

ISAIAH

ISAIAH 47:1-4, BABYLON'S DOWNFALL, PART 1

This chapter relates to the destruction of Babylon. It is not necessarily connected to Cyrus and his conquest of the nation for the same reasons that have been discussed previously in this context—the things described here did not happen when the Israelites were freed from their captivity in Babylon. Even Motyer, who believes this is about Cyrus, admits that “of all this drama [Cyrus’ conquest of Babylon] Isaiah says nothing!” [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 297]. The similarities to the book of Revelation and the defeat of the Babylonian world system at the end of the Tribulation cannot be ignored. This chapter would perfectly fit into the last book of the Bible (cf. Rev. 18:9-24). When the events of Revelation are over, Babylon as a world entity, a representation of Satan’s world system, will be no more. “The main point of this chapter is not primarily to predict Babylon’s fall, however, but to glorify the power and grace of Yahweh, using the destruction of Babylon as a backdrop” [Thomas L. Constable, *Thomas Constable’s Notes on the Bible, Volume IV: Isaiah-Daniel*, 4:133]. That is an even more applicable truth when the Tribulation is ended and the Kingdom is inaugurated.

God is going to see to it that Babylon is thoroughly defeated and humbled. Idols cannot stand up to God, and neither can a world super-power like Babylon. This chapter reveals that Babylon fell because God determined that must be her fate (vv. 1-7), the nation’s pride had left her overconfident and arrogant (vv. 8-11), and the nation’s reliance on false gods that can protect no one and no nation (vv. 12-15) will not be able to protect her from God’s judgment.

Isaiah 47:1¹ “Come down and sit in the dust [עָפָר], O virgin [בְּתוּלָה] daughter of Babylon; Sit on the ground without a throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans! For you shall no longer be called tender [רַךְ] and delicate [עֲנִיָּה].

Babylon is commanded to “come down” and to “sit,” but those are things the nation will not willingly do; it is a sign of degradation. It will happen, but it will happen because God has put them in the position of doing His will as opposed to doing the pagan nation’s self-will. Babylon is going to experience these things even though they are things the arrogant nation believes cannot happen, but Babylon cannot stand up to the power of God. It is also interesting to note the feminine references to the nation: virgin, daughter, queen, and widow; however, this is not terribly significant since it is not uncommon to refer to nations in feminine terms and the repetition of the feminine nouns represents that situation. We refer to nations in the feminine gender, and they are used that way as figures of speech to refer to Babylon in a creative, figurative, yet somewhat common manner.

Going down and sitting in the dust represent the opposite of occupying the seat of power in an ornate throne room while sitting on the throne. Babylon is going to experience a fall from the lofty tower of world dominance to the disgrace of defeat, subjugation, and humiliation on the world stage. Queens do not sit in the dirt! Dust, עָפָר, means dry earth, dust, or soil referring to the dry, fine crumbs of the earth. It is frequently used in a figurative way to refer to death or the grave, defeat, and humiliation which is the sense used in this

verse. "The prophet sees Babylon cast down from the pinnacle of her arrogant power to the very depths of degradation" [Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, 372]. The picture presented here is that of a queen forcibly removed from the royal court, a place of power and pampering, and shamefully and humiliatingly forced to sit on and in the filth of the ground rather than on an ornate throne. That is something that is far beneath the dignity of a queen and something no queen would do without being forced to do it. This possibly suggests that the nation has become a beggar sitting in the dirt begging those passing by for food or money. Dirt is also connected with mourning, and that is possibly part of the meaning here because losing one's country and being forced from a royal life into a life of poverty and humiliation would be sufficient cause for mourning. The implication is that Babylon's citizens will be forced into hard labor, taken into slavery, and reduced to poverty which means they will no longer be a powerful lead nation, feared by all, but they will be the least of nations and subject to them.

Virgin, בְּתוּלָה, refers to a maiden or a young woman, but it is usually thought of as a reference to one who has yet to have sexual intercourse. Many commentators believe the word is more in keeping with the context of a young woman of marriageable age than a virgin as we think of the concept. It may be further explained by identifying the word as a reference to a girl who is under the guardianship of her father [Willem A. VanGemeren, gen. ed., s.v. "בְּתוּלָה," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, 781]. It may also refer to reputation and chastity "Our conclusion is that *bētûlâ* should be identified as a social statue, defining someone as 'an ostensibly reputable young girl who is past puberty and is, by default at least, still in the household of her father'" [Willem A. VanGemeren, gen. ed., s.v. "בְּתוּלָה," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, 782]. In this context, it is referring to the Babylonian city state which is personified as a young female; therefore, it is being used figuratively to refer to Babylon as a nation that has not been violated by any other nation.

"Virgin daughter of Babylon" and "daughter of the Chaldeans" are titles that relate to the beauty, the desirability, and the powerful nature of the nation that made them a Middle Eastern power that had no equal. They thought they were invincible, and most of the nations around them thought that as well.

Babylon, personified as a female, is called tender and delicate. This is a reference to living the life of royalty.

Tender, רַךְ, means tender, delicate, frail, soft and mild also having elements of being weak, spoiled, coddled, and pampered. It has the sense of having or showing a kindly or tender nature. Babylon was anything but tender, but the point here is the role reversal that will take place. "The portrayal of the fall of Babylon with the metaphor of the delicate daughter that will have to do hard labor and who will no longer be called tender/delicate follows the familiar biblical motif of reversal" [Willem A. VanGemeren, gen. ed., s.v. "רַךְ," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, 1116].

Delicate, עָנָה, means dainty, sensitive, and delicate also having elements of being spoiled, molly-coddled [to treat very indulgently or protectively], and pampered. The reference to Babylon is a reference to the splendor and riches the nation amassed; it relates to the

luxury of ancient Babylon. This too is figurative language and relates to the role reversal that Babylon will experience by means of God's judgment.

I also believe the concepts of being spoiled and pampered are part of the context. Babylon, as a powerful nation, was used to having its way by conquering other nations, subjugating them, making captives of people, and stealing their wealth. No other nation could tell them what to do, how to do it, or when to do it. In that sense, Babylon the nation was spoiled rotten and royalty is always pampered and spoiled rotten anyway. They certainly did not believe that any other nation could turn the tables on them and defeat them. Certainly, they could not have imagined that they would themselves become slaves and laborers existing to do someone else's bidding.

It is hard to imagine how the people must have felt when they went from being on top of the world to being destroyed as a wealthy nation that was seemingly in total control of its own destiny. Yet, we know that no nation is in control of its destiny, and Babylon found that out the hard way. "The language of the poem is harsh, almost brutal. Babylon has lorded it over the world as though it were somehow her right, but now she must come face-to-face with reality. The opening imperatives set the tone—they are terse and abrupt. Although Babylon thought itself destined for a throne, its rightful place is in the dust" [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 241].

The next verse contains 6 commands: "take," "grind," "remove," "strip off," "uncover," and "cross."

Isaiah 47:2-3 ²"Take the millstones [מְחַרְרִים] and grind meal [קִמְחָה]. Remove your veil, strip off the skirt, Uncover the leg, cross the rivers. ³"Your nakedness [עֲרֹוֹתָ] will be uncovered [גְּלֹהָ], Your shame [חֲרָפָה] also will be exposed [רְאֹהָ]; ...

These words, these commands represent hard work and humiliation; these are things the lower class did, not the privileged people of Babylonian society.

Grinding grain for flour with millstones was certainly a laborious task; it was hard, repetitive work. It was probably something that had to be done on a daily basis. Even a set of small millstones are heavy, and the top stone must be turned against the bottom stone in order to grind the grain. It is hard work.

Millstone, מְחַרְרִים, means a pair of millstones (the word is dual in nature reflecting the fact that millstones must be a pair) consisting of an upper and a lower circular-shaped, relatively flat stones to grind grain into flour. "Millstones come in pairs, a convex stationary base known as the *bedstone* and a concave *runner stone* that rotates. The movement of the runner on top of the bedstone creates a 'scissoring' action that grinds grain trapped between the stones. Millstones are constructed so that their shape and configuration help to channel the ground flour to the outer edges of the mechanism for collection" [[Millstone - Wikipedia](#), accessed 16 April 2021].

The NASB translation "meal" is better translated "flour" (NET Bible, LEB, YLT, LSV). "Meal" is acceptable, but it is not commonly used to mean flour in modern, American English.

Meal, *קֹמֵחַ*, means flour or meal ground from wheat or barley which is used for baking bread and cakes.

As a woman of wealth and leisure, Babylon, personified as a woman, was no longer going to be waited on by those of a lower social status. Instead, Babylon will be subjected to the daily drudgery of providing for herself and her family. She will be doing her own cooking, and she will be eating far less elegantly and sumptuously. She will no longer be an elite person pampered and spoiled by slaves and domestic servants. She will not only be fending for herself, but she will be doing it under adverse circumstances.

In the ancient societies of the Middle East, the Sumerian, Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian women all wore veils and for essentially the same reasons. Israel seems to be an exception to wearing a veil in that area at that time. "In Assyria, the status of women was deplorable. Assyrian men were harsh, violent, and cruel people to their enemies and their women. With the conquests of the neighboring lands, Assyria was flooded with enormous numbers of slaves. The males were used for labor work [sic], while the females were used as concubines and domestic slaves. To be able to distinguish between their free honorable women from the slaves or concubines, laws were issued. Respectable women were forced to wear the veil while those who were considered unrespectable women were forced to go with their heads uncovered. Thus [the] veil became an exclusive symbol of respect; a privilege that slaves, prostitutes and concubines were denied off [sic]. And with their homes flooded with slaves to run their errands, free women had no reason to roam the streets and mingle with concubines, slaves and prostitutes. And hence, women seclusion was born" [History of the Veil. Part One: Veil in the Ancient World—Alexandra Kinias (wordpress.com), accessed 16 April 2021].

For a respectable woman of the that time and place to remove her veil in public would have been a very shameful and humiliating thing to do. Babylon is going to be put into the position of a woman who is forced to remove her veil in public. Some theologians believe the word for "veil" is a reference to the hair (cf. Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:233], but I could not find any support in the lexicons for that position. I don't think that makes sense in this context.

Stripping off the skirt may relate to performing hard labor and uncovering the leg was part of crossing irrigation canals, streams, or rivers. It may relate to going into captivity, but the Babylonians were not removed from the land by the conquering Medo-Persian Army of that time. They were simply allowed to stay under the reign of the new king and his army. It may also relate to exiles who are wandering from place-to-place with no place to call home. Or, it could relate to the sexual abuse conquered women routinely undergo at the hands of the soldiers who have just defeated their own nation's army. Whatever it means, and there are varying opinions because the text is not specific, it means that life for the virgin daughter of Babylon, the daughter of the Chaldeans, will never be the same. Babylon will no longer be in control of her own destiny, and she will no longer be the head nation in the Middle East, nor in the world at large once the Tribulation is ended.

The terms uncovering nakedness and exposing shame refer to sexual activity. Certainly, this would be applicable to the Babylonian women who would be subject to the abuse of the conquering soldiers. The concept of "uncovering nakedness" refers to sexual

relationships in Leviticus 18:6-19, and there is no reason to understand it any differently here. These words are used together this way 68 times in 26 verses in the Old Testament: Leviticus, 20 verses (all in chapters 18 and 20), Isaiah, 1 verse, and Ezekiel 5 verses (all in chapters 16, 22, 23). It is used to refer to the harlotry of pagan worship, but sexual relations are the basis for this particular metaphor which is used as a figure of speech at times to represent that idolatrous situation. While the sexual abuse of female captives and slaves is very real, these words are applicable to the nation in a figurative sense. Having said that this refers to sexual abuse, the nation, as a nation, cannot become naked in terms of losing clothing or suffering sexual abuse, but it can be naked in terms of exposing its true nature as a malevolent, evil entity on the world stage. This is primarily figurative language as it is used here, and it works by means of personification. The nation is likened to a woman.

Nakedness, עָרְוָה, means nakedness, the genitals, or the state of being without clothing or covering of any kind. It is also used figuratively to mean unprotected, vulnerable, formally naked, i.e., to be in a state or condition in which harm can come and therefore be virtually without defenses.

Uncovered, גִּלְיָה, means to uncover, remove, to reveal referring to being revealed or exposed or known. It may refer to being taken captive and/or exiled

"In biblical usage 'uncovering nakedness' has, at the least, the connotation of extreme humiliation, and in some cases may connote rape. As here, it is often used figuratively of nations that have consorted with many different lovers (allies or gods, or both), but are finally humiliated by being made to appear naked (defenseless) before them all. This will be Babylon's fate as well, says Isaiah. She may think of herself in a different category from all the other nations, but she is not. Only God is truly other. Babylon is simply one more human nation, subject to the same historical processes as any other" [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 242]. What is being uncovered is Babylon's true identity, which is an evil identity. The nation can hide behind raw power and the trappings of wealth, but the true, evil nature of the nation is going to be exposed for all to see.

"In the ancient world, people regarded nakedness as a shame because it left them open to the gaze of others, and so rendered them defenseless. People seen naked were often taken advantage of. Thus, to be uncovered was to be shamefully exposed. Babylon had regarded herself as someone special and superior, but now it would become clear that she was just like every other nation" [Thomas L. Constable, *Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible, Volume IV: Isaiah-Daniel*, 4:133].

Shame, תְּרִיפָה, means reproach, disgrace, scorn, and contempt referring to a state of dishonor and low status. It is an open disrespect for a person or a thing, in this case, for Babylon. The word basically means "'to reproach,' with the specific connotation of casting blame or scorn on someone.... In most instances the word is used in the sense of casting scorn" [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. "תְּרִיפָה," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 325]. I could not find any lexical support for translating this word as "shame," but most translations use that word, including the TANAKH, and it does seem to be a suitable word to use. I think "disgrace" (cf. ESV) might be the most suitable English word

to use that is most faithful to the Hebrew, but “shame” is not damaging the meaning of the text at all.

Exposed, רָאָה, means to see, to look, to view by using the perception of sight to view objects and to make judgments based on the perceptions. There is an element of understanding in the meaning of this word.

The true nature of Babylon is going to be seen for what it is, and Babylon will no longer be a powerful nation. Babylon has not been a power as a nation since it fell to Cyrus; instead, it has been ruled by other kings and dictators. It will rise again as the world system of the antichrist only to be finally and totally vanquished by the King of Kings when He returns to save all Israel. Once that happens, Babylon “will not be found any longer” (Rev. 18:21). Her reproach and disgrace will be complete at that time. It would not be inappropriate to consider the world as has been since Babylon fell as a representative Babylonian world system under the control of Satan.

All of this is the activity of God; He is the One who will ensure Babylon's destruction.

Isaiah 47:3–4 ³“... I will take vengeance [נָקַם] and will not spare [פָּנַעַ] a man.” ⁴Our Redeemer [גֹּאֲלֵנוּ], the LORD of hosts [צְבָאוֹת] is His name, The Holy One of Israel.

Vengeance, נָקַם, means vengeance or revenge, and it may refer to the desire for revenge. It is the act of harming someone in return for an injury or offense which can include harm beyond what is physical. In some contexts, it has the sense of repaying harm with more harm and therefore be in a hostile state implying that the first harm was uncalled for. “Behind all this dire suffering lies the Lord's vengeance. The word used (*nāqām*) expresses equivalence between offence and requital. Babylon's downfall is but her just due” [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 297].

An examination of Jeremiah 50-51 confirms that there will be two predominate periods of time when God will be taking vengeance on Babylon. The first time will be through Cyrus which will result in the freeing of the Israelites to return to Jerusalem and reestablish the city and the nation in preparation for the First Advent of Christ Jesus. The second period of imposing vengeance on Babylon will be accomplished at the hand of God, the Holy One of Israel, personally acting on behalf of Israel, and it will occur during the Tribulation in preparation for the Second Advent of Christ Jesus.

One might be tempted to think that the concept of vengeance would entail an irrational sort of anger and out-of-control actions to inflict damage on someone, but when used by God for God's purposes, vengeance is completely righteous and holy. God's vengeance relates to the imposition of justice on those who have transgressed God's standards or laws. His vengeance is frequently related to Israel either as it is imposed on the nation itself for their rebellion or, as in this Scripture, to other nations for their violence perpetrated against Israel. “He [God] will ‘take vengeance,’ a Hebrew idea that does not carry the negative connotation of an irrational violent punitive reprisal that usually overreacts because of uncontrollable anger. Instead, the Hebrew concept relates to the basic establishment of justice for one who has done wrong. This just divine punishment of Babylon will cause her to receive the right proportion of retribution based on the nature of her sins....

[Mendenhall] cautions against interpreting this idea as lawless blood revenge. It is used when judicial channels of bringing justice fail; then God uses his legitimate sovereign power to impose justice on evil powers" [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 302 and 302, n. 685; also referencing G. E. Mendenhall, *The Tenth Generation: The Origins of the Biblical Tradition*, 69-103].

The clause "and will not spare a man" is difficult to interpret, and I don't think anyone really knows exactly what it means. The Hebrew word פָּגַע has a number of meanings including to meet, to meet with hostility, to encounter, to strike upon, or to intercede. Some versions translate it, "I will not meet thee as a man" (KJV, YLT, LSV) which is an accurate translation of the word. Various Bibles translate the word spare, arbitrate, meet, pity, or intercede. Most commentators have correctly decided to say that it means God will totally destroy Babylon and leave it at that. "Spare: the verb 'to meet' adapts its meaning to its context; here it means 'to meet with favour', or simply 'to favour'. The situation has to be one of 'no quarter'" [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 297]. "He [God] is not the distillation of humanity (*anyone* ["a man" NASB] Heb. 'ādām), caught like humanity in the swirl of change and decay. He is God, and the human who dares to attempt to usurp his place can only find himself or herself caught in an unequal contest, the end of which is never victory, but either surrender or destruction" [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 242].

There are three titles in verse 4 for the God of Israel: Redeemer, Lord of hosts, and The Holy One of Israel. As the God of Israel, He has always acted, and always will act, in Israel's best interests. They may not think that is true, but it is. He truly is the God of Israel. He is their Redeemer, their Kinsman who is willing and able to redeem. He is God Almighty the commander of heavenly forces and the One who is able to overcome all opposition and see to it that His will is done and His plan for history involving Israel is accomplished. The power that Yahweh of hosts can wield is unimaginable to mere humans, but they will get a glimpse of it during the Tribulation. He is holy and all that He does is holy. His plans for Israel and for world history are holy, righteous, just, and true, and they will be fulfilled in total. Nothing can stop Him. He who is so powerful that He created the world by means of the spoken Word can destroy the most powerful of people and nations, and He can redeem His people and nation Israel just as easily.

Redemption is not only a physical reality for Israel, but it is also a spiritual reality for the nation; both are true and both will happen. The spiritual redemption of Israel did not take place out of the Babylonian captivity, and physical redemption was only for the few Jews who decided to return to Jerusalem. Many of them stayed in Babylon. They probably lived there in safety, but there was no guarantee that was going to happen. However, at the end of the Tribulation when the Babylonian world system is destroyed, every believing Jew alive at the time will be physically delivered into the land to enter the Messianic Kingdom, and every Jew who enters the Kingdom will be spiritually redeemed.

This verse is an exclamation of praise for God and for what He is doing in history on behalf of Israel. God is not going to allow any nation to oppress the Israelites without consequences, although He may allow them to do a great deal of damage to Israel until He

puts a stop to it before the nation can be totally destroyed. That will be the case right up until the end of history as we know it, and It is all part of His divine disciplinary program for Israel. Restoration is, however, the ultimate goal and that will happen.

Redeem, פָּדָה, means to redeem, to act as kinsman, and to buy back. Israel has been redeemed by God in the past, He is acting as their Redeemer in the present by safeguarding the nation and the believing remnant, and He will be their Redeemer in the future when the nation will require deliverance out of certain annihilation at the hands of antichrist. The Lord is, of course, our Redeemer as well, He purchases us out of the slave market of sin, but He is particularly identified as national Israel's Redeemer, and the Old Testament reveals that truth throughout.

Abraham was redeemed by God (Is. 29:22, cf. Gen. 15:6).

Isaiah 29:22 ²²Therefore thus says the LORD, who redeemed Abraham ...

Israel was redeemed out of slavery in Egypt (Dt. 7:8; 2 Sam. 7:23). The use of the word "Redeemer" here in Isaiah should give the Israelites confidence that, no matter how serious their situation is, the God who Redeemed them out of slavery in Egypt is totally capable of redeeming them out of the Babylonian world system whether that was about 3,000 years ago or at the end of history as we know it.

Deuteronomy 7:8 ⁸but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

2 Samuel 7:23 ²³"And what one nation on the earth is like Your people Israel, whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people and to make a name for Himself, and to do a great thing for You and awesome things for Your land, before Your people whom You have redeemed for Yourself from Egypt, *from* nations and their gods?

Israel was redeemed out of the Babylonian captivity (Neh. 1:10), and that Scripture in Nehemiah is also relevant to the end times redemption that will get Israel into the land for the inauguration of the Messianic Kingdom (Neh. 1:8-10).

Nehemiah 1:8–10 ⁸"Remember the word which You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful I will scatter you among the peoples; ⁹but *if* you return to Me and keep My commandments and do them, though those of you who have been scattered were in the most remote part of the heavens, I will gather them from there and will bring them to the place where I have chosen to cause My name to dwell.' ¹⁰"They are Your servants and Your people whom You redeemed by Your great power and by Your strong hand.

The word "peoples" עַמִּים, could be translated "nations" (cf. LEB, KJV, NKJV, ISV, NET Bible). This is significant because in 586 BC, Judah was not scattered among the nations, nor was the Northern Kingdom before it when Assyria conquered that nation. Judah was taken into captivity and moved to Babylon. While Nehemiah is correctly applying God's promise to remove them from the land as part of His divine disciplinary program, which

did happen at the hands of Babylon in 586 BC, it is only at the end of the Tribulation when He will have to regather them from "the nations" which involves "the most remote part of the heavens." This Scripture has both returns in view, the near-term return from geographical Babylon and the long-term return from around the world once the Babylonian world system is defeated, the earlier being a type of the latter.

Redemption is an ongoing process for the nation (Ps. 25:22).

Psalms 25:22 ²²Redeem Israel, O God, Out of all his troubles.

God will redeem Israel at the end so that the nation can inherit their covenant promises (Micah 4:10; Zech. 10:8) which Micah characterized as a rescue out of Babylon and which is also a reference to the end times world system.

Micah 4:10 ¹⁰"Writhe and labor to give birth, Daughter of Zion, Like a woman in childbirth; For now you will go out of the city, Dwell in the field, And go to Babylon. There you will be rescued; There the LORD will redeem you From the hand of your enemies.

Zechariah 10:8 ⁸"I will whistle for them to gather them together, For I have redeemed them; And they will be as numerous as they were before.

Jeremiah addressed the nation's end times redemption as well (Jer. 50:34).

Jeremiah 50:34 ³⁴"Their Redeemer is strong, the LORD of hosts is His name; He will vigorously plead their case So that He may bring rest to the earth, But turmoil to the inhabitants of Babylon.

As the Lord of hosts, He is God of the heavenly armies which He uses to facilitate His plans for Israel.

2 Kings 6:17 ¹⁷Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." And the LORD opened the servant's eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

Host, **צְבָא**, is literally an army or military troops and, in this context, the army of the heavens, and it may also refer to war and military service. It also relates to a horde, a host, or a vast multitude. The point is that the heavens are populated by a host, a heavenly army, that serves God under the leadership of God. The heavenly bodies—sun, moon, planets, and stars—are referred to as a host, and it includes the angels as well. The meaning is not confined to a heavenly army; armies composed of human soldiers are also called a "host."

In Judges 5:20, the stars are pictured as fighting from heaven against Sisera and his Canaanite army. In Deuteronomy 4:19, the Israelites are warned not to worship the heavenly bodies, the "sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven." In Exodus, the Israelites were called "the hosts of the LORD" as they departed Egypt. In Luke 2:13, the angels who appeared to the shepherds praising the birth of the Lord, were called "a multitude of the heavenly host."

