

27 The King of Persia as Deliverer

"the one who says"). Each of these three participles is to be understood as following the very first words of the sentence: "I, the LORD, am."

The first of these three final statements declares God's purpose to cause Jerusalem and the cities of Judah to be rebuilt, and the third specifically mentions Cyrus as God's shepherd through whom He will accomplish this purpose.

Verse 27, which comes between these two statements about God's purpose to cause Jerusalem to be rebuilt, might seem to repeat the idea of God's control over nature; but the context makes it rather clear that it means something quite different. Coming between the divine declaration that Jerusalem and the cities of Judah will be rebuilt (v. 26) and the statement that Cyrus will cause Jerusalem to be rebuilt (v. 28), it is reasonable to interpret both "the deep" and "thy rivers" as referring to the mighty Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which produced the fertile area in Mesopotamia and personified the conquering power of the Babylonian and Assyrian empires. In the context, the statement clearly means that the Babylonian power that destroyed Judah will itself be dried up.

For many centuries Mesopotamia had been a center from which conquering armies periodically marched out in various directions. After Cyrus's conquest, Babylon became merely a provincial capital and never regained its former greatness.

The word that we have translated as "the deep" ^{^1} is sometimes rendered as "the depths of the sea," but this is a paraphrase rather than a translation. The word occurs only once in the Scripture, but a closely related word ^{^2} is used not only for the depths of the sea but also to indicate a marsh or a river (as in Zechariah 10:11, where it refers to the Nile). The fact that it is used as parallel to "your rivers" in this verse strongly suggests that it refers to the land of the two rivers (Mesopotamia). However, some interpreters, preferring to take it as referring to the sea, note a few cases where rivers (or streams) also seems to point to the sea. In such a case, the verse is probably a reminder of the way God opened a path through the Red Sea to allow the Israelites to escape from Egyptian domination,