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Awake! Awake! Clothe Yourself, with Strength, O Arm of the LORD

51: 9-16

Awake! Awake! Clothe yourself with strength, O arm of the LORD DIG: Who is speaking here? For what nation was Rahab a nickname (30:7)? To what event is the speaker referring? What does the speaker mean by calling upon the LORD to “do it again?” What effect would recalling this event have upon the believing remnant during the Great Tribulation? What words or pictures are used to describe what the persecution of the antichrist felt like to those people who loved God? How would you sum up ADONAI’s message to these people? What would that message do for you when you are persecuted today?

REFLECT: When feeling persecuted, what event in your personal history can you look back upon and call on to believe that ADONAI is really there with you in the midst of the trial? What promises of the LORD encourage you to keep on following Him even when things seem impossible? Why do they mean so much to you? How hard is it for you to live out the reality of your faith when being confronted with fear? If the disciples could be afraid (Mark 4:35-41), and if Peter could say that he didn’t know Jesus (Matthew 26:69-75), what does that say about us? What do you say to that part of you that is afraid in the face of persecution? What is your answer to, “Who is YHVH?”

Chapter 51 is a far eschatological prophecy and a message of comfort to the believing remnant during the Great Tribulation. Zion, or Jerusalem, will be under extreme persecution from the antichrist and the armies of the world (Zechariah 14:2). At that time, they will be encouraged to clothe themselves with strength and call on Jesus Christ, or the arm of the LORD (51:9a). No matter what age we live in, believers need to cling to ADONAI. The Psalmist reminds us of this important lesson when he says: My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever (Psalm 73:26).

The doctrine of *progressive revelation* applies here to this concept of **the arm of the**

LORD. This is the idea that later revelation builds upon earlier revelation. The new revelation is complementary and supplementary to past revelation, not contradictory. Note the way in which **Jesus** elevated the teachings of the Torah by extending, expanding, and internalizing them. **He** frequently prefaced **His** teaching with the expression: **You have heard it said . . . but I say to you.** In a similar fashion, the author of **Hebrews** points out that **God**, who **in the past spoke to our forefathers through the prophets**, has **in these last days spoken to us by His Son, who reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of His nature (Heb 1:1-3).**²⁰³ *Progressive revelation*, then, takes place in **Isaiah**, just as it has taken place in the sixty-six books of the Bible. This is especially true of **the Suffering Servant**. Like all *progressive revelation* it develops from vagueness to clarity, from shadow to reality.



Another important example of *progressive revelation* is **the arm of the LORD**. It is referred to **nine times** in **Isaiah**, but the concept develops gradually. At first it is merely a phrase, but in the end the identity of **the arm of the LORD** is unmistakable and moving. First, he introduces it in **30:30** and **32**, secondly and thirdly, he mentions it again in **40:10** and **50:2**. Then fourthly, for the first time **Isaiah** ties the concept of **the arm of the LORD** to **salvation (51:5 and 9)**. **From this point forward all the references to the arm of the LORD and salvation will either be coupled together directly or in context.** Fifthly, in **52:10** **Isaiah** declares that **the LORD** will bare His holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.

Sixthly, **Isaiah** goes into great detail about who this **arm of the LORD** is going to be (**53:1**). For those who trusted **in the LORD**, five times earlier **Isaiah** had talked about this

arm resulting in **salvation**. Whom should **the Israelites** believe in? **Isaiah** reveals that the **arm of the LORD** is none other than **the Messiah**, who by means of **His** humiliation and suffering would bring about salvation for **Isra'el (Romans 11:25-26)**. **So how will these people gain salvation that will result in righteousness? By faith in Yeshua Messiah alone.**

The seventh time we see **the arm of the LORD, ADONAI** will hear **His holy ones (Zechariah 14:5)** confessing their sins (see the commentary on **Revelation, to see link click Ev - The Basis for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ**). At the end of the Great Tribulation **they** will have become **a prey** to the antichrist; however, **God** will see that they are defenseless against **Him**. And as a result, **He** will not **abandon them**. **So God's own arm** will bring **salvation and righteousness** to **the believing remnant (59:1 and 16)**. **God** says to believers of every age: **I will never leave you; never will I abandon you (Hebrews 13:5b)**.

The eighth time **Isaiah** uses this concept we see that **He** has set angels, or **watchmen** on **the walls of Jerusalem** to remind **Him** constantly of **His** promises to **the City**; for **He** has sworn that **she** will never again be plundered by enemies, but will enjoy the fruits of **her** labor in security and peace. The **LORD has sworn** this **by His right hand and by His mighty arm (62:8)**. The antichrist will not succeed. **Zion** will be **God's holy City**.

The ninth time we see **the arm of the LORD** is at the Second Coming (**63:5**). **Isaiah** reemphasizes that **Messiah** will fight alone. There is no one else in the world that can save **Isra'el** from the invading armies, and the antichrist himself will be the first casualty of the battle (**Second Thessalonians 2:8**). **God's own arm** will work **salvation** for **the Jews**, and **His own wrath** will sustain **Him** during this campaign (see **Kh - The Eight Stage Campaign of Armageddon**). Therefore, we can see that through *progressive revelation*, **Isaiah**, under the inspiration and direction of **the Spirit of God**, has taken the concept of **the arm of the LORD** from vagueness to clarity, from shadow to reality.

The context of these last six descriptions of **the arm of the LORD** is built around the cry of **the Jews** during the Great Tribulation. Just as **the hand** symbolizes personal activity (**Exodus 13:14; Ezra 7:28; Isaiah 25:10; Ezekiel 3:14**), so **the arm** symbolizes personal **strength** in action. Not even the greatest of the righteous of the TaNaKh are described as **the LORD's arm**. Rather, **the arm** went with **Moses (63:12)** and strengthened **David (Psalm 89:20-21)**. The metaphor calls upon **the LORD Himself** to act.²⁰⁴

Therefore, **Isaiah** responds and tells them: **Awake, awake! Clothe yourself with strength** and call on the **arm of the LORD (51:9a)**, which **Isaiah 53** will clearly confirm

as **the Messiah Himself**. The doubling of **awake** is for emotional intensity of the appeal. In the midst of their persecution, **Jesus Christ** will show **the believing remnant** during the Great Tribulation that on the basis of the miracles **He** had performed in the past, **they** could trust **Him** in the present, saying: **Awake, as in days gone by, as in generations of old**. What were those past miracles?²⁰⁵

First, **He** had **cut Rahab to pieces (51:9b)**. The name **Rahab** is a poetical name of **Egypt (Isaiah 30:7; Ps 87:4)**. So here **Isaiah** is referring to the miracles of the exodus (see the commentary on **Exodus Bj - The Ten Plagues of Egypt**). And how were the miracles of the exodus performed? From one **Person**, over and over again, who is given a special title throughout **Exodus**. **He** first appeared at the burning bush (see the commentary on **Exodus Aq - Flames of Fire from within a Burning Bush**). **His** title is **the Angel of the LORD (Ex 3:2)**, who is **the Second Person of the Trinity**. **He** is the same **Person** referred to here as **the arm of the LORD**.

Secondly, **He** had **pierced the monster through (51:9c-10)**. In reference to **Egypt**, the **monster** was pharaoh (**Ezeki'el 29:3; 32:2**). When did **God** pierce pharaoh? When **He** killed his firstborn son with the tenth plague (see the commentary on **Exodus By - At Midnight the LORD Struck Down all the Firstborn in Egypt**). Evil is not some ancient chaos **monster**, it was pharaoh who tried to threaten the redemptive plan of **God**. So the drying **up of the Sea** of Reeds (see the commentary on **Exodus Ce - Salvation at the Red Sea**), was also a miracle when **ADONAI** made **the waters of the great deep dry up, and made a road in the depths of the Sea of Reeds so that the redeemed might cross over** and escape the Egyptians (**51:10**).

The ransomed Israelites of ADONAI will return to Jerusalem victorious. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them and sorrow and sighing will flee away (51:11). We have seen this response earlier, virtually word-for-word (see **Gm - The Highway of Holiness Will Be There**). **The ransomed Israelites** will wear **everlasting joy on their heads** like a wreath of flowers worn for celebration during the feasts. Therefore, it will be during the messianic Kingdom, when sin and sorrow will be defeated forever, fleeing **away** from their mighty Conqueror. Finally, after a long struggle, **gladness and joy** will be **theirs** forever more.

The Comforter of Isra'el is the Creator of the universe. Therefore, **Isra'el** need have no fear of **her puny** mortal oppressors. They needed to remember and believe the words of King David: **The LORD is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters, He restores my soul. He guides**

me in righteousness for His name sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the LORD forever (Psalm 23). ADONAI, in a **three-part answer**, promises that **He** will act on behalf of **His people** during the Great Tribulation as **He** had acted in the past. These are also lessons for us to remember.

First, is the pointlessness of living in fear in light of God's power. Even with the armies of the antichrist at the gate, ADONAI says, It is **I, even I am He who comforts you. Who are you that you need to fear mortal man (51:12a)?** There are three different Hebrew words for **man**. One word means mankind, like Adam. The second Hebrew word is the word *ish* (pronounced *eesh*). This word simply means **man** in contrast to **woman**; male in contrast to female. But the word used here is the Hebrew word *enosh* that pictures man in his feebleness or frailty. So **Isaiah** is emphasizing **man's** weakness here. In light of ADONAI's tremendous power, why should the believers have any **fear** when **the sons of man are but grass (51:12b)?** It was **God** who made the heavens and the earth so why should they **fear man** who will wither away **like grass? The LORD**, who raises storms alike in the world of nature and history, is able to **quiet** them, thus **His** children have no need to **fear**.²⁰⁶

Secondly, is the problem of forgetting their Maker. That you forget the LORD your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, that you live in constant terror every day because of the wrath of the oppressor, who is bent on destruction? For where is the wrath of the oppressor (51:13)? To live in **constant fear** of humans is to have effectively forgotten **God**. I know that is easy to say, but it is true nonetheless. It is not that **God** has forgotten **His people (49:14)**; it is that **they** had forgotten Him! This was the problem of Ahaz (7:1-17), it was the problem of the exiles, and it can be a problem for us today if we let it. If **God** is indeed our **Maker**, then we need not fear anyone. None of this is to deny the horror of oppression. This is not an exercise in self-delusion. Rather it is a call to focus on the spiritual reality. If **the oppressor** fills my horizon, then I have only one option: be ruled by **fear** and hatred. But if we can see the big picture of the Gospel, then where is the anger of **the oppressor**? If we know that it is **God** who holds our ultimate destiny, then **the oppressor** no longer holds power over us. Yes, oppressors may hurt us, even kill us, but they do not have the power to make us follow them. **God** is the ruler over all.²⁰⁷ This is not easy, but it is possible.

This could not be a description of the Jews living during the Babylonian Captivity. Once there, they settled in and would live in **peace and prosperity (Jeremiah 29:4-11)**. They did not **live in constant terror every day because of the wrath of the oppressor, who is bent on destruction**. In fact, when it was time to leave with the decree of Cyrus (see [Ia - The Deliverance by Cyrus the Great](#)), most stayed in Babylon. No, the Jews who will **live in constant terror every day** will be those living during the Great Tribulation. They will **fear the wrath of the oppressor (Daniel 8:19)**, the antichrist.

Thirdly, is the promise of the restoration. The cowering prisoners will soon be set free; they will not die in their dungeon, nor will they lack bread (51:14). God will not allow **His** oppressed **people** to perish. There will always be a believing remnant, and as a result, there would be another exodus as they return to Jerusalem from all over the world (**Isaiah 60:4; 62:10; Jeremiah 23:3 and 8, 30:1-3; Ezekiel 36:24-28**). That was the basis of the prayer in **51:9-11**. On the basis of what **He** was able to accomplish for **Isra'el** in the past (**51:11**), **He** is asked to perform future miracles to fulfill prophecy. And in **51:14** **ADONAI** makes the promise that **He** would fulfill that prayer. Why will **His people** not be wiped out by the antichrist? Because of who **God** is in **51:15** and what **He** is already doing in **51:16**. Here **Isaiah** asks the **people** of his own day, the Jews at the end of the Great Tribulation, and of us today the question of the ages first framed by Pharaoh: **Who is the LORD, that I should obey Him (Exodus 5:2)?** How we answer that question will determine where we spend eternity.

For I am ADONAI your God, who churns up the sea so that its waves roar - the LORD of heaven's angelic armies is His name (51:15). The sentence starts with the *waw* conjunctive, the all-purpose connector of the Hebrew language. Here it expresses the idea that **the prisoners will soon be set free** because **ADONAI** is in control of human affairs. If the **God** of Israel is **ADONAI**, the great **I am**, then everything must be viewed from that perspective. **The whole earth is the LORD's (6:3)**, and **He** moves history toward **His** intended conclusion.

Then at the end of His answer about how **He** will act on their behalf, **ADONAI** declares: **I have put My words in your mouth and covered you with the shadow of My hand - I who set the heavens in place, who laid the foundations of the earth, says to Zion, "You are My people" (51:16).** Although it is true that **God** has made the world, yet, that world is still filled with oppressors. Yes, it is true that **ADONAI** chose the **people** of Israel for Himself, but through their sin, those **people** had come to be called **a godless nation, a people who angered Him (10:6)**. In view of these facts is **He** really **the LORD**? Yes, for the universe is to be remade (**65:17**), and the people of whom it was said **not My people**

shall be called **My people (Hosea 2:23; Isaiah 65:19)**. How will this happen? It is to happen through **the arm of the LORD**, His Servant the Messiah. The believing remnant will need to cling to **Jesus Christ** as they **walk through the valley of the shadow of death**. Is it not the same for us today in this **evil** world?

What, then, shall we say in the midst of our own persecution? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? Since He did not spare even His own Son but gave Him up for us all, won't He also give us everything else? Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen as His own? No one - for God Himself has given us a right standing with Himself. Who then will condemn us? No one - for Messiah Yeshua died for us and was raised to life for us, and He is sitting in the place of honor at God the Father's right hand, interceding for us. We have an advocate who pleads our case. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous (Romans 8:31-34 and First Peter 2:1 NLT).