

Jer. 31:2-14, North and South Together
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H. Van Dyke Parunak

Overview

1. This is in the "sin and restoration" section of 30-33, but at this point there is no emphasis on sin, just restoration. Looking at the restoration of North (Samaria, v.5) and South (Zion, v.6) together.
2. 31:2-14.
The successive paragraphs in this section give more and more detail, and follow somewhat a temporal succession, from God's own counsels, to an announcement of them, to the people's prayer and deliverance, and finally the announcement to all the nations. The picture is that of Mom and Dad planning a birthday party for a little child, who is eavesdropping at the door and whose excitement and anticipation grows greater, the more he hears. Finally what they planned in secret emerges as balloons on the mailbox and banners in the trees, announced for all to see.
 - a) 31:2, A glimpse into the heavenly council chambers, where God resolves to give rest to his people.
 - b) 31:3-6, The prophet hears God's plan of restoration from a great distance.
 - c) 31:7-9, Thus motivated, the nation should ask God to restore them, and he will.
 - d) 31:10-14, All nations will learn of the Lord's care for his people.

A. 31:2, God resolves to give rest to his people.

To understand what is happening in this verse, we must ask three questions: What is happening? When is it happening? To whom is it happening?

1. *What* is happening: God is showing grace and giving rest. The last clause is beautiful, "...when I went to cause him to rest." Not just "when I caused him to rest," but "when I went" God exerts himself on behalf of the nation.

Illustration: Bringing Anita home from college--I wasn't already there. I had to go there, pack her up, and conduct her back home.

Application: It costs God something to help us. Creation is the work of his hands (Ps. 19), but salvation requires his strong arm (Isa. 59). It's hard to understand why this should be, since he is infinite in power, but it is the teaching of God's word. Even harder to understand is why a holy, perfect God should *want* to save sinful people like us, but he does, and we should thank and worship him for it.

2. *When* is it happening? In English, the verbs are in the past tense, and we are apt to jump to the conclusion that this action must therefore be past. It might be; this form of Hebrew verb is often used for past tense action. But biblical Hebrew does not really have tenses. It distinguishes completed action from ongoing action, and this is the verb form that emphasizes the completedness of the action. It is used not only for the past, but also for prophecies about the future, which are "as good as done" because they are the Word of God. How can we decide which is intended here? The answer lies in the third question.
3. To *whom* is it happening? "The people which were left of the sword." A remnant ("left") that has survived military assault ("the sword") and exile (because they are now returning through "the wilderness"). The best fit in Israel's history is the remnant of the coming judgment at the hands of Babylon. So the passage is a prophecy, not history.
4. Stepping back: God is planning the restoration of the nation after its captivity.

B. 31:3-6, The prophet hears God's plan of restoration from a great distance.

"Of old" is literally "from afar." We are to picture the prophet straining to pick out the words of someone at a distance. Reinforcing this, the quotation starts in the middle of a sentence: "...and I have loved thee ...," as though the first few of the faint words escape his grasp. But those that remain are ample cause for rejoicing. They describe successive stages in God's restoration of the nation, as in 30:18-31:1. Yet the stages are not the same.

1. 3, the Foundation: elective love.
Anything at all good that happens to us, comes to us through God's elective love. This verse sets his love before us both in its eternal form and in its temporal effects.
 - a) "Everlasting love:" not only eternal into the future, but from eternity past, when the Lord set his love upon them as his people. Nothing causes God's love for us. It is tied up with his elective purposes toward us, 1 Thes. 1:4; 2 Thes. 2:13.
 - b) In time, it is the reason that he draws us to himself. "Lovingkindness" here is his covenant faithfulness, which, like his love, is from everlasting (Ps. 25:6). Because he loves us, he enters into covenant with us. Because of this covenant, he draws us to himself. It all starts with him. We are passive.
2. 4a, the People: population will increase.
In 30:18, the cities were to be rebuilt. Now it is the nation, previously ravaged by siege and exile, as in 30:19,20.
3. 4b, Rejoicing.

As in 30:19. The people are not only reestablished, but in a climate of prosperity and joy.

4. 5, Agriculture.

The Lord will restore agricultural prosperity. "Eat them as common things:" Lev. 19:23; Jud. 9:27 show that the fruit of a new vine was not to be eaten for three years, and in the fourth it was an offering to the Lord. So this shows the new order well established, in the fifth year and beyond.

5. 6, Orthodox Worship.

The people will once again go up to Jerusalem to worship the Lord. NB: These are the people of Ephraim, the northern kingdom, who are going to Jerusalem, something that Jeroboam forbade them at the time of the split after Solomon. Not only are the people brought back to the land, but they are reunited as they have not been for centuries. Thus they are better off after the captivity than they were before!

This, then, is the whisper that the prophet hears of God's gracious purposes, like a little boy listening in at the keyhole while his parents plan his party. How should they respond to this knowledge?

C. **31:7-9, Thus motivated, the nation should ask God to restore them, and he will.**

This oracle takes the form of a little conversation. First the people are to ask the Lord to restore them, and then he is to answer their prayer.

1. 7, the people joyfully ask God to restore them. Not "shout among," but "rejoice over:" Jacob is now the head of the nations. The people shout with praise, yet they are asking God for something. Seems backwards; usually we praise God for what he *has* done. But we can understand in this case. The praise results from what the people have heard the Lord planning. They know that it is his purpose to save his people, and so they joyfully ask him to do just that.

Application:

- a) So our prayers are to be founded on God's promises. A promise does not mean we don't need to pray. It does mean that we can pray in fulness of faith. Our prayers should be full of scripture, as we seek to frame our requests in ways that are pleasing to the Lord. This is the persistent example of scripture.
 - b) Phil. 1:4; 4:6, we are to pray with joy and thankfulness, because we have heard God's promises and know that he will help us.
2. 8-9, God their Father will restore them.
Each successive couplet unfolds another detail of this promise.

- a) 8a, where they come from: not just the North Country (reflecting the main route joining Israel to Mesopotamia), but also "from the ends of the earth," since we are looking at an eschatological return. Wherever they are, he will bring them back.
- b) 8b, who they are: even the weak and feeble, who might not otherwise be able to stand the journey.
- c) 9a, their attitude as they come: tears and supplications. This is at first glance as backwards and surprising as their request with joy! Why should they weep when they are returning? Can't say that these are only tears of joy, because he also mentions "supplications." Yet it is completely consistent: it is only when the Lord saves us from our sin that we fully realize its enormity, and repent of it. In fact, deep conviction and sorrow for sin is one of the greatest evidences of the Spirit's work in our lives.
- d) 9b, God's care for them. Plenty of water, and a smooth road that will not turn their ankles. Contrast the slippery, hazardous path of the wicked, 23:12.
- e) 9c, God's reason for all of this: he is their father, and restores them with a father's love.

D. 31:10-14, All nations will learn of the Lord's care for his people.

Finally, what was planned in the secret chambers of heaven is proclaimed to all nations, so that they can see God's goodness to his people. Four paragraphs, alternating between what God does and what his people experience.

1. 10-11, The Lord's action.

The two couplets here present two different perspectives on what has happened.

- a) 10 sees everything as a coordinated plan in the Lord's hands. He did the scattering; he will regather. There is no enemy, no third party. All is under his control.
- b) 11, by contrast pictures a third party, "him that was stronger than [Jacob], from whom the nation must be ransomed and redeemed.
- c) *Application:* This strange ambivalence runs throughout scripture. Compare Acts 2:23, "determinate counsel ... wicked hands." The world is not simple; we should not pretend to understand how an omnipotent God can permit evil and still not be tainted by it. But we should realize that we are in a real conflict, and yet that our loving heavenly Father superintends all, and will deliver us.

2. 12-13a, the people's joy.

The scene is one of a joyous harvest time, when the Lord's bounty

is evident to all, and people have parties to celebrate it. Instead of "flow together," this is the homonym "beam;" they are so full of joy at the Lord's bounty that their faces shine. For dancing in the vineyards, Judg. 21; for feasting and rejoicing, Ruth 3. But this is no temporary celebration; "they shall not sorrow any more at all." This joy will never end.

3. 13b-14a, the Lord's action.

He will reverse his people's fortune. The prosperity of the priests indicates two things.

- a) The harvests, out of which the priests receive a tithe, are bountiful.
- b) The people, restored spiritually as well as physically, are dutiful in paying those tithes. Recall that under Nehemiah, during the restoration, failure in this regard was a persistent problem. But in this great final restoration, God's people will serve him in spirit and in truth.
- c) *Application:* The true sign of God's blessing is a spiritual desire to serve him as well as material prosperity. We should not be satisfied until his Spirit rules in our hearts and minds, and our desires are one with his.

4. 14b, the people's satisfaction.

A summary of v.12. His goodness, according to v.12, consists of material bounty--yet their satisfaction is not in those things per se, but in his goodness, the knowledge that they are his gifts and come from his hand. Not, "Look at this beautiful cluster of grapes--have you ever seen anything like it?" But, "My heavenly father cares for me, and I can see that in the provision he has made for me, so I will rejoice in his care." It's a subtle difference, but an important one.

Summary: God's great purpose through all of history is revelation; bringing out into the open the beautiful things that he has wrought in secret. Cf. Mark 4:21-23. We have seen this depicted beautifully here concerning the nation Israel and her restoration to a place of favor; we are told it is God's pattern with the gospel (Rom. 16:25-26); and in our own lives as well, though now we see only through a glass darkly, one day we shall see face to face. The veil of tears will be torn aside, and we too will inherit the kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world.

Psalm: 126

Analysis

A. 30:4-31:25, * quote p: the promise of restoration after suffering to both houses of Israel

1. quote f: W:/)"L.EH HA/D.:BFRIYM):AŞER D.IB.ER Y:HWFH
)EL-YI&:RF)"L W:/)EL-Y:HW.DFH

2. quote: let S be suffering, R restoration. A series of oracles, in four groups; the first and third include both suffering and restoration; the second and fourth are purely restoration. He sneaks the northern kingdom in; no mention of either house in the first group, north included in the second, then focus on the north in the third, and on the south in the fourth. No one would suspect such a prospect for the rebellious north, but just as they led Judah in sin, so they will share with her in restoration.

a) 30:5-31:1, SRRS SRS RSR

Three cycles of suffering and restoration for Jacob. No explicit mention of either house of Israel. See previous studies.

b) 31:2-14, All restoration: the Lord regathers his people. Both northern and southern kingdoms (Samaria; Zion) are expressly included.

The successive oracles give more and more detail, and follow somewhat a temporal succession, from God's own counsels, to an announcement of them, to the people's prayer for them, and finally the restoration.

1) 31:2, quote p: God plans the nation's restoration.

a> quote f: 31:2 K.OH)FMAR Y:HWFH

b> quote:

1> MFCE) X"N B.A/M.ID:B.FR (AM &:RIYD"Y XFREB

2> HFLOWK: L:/HAR:G.IY(/OW YI&:RF)"L

2) 31:3-6, The prophet hears God's plan of restoration from a great distance.

a> quote f: 31:3 M"/RFXOWQ Y:HWFH NIR:)FH L/IY

b> quote: reason p

1> reason: result p

a: text: W:/)AH:ABAT (OWLFM):AHAB:T.IY/K:

b: result: (AL-K."N M:\$AK:T.IY/K: XFSED

2> text: coordinate p: consecutive steps of restoration
Note 3x initial (OWD, and the fourth also has an opening temporal phrase.

a: coordinate p: rebuilding

1: 31:4 (OWD)EB:N/"K:

2: W:/NIB:N"YT B.:TW.LAT YI&:RF)"L

b: coordinate p: rejoicing

1: (OWD T.A(:D.IY TUP.AY/IK:

2: W:/YFCF)T B.I/M:XOWL M:&AX:AQIYM

c: coordinate p: restoration of agriculture

1: 31:5 (OWD T.I+.: (IY K:RFMIYM B.:/HFR"Y
\$OM:ROWN

2: NF+:(W. NO+:(IYM

3: W:/XIL."LW.

d: temporal p: restoration of orthodox worship

1: time: 31:6 K.IY YE\$-YOWM

2: text: quote p

A. quote f QFR:)W. NOC:RIYM B.:/HAR)EP:RFYIM
 B. quote
 1. QW.MW.
 2. W:/NA(:ALEH CIY.OWN)EL-Y:HWFH
):ELOH"Y/NW. P

3) 31:7-9, Thus motivated, the nation should ask God to restore them, and he will.
 a> quote f: 31:7 K.IY-KOH)FMAR Y:HWFH
 b> quote: interchange p
 1> quote p: call on God to bring them back.
 a: quote f: coordinate p
 1: RFN.W. L:/YA(:AQOB &IM:XFH
 2: W:/CAH:ALW. B.:/RO)\$ HA/G.OWYIM
 3: HA\$:MIY(W.
 4: HAL:LW.
 5: W:/)IM:RW.
 b: quote: HOW\$A(Y:HWFH)ET-(AM./:KF)"T \$:)"RIYT
 YI&:RF)"L
 2> reason p: He will restore them, because he is their father.
 a: text:
 1: 31:8 HIN/:NIY M"BIY))OWT/FM M"/)EREC CFPOWN
 2: W:/QIB.AC:T.IY/M MI/Y.AR:K.:T"Y-)FREC
 3: B./FM (IW."R W./PIS."XA HFRFH W:/YOLED
 ET YAX:D./FW
 4: QFHFL G.FDOWL YF\$W.BW. H"N.FH
 5: 31:9 B.I/B:KIY YFBO)W.
 6: W./B:/TAX:ANW.NIYM)OWBIYL/"M
 7: comment p
 A. text:)OWLIYK/"M)EL-NAX:AL"Y MAYIM
 B.:/DEREK: YF\$FR
 B. comment <DEREK>: LO) YIK.F\$:LW. B./FH.
 b: reason: coordinate p: K.IY-
 1: HFYIYTIY L:/YI&:RF)"L L:/)FB
 2: W:/)EP:RAYIM B.:KOR/IY HW.) S

4) 31:10-14, Because of the Lord's care, the people will rejoice.
 a> quote f:
 1> 31:10 \$IM:(W. D:BAR-Y:HWFH G.OWYIM
 2> W:/HAG.IYDW. BF/)IY.IYM MI/M.ER:XFQ
 3> W:/)IM:RW.
 b> quote: alternating result p
 1> text: reason p: The Lord's action
 a: text: coordinate p
 1: M:ZFR"H YI&:RF)"L Y:QAB.:C/EN.W.
 2: W./\$:MFR/OW K.:/RO(EH (ED:R/OW
 b: reason: coordinate p
 1: 31:11 K.IY-PFDFH Y:HWFH)ET-YA(:AQOB
 2: W./G:)FL/OW MI/Y.AD XFZFQ MI/M./EN.W.
 2> result: chiasitic nap: the people return in joy
 a: text:
 1: 31:12 W./BF)W.

2: W:/RIN.:NW. BI/M:ROWM-CIY.OWN
 3: W:/NFH:ARW.)EL-+W.B Y:HWFH (AL-D.FGFN
 W:/(AL-T.IYRO\$ W:/(AL-YIC:HFR
 W:/(AL-B.:N"Y-CO)N W./BFQFR
 4: W:/HFY:TFH NAP:\$/FM K.:/GAN RFWEH
 b: paraphrase: W:/LO)-YOWSIYPW. L:/DA):ABFH (OWD
 c: text: 31:13)FZ T.I&:MAX B.:TW.LFH B.:/MFXOWL
 W./BAXURIYM W./Z:Q"NIYM YAX:D./FW
 3> text: coordinate p: The Lord's action
 a: W:/HFPAK:T.IY)EB:L/FM L:/&F&OWN
 b: W:/NIXAM:T.IY/M
 c: W:/&IM.AX:T.IY/M MI/YGOWN/FM
 d: 31:14 W:/RIW."YTIY NEPE\$ HA/K.OH:ANIYM D.F\$EN
 4> result: W:/(AM./IY)ET-+W.B/IY YI&:B.F(W.
 N:)UM-Y:HWFH S

- c) 31:15-22, coordinate p, SR SR, the Lord comforts two weepers, Rachel and Ephraem (N). Full focus on the northern kingdom. Next message.
- d) 31:23-25, quote p, restoration of Judah (note extended quote formula). Full focus on the south. Next message.