



Research Paper

Spiritual Blindness beneath Physical Sight: A Close Reading of 2 Kings 6:8-23

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Abstract: *Blindness, physical sight and spiritual sight can often occur together, but rarely are these phenomena juxtaposed so dramatically as in the study passage. The visionary tale of Elisha has much to teach today's modern society in respect to how enemies' evil plans are counteracted and handled by God's people. The people of God and their leaders, do not only see partially, indirectly and darkly, but suffer outright spiritual blindness which connives to worsen the problem. Spiritual sight is needed by the people of God to understand and put off these murderous issues which cause fear and anxiety, hence the need for this study. The aim of the article is to attempt an exegetical explanation of the passage with a view to reinterpreting and anchoring its theological stand points on the significance of spiritual sight. It is discovered that Israel, its kings and by extension all people of God need two things to appropriate God's resources against the enemy: spiritual sight and God's sufficiency. Focusing only on outward circumstances which is equivalent to spiritual blindness causes fear and panic that can have a paralyzing effect on people. The blessing Elisha's servant enjoyed in the unity of spirit with his master was here truncated by fear of the enemy. Focusing on God's power, the divine, and the spiritual, removes fear and anxiety. Elisha's prayer that God might open the eyes of his servant was a prayer for spiritual transformation and discernment. To see God's true character all eyes need to be opened. To be obedient to God as Elisha was in accordance with the deuteronomic code is part of active successful prayer operation. Elisha's servant himself had to see the shielding defense force of God against the enemy and was prayed into seeing it. It is revealed that knowledge by ocular demonstration exceeds that by any other means; and spiritual enlightenment has a clearer effect than secular explanation. Spiritual tuition is clearly reassuring and divine instruction evidently superior to earthly one. Mere talking and hearing do not provide distinct and clear apprehensions which are furnished by sight. Finally, it is revealed that the number of soldiers, human intelligence, confidence, instruments of warfare, logistics and strategies, timing and the nature of surprise attack do not determine victory and triumphant outcome; God's opinion with the gaining of spiritual eyes does. Only spiritual transformation can make men turn from their attacking position to the opposite in such a speedy harmonious agreement. All transformed men, like Elisha and his servant, are fearless and have always courageously assumed command of the army of the righteous against the enemy soldiers in order to have a better society.*

Key Words: *Blindness, spiritual sight, physical sight, close reading*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Many cultures of the world use the metaphorical expression of physical sight to describe the idea of discernment and understanding. Physical sight and Spiritual sight are related but the latter is in a visionary category. Spiritual sight ranks higher than physical sight in discerning and understanding but more challenging to obtain as only few possess it. The biblical expression "They have eyes but they do not see" (Jer 5:21) captures this age long predicament of man succinctly.

The text under study (2 Kings 6:8-23) falls within the realm of deuteronomic narrative. According to Ellis (1977), the main purpose of the narrative is to arouse admiration for Prophet Elisha's spiritual sight and powers as protected and authenticated by God. The deuteronomist and compiler of the book of Kings, a like-minded man such as Jeremiah, and almost certainly a contemporary, lived and wrote under the same influence. The deuteronomic truth is the standard by which men and actions are judged. It states that obedience to the deuteronomic law is the qualification for an approving verdict and deviation from it is the source of all ill-success and the sure prelude to condemnation.

The trauma

of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 BC, and the exile which followed, led to much theological reflections on the meaning of the tragedy, and the deuteronomic history was written as an explanation that Israel had been unfaithful to Yahweh and the exile was God's punishment.

This Elisha narrative in the book of Kings is a reasonable way to reveal how Israel is to live and follow God in obedience in order to avoid similar catastrophe like the exile, but the words and lives of the prophet should always be evaluated in the light of the clear and straight forward teaching of Deuteronomy (Mein, 2018). Deuteronomically speaking, Prophet Elisha in this passage can overcome any obstacle with the power of God. He can inspire confidence in his otherwise frightened servant; alone against the Syrian army, he can mediate their being blinded; he can himself lead a blinded army into their enemy's capital; he can even persuade an Israelite King to feed and free the Syrian. Further, Elisha the Prophet can so frighten the Syrians that he causes the raids to cease - raids, that their effectiveness was cancelled in the first place, by God's revelatory prophecy through Elisha. Laffey (2001) summarizes Prophet Elisha's divine powers by saying "Elisha is in control - or so the Deuteronomic theology of Prophecy would have us believe" (P.73).

The central attention this passage draws is on the hostilities and threats Israel experienced from the king of Syria's evil plans and actual border raids. Hostilities, threats, evil plans and real invasions and plundering are not in short supplies in modern society. The world of Elisha looks much similar like today's society. The modern world is gravely threatened by everything that is odd and antithetical to a good life: war, murderous plotting, kidnapping, terrorism, wanton destruction of life and property, Boko Haram menace, Iswap danger, hunger and insecurity. How can the task of Elishaic Prophetic theology contribute in solving the problem of devastating insecurity of life and property? In constructing such a prophetic theology it must be recognized that God's work in the world, here and now, is disclosed to man partially, indirectly, and often darkly.

In problematizing the focal point of the essay it is important to clearly state again that the people of God and their leaders, not only see partially, indirectly and darkly, but suffer outright spiritual blindness that connives to worsen the problem and heighten the attendant fear and anxiety appertaining therefrom. The aim of the article is to attempt an explanation of the passage exegetically with a view to reinterpreting and anchoring its theological stand points on the significance of spiritual sight. Deuteronomic formular with intercultural hermeneutics are deployed as approaches for the study. The name Aram or Aramea, which lends its name to Aramaic language, refers to Syria and Mesopotamia, a historical region including several Aramean kingdoms covering much of the present day Syria. Syria and Aram could be used interchangeably.

The Passage in *Biblia Hebraica* (Biblical Hebrew)

2 Kings 6:8-23

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rmoaale wyd"äb'[]-la, `#[;W"YIw: lae_r"f.yIB. ~x'Ðl.nI hy"ih' ~r"êa]
                                     %l,m,äW8
                                     `yti(nOx]T; ynIßmol.a; ynIil{P. ~Aqtm.-la,
rm,V'Shi rmoêale `laer"f.yI %l,m,Û-la, ~yhial{a/h' vyaiä xl;úv.YIw: 9
    `~yTi(xin> ~r"ia] ~v'Ð-yKi( hZ<+h; ~AqâM'h; rboà[]me
    Alô-rm;a'( rv,'a] ~AqúM'h;-la,( laear"f.yI %l,m,ä xl;úv.YIw: 10
tx;Ða; al{i ~v'_ rm:äv.nIw> îArßyhiz>hiw>Ð çHr"yhiz>hiw>À ~yhi2l{a/h'-vyai
    `~yIT")v. al{iw>
`wyd"b'[]-la, ar"Ûq.YIw: hZ<+h; rb"ßD"h;-l[; ~r"êa]-%l,m,( bleä `r[eS'YIw:
                                     11
    `lae(r"f.yI %l,m,î-la, WnL'ÐV,mi ymiî yliê WdyGIâT; `aAlh] ~h,êylea]
                                     rm,aYOæw:
    `aybiN"h; [v'Ûyλια/-yKi( %l,M,_h; ynIâdoa] aAlß wyd"êb'[]me(dx;äa;
                                     `rm,aYO'w: 12
rv<ia] ~yrIêb'D>h;'-ta, laeêr"f.yI %l,m,äl. `dyGIy: laeêr"f.yIB. rv<âa]
                                     ^b<)K'v.mi rd:ix]B; rBEßd:T.
Ali-dG:YUw: Whxe_Q'a,w> xl;Ðv.a,w> aWhê hkoâyae `War>W WkÛl. rm,aYOöw: 13
                                     `!t")dob. hNEihi rmoàale
WpQIBY:w: hl'y>l;ê WaboâY"w: dbe_K' lyIx:âw> bk,r<Ðw> ~ysiîWs hM'v'2-
                                     xl;v.YIw: 14
                                     `ry[i(h'-l[;
    bbeîAs lyIx:±-hNEhiw> ace$YEw: è~Wql' é~yhil{a/h'( vyaiî trE'v'm.
                                     ~Kev.Y:w:û 15
hk'iyae ynIßdoa] Hh'ia] wyl'2ae Ari[]n: rm,aYO"w: bk,r"_w" sWsâw> ry[iPh'-
                                     ta,
                                     `hf,([]n:¥
    
```

~t'(Aa rv<βa]me WnT'êai rv<âa] ~yBir: yKiÛ ar"_yTi-la; rm,aYOàw: 16
ha,_r>yIw> wyn"βy[e-ta, an"i-xq;P. hw""hy> rm;êaYow: `[v'yliã/
lLeÛP;t.YIw: 17
~ysiîWs ale'm' rh'øh' hNE`hiw> ar>Y:ow: r[;N:èh; ynEây[e-ta, 'hw"hy>
xq:Ûp.YIw:
`[v'(yliã/ tboiybis. vaeP bk,r<²w>
an"i-~h; rm;êaYow: 'hw"hy>-la, [v'Ûyliã/ lLe'P;t.YIw: èwyl'ae éWdr>YEW: 18
`[v'(yliã/ rb:îd>Ki ~yrIβwEn>S;B; ~KeîY:w: ~yrI+wEn>S;B; hZ<βh;-yAGh;-ta,
Wkâl. èry[ih' hzOæ al{âw> é%r<D<h; hz<â al{â [v'^yliã/ ~h,ølea] rm,aYO"w: 19
~t'PAA %l,YOow: !Wv+Qeb;T. rv<âa] vyaiPh'-la, ~k,èt.a, hk'yliãAaw>
yr:èx]a;
`hn"Ar*m.vo
xq:îP. hw""hy> [v'Ûyliã/ rm,aYOæw: è!Arm.vo ~a'äboK. éyhiy>w: 20
hNEβhiw> WaSr>YIw: ~h,èynEy[eä-ta, 'hw"hy> xq:Ûp.YIw: Wa+r>yIw> hL,aeP-
ynE)y[e-ta,
`!Ar)m.vo %AtiB.
hK,îa;h; ~t'_Aa Atβaor>Ki [v'Ûyliã/-la, 'laer"f.yI-%l,m,(rm,aYOÛw: 21
`ybi(a' hK,Pa;
hT'äa; ^βT.v.q;b.W* ^îB.r>x;B. t'ybi²v' rv<îa]h; hK,èt; al{â `rm,aYO'w: 22
Wkβl.yEw> WTêv.yIw> `Wlk.ayO*w> ~h,^ynEp.li ~yIm;øw" ~x,l,' ~yfi hK,_m;
`~h,(ynEdoa]-la,
Wkβl.YEW: ~xeêL.v;y>w:) WTêv.YIw: `Wlk.aYO*w: hl'^Adg> hr"äKe ~h,øl'
hr<'k.YIw: 23
#r<a,îB. aAbβl' ~r"êa] ydEäWdg> `dA[Wps.y"Û-al{}w> ~h,_ynEdo*a]-la,
p `lae(r"f.yI

The Passage in English Translation – New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

2 Kings 6:8-23 ⁸ Once when the king of Aram was at war with Israel, he took counsel with his officers. He said, "At such and such a place shall be my camp." ⁹ But the man of God sent word to the king of Israel, "Take care not to pass this place, because the Arameans are going down there." ¹⁰ The king of Israel sent word to the place of which the man of God spoke. More than once or twice he warned such a place so that it was on the alert. ¹¹ The mind of the king of Aram was greatly perturbed because of this; he called his officers and said to them, "Now tell me who among us sides with the king of Israel?" ¹² Then one of his officers said, "No one, my lord king. It is Elisha, the prophet in Israel, who tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedchamber." ¹³ He said, "Go and find where he is; I will send and seize him." He was told, "He is in Dothan." ¹⁴ So he sent horses and chariots there and a great army; they came by night, and surrounded the city. ¹⁵ When an attendant of the man of God rose early in the morning and went out, an army with horses and chariots was all around the city. His servant said, "Alas, master! What shall we do?" ¹⁶ He replied, "Do not be afraid, for there are more with us than there are with them." ¹⁷ Then Elisha prayed: "O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see." So the LORD opened the eyes of the servant, and he saw; the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. ¹⁸ When the Arameans came down against him, Elisha prayed to the LORD, and said, "Strike this people, please, with blindness." So he struck them with blindness as Elisha had asked. ¹⁹ Elisha said to them, "This is not the way, and this is not the city; follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom you seek." And he led them to Samaria. ²⁰ As soon as they entered Samaria, Elisha said, "O LORD, open the eyes of these men so that they may see." The LORD opened their eyes, and they saw that they were inside Samaria. ²¹ When the king of Israel saw them he said to Elisha, "Father, shall I kill them? Shall I kill them?" ²² He answered, "No! Did you capture with your sword and your bow those whom you want to kill? Set food and water before them so that they may eat and drink; and let them go to their master." ²³ So he prepared for them a great feast; after they ate and drank, he sent them on their way, and they went to their master. And the Arameans no longer came raiding into the land of Israel.

Close Reading of the Text

The Hebrew words/expressions explained below are the ones considered directly important to the study. These expressions are not meant to cause confusion for they are clearly explained in English. The section is included for the benefit of Old Testament students/readers.

Verse 9

rm,V'Shi rmoêale `laer"f.yI %l,m,Û-la, ~yhi^l{a/h' vyaiä xl;úv.YIw: 9
`~yTi(xin> ~r"îa] ~v'P-yKi(hZ<+h; ~AqâM'h; rboà[]me

The expression אִישׁ־הָאֱלֹהִים (man of God) depicts a man owned by God. Man אִישׁ is in the construct case which literally means ‘man that belongs to’, ‘man that is owned by or man that is dependent on’. *Elohim* is an untranslatable Hebrew plural noun that means heavenly beings but with capital ‘E’ it means God of Israel. It is in the absolute case showing that he is the ‘owner’ of the man that is attached to it. What is important here is that it is such a man that belongs to God/owned by God/dependent on God that could see, inform and caution the king of Israel about the secret enemy plan of the king of Syria.

Verse 10

Alô-rm;a'(rv,'a] ~AqúM'h;-la,(lae^ar"f.yI %l,m,ä xl;úv.YIW: ¹⁰
tx;Ða; al{i ~v'_ rm:âv.nIw> ÎArβyhiz>hiw>Ð ¿Hr"yhiz>hiw>À ~yhi²l{a/h'-vyai
`~yIT")v. al{iw>

Once more, and throughout the narrative in this study text, the expression אִישׁ־הָאֱלֹהִים (man of God) is repeated in connection with the spiritual information that has saved (וְנִשְׁמַר) the king of Israel ‘not once and not twice’ (לֹא אַחַת וְלֹא שְׁתַּיִם) (לא אחת ולא שתיים) is a verb, *niphal*, *waw* consecutive, perfect third masculine singular meaning ‘to be kept’ (safe) or guarded. Not once and not twice means severally or many times, לא is particle negative meaning no, not; אחת is an adjective, feminine singular, meaning one, same, single or each; וְ is particle conjunction (and) with particle negative no or not; שְׁתַּיִם is an adjective, feminine dual, meaning two. The king of Israel has been saved severally by this type of spiritual information from the man of God.

Verse 12

aybiN"h; [v'ÛyIia/-yKi(%l,M,_h; ynIâdoa] aAlß wyd"êb'[[me(dx;äa;
`rm,aYO'w: ¹²
rv<ia] ~yrIêb'D>h;'-ta, laeêr"f.yI %l,m,äl. `dyGIy: laeêr"f.yIB. rv<âa]
`^b<)K'v.mi rd:ix]B; rBEßd:T.

In this verse the man of God is called by his proper name - אֵלִישָׁע הַנָּבִיא (Elisha the prophet). אֵלִישָׁע (Elisha) means God is salvation. It is a proper noun; no gender no number, no state. הַנָּבִיא (the prophet) prefixed with the definite article ‘the’ is a noun, masculine singular meaning spokesman, speaker, prophet. It is Elisha the prophet that reveals (וַיְגִיד) the words (אֲתֵּדְבָרִים) the king of Syria speaks (וַיְדַבֵּר) in the room of (בַּחֲדָר) his place of lying down (מִשְׁכָּבְךָ). וַיְגִיד is a verb, *hiphil* imperfect, third masculine singular meaning to declare, tell. אֲתֵּדְבָרִים has the direct object marker (אֵת), it is a noun, masculine plural, meaning ‘word, matter, thing or speech’. וַיְדַבֵּר is a verb, *piel* imperfect, second masculine singular, meaning to speak. בַּחֲדָר has particle preposition, meaning ‘in, at, by, with or among’, it is a noun, masculine singular construct, meaning room or chamber. מִשְׁכָּבְךָ is a noun, masculine construct, suffix second person masculine singular, meaning place of lying, couch or act of lying down. The man of God is called by his proper name Elisha, which means God is salvation: salvation is security, fortification, liberty and peace.

Verse 15

bbeiAs lyIx:±-hNEhiw> aceS\$Ew: è~Wql' é~yhil{a/h'(vyaiî trE'v'm.
~Kev.Y:w:û ¹⁵
hk'iyae ynIßdoa] Hh'ia] wyl'²ae Ari[[n: rm,aYO"w: bk,r"_w" sWsâw> ry[iPh'-
ta,
`hf, ([[n:¥

As the king of Syria discovered that Elisha’s spiritual watch was the cause of the diminishing potency of his murderous plans against the king of Israel, he sent an army (הֵיל) with horses (סוּסִים) and chariots (רֶכָבִים) to seize Elisha. הֵיל is a noun, masculine singular, meaning power, strength, wealth or army; סוּסִים is a noun masculine plural, meaning horses; רֶכָבִים is a noun, masculine plural, meaning chariotry or chariots. Elisha’s servant saw the army surrounding the city and was frightened; he asked his master ‘what shall we do?’ (נַעֲשֶׂה). נַעֲשֶׂה is particle interjection, meaning ‘how, where or what’ and נַעֲשֶׂה is a verb, *qal* imperfect, first person plural, meaning to ‘do or make’. Infuriated by Elisha’s spy prophecy, the king of Syria sends attacking band to seize Elisha and this frightened the prophet’s servant.

Verse 16

`~t'(Aa rv<Ba]me WnT'êai rv<âa] `~yBir: yKiÛ
ar"_yTi-la; rm,aYOàw:

Elisha told his servant not to fear (אֲתִירָא) for (כִּי) many (רַבִּים) who (אֲשֶׁר) are with us (אִתָּנוּ) are more than (מֵאֲשֶׁר) those with them (אִוְתָם). The אַל attached to אֲתִירָא is a particle adverb, meaning ‘not or nothing’. אֲתִירָא is a verb, *qal* imperfect, second person masculine singular, meaning ‘to fear’. כִּי is a particle conjunction, meaning ‘that, because, for or when’. רַבִּים is an adjective, masculine plural, meaning much, great or many. אֲשֶׁר is a particle relative meaning who, which, that because, when or since. אִתָּנוּ has אֵת attached to it meaning ‘with’ denoting proximity; it is a particle preposition with suffix, first person plural. מֵאֲשֶׁר is a particle preposition meaning from, out of, by, by reason of, at, because of or more than, with particle relative אֲשֶׁר meaning who. אִוְתָם has the אֵת denoting proximity; it is a particle preposition with suffix, third person masculine plural. ‘Those

who are with us are more than those who are with them’, is proper and befitting of the prophet and his servant, and all who have God’s salvation.

Verse 17

ha, _r>yIw> wyn"βy[e-ta, an"i-xq;P. hw""hy> rm;êaYow: '[v'yliā/ lLeÛP;t.YIw:
 ~ysiîWs ale'm' rh'øh' hNE`hiw> ar>Y:©w: r[;N:ëh; ynEây[e-ta, 'hw"hy>
 xq:Ûp.YIw:
 '[v'(yliā/ tboiybis. vaeP bk,r<²w>

Then Elisha prayed (וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל) and said Lord (יְהוָה) please open (פָּקַחְנָא) his eyes (אֶת־עֵינָיו) that he may see (וַיִּרְאֶה). So the Lord opened (וַיִּפְקַח) the eyes of the servant. To pray in Hebrew as used here is וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל: it is a verb, *hithpael*, *waw* consecutive, imperfect, third person masculine singular. יְהוָה as used here is Lord: a noun, proper, no gender, no state, no number. פָּקַחְנָא here as used, means to open: it is a verb, *qal* imperative, third person masculine, singular, with the particle interjection נָא which means ‘I (we) pray, now’. אֶת is the sign of direct object, denoting proximity, used together with עֵינָיו meaning his eyes: it is a noun, both dual construct, suffix, third person masculine singular, meaning ‘an eye’. רָאָה is derived from the verb ‘to see’. It is *qal* imperfect, third person masculine singular. Prayer to God by the prophet opened the eyes of the prophet’s servant.

Verse 18

an"i-%h; rm;êaYow: 'hw"hy>-la, [v'Ûyliā/ lLe'P;t.YIw: èwyl'ae éWdr>YEW: 18
 '[v'(yliā/ rb:īd>Ki ~yrIβwEn>S;B; ~KeīY:w: ~yrI+wEn>S;B; hZ<βh;-yAGh;-ta,
 When the Syrians came down against him, Elisha prayed (וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל) to the Lord and said ‘strike (הִדְרֵנָא) this people, please, with blindness (בַּסַּנְגְרִים)’. To pray is וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל which is a verb, *hithpael*, *waw* consecutive, imperfect third person, masculine singular derived from פָּלַל. בַּסַּנְגְרִים is a noun, masculine plural absolute, meaning sudden blindness with the definite article ‘the’, written together with the inseparable בַּ preposition meaning ‘in, by, with or among’. Prayer to God by the prophet struck the Syrians with blindness.

Verse 20

xq:īP. hw""hy> [v'êyliā/ rm,aYOæw: è!Arm.vo ~a'äboK. éyhiy>w: 20
 hNEβhiw> WaS̄r>YIw: ~h,êynEy[eä-ta, 'hw"hy> xq:Ûp.YIw: Wa+r>yIw> hL,aeP-
 ynE) y[e-ta,
 !Ar)m.vo %AtiB.

As Elisha led them to Samaria, Elisha said (וַיֹּאמֶר) ‘Lord, open (פָּקַח) the eyes of these (אֶת־עֵינֵי־אֵלֶּהָ) men so that they may see (וַיִּרְאוּ)’. Elisha said וַיֹּאמֶר, instead of prayed, is used here: it is a verb, *qal*, *waw* consecutive, imperfect, third person masculine, meaning to say. To open פָּקַח is a verb, *qal* imperative, masculine singular. The ‘eyes of these’ אֶת־עֵינֵי־אֵלֶּהָ expression taken together has the direct object marker אֶת; עֵינֵי noun, both dual construct, derived from עֵין - an eye; אֵלֶּהָ is an adjective, both plural, meaning these. That they may ‘see’ וַיִּרְאוּ is a verb word, *qal* imperfect, third person masculine plural, derived from רָאָה - to see. Prayer, from the prophet to God opens the closed eyes of the Syrians.

Verse 21

hK,īa;h; ~t'_Aa Atβaor>Ki [v'êyliā/-la, 'laer"f.yI-%l,m, (rm,aYO'w: 21
 'ybi(a' hK, P̄a;

The king of Israel as he saw (כִּרְאֵתוֹ) them (אֹתָם - the Syrians), said to Elisha ‘should I will smite (הֲאֶכָּה) to smite (אֶכָּה) them, my Father (אָבִי)?’. There is a particle preposition כִּי (like, as, according to, after, when or if) attached to רָאֵתוֹ which is a verb, *qal* infinitive construct, suffix third masculine singular, derived from רָאָה meaning to see. The word ‘them’, referring to the Syrians has the אֶת - particle direct object marker plus suffix third person masculine plural. The word הֲאֶכָּה is prefixed to the interrogative particle הֲ (meaning whether or if); it is a *hiphil* imperfect verb, first person singular, derived from כָּה - to smite. The repetition of ‘smiting to smite’ is used to echo accent on the action of hacking down or killing. It is a reiteration phrase in Hebrew where the same word is repeated in sentence construction to stress emphasis.

Verse 22

hT'äa; ^βT.v.q;b.W* ^iB.r>x;B. t'ybi²v' rv<ia]h; hK,êt; al{â 'rm,aYO'w: 22
 Wkβl.yEw> WTêv.yIw> 'Wlk.ayO*w> ~h,^ynEp.li ~yIm;øw" ~x,l,' •~yfi hK,_m;
 ~h, (ynEdoa]-la,

Elisha answered no! (לא) you smite (תִּקֶּה) if you take (שְׁבִיתָ) captive with your sword (בַּחֶרֶב) and your bow (וּבִקְשֶׁתְךָ). Set bread (לֶחֶם) and water (מַיִם) in front of them (לְפָנֵיהֶם) so they will eat (וַיֹּאכְלוּ) and drink (וַיִּשְׁתּוּ) and go (וַיֵּלְכוּ) to their lord (אֲדֹנֵיהֶם). To smite תִּקֶּה is a verb, *hiphil*, imperfect, second person masculine singular. To take captive שְׁבִיתָ is a verb, *qal* perfect, second person masculine singular. וּבִחֶרֶב has a particle conjunction וְ : it is a noun, feminine construct, second person masculine singular, meaning ‘and with your sword’. וּבִקְשֶׁתְךָ has a particle conjunction וְ: it is a noun, feminine singular construct, suffix, second person masculine singular, meaning with your bow. Bread לֶחֶם in front of them לְפָנֵיהֶם has a particle preposition לְ: it is a

noun, masculine plural, construct, third person, masculine plural. וַיֹּאכְלוּ has a particle conjunction ׀: it is a verb, *qal waw* consecutive imperfect, third person masculine plural meaning to eat. To drink וַיִּשְׁתּוּ has a particle conjunction ׀: it is a verb, *qal* imperfect, third person masculine plural. וַיֵּלְכוּ has a particle conjunction: it is a verb, *qal* imperfect, third person masculine plural, meaning go or walk. וְאֶל־אֲדֹנָיָם has a particle preposition: it is a noun, masculine plural construct, suffix third person masculine, meaning lord. Oriental kings kill their enemies but Yahweh as well as Elisha, his prophet differs.

Verse 23

Wkβl.YEW: ~xeêL.v;y>w:) WTêv.YIw: `Wlk.aYO*w: hl'ªAdg> hr"äKe ~h,øl'
 hr<'k.YIw: 23
 #r<a,îB. aAbβl' ~r"êa] ydEäWdG> `dA[Wps.y"Û-al{)w> ~h,_ynEdo*a]-la,
 p `lae(r"f.yI

So he gave a feast (וַיִּכְרֶה) to them, a great feast (כְּרֶה גְדוֹלָה); after they ate (וַיֹּאכְלוּ) and drank (וַיִּשְׁתּוּ), he sent them on their way, and they went to their master. And the Syrian troop (בְּדוּד) did not increase (וְלֹא־יָסַפּ) going around (עוֹד) to come (לָבוֹא) into the land (בְּאֶרֶץ) of Israel (יִשְׂרָאֵל). The word 'he gave a feast' (וַיִּכְרֶה) is a verb, *qal waw* consecutive, imperfect third person masculine singular. The feminine singular adjective, absolute (גְּדוֹלָה) meaning great is used to qualify the feast. דוּד is a noun common, masculine plural construct meaning troop or band. The particle conjunction ׀ (and, but, so, then, when or now) is attached to the negative particle לֹא (not, no) to form a compound word with יָסַפּ (it is a verb *qal* perfect, third person common plural) meaning to add or increase: taken together they mean 'they increased or added not'. עוֹד which means going around, continuance, again, beside, yet or still is a particle adverb. The word to come לָבוֹא is comprised of the inseparable preposition לָ (to, for, towards or belonging to) and the verb בּוֹא - *qal* infinitive construct, meaning to come in. The word בְּאֶרֶץ is made up of the preposition בְּ (in, on, by, with or among) and אֶרֶץ (noun, feminine, singular construct) meaning earth, land or ground of יִשְׂרָאֵל (proper noun, no number, no state, no gender) meaning Israel, which in turn means God strives. The end of the narrative is summed up in this verse: when the ungodly strives to oppose God's purpose and will for his people, the result is always fruitless.

The explanation of Hebrew words and phrases above gives readers, especially students of Hebrew, the advantage of evaluating the text in their original form, and representing the passage in ancient language allows for a better, more nuanced understanding of the text.

Reinterpretation of 2 Kings 6:1-23

The first captivating impression about the passage is the prophetic revelation given by God to Elisha that has the ability to telescope and detect what is done, planned and spoken far away in secret. This is part of the essential meaning of the functionality of the phrase 'man of God' - a person chosen to speak for God and to accordingly guide the people of Israel. Elisha gave the King of Israel information from divinely inspired espionage. In other words he provided the king an efficient intelligence services. The kings of Israel and by extension all people of God need two things to appropriate God's resources against the enemy: spiritual sight and God's sufficiency.

For an adult to have his two eyes wide open and yet not see is sad, discomforting and terribly embarrassing. Blindness exposes weaknesses. Such an individual is dependent on others for various kinds of assistance. He is an object of pity, sympathy, care and compassion. Generally, people with vision impairment experience restrictions in their independence, mobility, and learning achievement (Welp, Wood Bark, Mcoy etal, 2016). They are as well likely to be more susceptible to an increased risk of falls, fractures, injuries, poor mental health, cognitive deficits, and social isolation. When contrasted with vision impairment, physical sight is the process, power, or function of seeing. It is the physical sense by which light stimuli received by the eyes are interpreted by the brain and constructed into a representation of the position, shape, brightness, and usually colour of objects in space (Merriam-Webster, 2021).

Spiritual sight, the third category of sight condition, is different but related to the other two in the sense that a person could get changed from one form to another through diverse circumstances. The change from physical vision to blindness and from blindness to physical vision may perhaps be explained by science. However, the process of removal of spiritual blindness and gaining of spiritual sight, unlike the other two, cannot be explained, and not likely to be explained scientifically. Only illumination from God can remove this type of blindness.

Blindness, physical sight and spiritual sight can often occur together, but rarely are these phenomena, according to Barnes (2016), juxtaposed so dramatically as in the passage under revision. Elisha could see physically and spiritually. Elisha's servant, known *ab nitio* to have only physical sight, at some point briefly had spiritual sight (2 Kings 6:17). The Syrians, the enemies of Israel in the passage, accosted Elisha having physical sight which they lost but later regained it when they reached Samaria.

The superiority and uniqueness of spiritual sight is at the center stage of this narrative. The man of God, the Prophet Elisha has it as his main operational tool in his dedicated ministration. With the second sight,

Elisha could see and foil the hidden Syrian ambushes. With his clairvoyance Elisha saw the fiery cavalry of Yahweh protecting him and his servant. With his psychic sight power, Elisha could open his servant's eyes. Equipped with metaphysical sight, Elisha could make the eyes of his enemies closed and at some point opened. Spiritual sight, no doubt, has spiritual force as the core power behind it. It is power from above. In the words of Pett (2013), this extraordinary power of vision is of great importance, for it is a reminder that the invisible forces of God are ever watching and protecting his people. Humans live in a sense in two ways: in the bodies where they are limited to the physical world and in the spirit where they live beyond the physical, under God's envious protection. Hence, the possessor of spiritual sight is obviously the object of attack. Elisha's spiritual intervention put him in personal danger, reinforcing the saying that anything close to God receives attack. Opposition occurs any time there is true response to God. In almost any sphere of life, people who are active and genuinely involved create enemies. Too often, efforts at spiritual renewal, growth or ministry cause murmuring, dissent or outright hostility. Whatever be the exact cause, such opposition causes grief and can even lead to spiritual crisis. Elisha's servant, who first experienced this sign of intended Syrian attack on his master, felt emotionally destabilized and traumatized.

His fear had a paralyzing effect on him. Focusing only on outward circumstances can lead to panic. The blessing Elisha's servant enjoyed in the unity of spirit with his master was here truncated because of fear. Fear can stop the enjoyment of God's power and blessing or stop the progress of a project or make serving the Lord difficult or impossible. Vaswani (2006) aptly describes fright thus "Fear paralyses the mind, even as a stroke paralyses the body. It strikes at the nervous system; it causes stress and tension. It undermines our well-being. Worst of all, it robs us of happiness and destroys our peace of mind "(P.8). It is important to interrogate the cause of the servant's fear. Could it be that he saw too much than the physical eye ought to have seen, not at all. It was rather because he saw too little. He only had the physical eyes to see the man-made problem or danger. Seeing the problems or the danger is not awful or incorrect for humans who naturally possess physical sight. It is wise, for it shows the insufficiency and inadequacy of humanity. The real problem was that he missed what he needed to see because he relied solely on physical sight. He ought to have seen the hosts of God and God's divine presence that always surround the children of God like a wall or a shelter in every time of storm. Focusing on God's power, the divine, the spiritual removes fear.

Of a very important aspect of the narrative is the way and style Elisha handled the servant's fear. We learn in Bible.Org (2004) about the three ways Elisha handled the matter. First, he demonstrated a personal concern through a word of encouragement saying "Do not fear", second, he gave a biblical instruction designed to give a reason why the servant should not fear - "for those who are with us are more than those who are with them". Finally, he prays for the servant's illumination. Elisha's answer is not a call to fight but a calm response of encouragement. He reaches a profound faith that understands the resources that God can bring to bear on the lives of the fearful and the distressed. The lessons are practical and powerful: personal concern and involvement, provision of biblical instruction and dependence on God's illumination and sufficiency. These are essential ingredients of every distress lesson and lessons to the distressed. It is important at this point to remember that it was the servant's question "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" that gave him away as one being frightened.

It is better to ask questions than to die in silence, especially when fear, myopia, ignorance or distress of any sort sets in. Asking questions clarifies thoughts, elicits interest from audience, improves knowledge, enhances trust in relationships, promotes better decision making, and opens the eyes of faith of people, thereby increasing trust and faith in God. Elisha's assistant, understandably upset, had to cry out. This is the type of cry and question mostly asked at some distress points in life, even repeated as often as crisis, shortsightedness, opposition or danger looms. According to the Old Testament professor Bratcher (2016), the narrative from this point moves to a different level and turns into spiritual transactions and realities. The details of the story are not at the center here, what the narrative intends to teach about God and the expected responses from humans are the central elements: sincere questions and spiritually sighted responses open the eyes of faith of humans as well as remove fear and blindness. Spiritual discernment is not automatic; it comes sometimes because people seek it. In this instance it came through question-induced prayer. Elisha's prayer that God might open the eyes of his servant was a prayer for spiritual discernment. To see God's true character all eyes need to be opened.

To open the servant's eyes Elisha prayed, to strike the enemies with blindness he prayed, and for the enemies to regain their sight Elisha also prayed. This means turning always to God's resources for help in the successful realization of every need. It denotes focusing on the Creator instead of the created for assistance. It signifies relying on the giver instead of the given for aid. It represents depending on the producer instead of the product for support. It indicates trusting on the spiritual instead of the physical for direction. According to Ekwunife (2007), "In prayer, the disturbed order of creation is restored for the religious man and peace reigns once more" (p. 6). Prayer is a spiritual means through which the religious man interiorly and externally communicates with God and all supra-sensible beings of his invisible world. The Hebrew word for prayer as used in the passage and explained in the exegesis shows the word to be in the *hithpae'el*, showing reflexive

mood. This mood in Hebrew has an additional meaning that is not operative in the English word prayer. It tells that something about the activity of praying reflects back on the person who is praying (Hammer, 1994). Apart from entreaty and supplication, it connotes to think, obey, rely and depend on God, decide, judge, incriminate and even punish. It is not only to reach upwards or outwards to the divine; for the Jew, it is also to look inwards. Not only to look inwards at one's dreams, aspirations and desires, but it is also to look inwards critically to challenge oneself to become a better person, and to invite divine participation in this process (Ugwueye, 2008). Prayer is the means of access to the all-sufficient God. It is a communal bond between God and his children and an introspection that results in bonding between the creature and the created, as a child would bond with his or her father. To think and decide how to pray according to God's will is part of prayer. To be obedient to God as Elisha was in accordance with the deuteronomic code is part of active successful prayer operation.

Elisha's only request in his prayer was that his servant could actually see the reality of the situation. He did not pray that God should chain the enemies and send them into the abyss or bottomless pit or for God to chain, scatter, kill and burn the enemies into ashes or for God to change the situation. Elisha did not pray for the servant to change his fear-soaked mind to perceive the reality of the power-presence of "those with us being more than those who are with them". The servant was not prayed into this explanation nor prayed into the persuasion to believe it. He had to see it himself and was prayed into seeing it. Truly, knowledge by ocular demonstration exceeds that by any other means; and spiritual enlightenment has a clearer effect than secular explanation. To further highlight the spiritual tuition, it is clearly reassuring that divine education evidently is superior to earthly one; and mere talking and hearing do not provide distinct and clear apprehensions which are furnished by sight.

The Hebrew word used for the blindness that befell the Syrian army as they marched to attack Elisha is not the normal word for lack of physical sight. It means to dazzle, with the implication of confusion. It could describe a night animal dazzled or confused by a bright light. If the soldiers were made totally blind, they could not have followed Elisha to Samaria. It is probable that their sight was clouded in such a way that they were able to see, but not comprehend. The intent here is not that God physically blinded them, but that God prevented them from recognizing and capturing Elisha when they met him. Those that fight against God and his prophets deceive themselves, and are justly given up to delusions. According to Henry (2008) when the enemies of God and his people fancy themselves ready to triumph, they will find themselves conquered and triumphed over.

In their delusion and blindness, the Syrians made a lot of mistakes that educe pity because they do not understand the situation they are desperately trying to control. The logical plan was to eliminate Elisha but this is sheer ignorance for if Elisha knew every secret plan about the border raids, certainly he would know this. Sending horses and chariots and great army and coming by night to surround the city to capture the prophet of God depict another form of 'blindness'. The number of soldiers, human intelligence, confidence, instruments of warfare, logistics and strategies, timing and the nature of surprise attack do not determine victory and triumphant outcome; God's opinion together with the spiritual eyes to perceive it does.

It is important to remark that enemies are not to be taken extremely serious the way the king of Israel did, to the extent of contemplating killing them. The enemy in this narrative is not the devil or demon, but other human beings who do not understand what serving God entails. Not that the problems and attacks from these human enemies are not dangerous, disturbing and disruptive, but learning to see that they cannot see, provokes pity, mercy, sympathy, love, peace and understanding specially reserved only for the unaided blind. This is the reason Elisha in the narrative brought his enemies into difficult predicament not to kill them, but to communicate by bold demonstration, the power, wisdom, and mercy of the God of Israel. If the Syrians, non Jews, had eyes to see, they would understand the offer of salvation also being given to them here. Yahweh not only protected Elisha, his servant and Israel by disabling the Syrians but also protected the Syrians by restraining Israel's king from slaying them. Both Israel and the gentiles can at the same time have Yahweh as their sun and shield. This uncommon spiritual sighted practice of answering evil with good successfully changed the Syrian policy of free-lance border raids for the time being. Kindness and mercy towards enemies are exceptional and a surprising strategy that proves to be Israel's best defence tactic.

The king of Israel went beyond the prophet's request for the provision of bread and water and prepared a great feast for the Syrian enemy soldiers. The king knew that having a meal with them was highly covenantal (Genesis 26: 26 - 31). Table fellowship was of paramount importance to Jesus: as he was teaching, so he was feeding his disciples (Mark 6: 41). Table fellowship in Judaism was more than eating food together. Its importance is often underestimated by the modern readers. But in the ancient world, to share the table with another person was making a social statement about yourself and about your guest. Jews and Gentiles sharing the table mean crossing the social class boundary in order to meet a spiritual need.

The world of today like the society of Elisha still has many blind spots. Israel-Syria crisis did not start with Elisha; it was not a new problem for it used to occur repeatedly. Problems besetting man are old and as well repetitive. Elisha is experienced in handling the repetitive numerous crises man suffers in the society. Elisha means God is salvation and God's salvation is available to everyone. Even though Israel's salvation from the

Syrian enemy came through the man of God, other sources could be used by God to give salvation and liberation. For a modern man to be safe, secure and be able to handle his problems, the passage points out that man does not need a new nature or new identity, neither does he need new training nor a new day, not a new master or a new servant, not even new cities or new neighbours; what man needs is a new perspective. A master, mentor, teacher, stranger, enemy, differing faithful, untrustworthy person or thing, disagreeable person or thing, partner, co-friend or animal pet could be used by God to bring about this new perspective. The Balaam narrative (Numbers 22: 21 - 41), sharply and summarily elucidates the point clearly: God can use anything or anybody, good or bad, master or servant, sensible or stupid, foolish or wise, to make one have a new perspective or facilitate the opening of anyone's spiritual eyes. God's guidance at the crucial moment came to Balaam through the mouth of an animal, a lowly donkey. Many times the new perspective, God's guidance, or opening of the spiritual eye of a person comes not from the favoured sources but from the sources chosen by God himself. It is remarkable also to note that when God wishes to speak through words of a potential enemy, slave or master, or even people from other religions, people should be ready to listen. It is easy for people to seek God's voice and new perspective only from known sources. Leaders often reinforce this by surrounding themselves with a narrow band of like-minded deputies and advisers. Ideas, opinions and suggestions on the incessant security problems in the world from notable people from differing parties and religious affiliates, have the potentials to solve the problems but lack of openness and hampering blindness on the part of the current leadership stifle every meaningful effort. The way people see and hear are greatly influenced by social locations which ultimately shape the image of God in their thinking. Congregating with people that are like minded, whether religionists or politicians, is not always helpful because the group dynamics is always there, and it is not always positive. When one submits himself to a totalizing ideology, he will end up seeing things from that one partial corner which means being blind to other truths that could be seen in other angles. Humility and openness to new perspectives, as emanating from focusing on the spiritual, are the twin angels that clear vision, dispel fear, discourage warfare and generally transform the man. Elisha's servant became a new man, humbled, fearless and courageous after his blurred and distorted vision was cleared to be open in order to see more. The Syrian soldiers after losing and regaining their sight gained a new perspective and jettisoned the intended attack on Elisha; became peaceful and participated in the covenantal meal prescribed by the prophet.

Only spiritual transformation can make men turn from their direction to the opposite route in such a speedy harmonious agreement. Once a man's eyes are opened by God-appointed agents, means and sources, he gains a new perspective and becomes a changed man different from what he was before. The power of transformation comes from God alone. Agbese in Ugwueye (2004) opines that "...the miracle of transformation is a confirmation of our faith in God's willingness to give us the messiah we need to transform us; the power of transforming ourselves being effectively beyond us" (p. 102). Only he who is transformed by the possession of spiritual eyes can transform his society and his fellow men. The great and important thing about a transformed man is that he has been equipped expressly to facilitate the opening of the eyes of his fellow men, stop the enemies from attacking the society and change them to become peaceful. All transformed men, like Elisha and his servant, are fearless and have always courageously assumed command of the army of the righteous against the enemy soldiers for the purpose of changing the society for better.

II. Conclusion

The following four Hebrew names mean "God saves" Joshua (יהושע) *Yehoshua*, Elisha (אלישע) *Elisha*, Isaiah (ישעיה) *Yishaya*, and Jesus (ישוע) *Yeshua*.

All four contain the name of the One God (*El/Yah*) plus the root *Yasha* (ישע) meaning "to save." This is hardly coincidental because each of these men served as God's instrument for salvation at one point in history. Many believe that through Joshua, the Lord saved the Israelites in their conquest of the Land of Canaan; through Elisha, the Lord saved the Kingdom of Israel from the Syrians; through Isaiah, the Lord saved the Kingdom of Judah from the Assyrian invasion; and through Jesus, the Lord saves all of humanity. The amazing thing is that these four names do not seem at all related when we say them in English. But if we go back to the original Hebrew, we find a deep spiritual connection which enhances our understanding of salvation.

Spiritual sight, physical sight, fear, blindness and prayer are all necessary constructive tools, not only for the study of this narrative but, to maintain unity and oneness in one's relationship with God for salvation. God is all-sufficient and prayer with other God-ordained channels is the means of access to the all-sufficient God. No matter what happens, God is fighting the battles for his people in the midst of any problem and even when answers to problems are not clearly seen, God has already worked everything out for the salvation of his people.

In assembling a theology of prophecy the progress needed is to move beyond the exegesis of ancient text to meaningfully interlacing the interpretation with the results of analysis of the complex and ever changing character of worldly life of humans. Universal expansion of Deuteronomic repentance theology of obedience to God cannot wait to be underscored if the society should have peace. Obedience to God is the highest currency in

prophetic service (Ugwueye and Ngana, 2019). Seeking to learn how to see ‘that those who are with us are more than those who are with them’; amid the constant noise and distraction of human babbles, obedience to God, the deuteronomic requirement, is necessary. Elisha left a legacy of obedience and faithfulness to God. He performed many miracles throughout his ministry to try to convince the Israelites to repent and return to God. Elisha’s opening of his servant eyes, just like most of his incredible miracles had to do with going from death to life, ultimately showing, according to the deuteronomic principle that through obedience to God one can experience a new life, a new sight, a new perspective, a new transformation and a new hope.

When Paul writes in Romans 8: 13, “If God is for us, who can be against us”, he is reechoing and rephrasing 2 kings 6: 16 ‘Do not fear, for they that are with us are more than those with them’ (2 kings 6: 16) with other similar Old Testament passages such as Psalm 118: 6; 56:9; 27:1, where he is comparing earthly opposition to the eternal power and presence of almighty God surrounding his people. The man who penned down this passage faced problems as people of God are facing today so much so that one may wonder if God is truly for his people. Despite spiritual promises, physical, mental, and emotional struggles still exist and are to be endured. The numerous problems confronting the world today, especially insecurity of life and property orchestrated by poor leadership, are enormous. When considered in the light of the promise of “those who are with us are more than those who are with them” there tends to be increased tension. But this tension is resolved the moment it is understood that humans perceive God’s purposes in parts, not in full. In addition God does not reveal his purposes for complete human comprehension. Finally, God uses everything, including problems and opposition, to refine, reorganize, overthrow, enthrone, test, teach, punish, curse and or bless his people in the process of the realization of his purpose and will within history. The idea is not that the people of God can never face opposition; it is simply that their opposition is doomed to failure. Since God is on their side, there is nothing to worry about.

Whatever happens at any point in time is the will of God and the people of God and men of faith are to be always obedient to God in order to overcome. Elisha was obedient and he excelled, transforming his servant and bringing salvation to his people. Whoever is obedient to the law like him will be a conqueror. It is growth in obedience, as exemplified by Elisha that the deuteronomic narrative is advocating for God’s people. Physical maturity is as a result of time, intellectual maturity is as a result of learning, spiritual maturity comes only as a result of obedience to God (Ugwueye and Igbo, 2018). In order to make this point as clear as crystal, the author of the narrative purposely took the emphasis from the ancient king’s excessive powers and put it squarely on Elisha’s humble obedience to Yahweh. The kings were man-made while Elisha was God-made. The kings depended on the harsh law of the land for their operation; Elisha depended on the spiritual law of God for his mission. Those who opposed the kings found themselves a head shorter. Those who opposed the prophet had new perspective and direction. The kings were physically powerful but Elisha was spiritually superior in actual fact because of his obedience to Yahweh.

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