel, there is no one from outside the nation to comfort and mourn for Israel either. The fact is that Israel has been universally hated by all the nations of the world except the United States—and that is

rapidly changing. There is no one in the world who is willing to come to the aid of the nation. In fact, the world is against Israel and that is only going to intensify as time marches onward to its God ordained conclusion. Ultimately, it will be God alone who is able to comfort the nation, but in the meantime, it is God who is seeing to it that these disciplinary measures are imposed on the nation.

Mourn, נָדַד, means to be in an emotional state of great sorrow, either formal, or without ritual. It has the sense of concern for people by sympathizing with them and mourning for them.

Comfort, נָחַם, means to be comforted referring to being in a state or condition of finding a measure of relief from sorrow and distress with the result of being consoled or encouraged. The verb always means to console or comfort. This verb is intensive in form.

The verse refers to two things, but there are four things listed. Some theologians consider them to be two pairs as Motyer did in the above quote, but the conjunction “and” is between the two words in each group which at least somewhat refutes the notion of two groups of two. I don't think anyone has a good solution to this grammatical issue.

The sons of Israel had no ability to assume leadership positions even if they wanted to do so, which, of course, they did not. God's disciplinary action has been devastating to the nation throughout history.

Isaiah 51:20 ²⁰Your sons have fainted [עָלְהוּ], They lie [שָׁכְבוּ] helpless at the head of every street, Like an antelope in a net, Full [מְלֵא] of the wrath [תְּמִיָּה] of the LORD, The rebuke [גְּעִיר] of your God.

The nation was helpless and the nation's people were helpless. That is a natural thing to have happen, of course, because nations consist of people; therefore, weak people can only have a weak nation. They lie in place implying being in a helpless state.

Fainted, עָלָה, means to faint, to swoon, or to be weakened pertaining to an unhealthy state ranging from listlessness to losing consciousness. The sense is to faint meaning to pass out from weakness or physical or emotional distress. The verb is passive meaning the sons have fainted due to external stimuli that they cannot control. It is also intensive; this is a serious situation. “Both prophets [Isaiah and Amos] use the image of exhausted youth to underline the devastation and horror of the punishment unleashed by God. The theological contribution of 'ק' is best located within these passages, serving to underline, in the graphic tragedy of youth destroyed, the dark side of the Day of the Lord” [Willem A. VanGemeren, s.v. “עָלָה,” *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, 3:428].

Lie, שָׁכַב, means to lie down in a horizontal position. The NASB is the only English translation I routinely used that adds the word “helpless” to the text; it is not in the Hebrew text. Because “lie” is tied in with “fainted,” the addition of the word is unnecessary. “Fainted” inherently refers to a helpless state, usually lying down in a prone position.

The metaphor suggests they are all incapacitated and unable to respond in any meaningful way to get themselves out of their predicament. The only thing available to get

them out of their situation is faith, and that is something the nation has been and continues to refuse to do. The metaphor goes on to compare them to an antelope caught in a net and struggling to get out. Animals caught in a net struggle until exhausted and then they lie down seemingly accepting their inevitable fate. In the same way, the Israelites are lying everywhere, exhausted experiencing the wrath of God as exercised by the pagan agents of God, awaiting their inevitable end.

The sons of Israel are caught in a trap much worse than a net; they are caught in a trap of their own making by rebelling against Yahweh, and they are reaping His full wrath in that trap. There is no escape.

Hebrews 10:31 ³¹It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Note also that the wrath being inflicted on the nation is the wrath of Israel's God, identified as "your" God. In the most basic sense here, it is not the wrath of the nations who hate Israel; it is the wrath of Yahweh using those nations as His disciplinary instruments. That does not mean the nations don't hate Israel, they do, and they may have done exactly what God was having them do—or not. God's involvement ensured that His will was carried out in terms of the imposition of divine discipline.

Wrath, *חַמָּה*, means anger, fury, and rage referring to a very strong feeling of displeasure, hostility, and antagonism usually in relation to a wrong, real or imagined, as an extension of the heat and burning feeling one can have when one is emotionally worked up in strife and turmoil. When God exercises His wrath, it is nothing but righteous and holy and there is no sin in it. Israel's situation is exactly what the nation deserves. Full, *מְלֵא*, indicates the extent of God's wrath. He could not be any angrier with His people than He is when He is imposing temporal discipline on the nation, which has basically been all the time.

Rebuke, *נָעַר*, means to speak words that show what another had done wrong, and other actions may follow to show the disapproval. The root indicates a check applied to a person or peoples through strong admonitions or actions. "... *rebuke* here has a strong sense, almost approaching the force of *curse*" [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:322].

Isaiah 51:21 ²¹Therefore, please hear this, you afflicted [*אֲפֻיָּי*], Who are drunk, but not with wine:

This verse reveals the transition from wrath and judgment to the promise of restoration, and it connects what follows, deliverance, with what has come before, judgment. Not only are the Israelites, the afflicted, going to be delivered from cup of reeling, but it will be turned around and passed on to those who have persecuted them.

"You afflicted, drunk, but not with wine" is a reference to the wrath that has made the people act as though drunk. Some theologians call this a messenger formula. "Hear" is a command to listen to what is being revealed because it is important.

The people are described as afflicted, which is a good description of life for the Israelites throughout history and particularly beginning with the Babylonian captivity and

continuing on into the *diaspora* and ultimately into the Tribulation. Afflicted, עָנִי, means afflicted, wretched, and oppressed referring to being in a lowly, needy state, as a class of persons of low status in a society, usually of persons in fiscal poverty, implying a lack of resources. The sense is that of a person who has been the victim of some pain, injury, or harm, either physically or mentally and often associated with recurring treatment or events.

The next verse reveals that it is God, and God alone, Israel's God, who will finally deliver them.

Isaiah 51:22 ²²Thus says your Lord [אֲדֹנָי from אָדֹנָי], the LORD [יְהוָה], even your God [אֱלֹהִים] Who contends [רִיב] for His people, "Behold, I have taken out of your hand the cup of reeling, The chalice of My anger; You will never [שָׁרָף] drink it again. לֹא־תִשְׁרָף־לְךָ֙

There are three different names for God used here to open this verse, and this is a very emphatic grammatical construction. The God identified by these names is Israel's God. In verse 20, God was "your God," in reference to Israel, and here He refers to Himself in relation to the Israelites "your Lord," "your God," and "His people." Even in the midst of all this difficulty, He is completely identified with Israel and the Israelites.

Lord, אֲדֹנָי, means lord, master, husband, or owner. When it is used for God, it is describing the One who is the supernatural master over the universe, a title of the one true God. The sense is that this name reflects His authority. "[Adonai is] a divine name, tr. 'the Lord,' and signifying 'sovereignty,' 'master.' Its etymology is obscure, but its meaning is certain—God is the ruling Lord" [Merrill C. Tenney, s.v. "Adonai" *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 1, 1:58]. This word is plural in the text. "This plural form of the word (lit. 'your lords'), is considered to be an intensive form that is frequently applied to humans but rarely to God" [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 355]. Because this word may refer to a husband, some theologians apply this to the marriage relationship between Israel and Yahweh (cf. Hosea). In Isaiah 50:1, God denied divorcing the nation, which serves to reinforce the concept of a marriage between Him and Israel. In this verse, then, the thinking goes that as a faithful husband who has not put His wife away by means of divorce for her infidelity, He instead restores her after punishing her. "Isaiah uses the plural of the word here usually reserved for human relationships—as of husband to wife, parent to child. Could it be that Isaiah chose this form here in order to stress that the divine lordship comes down into the ordinary affairs of life? Transcendent though he is, his sovereignty is not remote but practical and everyday" [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 327].

LORD, or Yahweh, יְהוָה, is a reference to the Creator God of the universe who identified Himself to Moses, and therefore through Moses to Israel, as I AM WHO I AM (Ex. 3:14). "Jehovah [Yahweh] represents God in His special relation to the chosen people, as revealing Himself to them, their guardian and object of their worship [Merrill F. Unger, s.v. "Elohim" *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, 360].

God, אֱלֹהִים, refers, in this context, to the one true God, although it is also used of pagan deities. Elohim represents God in His relation to the world at large, as Creator, providential

ruler in the affairs of men, and controlling the operations of nature” [Merrill F. Unger, s.v. “Elohim” *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, 360].

These names emphasize “(a) his great power as master and lord who controls the whole earth, (b) his relationship to his people as Yahweh their covenant God, and (c) his function as a judge who is concerned that his people are treated with justice” [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 414].

Contends, *רִיב*, means to strive, to contend, and to conduct a lawsuit, although it can refer to contending or striving for reasons in other than a legal setting as well. At the same time that God has been disciplining the nation, He has also acted in its behalf in order to preserve the nation to keep it from being completely destroyed. He is the defender of Israel. At the end of history, He will accomplish the ultimate in striving and save all Israel and inaugurate the Messianic Kingdom.

“Behold” is a call to pay attention to what follows. Israel should find this to be incredibly good news. The time of their judgment is going to end, the cup of reeling and the chalice of His anger is going to be removed from them, and they will never drink it again. “Wrath was deserved, wrath was measured out, wrath is gone—and gone forever” [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 327].

This cannot be a reference to any period of time other than the end of the Tribulation.

“Note the absence of any mention of Cyrus or of other historical referents here. Cyrus may be the instrument to deliver Israel from Babylon, but the deliverance being spoken of here is larger than that from Babylon, and it is God alone who can effect this deliverance” [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 354, n. 93].

“Plainly none of these promises were fulfilled at the return from exile in Babylon. Although some argue that the prophet is using hyperbole here, because the author gives no hint of using a figure of speech, it is better to still anticipate the fulfillment of God’s permanent restoration of Israel in the future messianic kingdom” [Michael Rydelnik and James Spencer, “Isaiah” in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, 1086].

“I have taken” (*לָקַחְתִּי*) is a perfect verb representing completed action, yet this prophecy has yet to be fulfilled. This is another example of a prophetic perfect. God is going to see to it that the cup of reeling and the chalice of His anger is completely removed from Israel, and it will never be experienced by the nation again once He fulfills His promise. When God guarantees something is going to happen, it is going to happen. He can use a verb tense that represents something already completed even though it is an event that won’t be completed until sometime in the future, which is the situation presented in this verse. This situation still has not happened, and it will not happen until the end of the Tribulation.

Once God’s anger is removed from the nation, Israel will never again experience God’s temporal divine discipline. There will be no need; Israel will never rebel against God

again. Never, *נִסְּ*, means to add to increase, to continue to do, but here it is negated meaning no longer. It refers to the extension of time to a point but no further. This verb is causative; it is God who will see to it that Israel never experiences His wrath ever again.

Due to the progressive revelation that we are privileged to have before us, we know that the Tribulation, the time of Jacob's distress, will mark the end of God's disciplinary program for Israel and at the end of it, all Israel will be saved.

Jeremiah 30:4-7 ⁴Now these are the words which the LORD spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah: ⁵"For thus says the LORD, 'I have heard a sound of terror, Of dread, and there is no peace. ⁶'Ask now, and see If a male can give birth. Why do I see every man *With* his hands on his loins, as a woman in childbirth? And why have all faces turned pale? ⁷'Alas! for that day is great, There is none like it; And it is the time of Jacob's distress, But he will be saved from it.

"Thou shalt no more drink it again. This can only refer to Israel's final deliverance from the Babylon of her present worldwide Dispersion. For since her return from Babylon she has drunk the dregs of suffering more bitterly than ever before, and the bitterest draught of all awaits her in 'the time of Jacob's trouble'" [Merrill F. Unger, "Isaiah" in *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1290].

Isaiah 51:23 ²³"I will put it into the hand of your tormentors [*נִגְּ*], Who have said to you [*נִפְּ*], 'Lie down that we may walk over you.' You have even made your back like the ground And like the street for those who walk over it."

The cup of wrath that Israel has been drinking for so long, will finally be taken from them by God and instead given to those who have persecuted Israel and that will be done by God as well.

During the Exodus, God judged Israel's captors with plagues and finally with death in the Red Sea, at least for Pharaoh and his army. At the end of history as we know it, that same situation will immediately precede the Second Coming when the Lord will vanquish Israel's enemies and save the nation from destruction (Rev. 19:20-21) which leads to the second Exodus out of the world and back into the land of Israel. "The removal of wrath from the one and the infliction of wrath on the other were two sides of perfect divine justice. But the question yet to be answered here is what Passover work of God waits to be revealed as the explanation of verse 22. For his wrath does not evaporate; it demands satisfaction" [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 327].

What happens to the enemies of Israel is not revealed here, although we can piece some things together from the body of Scripture that follows. Instead, their behavior towards Israel throughout history is described. They trample and humiliate God's people as though literally forcing them to lay down on the ground and walk over them. It was common for ancient kings to step on the necks of kings they had conquered to show their domination over them (Josh. 10:24). There are historical records of conquering armies walking or riding horses across the backs of their fallen enemies [cf. John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 357, n. 99, and Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, 323]. Clearly, the emphasis is on the ability and the desire of Israel's enemies to not merely defeat them

but to shame and humiliate them. “Just because God will use these nations as tools to accomplish his larger purposes with Israel does not mean they are immune from the moral standards of God.... If he uses a wicked people to discipline his own, this does not mean the wicked will escape judgment” [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 356]. These nations already hated Israel; they were part of Satan's plot to destroy Israel all along. God simply directed the hatred in ways that fulfilled His will all the while they were doing what they wanted to do in the first place.

Both Babylon and Assyria were punished by God after they were used by Him to discipline the Israelites for their rebellion.

Isaiah 10:12 ¹²So it will be that when the Lord has completed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, *He will say*, “I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the pomp of his haughtiness.”

Jeremiah 50:17–18 ¹⁷“Israel is a scattered flock, the lions have driven *them* away. The first one *who* devoured him was the king of Assyria, and this last one *who* has broken his bones is Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. ¹⁸“Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: ‘Behold, I am going to punish the king of Babylon and his land, just as I punished the king of Assyria.

Tormentors, יִגְּדוּ, is in a causative verb form meaning to torment, to bring grief, and to cruelly treat others. The grammar suggests an ongoing series consisting of continual cruel treatment, which could have been translated “into the hand of [the] ones tormenting you.” That is, of course, precisely what history reveals has happened to the nation.

The text does not literally say “Who have said to you;” it literally says, “Who have said to your soul [נַפְשְׁךָ].” Israel's tormentors are not simply interested in killing them; they are interested in destroying the very fact of their personhood, their humanity. That too is in accord with Satan's hatred of the Israelites. The NKJV, ASV, YLT, and LSV all use the word “soul” in their translations.