

# NIV 39

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Beard of Bees Press  
Chicago, Illinois  
Number 61  
April, 2009

## **Preface**

During a bender, an acquaintance of mine carried his shotgun into his hotel room. In the mirror, he saw himself with the gun to his temple. But on the nightstand, the Gideons International Bible had been left out. He placed the gun down and picked up the book. The book has become a totem for him; however, the contents are only skimmed. The text for him is an object, an object that obscures the signs it theoretically should contain.

While attending a conference at the University of Louisiana, I returned to my hotel room and noticed the Gideons. Flipping through the pages, I thought about this acquaintance and about the objecthood imbued in the text.

I took the book and once I was back in Chicago, I put the text of each book of the Old Testament through a randomizing process. The randomized text was ordered with the basic rule that the New International Version of the Bible has 39 books of the Old Testament. So each book has been condensed to 39 words.

This process led to this project, NIV 39.

(1)

Flocks and herds land able to dwell together for possessions.  
Cattle spoke to Esau; Esau goes to the field to hunt Rebekah.  
The household of Pharaoh finds eyes in hearing Father swear,  
saying: *Behold my grave, which I dug.*

(2)

Woven of scarlet thread, hate burdens pervert elders. The  
donkey of refrain weeps compassion. Thirst cries, *People are  
almost stone*. Moses and Aaron say, *Time sinned the Lord*.  
The Lord strikes the waters, which are the fish that stink.

(3)

Turtledoves afford bright spots and skin offered them. The skin is white, a spot of raw flesh swelling. The sore shall be unclean. Young pigeons shall examine the sore; then the priest shall pronounce it one dull white offering.

(4)

The persons who touched a bone shall sprinkle the unclean. The Lord makes and numbers the children of one kid. The sons say, *Man separates the Lord*. The law dies a curse in a tent. The Lord makes atonement.

(5)

Every green tree shall destroy their altars and burn their wooden images. Sufficient enemies are holy ones with waters. A favored son dips his foot in oil. The Lord, your God, destroys the land, fights your eyes for Egypt.

(6)

The Lord delivers the officer of the children in sight, and cuts the mountains from all the mountains of Judah. From all the mountains, utterly destroyed cities are left in the land of children. Be afraid Lord, the people-commander.



(7)

Daylight kills Samson and a couple of donkeys. The judges play the harlot with other gods and quickly bow to their fathers, obeying the commandments of their hands. Children of twenty-six thousand draw the sword of the wonderful goat.

(8)

Ruth, maidservant under your wing, returns each to her mother's house with the dead and with me. A little house among the sheaves gleams her witnesses. His feet uncover and lie down at midnight. The man startles his feet.

(9)

Uncircumcised from saving many armor bearers, the name of man burns children and brings demands from his own soul. Agag cautiously says, *Death is past*. But Samuel says, *The army within the camp is encamped anxious about the supplies*.

(10)

The safe young man harms his anointed mouth, saying, *Waves of ungodliness play music on all kinds of fir*. From Earth, David commands his young piece of meat, a cake of raisins, to depart to his inheritance, his tents.

(11)

His chariots fight his father. There is no voice of Baal who eats at Jezebel's table. Small or great from the eyes of the disguised captains of high places, his robes become king and reign twenty-five years in Salem.

(12)

A prophet returns fire to heal her son, a leprosy and famine in the land. Prophets master a certain woman of the wives of sight. Her servant shall attack every husband, leprosy and in-land famine, and also drink animals.

(13)

All these children beget the threshing floor of his angel's eyes, standing between earth and hand. A drawn sword over Jerusalem clothed in sackcloth fells the ark of proclaimed cherubim and strangers go from one nation to one king.

(14)

Chariots see Israel, pursuing a certain man. Willingly, a loyal heart knows burden and spreads his hands. A bow at random strikes the king of joints, so he says, *Whoever gave the temple under cherubim over overshadowed scribes rejoice.*



(15)

My garment and my robe pluck out my beard. Everyone who trembles at baths of oil diligently commands the House of Heaven. Noble captives settle cities beyond the river. The men beyond the river burn salt palaces, break walls.

(16)

Army and horsemen with the official hear deeply of a man  
disturbed to seek. Salem lies wasted and its gates may no  
longer reproach the hand. The king (queen sitting beside him)  
will return pleased by a cloudy pillar.

(17)

The scribes call the third month, *Words*. Young virgins into the women's quarters under the custody of the king's eunuch custodian let beauty preparations given dignity attend nothing. So the king says, *Wither with the king's signet ring. Revoke.*

(18)

Upright lips with pure knowledge make breath. Frost gives birth like stone. The surface of the deep frozen cluster, the Pleiades, loses the belt of Orion. The five wicked justices do not withdraw his eyes on earth, blameless evil.

(19)

Blessed who trains my hands for fingers—my fortress who subdues my people under me. Judges overthrown by the cliff are sweet bones scattered at the vain mouth. I hate with perfect hatred the wilderness clothed with flocks for joy.

(20)

Forsake the way who hates correction. Disdain the man who listens to me, waiting at the posts of my doors. So destruction goes out by night, stretches her hands to distaff and spindles; she is not afraid of snow.

(21)

Men of skill know a cruel net, so the sons of men are snared.  
A fool multiplies words. Their labor wearies the city. Under  
the sun, their vanity may be exercised. Grasping for the wind,  
bones grow the womb

(22)

Fitly set, his cheeks drip liquid myrrh. His rod is set with beryl. Earth will return vanity, the vineyard, to a thousand silver coins. Ten thousand like gold and raven. Your breasts, like clusters of vines, go down smoothly.



(23)

Continue until night. Harp and tambourine till wine inflames my ways, your thoughts. Bring forth wild grapes that will roar and sorrow. Light is darkened ruins under everyone who is found. Dashed, plundered, ravished, I will stir captured fall.

(24)

Hearted, a wooden idol is. Silver beaten and hands are purple,  
blue. The work of the daughter is no peace; there is no breath  
in futile work. They are ashamed, without knowledge, put to  
shame by his molded image.

(25)

Hiss and gnash the Lord fulfilled. His fierce word, *anger*, sends fire into my bones, a net. Pour your heart like water before straight legs. The soles of feet are burnished bronze calve's feet; no breath in futile work.

(26)

Healed wherever the river goes fishermen spread nets. The great swamps and marshes will not be healed, be given the blood of the sin. Neighbors your harlotry stretched my hand against you, diminished the allotment of those you hate.

(27)

On the south side, one gate... on the west side three gates shall be swept and broken. The prince of the covenant makes with a small people. The hand of his enemy when taken will turn back on a number.

(28)

The Lord says, *Love a woman who loves the raisin cakes of the pagans.* I bought her for myself. New treacherous cursings of my forgotten law, wine and a stubborn calf will let her forage like an open lamb.

(29)

Gloom cuts your months. My ruined fig tree strips the girded virgin of sackcloth. Wilderness escapes with noise like chariots. Your mighty waken to the valley for there I will sit to judge the sickle for the harvest mountain.

(30)

The hand takes from the mouth of a lion a piece of ear and commands drink as a cart full of sheaves. Orion turns the shadow of death. Calamity passes through you. Quench the Pleiades and sieve all vineyards.



(31)

The border forces peace. Those who eat your bread shall will that day, destroy the wise who will bring the ground as high as the eagle. Thieves fail loud saying, *The new moon trades, falsifying its poor silver works.*

(32)

Insult for insult, in the house of the restricted charges, word laid aside. The inhabitant pines for disaster. So he licks up the Lord and throws him into the sea. The sea owns into the lowest parts of Jonah.

(33)

That mountain of the Lord's house flows to many nations of Jacob who teach transgressions and heads, who abhor and pervert bloodshed with iniquity, who harness the chariot to the beginning of the transgression given birth to the house.

(34)

The voice of doves beats its breasts like a pool of water.  
Wickedness is the house of short measure. Locusts plunder  
the dwelling of young lions. An abomination counts pure  
wicked scales with the bag of locusts of heaven.

(35)

You make men like creeping things that have no ruler over them in their dragnet glory cover their brightness like earth. Stone teaches wood. You become their booty because you have plundered the remnant. Its mold should mute idols.

(36)

Humility upholds hidden anger. Sacrifice will punish the princess clothed with earth. A pure desolate language calls the name beyond the offering. Weeds and salt pits shall possess the remnant of my people; they shall pride my dispersed Sodom.

(37)

Land and new wine labor your hands. The prophet carries  
holy meat in the fold of his garments; oils any food. It  
becomes a dead body, uncleans priests of the ninth month.  
The son of my ruins is everyone.

(38)

The pomegranate and the olive tree come again. The word drains the whole earth. The horns scatter the craftsmen. The horns terrify the nations of filthy garments. Before the angel, he answers, *Filthy garments completely wither his right arm.*



(39)

The messenger of hosts departs from the way, causes law to stumble. His lips walk with me. Equity turned from inequity. A curse robs one who serves and hosts; the storehouse windows pour enough jewels to spare man's son.

NICHOLAS ALEXANDER HAYES is an editor at Ignavia Press. He is currently working on contemporary retellings of Greek Myths with Terri Griffith. His writing has appeared in *Word Riot*, *Sein Und Werden*, *5\_Trope*, *Bloom*, and *Madder Love: Queer Men and the Precincts of Surrealism*.

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