

not necessarily make for vagueness or lack of clarity. They may actually present an idea more clearly than could be done in literal speech. When we say of a man, "He was a lion in the fight," we do not mean that the man actually was transformed into a four-footed beast in the midst of the battle. We do not mean that he roared, that he clawed with his fingernails, or that he chewed up the enemy with his mouth. We simply mean that he showed those qualities of courage and of ferocious onslaught which are thought of as typical of a lion. It is a figurative expression which gives the idea with greater clarity than could be done in equal space with literal language. In addition, it often greatly increases the beauty of a statement.

In any passage we must usually accept the literal meaning if it makes sense. However, we must recognize the possibility of finding evidence that some sort of a figure is involved.

There is a good illustration of this in Judges 14:18: "And the men of the city said unto him on the seventh day before the sun went down, What is sweeter than honey? and what is stronger than a lion? And he said unto them, If ye had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle." In this verse we may ask whether "lion," "honey," "plow," and "heifer" are to be taken literally, or as figures. Earlier in the chapter we read that Samson met a young lion and killed it. Later he returned and found that bees had made honey in its carcass. There is no question that these terms are to be taken literally. In verse 18 the same matters are referred to in the answer given by the men of the city, and there is no doubt that "lion" and "honey" are again used literally. Yet when Samson answers, it is equally clear that he is using "plow" and "heifer" in a figurative sense. The meaning is just as clear as if he had used literal terms but if we had only the one verse before us we might have difficulty deciding which terms were literal and which were figurative.

A similar question faces us in Isaiah 13 and 14. Are these great cosmic statements to be interpreted as figurative descriptions of the upheavals accompanying the downfall of Babylon, or is Babylon to be taken as a figure for something else to which these expressions might more suitably be applied? When we find great historical difficulties in the application of certain statements to Babylon, we are led to