



*YOU CAN UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE*

**ISAIAH:**  
**THE PROPHET AND HIS DAY**  
**CHAPTERS 1-39**

BOB UTLEY  
PROFESSOR OF HERMENEUTICS  
(BIBLE INTERPRETATION)

STUDY GUIDE COMMENTARY SERIES  
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## The New American Standard Bible Update — 1995

### **Easier to read:**

- ▣ Passages with Old English “thee’s” and “thou’s” etc. have been updated to modern English.
- ▣ Words and phrases that could be misunderstood due to changes in their meaning during the past 20 years have been updated to current English.
- ▣ Sentences beginning with “And” have often been retranslated for better English, in recognition of differences in style between the ancient languages and modern English. The original Greek and Hebrew did not have punctuation as is found in English, and in many cases modern English punctuation serves as a substitute for “and” in the original. In some other cases, “and” is translated by a different word such as “then” or “but” as called for by the context, when the word in the original language allows such translation.

### **More accurate than ever:**

- ▣ Recent research on the oldest and best Greek manuscripts of the New Testament has been reviewed, and some passages have been updated for even greater fidelity to the original manuscripts.
- ▣ Parallel passages have been compared and reviewed.
- ▣ Verbs that have a wide range of meaning have been retranslated in some passages to better account for their use in the context.

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- ▣ The NASB update is not a change-for-the-sake-of-change translation. The original NASB stands the test of time, and change has been kept to a minimum in recognition of the standard that has been set by the New American Standard Bible.
- ▣ The NASB update continues the NASB’s tradition of literal translation of the original Greek and Hebrew without compromise. Changes in the text have been kept within the strict parameters set forth by the Lockman Foundation’s Fourfold Aim.
- ▣ The translators and consultants who have contributed to the NASB update are conservative Bible scholars who have doctorates in Biblical languages, theology, or other advanced degrees. They represent a variety of denominational backgrounds.

### **Continuing a tradition:**

The original NASB has earned the reputation of being the most accurate English Bible translation. Other translations in recent years have sometimes made a claim to both accuracy and ease of reading, but any reader with an eye for detail eventually discovers that these translations are consistently inconsistent. While sometimes literal, they frequently resort to paraphrase of the original, often gaining little in readability and sacrificing much in terms of fidelity. Paraphrasing is not by nature a bad thing; it can and should clarify the meaning of a passage as the translators understand and interpret. In the end, however, a paraphrase is as much a commentary on the Bible as it is a translation. The NASB update carries on the NASB tradition of being a true Bible translation, revealing what the original manuscripts actually say—not merely what the translator believes they mean.

—The Lockman Foundation



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Brief Explanations of the Technical Resources used in This Commentary . . . . .	i
Brief Definitions of Hebrew Verbal Forms that Impact Exegesis . . . . .	iii
Abbreviations Used in This Commentary . . . . .	ix
A Word From the Author: How Can This Commentary Help You? . . . . .	xi
A Guide to Good Bible Reading: A Personal Search for Verifiable Truth . . . . .	xiii
Commentary	
Introduction to Isaiah . . . . .	1
Isaiah 1 . . . . .	11
Isaiah 2 . . . . .	41
Isaiah 3 . . . . .	55
Isaiah 4 . . . . .	65
Isaiah 5 . . . . .	71
Isaiah 6 . . . . .	89
Isaiah 7 . . . . .	101
Isaiah 8 . . . . .	111
Isaiah 9 . . . . .	125
Isaiah 10 . . . . .	133
Isaiah 11 . . . . .	143
Isaiah 12 . . . . .	153
Isaiah 13 . . . . .	157
Isaiah 14 . . . . .	165
Isaiah 15 . . . . .	179
Isaiah 16 . . . . .	185
Isaiah 17 . . . . .	191
Isaiah 18 . . . . .	199
Isaiah 19 . . . . .	205
Isaiah 20 . . . . .	215
Isaiah 21 . . . . .	219
Isaiah 22 . . . . .	227
Isaiah 23 . . . . .	239
Isaiah 24 . . . . .	247
Isaiah 25 . . . . .	257

Isaiah 26 .....	265
Isaiah 27 .....	277
Isaiah 28 .....	285
Isaiah 29 .....	295
Isaiah 30 .....	307
Isaiah 31 .....	321
Isaiah 32 .....	327
Isaiah 33 .....	339
Isaiah 34 .....	349
Isaiah 35 .....	357
Isaiah 36 .....	363
Isaiah 37 .....	371
Isaiah 38 .....	385
Isaiah 39 .....	393
Appendix One: Introduction to Hebrew Poetry .....	397
Appendix Two: Introduction to OT Prophecy .....	401
Appendix Three: A Brief Historical Survey .....	405
Appendix Four: Charts	
1. OT Time Line .....	411
2. Kings and Events of the Babylonian, Persian, and Greek Dynasties .....	415
3. Kings of the divided Monarchy .....	421
Appendix Five: Doctrinal Statement .....	427



# SPECIAL TOPICS TABLE OF CONTENTS

Names for Deity, 1:1 .....	13
Bob's Evangelical Biases, 1:3 .....	18
Election/Predestination and the Need for A Theological Balance, 1:3 .....	18
Righteousness, 1:4 .....	19
Sanctification, 1:4 .....	23
Lord of Hosts, 1:9 .....	25
The Remnant, Three Senses, 1:9 .....	26
Eastern Literature, 1:16 .....	29
Covenant, 1:19 .....	31
Biblical Attitudes Toward Alcohol and Alcoholism, 1:22 .....	33
Fire, 1:31 .....	38
This Age and the Age to Come, 2:2 .....	44
Why Are End-Time Events So Controversial, 2:2 .....	45
Judge, Justice, Judgment in Isaiah, 3:1 .....	57
Glory, 3:8 .....	60
Moon Worship, 3:18 .....	63
Jesus the Nazarene, 4:2 .....	67
The Two Books of God, 4:3 .....	69
Ancient Near Eastern Weights and Volumes, 5:10 .....	77
Where Are the Dead?, 5:14 .....	80
Burial Practices, 5:25 .....	85
Anthropomorphic Language Used for God, 6:1 .....	91
<i>Seraphim</i> , 6:1 .....	93
Holy, 6:3 .....	94
Trinity, 6:8 .....	96
Repentance in the Old Testament, 6:10 .....	98
Believe, 7:4-9 .....	104
Women in the Bible, 8:3 .....	114
Cornerstone, 8:14-15 .....	120
Symbolic Numbers in Scripture, 11:12 .....	150
Satan, Contextual Insights to chapter 14 .....	166
Giants, 14:9 .....	172
Grieving Rites, 15:1 .....	182
Lovingkindness ( <i>Hesed</i> ), 16:5 .....	188
Fertility Worship in the Ancient Near East, 17:8 .....	195
Know, 19:21 .....	213
Believe, Trust, Faith, and Faithfulness in the Old Testament, 22:25 .....	233
Apocalyptic Literature, Contextual Insights to chapter 24 .....	248

Land, Country, Earth (ארץ), 24:1 .....	250
Wonderful Things (אליפ), 25:1 .....	259
Terms for God's Revelations, 26:8 .....	270
Horns Used by Israel, 27:13 .....	283
Ransom/Redeem, 29:22 .....	303
Shadow as Metaphor for Protection and Care, 30:2 .....	309
Prophet (the different Hebrew terms), 30:10 .....	313
Forever ('Olam), 32:14 .....	332
The Personhood of the Spirit, 32:15-20 .....	334
Peace (Shalom), 32:17 .....	336
Salvation, 33:2 .....	342
The Demonic, 34:11-15 .....	354
Intercessory Prayer, 37:21-24 .....	378
The Angel of the Lord, 37:36 .....	383
Words for Forgiveness, 38:17 .....	391

# BRIEF EXPLANATIONS OF THE TECHNICAL RESOURCES USED IN THIS OLD TESTAMENT COMMENTARY SERIES

## I. Lexical

There are several excellent lexicons available for ancient Hebrew.

- A. *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* by Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. It is based on the German lexicon by William Gesenius. It is known by the abbreviation BDB.
- B. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* by Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, translated by M. E. J. Richardson. It is known by the abbreviation KB.
- C. *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* by William L. Holladay and is based on the above German lexicon.
- D. A new five volume theological word study entitled *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, edited by Willem A. Van Gemeren. It is known by the abbreviation NIDOTTE.

Where there is significant lexical variety, I have shown several English translations (NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV, NJB) from both “word-for-word” and “dynamic equivalent” translations (cf. Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 28-44).

## II. Grammatical

The grammatical identification is usually based on John Joseph Owens’ *Analytical Key to the Old Testament* in four volumes. This is cross checked with Benjamin Davidson’s *Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon of the Old Testament*.

Another helpful resource for grammatical and syntactical features which is used in most of the OT volumes of “You Can Understand the Bible” Series is “The Helps for Translators Series” from the United Bible Societies. They are entitled “A Handbook on \_\_\_\_\_.”

## III. Textual

I am committed to the inspiration of the consonantal Hebrew text (not the Masoretic vowel points and comments). As in all hand-copied, ancient texts, there are some questionable passages. This is usually because of the following:

- A. *hapax legomenon* (words used only once in the Hebrew OT)
- B. idiomatic terms (words and phrases whose literal meanings have been lost)
- C. historical uncertainties (our lack of information about the ancient world)
- D. the poly-semitic semantic field of Hebrew’s limited vocabulary
- E. problems associated with later scribes hand-copying ancient Hebrew texts
- F. Hebrew scribes trained in Egypt who felt free to update the texts they copied to make them complete and understandable to their day (NIDOTTE pp. 52-54).

There are several sources of Hebrew words and texts outside the Masoretic textual tradition.

1. The Samaritan Pentateuch
2. The Dead Sea Scrolls
3. Some later coins, letters, and ostraca (broken pieces of unfired pottery used for writing)

But for the most part, there are no manuscript families in the OT like those in the Greek NT manuscripts. For a good brief article on the textual reliability of the Masoretic Text (A.D. 900's) see “The Reliability of the Old Testament Text” by Bruce K. Waltke in the NIDOTTE, vol. 1, pp. 51-67.

The Hebrew text used is *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* from the German Bible Society, 1997, which is based on the Leningrad Codex (A.D. 1009). Occasionally, the ancient versions (Greek Septuagint, Aramaic Targums, Syriac Peshitta, and Latin Vulgate) are consulted if the Hebrew is ambiguous or obviously confused.

# BRIEF DEFINITIONS OF HEBREW VERBAL FORMS WHICH IMPACT EXEGESIS

## I. Brief Historical Development of Hebrew

Hebrew is part of the Shemitic (Semitic) family of southwest Asian language. The name (given by modern scholars) comes from Noah's son, Shem (cf. Gen. 5:32; 6:10). Shem's descendants are listed in Gen. 10:21-31 as Arabs, Hebrews, Syrians, Arameans, and Assyrians. In reality some Semitic languages are used by nations listed in Ham's line (cf. Gen. 10:6-14), Canaan, Phoenicia, and Ethiopia.

Hebrew is part of the northwest group of these Semitic languages. Modern scholars have samples of this ancient language group from:

- A. Amorite (*Mari Tablets* from 18<sup>th</sup> century B.C. in Akkadian)
- B. Canaanite (*Ras Shamra Tablets* from 15<sup>th</sup> century in Ugaritic)
- C. Canaanite (*Amarna Letters* from 14<sup>th</sup> century in Canaanite Akkadian)
- D. Phoenician (Hebrew uses Phoenician alphabet)
- E. Moabite (Mesha stone, 840 B.C.)
- F. Aramaic (official language of the Persian Empire used in Gen. 31:47 [2 words]; Jer. 10:11; Dan. 2:4-6; 7:28; Ezra 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26 and spoken by Jews in the first century in Palestine)

The Hebrew language is called "the lip of Canaan" in Isa. 19:18. It was first called "Hebrew" in the prologue of Ecclesiasticus (Wisdom of Ben Sirach) about 180 B.C. (and some other early places, cf. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4, pp. 205ff). It is most closely related to Moabite and the language used at Ugarit. Examples of ancient Hebrew found outside the Bible are:

- 1. the Gezer calendar, 925 B.C. (a school boy's writing)
- 2. the Siloam Inscription, 705 B.C. (tunnel writings)
- 3. Samaritan Ostraca, 770 B.C. (tax records on broken pottery)
- 4. Lachish letters, 587 B.C. (war communications)
- 5. Maccabean coins and seals
- 6. some Dead Sea Scroll texts
- 7. numerous inscriptions (cf. "Languages [Hebrew]," ABD 4:203ff)

It, like all Semitic languages, is characterized by words made up of three consonants (tri-consonantal root). It is an inflexed language. The three-root consonants carry the basic word meaning, while prefixed, suffixed, or internal additions show the syntactical function (later vowels, cf. Sue Green, *Linguistic Analysis of Biblical Hebrew*, pp. 46-49).

Hebrew vocabulary demonstrates a difference between prose and poetry. Word meanings are connected to folk etymologies (not linguistic origins). Word plays and sound plays are very common (*paronomasia*).

## II. Aspects of Predication

### A. VERBS

The normal expected word order is VERB, PRONOUN, SUBJECT (with modifiers), OBJECT (with modifiers). The basic non-flagged VERB is the *Qal*, PERFECT, MASCULINE, SINGULAR form. It is how Hebrew and Aramaic lexicons are arranged.

VERBS are inflected to show

1. number—singular, plural, dual
2. gender—masculine and feminine (no neuter)
3. mood—indicative, subjunctive, imperative (relation of the action to reality)
4. tense (aspect)
  - a. PERFECT, which denotes completion, in the sense of the beginning, continuing, and concluding of an action. Usually this form was used of past action, the thing has occurred. J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*, says  
“The single whole described by a perfect is also considered as certain. An imperfect may picture a state as possible or desired or expected, but a perfect sees it as actual, real, and sure” (p. 36).

S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew*, describes it as,

“The perfect is employed to indicate actions the accomplishment of which lies indeed in the future, but is regarded as dependant upon such an unalterable determination of the will that it may be spoken of as having actually taken place: thus a resolution, promise, or decree, especially of Divine one, is frequently announced in the perfect tense” (p. 17, e.g., the prophetic perfect).

Robert B. Chisholm, Jr. *From Exegesis to Exposition*, defines this verbal form as:

“views a situation from the outside, as a whole. As such it expresses a simple fact, whether it be an action or state (including state of being or mind). When used of actions, it often views the action as complete from the rhetorical standpoint of the speaker or narrator (whether it is or is not complete in fact or reality is not the point). The perfect can pertain to an action/state in the past, present or future. As noted above, time frame, which influences how one translates the perfect into a tense-oriented language like English, must be determined from the context” (p. 86).

- b. IMPERFECT, which denotes an action in progress (incomplete, repetitive, continual, or contingent), often movement toward a goal. Usually this form was used of Present and Future action.

J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*, says:

“All IMPERFECTS represent incomplete states. They are either repeated or developing or contingent. In other words, or partially developed, or partially assured. In all cases they are partial in some sense, i.e., incomplete” (p. 55).

Robert B. Chisholm, Jr. *From Exegesis to Exposition*, says:

“It is difficult to reduce the essence of the imperfect to a single concept, for it encompasses both aspect and mood. Sometimes the imperfect is used in an indicative manner and makes an objective statement. At other times it views an action more subjectively, as hypothetical, contingent, possible, and so on” (p. 89).

- c. The added *waw*, which links the VERB to the action of the previous VERB(s).
- d. IMPERATIVE, which is based on the volition of the speaker and potential action by the hearer.
- e. In ancient Hebrew only the larger context can determine the authorial-intended time orientations.

- B. The seven major inflected forms and their basic meaning. In reality these forms work in conjunction with each other in a context and must not be isolated.
1. *Qal (Kal)*, the most common and basic of all the forms. It denotes simple action or a state of being. There is no causation or specification implied.
  2. *Niphal*, the second most common form. It is usually PASSIVE, but this form also functions as reciprocal and reflexive. It also has no causation or specification implied.
  3. *Piel*, this form is active and expresses the bringing about of an action into a state of being. The basic meaning of the *Qal* stem is developed or extended into a state of being.
  4. *Pual*, this is the PASSIVE counterpart to the *Piel*. It is often expressed by a PARTICIPLE.
  5. *Hithpael*, which is the reflexive or reciprocal stem. It expresses iterative or durative action to the *Piel* stem. The rare PASSIVE form is called *Hothpael*.
  6. *Hiphil*, the active form of the causative stem in contrast to *Piel*. It can have a permissive aspect, but usually refers to the cause of an event. Ernst Jenni, a German Hebrew grammarian, believed that the *Piel* denoted something coming into a state of being, while *Hiphil* showed how it happened.
  7. *Hophal*, the PASSIVE counterpart to the *Hiphil*. These last two stems are the least used of the seven stems.

Much of this information comes from *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, by Bruce K. Walke and M. O'Connor, pp. 343-452.

Agency and causation chart. One key in understanding the Hebrew VERB system is to see it as a pattern of VOICE relationships. Some stems are in contrast to other stems (i.e., *Qal - Niphal*; *Piel - Hiphil*)

The chart below tries to visualize the basic function of the VERB stems as to causation.

Voice or Subject	No Secondary Agency	An Active Secondary Agency	A Passive Secondary Agency
ACTIVE	<i>Qal</i>	<i>Hiphil</i>	<i>Piel</i>
MIDDLE PASSIVE	<i>Niphal</i>	<i>Hophal</i>	<i>Pual</i>
REFLEXIVE/ RECIPROCAL	<i>Niphal</i>	<i>Hiphil</i>	<i>Hithpael</i>

This chart is taken from the excellent discussion of the VERBAL system in light of new Akkadian research (cf. Bruce K. Waltke, M. O'Conner, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, pp.354-359).

R. H. Kennett, *A Short Account of the Hebrew Tenses*, has provided a needed warning:

"I have commonly found in teaching, that a student's chief difficulty in the Hebrew verbs is to grasp the meaning which they conveyed to the minds of the Hebrews themselves; that is to say, there is a tendency to assign as equivalents to each of the Hebrew Tenses a certain number of Latin or English forms by which that particular Tense may commonly be translated. The result is a failure to perceive many of these fine shades of meaning, which give such life and vigor to the language of the Old Testament.

The difficulty in the use of the Hebrew verbs lies solely in the point of view, so absolutely different from our own, from which the Hebrews regarded an action; the *time*, which with us is the first consideration, as the very word, 'tense' shows, being to them a matter of secondary importance. It is, therefore, essential that a student

should clearly grasp, not so much the Latin or English forms which may be used in translating each of the Hebrew Tenses, but rather the aspect of each action, as it presented itself to a Hebrew's mind.

The name 'tenses' as applied to Hebrew verbs is misleading. The so-called Hebrew 'tenses' do not express the *time* but merely the *state* of an action. Indeed were it not for the confusion that would arise through the application of the term 'state' to both nouns and verbs, 'states' would be a far better designation than 'tenses.' It must always be borne in mind that it is impossible to translate a Hebrew verb into English without employing a limitation (of time), which is entirely absent in the Hebrew. The ancient Hebrews never thought of an action as past, present, or future, but simply as *perfect*, i.e., complete, or *imperfect*, i.e., as in course of development. When we say that a certain Hebrew tense corresponds to a Perfect, Pluperfect, or Future in English, we do not mean that the Hebrews thought of it as Perfect, Pluperfect, or Future, but merely that it must be so translated in English. The *time* of an action the Hebrews did not attempt to express by any verbal form" (preface and p. 1).

For a second good warning, Sue Groom, *Linguistic Analysis of Biblical Hebrew*, reminds us,

"There is no way of knowing whether modern scholars' reconstruction of semantic fields and sense relations in an ancient dead language are merely a reflection of their own intuition, or their own native language, or whether those fields existed in Classical Hebrew" (p. 128).

#### C. MOODS (MODES)

1. It happened, is happening (INDICATIVE), usually uses PERFECT tense or PARTICIPLES (all PARTICIPLES are INDICATIVE).
2. It will happen, could happen (SUBJUNCTIVE)
  - a. uses a marked IMPERFECT tense
    - (1) COHORTATIVE (added h), first person IMPERFECT form which normally expresses a wish, a request, or self-encouragement (i.e., actions willed by the speaker)
    - (2) JUSSIVE (internal changes), third person IMPERFECT (can be second person in negated sentences) which normally expresses a request, a permission, an admonition, or advice
  - b. uses a PERFECT tense with *lu* or *lule*  
These constructions are similar to SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL sentences in Koine Greek. A false statement (protasis) results in a false conclusion (apodosis).
  - c. uses an IMPERFECT tense and *lu*  
Context and *lu*, as well as a future orientation, mark this SUBJUNCTIVE usage. Some examples from J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament* are Gen. 13:16; Deut. 1:12; I Kgs. 13:8; Ps. 24:3; Isa. 1:18 (cf. Pp. 76-77).

D. *Waw* - Conversive/consecutive/relative. This uniquely Hebrew (Canaanite) syntactical feature has caused great confusion through the years. It is used in a variety of ways often based on genre. The reason for the confusion is that early scholars were European and tried to interpret in light of their own native languages. When this proved difficult they blamed the problem on Hebrew being a "supposed" ancient, archaic language. European languages are TENSE (time) based VERBS. Some of the variety and grammatical implications were specified by the letter WAW being added to the PERFECT or IMPERFECT VERB stems. This altered the way the action was viewed.

1. In historical narrative the VERBS are linked together in a chain with a standard pattern.



2. The *waw* prefix showed a specific relationship with the previous VERB(s).
3. The larger context is always the key to understanding the VERB chain. Semitic VERBS cannot be analyzed in isolation.

J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*, notes the distinctive of Hebrew in its use of the *waw* before PERFECTS and IMPERFECTS (pp. 52-53). As the basic idea of the PERFECT is past, the addition of *waw* often projects it into a future time aspect. This is also true of the IMPERFECT whose basic idea is present or future; the addition of *waw* places it into the past. It is this unusual time shift which explains the *waw*'s addition, not a change in the basic meaning of the tense itself. The *waw* PERFECTS work well with prophecy, while the *waw* IMPERFECTS work well with narratives (pp. 54, 68).

Watts continues his definition

“As a fundamental distinction between *waw* conjunctive and *waw* consecutive, the following interpretations are offered:

1. *Waw* conjunctive appears always to indicate a parallel.
2. *Waw* consecutive appears always to indicate a sequence. It is the only form of *waw* used with consecutive imperfects. The relation between the imperfects linked by it may be temporal sequence, logical consequence, logical cause, or logical contrast. In all cases there is a sequence” (p. 103).

E. INFINITIVE - There are two kinds of INFINITIVES

1. INFINITIVE ABSOLUTES, which are “strong, independent, striking expressions used for dramatic effect. . .as a subject, it often has no written verb, the verb ‘to be’ being understood, of course, but the word standing dramatically alone” J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*” (p. 92).
2. INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, which are “related grammatically to the sentence by prepositions, possessive pronouns, and the construct relationship” (p. 91).  
J. Weingreen, *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew*, describes the construct state as:

“When two (or more) words are so closely united that together they constitute one compound idea, the dependent word (or words) is (are) said to be in the construct state” (p. 44).

F. INTERROGATIVES

1. They always appear first in the sentence.
2. Interpretive significance
  - a. *ha* - does not expect a response
  - b. *halo'* - the author expects a “yes” answer

NEGATIVES

1. They always appear before the words they negate.
2. Most common negation is *lo'*.
3. The term *'al* has a contingent connotation and is used with COHORTATIVES and JUSSIVES.
4. The term *lebhilit*, meaning “in order that. . .not,” is used with INFINITIVES.
5. The term *'en* is used with PARTICIPLES.

G. CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

1. There are four kinds of conditional sentences which basically are paralleled in Koine Greek.
  - a. something assumed to be happening or thought of as fulfilled (FIRST CLASS in Greek)
  - b. something contrary to fact whose fulfillment is impossible (SECOND CLASS)

- c. something which is possible or ever probable (THIRD CLASS)
  - d. something which is less probable, therefore, the fulfillment is dubious (FOURTH CLASS)
2. GRAMMATICAL MARKERS
- a. the assumed to be true or real condition always uses an INDICATIVE PERFECT or PARTICIPLE and usually the protasis is introduced by:
    - (1) *'im*
    - (2) *ki* (or *'asher*)
    - (3) *hin* or *hinneh*
  - b. the contrary to fact condition always uses a PERFECT aspect VERB or a PARTICIPLE with the introductory PARTICIPLE *lu* or *lule*
  - c. the more probably condition always used IMPERFECT VERB or PARTICIPLES in the protasis, usually *'im* or *ki* are used as introductory PARTICLES
  - d. the less probable condition uses IMPERFECT SUBJUNCTIVES in the protasis and always uses *'im* as an introductory PARTICLE

## ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS COMMENTARY

AB	Anchor Bible Commentaries, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary (6 vols.), ed. David Noel Freedman
AKOT	Analytical Key to the Old Testament by John Joseph Owens
ANET	Ancient Near Eastern Texts, James B. Pritchard
BDB	A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament by F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, GBS, 1997
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
IDB	The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (4 vols.), ed. George A. Buttrick
ISBE	International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (5 vols.), ed. James Orr
JB	Jerusalem Bible
JPSOA	The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text: A New Translation (The Jewish Publication Society of America)
KB	The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament by Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner
LAM	The Holy Bible From Ancient Eastern Manuscripts (the Peshitta) by George M. Lamsa
LXX	Septuagint (Greek-English) by Zondervan, 1970
MOF	A New Translation of the Bible by James Moffatt
MT	Masoretic Hebrew Text
NAB	New American Bible Text
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NET	NET Bible: New English Translation, Second Beta Edition
NIDOTTE	New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis (5 vols.), ed. Willem A. VanGemeren

NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NRSV	New Revised Standard Bible
OTPG	Old Testament Parsing Guide by Todd S. Beall, William A. Banks and Colin Smith
REB	Revised English Bible
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SEPT	The Septuagint (Greek-English) by Zondervan, 1970
TEV	Today's English Version from United Bible Societies
YLT	Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible by Robert Young
ZPBE	Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia (5 vols.), ed. Merrill C. Tenney

## **A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR: HOW CAN THIS COMMENTARY HELP YOU?**

Biblical interpretation is a rational and spiritual process that attempts to understand an ancient inspired writer in such a way that the message from God may be understood and applied in our day.

The spiritual process is crucial but difficult to define. It does involve a yieldedness and openness to God. There must be a hunger (1) for Him, (2) to know Him, and (3) to serve Him. This process involves prayer, confession, and the willingness for lifestyle change. The Spirit is crucial in the interpretive process, but why sincere, godly Christians understand the Bible differently is a mystery.

The rational process is easier to describe. We must be consistent and fair to the text and not be influenced by our personal, cultural, or denominational biases. We are all historically conditioned. None of us are objective, neutral interpreters. This commentary offers a careful rational process containing three interpretive principles structured to help us attempt to overcome our biases.

### **First Principle**

The first principle is to note the historical setting in which a biblical book was written and the particular historical occasion for its authorship (or when it was edited). The original author had a purpose and a message to communicate. The text cannot mean something to us that it never meant to the original, ancient, inspired author. His intent—not our historical, emotional, cultural, personal, or denominational need—is the key. Application is an integral partner to interpretation, but proper interpretation must always precede application. It must be reiterated that every biblical text has one and only one meaning. This meaning is what the original biblical author intended through the Spirit's leadership to communicate to his day. This one meaning may have many possible applications to different cultures and situations. These applications must be linked to the central truth of the original author. For this reason, this study guide commentary is designed to provide a brief introduction to each book of the Bible.

### **Second Principle**

The second principle is to identify the literary units. Every biblical book is a unified document. Interpreters have no right to isolate one aspect of truth by excluding others. Therefore, we must strive to understand the purpose of the whole biblical book before we interpret the individual literary units. The individual parts—chapters, paragraphs, or verses—cannot mean what the whole unit does not mean. Interpretation must move from a deductive approach of the whole to an inductive approach to the parts. Therefore, this study guide commentary is designed to help the student analyze the structure of each literary unit by paragraphs. Paragraph and chapter divisions are not inspired, but they do aid us in identifying thought units.

Interpreting at a paragraph level—not sentence, clause, phrase, or word level—is the key in following the biblical author's intended meaning. Paragraphs are based on a unified topic, often called the theme or topical sentence. Every word, phrase, clause, and sentence in the paragraph relates somehow to this unified theme. They limit it, expand it, explain it, and/or question it. A real key to proper interpretation is to follow the original author's thought on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis through the individual literary units that make up the biblical book. This study guide commentary is designed to help the student do that by comparing the paragraphing of modern English translations. These translations have been selected because they employ different translation theories:

- A. The New King James Version (NKJV) is a word-for-word literal translation based on the Greek manuscript tradition known as the Textus Receptus. Its paragraph divisions are longer than the other translations. These longer units help the student to see the unified topics.
- B. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is a modified word-for-word translation. It forms a midpoint between the following two modern versions. Its paragraph divisions are quite helpful in identifying subjects.
- C. The Today's English Version (TEV) is a dynamic equivalent translation published by the United Bible Society. It attempts to translate the Bible in such a way that a modern English reader or speaker can understand the meaning of the original text.
- D. The Jerusalem Bible (JB) is a dynamic equivalent translation based on a French Catholic translation. It is very helpful in comparing the paragraphing from a European perspective.
- E. The printed text is the 1995 Updated New American Standard Bible (NASB), which is a word for word translation. The verse by verse comments follow this paragraphing.

### **Third Principle**

The third principle is to read the Bible in different translations in order to grasp the widest possible range of meaning (semantic field) that biblical words or phrases may have. Often a phrase or word can be understood in several ways. These different translations bring out these options and help to identify and explain the manuscript variations. These do not affect doctrine, but they do help us to try to get back to the original text penned by an inspired ancient writer.

### **Fourth Principle**

The fourth principle is to note the literary genre. Original inspired authors chose to record their messages in different forms (e.g., historical narrative, historical drama, poetry, prophecy, gospel [parable], letter, apocalyptic). These different forms have special keys to interpretation (see Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, Jr., *Cracking Old Testament Codes*, or Robert Stein, *Playing by the Rules*).

This commentary offers a quick way for the student to check his interpretations. It is not meant to be definitive, but rather informative and thought-provoking. Often, other possible interpretations help us not be so parochial, dogmatic, and denominational. Interpreters need to have a larger range of interpretive options to recognize how ambiguous the ancient text can be. It is shocking how little agreement there is among Christians who claim the Bible as their source of truth.

These principles have helped me to overcome much of my historical conditioning by forcing me to struggle with the ancient text. My hope is that it will be a blessing to you as well.

Bob Utley  
East Texas Baptist University  
June 27, 1996

# **A GUIDE TO GOOD BIBLE READING: A PERSONAL SEARCH FOR VERIFIABLE TRUTH**

Can we know truth? Where is it found? Can we logically verify it? Is there an ultimate authority? Are there absolutes which can guide our lives, our world? Is there meaning to life? Why are we here? Where are we going? These questions—questions that all rational people contemplate—have haunted the human intellect since the beginning of time (Eccl. 1:13-18; 3:9-11). I can remember my personal search for an integrating center for my life. I became a believer in Christ at a young age, based primarily on the witness of significant others in my family. As I grew to adulthood, questions about myself and my world also grew. Simple cultural and religious clichés did not bring meaning to the experiences I read about or encountered. It was a time of confusion, searching, longing, and often a feeling of hopelessness in the face of the insensitive, hard world in which I lived.

Many claimed to have answers to these ultimate questions, but after research and reflection I found that their answers were based upon (1) personal philosophies, (2) ancient myths, (3) personal experiences, or (4) psychological projections. I needed some degree of verification, some evidence, some rationality on which to base my world-view, my integrating center, my reason to live.

I found these in my study of the Bible. I began to search for evidence of its trustworthiness, which I found in (1) the historical reliability of the Bible as confirmed by archaeology, (2) the accuracy of the prophecies of the Old Testament, (3) the unity of the Bible message over the sixteen hundred years of its production, and (4) the personal testimonies of people whose lives had been permanently changed by contact with the Bible. Christianity, as a unified system of faith and belief, has the ability to deal with complex questions of human life. Not only did this provide a rational framework, but the experiential aspect of biblical faith brought me emotional joy and stability.

I thought that I had found the integrating center for my life—Christ, as understood through the Scriptures. It was a heady experience, an emotional release. However, I can still remember the shock and pain when it began to dawn on me how many different interpretations of this book were advocated, sometimes even within the same churches and schools of thought. Affirming the inspiration and trustworthiness of the Bible was not the end, but only the beginning. How do I verify or reject the varied and conflicting interpretations of the many difficult passages in Scripture by those who were claiming its authority and trustworthiness?

This task became my life's goal and pilgrimage of faith. I knew that my faith in Christ had (1) brought me great peace and joy. My mind longed for some absolutes in the midst of the relativity of my culture (post-modernity); (2) the dogmatism of conflicting religious systems (world religions); and (3) denominational arrogance. In my search for valid approaches to the interpretation of ancient literature, I was surprised to discover my own historical, cultural, denominational and experiential biases. I had often read the Bible simply to reinforce my own views. I used it as a source of dogma to attack others while reaffirming my own insecurities and inadequacies. How painful this realization was to me!

Although I can never be totally objective, I can become a better reader of the Bible. I can limit my biases by identifying them and acknowledging their presence. I am not yet free of them, but I have confronted my own weaknesses. The interpreter is often the worst enemy of good Bible reading!

Let me list some of the presuppositions I bring to my study of the Bible so that you, the reader, may examine them along with me.

## **I. Presuppositions**

- A. I believe the Bible is the sole inspired self-revelation of the one true God. Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of the intent of the original divine author (the Spirit) through a human writer in a specific historical setting.

- B. I believe the Bible was written for the common person—for all people! God accommodated Himself to speak to us clearly within a historical and cultural context. God does not hide truth—He wants us to understand! Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of its day, not ours. The Bible should not mean to us what it never meant to those who first read or heard it. It is understandable by the average human mind and uses normal human communication forms and techniques.
- C. I believe the Bible has a unified message and purpose. It does not contradict itself, though it does contain difficult and paradoxical passages. Thus, the best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible itself.
- D. I believe that every passage (excluding prophecies) has one and only one meaning based on the intent of the original, inspired author. Although we can never be absolutely certain we know the original author’s intent, many indicators point in its direction:
  1. the genre (literary type) chosen to express the message
  2. the historical setting and/or specific occasion that elicited the writing
  3. the literary context of the entire book as well as each literary unit
  4. the textual design (outline) of the literary units as they relate to the whole message
  5. the specific grammatical features employed to communicate the message
  6. the words chosen to present the message
  7. parallel passages

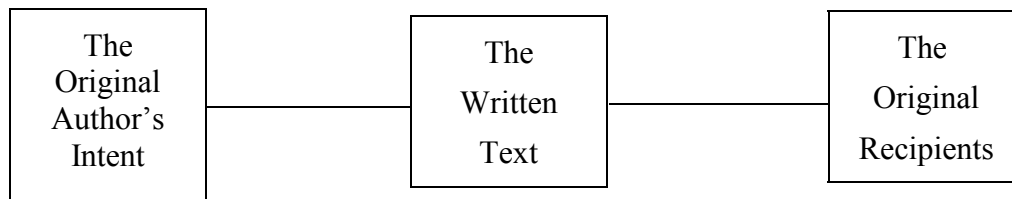
The study of each of these areas becomes the object of our study of a passage. Before I explain my methodology for good Bible reading, let me delineate some of the inappropriate methods being used today that have caused so much diversity of interpretation, and that consequently should be avoided:

## II. Inappropriate Methods

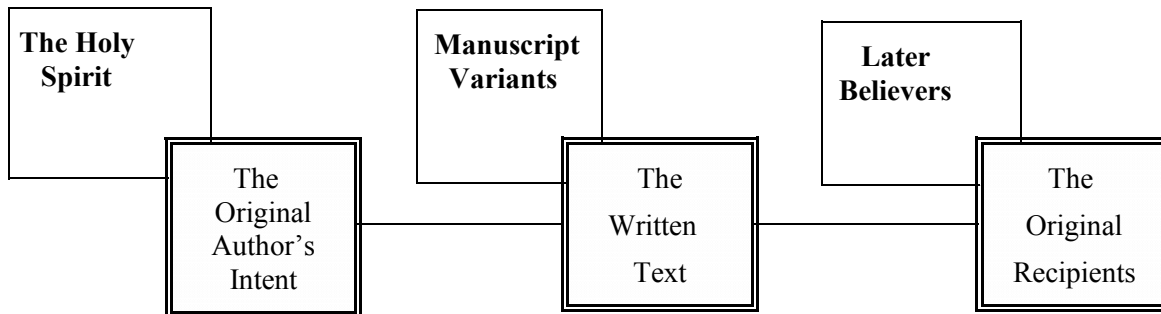
- A. Ignoring the literary context of the books of the Bible and using every sentence, clause, or even individual words as statements of truth unrelated to the author’s intent or the larger context. This is often called “proof-texting.”
- B. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by substituting a supposed historical setting that has little or no support from the text itself.
- C. Ignoring the historical setting of the books and reading it as the morning hometown newspaper written primarily to modern individual Christians.
- D. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by allegorizing the text into a philosophical/theological message totally unrelated to the first hearers and the original author’s intent.
- E. Ignoring the original message by substituting one’s own system of theology, pet doctrine, or contemporary issue unrelated to the original author’s purpose and stated message. This phenomenon often follows the initial reading of the Bible as a means of establishing a speaker’s authority. This is often referred to as “reader response” (“what-the-text-means-to-me” interpretation).



At least three related components may be found in all written human communication:



In the past, different reading techniques have focused on one of the three components, but to truly affirm the unique inspiration of the Bible, a modified diagram is more appropriate:



In truth all three components must be included in the interpretive process. For the purpose of verification, my interpretation focuses on the first two components: the original author and the text. I am probably reacting to the abuses I have observed (1) allegorizing or spiritualizing texts and (2) “reader response” interpretation (what-it-means-to-me). Abuse may occur at each stage. We must always check our motives, biases, techniques, and applications, but how do we check them if there are no boundaries to interpretations, no limits, no criteria? This is where authorial intent and textual structure provide me with some criteria for limiting the scope of possible valid interpretations.

In light of these inappropriate reading techniques, what are some possible approaches to good Bible reading and interpretation which offer a degree of verification and consistency?

### III. Possible Approaches to Good Bible Reading

At this point I am not discussing the unique techniques of interpreting specific genres but general hermeneutical principles valid for all types of biblical texts. A good book for genre-specific approaches is *How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth*, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, published by Zondervan and *Cracking Old Testament Codes* by D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, Jr., published by Broadman and Holman.

My methodology focuses initially on the reader allowing the Holy Spirit to illumine the Bible through four personal reading cycles. This makes the Spirit, the text, and the reader primary, not secondary. This also protects the reader from being unduly influenced by commentators. I have heard it said: “The Bible throws a lot of light on commentaries.” This is not meant to be a depreciating comment about study aids, but rather a plea for an appropriate timing for their use.

We must be able to support our interpretations from the text itself. Three areas provide at least limited verification:

1. the original author's
  - a. historical setting
  - b. literary context
2. the original author's choice of
  - a. grammatical structures (syntax)

- b. contemporary work usage
- c. genre
- 3. our understanding of appropriate
  - a. relevant parallel passages
  - b. relationship between doctrines (paradox)

We need to be able to provide the reasons and logic behind our interpretations. The Bible is our only source for faith and practice. Sadly, Christians often disagree about what it teaches or affirms. It is self-defeating to claim inspiration for the Bible and then for believers not to be able to agree on what it teaches and requires!

The four reading cycles are designed to provide the following interpretive insights.

A. The first reading cycle

1. Read the book in a single sitting. Read it again in a different translation, hopefully from a different translation theory
  - a. word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
  - b. dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
  - c. paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
2. Look for the central purpose of the entire writing. Identify its theme.
3. Isolate (if possible) a literary unit, a chapter, a paragraph or a sentence which clearly expresses this central purpose or theme.
4. Identify the predominant literary genre
  - a. Old Testament
    - (1) Hebrew narrative
    - (2) Hebrew poetry (wisdom literature, psalm)
    - (3) Hebrew prophecy (prose, poetry)
    - (4) Law codes
  - b. New Testament
    - (1) Narratives (Gospels, Acts)
    - (2) Parables (Gospels)
    - (3) Letters/epistles
    - (4) Apocalyptic literature

B. The second reading cycle

1. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify major topics or subjects.
2. Outline the major topics and briefly state their contents in a simple statement.
3. Check your purpose statement and broad outline with study aids.

C. The third reading cycle

1. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify the historical setting and specific occasion for the writing from the Bible book itself.
2. List the historical items that are mentioned in the Bible book
  - a. the author
  - b. the date
  - c. the recipients
  - d. the specific reason for writing
  - e. aspects of the cultural setting that relate to the purpose of the writing
  - f. references to historical people and events
3. Expand your outline to paragraph level for that part of the biblical book you are interpreting. Always identify and outline the literary unit. This may be several chapters or paragraphs. This enables you to follow the original author's logic and textual design.
4. Check your historical setting by using study aids.

#### D. The fourth reading cycle

1. Read the specific literary unit again in several translations
  - a. word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
  - b. dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
  - c. paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
2. Look for literary or grammatical structures
  - a. repeated phrases, Eph. 1:6,12,13
  - b. repeated grammatical structures, Rom. 8:31
  - c. contrasting concepts
3. List the following items
  - a. significant terms
  - b. unusual terms
  - c. important grammatical structures
  - d. particularly difficult words, clauses, and sentences
4. Look for relevant parallel passages
  - a. look for the clearest teaching passage on your subject using
    - (1) “systematic theology” books
    - (2) reference Bibles
    - (3) concordances
  - b. Look for a possible paradoxical pair within your subject. Many biblical truths are presented in dialectical pairs; many denominational conflicts come from proof-texting half of a biblical tension. All of the Bible is inspired, and we must seek out its complete message in order to provide a Scriptural balance to our interpretation.
  - c. Look for parallels within the same book, same author or same genre; the Bible is its own best interpreter because it has one author, the Spirit.
5. Use study aids to check your observations of historical setting and occasion
  - a. study Bibles
  - b. Bible encyclopedias, handbooks and dictionaries
  - c. Bible introductions
  - d. Bible commentaries (at this point in your study, allow the believing community, past and present, to aid and correct your personal study.)

#### IV. Application of Bible interpretation

At this point we turn to application. You have taken the time to understand the text in its original setting; now you must apply it to your life, your culture. I define biblical authority as “understanding what the original biblical author was saying to his day and applying that truth to our day.”

Application must follow interpretation of the original author’s intent both in time and logic. We cannot apply a Bible passage to our own day until we know what it was saying to its day! A Bible passage should not mean what it never meant!

Your detailed outline, to paragraph level (reading cycle #3), will be your guide. Application should be made at paragraph level, not word level. Words have meaning only in context; clauses have meaning only in context; sentences have meaning only in context. The only inspired person involved in the interpretive process is the original author. We only follow his lead by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. But illumination is not inspiration. To say “thus saith the Lord,” we must abide by the original author’s intent. Application must relate specifically to the general intent of the whole writing, the specific literary unit and paragraph level thought development.

Do not let the issues of our day interpret the Bible; let the Bible speak! This may require us to draw principles from the text. This is valid if the text supports a principle. Unfortunately, many times our principles are just that, “our” principles—not the text’s principles.

In applying the Bible, it is important to remember that (except in prophecy) one and only one meaning is valid for a particular Bible text. That meaning is related to the intent of the original author as he addressed a crisis or need in his day. Many possible applications may be derived from this one meaning. The application will be based on the recipients' needs but must be related to the original author's meaning.

#### V. The Spiritual Aspect of Interpretation

So far I have discussed the logical and textual process involved in interpretation and application. Now let me discuss briefly the spiritual aspect of interpretation. The following checklist has been helpful for me.

- A. Pray for the Spirit's help (cf. I Cor. 1:26-2:16).
- B. Pray for personal forgiveness and cleansing from known sin (cf. I John 1:9).
- C. Pray for a greater desire to know God (cf. Ps. 19:7-14; 42:1ff.; 119:1ff).
- D. Apply any new insight immediately to your own life.
- E. Remain humble and teachable.

It is so hard to keep the balance between the logical process and the spiritual leadership of the Holy Spirit. The following quotes have helped me balance the two:

- A. from James W. Sire, *Scripture Twisting*, pp. 17-18:

“The illumination comes to the minds of God’s people—not just to the spiritual elite. There is no guru class in biblical Christianity, no illuminati, no people through whom all proper interpretation must come. And so, while the Holy Spirit gives special gifts of wisdom, knowledge and spiritual discernment, He does not assign these gifted Christians to be the only authoritative interpreters of His Word. It is up to each of His people to learn, to judge and to discern by reference to the Bible which stands as the authority even to those to whom God has given special abilities. To summarize, the assumption I am making throughout the entire book is that the Bible is God’s true revelation to all humanity, that it is our ultimate authority on all matters about which it speaks, that it is not a total mystery but can be adequately understood by ordinary people in every culture.”

- B. on Kierkegaard, found in Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, p. 75:

According to Kierkegaard the grammatical, lexical, and historical study of the Bible was necessary but preliminary to the true reading of the Bible. “To read the Bible *as God’s word* one must read it with his heart in his mouth, on tip-toe, with eager expectancy, in conversation with God. To read the Bible thoughtlessly or carelessly or academically or professionally is not to read the Bible as God’s Word. As one reads it as a love letter is read, then one reads it as the Word of God.”

- C. H. H. Rowley in *The Relevance of the Bible*, p. 19:

“No merely intellectual understanding of the Bible, however complete, can possess all its treasures. It does not despise such understanding, for it is essential to a complete understanding. But it must lead to a spiritual understanding of the spiritual treasures of this book if it is to be complete. And for that spiritual understanding something more than intellectual alertness is necessary. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and the Bible student needs an attitude of spiritual receptivity, an eagerness to find God that he may yield himself to Him, if he is to pass beyond his scientific study unto the richer inheritance of this greatest of all books.”

## VI. This Commentary's Method

The *Study Guide Commentary* is designed to aid your interpretive procedures in the following ways:

- A. A brief historical outline introduces each book. After you have done "reading cycle #3" check this information.
- B. Contextual insights are found at the beginning of each chapter. This will help you see how the literary unit is structured.
- C. At the beginning of each chapter or major literary unit the paragraph divisions and their descriptive captions are provided from several modern translations:
  - 1. The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update (NASB)
  - 2. The New King James Version (NKJV)
  - 3. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)
  - 4. Today's English Version (TEV)
  - 5. The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB)

Paragraph divisions are not inspired. They must be ascertained from the context. By comparing several modern translations from differing translation theories and theological perspectives, we are able to analyze the supposed structure of the original author's thought. Each paragraph has one major truth. This has been called "the topic sentence" or "the central idea of the text." This unifying thought is the key to proper historical, grammatical interpretation. One should never interpret, preach or teach on less than a paragraph! Also remember that each paragraph is related to its surrounding paragraphs. This is why a paragraph level outline of the entire book is so important. We must be able to follow the logical flow of the subject being addressed by the original inspired author.

- D. Bob's notes follow a verse-by-verse approach to interpretation. This forces us to follow the original author's thought. The notes provide information from several areas:
  - 1. literary context
  - 2. historical, cultural insights
  - 3. grammatical information
  - 4. word studies
  - 5. relevant parallel passages
- E. At certain points in the commentary, the printed text of the New American Standard Version (1995 update) will be supplemented by the translations of several other modern versions:
  - 1. The New King James Version (NKJV), which follows the textual manuscripts of the "Textus Receptus."
  - 2. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which is a word-for-word revision from the National Council of Churches of the Revised Standard Version.
  - 3. The Today's English Version (TEV), which is a dynamic equivalent translation from the American Bible Society.
  - 4. The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB), which is an English translation based on a French Catholic dynamic equivalent translation.
- F. For those who do not read the original languages, comparing English translations can help in identifying problems in the text:
  - 1. manuscript variations
  - 2. alternate word meanings
  - 3. grammatically difficult texts and structure

4. ambiguous texts

Although the English translations cannot solve these problems, they do target them as places for deeper and more thorough study.

- G. At the close of each chapter relevant discussion questions are provided which attempt to target the major interpretive issues of that chapter.

# INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH

## I. OPENING STATEMENTS

- A. Isaiah is quoted more often in the NT than any other prophet (over 411 times). His message was one of a radical universal monotheism and a redemptive plan for all creation.
  - 1. one God
  - 2. one world
  - 3. one faith
- B. Isaiah is wonderfully Messianic.
  - 1. the special children of the New Age, chapters 7-14
  - 2. the Servant Songs, 41:1-4; 42:1-9; 49:1-7; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12 (possibly 61:1-3)
  - 3. the future Messianic Kingdom (New Age), chapters 56-66. The fall of Genesis 3 is not the last word!
- C. E. J. Young, in *An Introduction to the OT*, states:
  - 1. “The book of Isaiah is rightly considered the greatest of the OT prophecies,” p. 168.
  - 2. “Of all the prophets of Israel, Isaiah understood most completely the mind of God and His plan for the ages,” p. 171.
  - 3. “In spiritual insight he is unsurpassed in all the OT,” p. 172.

## II. THE NAME OF THE BOOK

- A. The book is named after its prophetic spokesman.
- B. The name means “salvation of YHWH” or “YHWH saves.” The Hebrew names that end in “iah” are an abbreviation of YHWH, as are many of the names in English that begin with a “j” and a vowel, example Joshua and Joel.

## III. CANONIZATION

- A. This is the first of the four scrolls of the Latter Prophets.
  - 1. Isaiah
  - 2. Jeremiah
  - 3. Ezekiel
  - 4. the Twelve (minor prophets)
- B. It was accepted early and completely into the sacred writings of the Israelites.

## IV. GENRE

- A. Isaiah’s literary skills surpass all OT prophets. His word plays and poetry are majestic and intriguing. The book is mostly Hebrew poetry (see Appendix One).
- B. It is difficult to sit down and read all of Isaiah at one time. It is difficult to outline the book. This is because Isaiah was a preacher, not just an author or editor. His book records his spoken messages over a long period of time. These are linked together, sometimes
  - 1. by theme

2. by chronology
3. by events which affect Israel
4. by the cultural norms of the Ancient Near East, which are so different from our own
5. mostly by key words and word plays

## V. AUTHORSHIP

### A. Jewish views of authorship

1. The Talmud's *Baba Bathra* 15a said Hezekiah and his men wrote (i.e., edited or compiled) Isaiah, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs.
2. Ben Sirah, in *Ecclesiasticus* 49:17-25, written about 185 B.C., said, "Isaiah, son of Amoz," wrote the book (1:1; 12:1; 13:1).
3. II Chronicles 32:32 attests to Isaiah's vision, as does the parallel in Kings (II Kgs. 18:19-20:19 tells us about the man).
  - a. He was from a wealthy noble family in Jerusalem, possibly even a cousin to King Uzziah.
    - (1) some evidence that "iah" (as an ending to names), which is an abbreviation of YHWH, was practiced almost exclusively among Judah's royalty
    - (2) Isaiah's access to King Uzziah also lends support to his possible family connection
    - (3) see Talmud, "Meg." 10b
  - b. He married a prophetess (8:3).
    - (1) first son, "Shear-Jashub," which means "a remnant shall return"
    - (2) second son, "Maher-shalal-hash-baz" (8:3), which means "speed the spoil, haste the booty"
  - c. Isaiah had one of the longest prophetic ministries of any of the OT prophets. He was God's spokesman in Judah from the reign of Jotham (742-735 B.C.) to that of Hezekiah (715-687 B.C.) with the possibility of even reaching into the reign of Manasseh (687-642 B.C.); Manasseh was possibly co-regent from 696 B.C.
  - d. If II Chr. 26:22 refers to Isaiah, then he was the official scribe and keeper of the royal chronicles of the king.
  - e. Traditions said he was sawed in two inside a log (cf. *Assumption of Isaiah*) during Manasseh's reign (cf. Heb. 11:37).
4. Moses ben Samuel Ibn Gekatilla, about A.D. 110, said that chapters 1-39 are Isaiah's, but chapters 40-66 were written during the Second Temple period (Persian Period, 538-430 B.C.).
5. Ibn Ezra (A.D. 1092-1167) followed Gekatilla's lead and denied, or at least questioned, chapters 40-66 to the eighth century Isaiah.

### B. Modern scholarship's views of authorship

1. A good historical summary is found in R. K. Harrison's *Introduction to the OT*, Eerdmans, 1969.
2. A good discussion of the technical reasons for asserting two authors can be found in S. R. Drivers' *Introduction to the Literature of the OT*, reprint 1972.
3. No Hebrew or Greek (LXX) manuscripts have ever been found which show a division between chapters 1-39 and 40-66.
  - a. There is a two line space at the end of chapter 33 in the Dead Sea Scrolls. This implies a division at this point, not chapter 39.



- b. There seems to be a parallel structure between 1-33 and 34-66. This dual structure based on the author's own day and then the future, was common in the Hebrew prophets (cf. Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah).
- 4. Modern scholarship has no unanimity as to how many authors or where to divide the book.

C. Some reasons for the unity of Isaiah

- 1. Twenty-five terms are found in both sections of Isaiah which are not found elsewhere in the OT (NIV, Intro. to Isaiah, p. 1014).
- 2. The title "the Holy One of Israel" occurs 13 times in chapters 1-39 and 14 times in chapters 40-66 and only six times in all other OT books.
- 3. Jesus, in John 12:38,40, quotes from Isa. 53:1 and 6:10 and attributes both to Isaiah.
- 4. Passages from Isaiah 40-66 are attributed to Isaiah in Matt. 3:3; 8:17; 12:17; Luke 3:4; 4:17; John 1:23; Acts 8:28; and Rom. 10:16-20.
- 5. There is no manuscript evidence of a division of the book at chapter 39 (MT, DSS, or LXX).
- 6. There is no historical mention of a great prophet (Deutero-Isaiah) in the 6th century.

R. K. Harrison, in *Introduction to the OT*, comments on this subject,

"Arguments from literary style were greatly in vogue at the end of the nineteenth century, but in the light of a much wider knowledge of ancient Near Eastern languages they have now assumed a far less important position. The very subjectivity of stylistic considerations had a great appeal for the adherents of the Graf-Wellhausen theory of literary analysis, who saw no inconsistency whatever in perusing material ascribed to a Biblical author, and then denying parts of that very corpus to him because the literary form and vocabulary of each chapter did not happen to be identical. Apparently it did not occur to those early investigators that it was only possible to derive some concept of the style of an ancient author as the result of careful study of all the material ascribed to him, and that subsequent rejection of part or all of that corpus could only be validated on the basis of some rigorous external control" (p. 776).

D. Some reasons for multiple authorship of Isaiah.

- 1. In chapters 40-66 the name "Isaiah" is not mentioned.
- 2. Chapters 40-66 do not fit into Isaiah's historical setting.
- 3. There seems to be a mixing of Isaiah's references to:
  - a. Assyria's invasion, exile, and judgment
  - b. Babylon's invasion, exile, and judgment
- 4. There are some reasons for theorizing multiple authorship.
  - a. change of historical setting
    - (1) pre-invasion Judah, 1-39
    - (2) exile, 40-55
    - (3) post-exilic Judah, 56-66
    - (4) in Isaiah 1-39 the Temple will never fall, while in 40-66 it apparently has already fallen. The author seems to be in exile.
  - b. change of terms to describe God's chosen
    - (1) Messianic child
    - (2) Suffering Servant

- (3) Israel as
  - (a) wife, 50:1
  - (b) servants of YHWH, 54:17
  
- 5. Modern conservative scholars
  - a. E. J. Young's statement about chapters 56-66 is helpful, "another possibility is that Spirit-led, editor-collected prophecies from different prophets of the Isaiah school around the basic themes of this section," (p. 188).
  - b. R. K. Harrison's statement, "The present writer holds to the view that Isaiah, like the majority of the other extant prophetic writings, represents an anthology of utterances given at various times, and as such the work merits no different treatment from that accorded the other major OT prophecies. In this connection it is important to note that arguments based upon differences of style or literary expression are immediately vitiated by this approach, since an anthology may be taken quite fairly as representing the total style of the author over the different periods of his creative activity. Justification for describing the work as an anthology in the best sense of that term is furnished by the opening verse of the prophecy, which constitutes a heading for the work, and speaks specifically of the revelatory material that Isaiah the son of Amoz received in visions concerning Judah and Jerusalem in days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. As with all anthologies it is fairly evident that the book contained only a selection of the available prophetic oracles and sermons, and it is highly probable that Isaiah produced considerably more material than has survived in his book. The nature of the prophecy as an anthology is further indicated by the presence of superscriptions in Isa. 2:1 and 13:1, which may have represented, or pointed to the presence of, earlier collections of prophetic utterances," (p. 780).
  
- 6. The literary style of chapters 40-66 is different from that of chapters 1-39.
  
- E. Concluding comments about authorship
  - 1. Godly scholars continue to disagree about how our OT book of Isaiah came to be in its current form (cf. DSS and MT). The main emphasis must be placed on its inspiration and trustworthiness in revealing the character and purposes of YHWH.
  - 2. We must reject any presuppositions that deny God's faithful revelation through Isaiah. This also includes the *á priori* rejection of predictive prophecy and the lowering of the OT to an exclusively human, contemporary, historical account.

## VI. DATE

- A. Isaiah is part of the 8<sup>th</sup> century prophets.
  - 1. Jonah, Amos, and Hosea in the Northern Kingdom (Israel), during the reign of Jeroboam II (786-640 B.C.)
  - 2. Isaiah and Micah in the Southern Kingdom (Judah)
  
- B. He was born in 760's B.C. and was called into prophetic office around 742 B.C. in the year Uzziah died (6:1). Uzziah is also called Azariah (783-742 B.C.).
  
- C. Isaiah had a long ministry from the closing years of Uzziah (783-742 B.C.) through Jotham (742-735 B.C.), Ahaz (735-715 B.C.), Hezekiah (715-687 B.C.), and into the reign of Manasseh (687-642 B.C.) because Isaiah predicts/records Sennacherib's death in 37:38 (i.e., 681 B.C.).

- D. R. K Harrison states that the book is an anthology of the prophet's writings and sermons over many years through several Judean kings. It was finally compiled and edited after the prophet's death, about 630 B.C.

## VII. HISTORICAL SETTING OF EIGHTH CENTURY PROPHETS

- A. The biblical material is found in
1. II Kings 14:3-17:6
  2. II Chronicles 25-28
  3. Amos
  4. Jonah
  5. Hosea
  6. Isaiah
  7. Micah
- B. The simplest summary of the state of idolatry among God's people can be seen in Hosea.
1. 2:16, "will no longer call Me Baali"
  2. 4:12-14, "... daughters play the harlot . . ."
  3. 4:17, "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone"
  4. 13:2 "men kiss calves!" (ritual)
- C. Social setting
1. It was a time of economic prosperity and military expansion for both Israel and Judah. However, this prosperity was beneficial only to the wealthy class. The poor were exploited and abused. It almost seems that "the buck and the gun" became idols!
  2. The social stability and property of both Israel and Judah are related to several causes.
    - a. the long and prosperous reigns of Jeroboam II (786-746 B.C.) in the North and Uzziah (783-742 B.C.) in the South
    - b. Assyrians' defeat of Syria by Adad-Nirari III in 802 B.C.
    - c. the lack of conflict between Israel and Judah
    - d. the taxation and exploitation of the trade routes from north to south through the land bridge of Palestine caused rapid economic growth, even extravagance for the wealthy class
  3. The "Ostraca of Samaria," which are dated during the reign of Jeroboam II, seem to indicate an administrative organization much like Solomon's. This seems to confirm the widening gap between the "haves" and "have nots."
  4. The dishonesty of the wealthy is clearly depicted in Amos, who is called "the prophet of social justice." The bribery of the judiciary and the falsification of commercial weights are two clear examples of the abuse that was common apparently in both Israel and Judah.
- D. Religious Setting
1. It was a time of much outward religious activity, but very little true faith. The fertility cults of Canaan had been amalgamated into Israel's religion. The people were idolaters but they called it YHWHism. The trend of God's people toward political alliances had involved them in pagan worship and practices.
  2. The idolatry of Israel is spelled out in II Kgs. 17:7-18.
    - a. In v. 8 they followed the worship practices of the Canaanites.
      - (1) fertility worship (cf. Lev. 18:22-23)
        - (a) high places, vv. 9, 10, 11
        - (b) sacred pillars (Ba'al), vv. 10, 16
        - (c) Asherim, v. 16, these were wooden symbols of the female consort of Ba'al. They were either carved stakes or live trees.

- (2) divination, v. 17. This was condemned in Leviticus 19-20 and Deuteronomy 18.
    - b. In v. 16 they continued the worship of the two golden calves, symbolizing YHWH, set up at Dan and Bethel by Jeroboam I (I Kgs. 12:28-29).
    - c. In v. 16 they worshiped the astral deities of Babylon: sun, moon, stars, and constellations.
    - d. In v. 18 they worshiped the Phoenician fertility fire god, *Molech*, by sacrificing their children (cf. Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5). This practice is called *molech*; it was not the name of the god.
  - 3. Ba'alism (cf. W. F. Albright's *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, p. 82ff)
    - a. Our best archaeological source is "Ba'al Epic from Ugarit."
      - (1) It depicts Ba'al as a seasonal dying and rising god. He was defeated by Mot and confined to the underworld. All life on earth ceased. But, helped by the female goddess (*Anat*), he rises and defeats *Mot* each spring. He was a fertility deity who was worshiped by imitation magic.
      - (2) He was also known as Hadad.
    - b. *El* is the chief deity of the Canaanite pantheon, but Ba'al's popularity usurped his place.
    - c. Israel was most influenced by Tyrian Ba'alism through Jezebel who was the King of Tyre's daughter. She was chosen by Omri for his son, Ahab.
    - d. In Israel Ba'al was worshiped at local high places. He was symbolized by an uplifted stone. His consort, Asherah, is symbolized by a carved stake symbolizing the tree of life.
  - 4. Several sources and types of idolatry are mentioned.
    - a. the golden calves at Bethel and Dan set up by Jeroboam I to worship YHWH.
    - b. the worship of the Tyrian fertility god and goddess at local high places
    - c. the necessary idolatry involved in political alliances of that day
- E. Brief summary of the invasions of Assyria and Babylon during the eighth century which affected Palestine.
1. The four eighth-century prophets were active during the rise of the Tigris-Euphrates empire of Assyria. God would use this cruel nation to judge His people, particularly Israel.
    - a. The specific incident was the formation of a trans-Jordan political and military alliance known as the "Syro-Ephramatic League" (735 B.C.). Syria and Israel tried to force Judah to join them against Assyria. Instead Ahaz sent a letter to Assyria for help. The first powerful empire-minded Assyrian king, Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 B.C.), responded to the military challenge and invaded Syria.
    - b. Later, Assyria's puppet king, Hoshea (732-722 B.C.), in Israel also rebelled, appealing to Egypt. Shalmaneser V (727-722 B.C.) invaded Israel again. He died before Israel was subdued but his successor, Sargon II (722-705 B.C.), captured Israel's capital of Samaria in 722 B.C. Assyria deported over 27,000 Israelites on this occasion as Tiglath-Pileser had exiled thousands earlier in 732 B.C.
  2. After Ahaz's death (735-715 B.C.) another military coalition was formed by the trans-Jordan countries and Egypt against Assyria (714-711 B.C.). It is known as the "Ashdod Rebellion." Many Judean cities were destroyed when Assyria invaded again. Initially Hezekiah supported this coalition, but later withdrew his support.
  3. However, another coalition again tried to take advantage of the death of Assyria's powerful king, Sargon II, in 705 B.C., along with the many other rebellions which occurred throughout the Assyrian empire.

- a. Hezekiah fully participated in this rebellion. In light of this challenge Sennacherib (705-681 B.C.) invaded (701 B.C.) Palestine and camped near the city of Jerusalem (II Kings 18-19; Isaiah 36-39), but his army was miraculously destroyed by God.
  - b. There is some question among scholars as to how many times Sennacherib invaded Palestine (e.g., John Bright has one invasion in 701 B.C. and another possible one in 688 B.C., cf. *The History of Israel*, p. 270).
  - c. Hezekiah was spared an Assyrian takeover, but because of his prideful exhibition of the treasures of Judah to the Babylonian delegation, Isaiah predicted Judah's fall to Babylon (39:1-8). Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar in 587-586 B.C.
4. Isaiah specifically predicted the restoration of God's people under Cyrus II, the Medo-Persian ruler (41:2-4; 44:28; 45:1; 56:11). Nineveh (capital of Assyria) fell in 612 B.C. to Babylon, but the city of Babylon fell in 539 B.C. to Cyrus' army. In 538 B.C. Cyrus issued a decree that all exiled people, including the Jews, could return home. He even provided funds from his treasury for the rebuilding of the national temples. He was a superstitious person and wanted all the gods to favor him.

## VIII. LITERARY UNITS

### A. Brief Outline

1. Chapters 1-39, the prophet and his day
2. Chapters 40-66 (or possibly 40-55 and 56-60), the new age

### B. Chapters 1-39, the historical setting in Isaiah's day (pre-exilic)

1. Chapters 1-6, under Kings Uzziah and Jotham
2. Chapters 7-14, under King Ahaz
3. Chapters 15-39, under King Hezekiah (chapters 36-39 are parallel to II Kgs. 18:13-20:19)

### C. Chapters 40-66, the exilic and post-exilic period, are types of the future kingdom

1. As chapters 1-39 reflect Isaiah's preaching and are obviously oral presentations, chapters 40-55 reflect a new setting. God's judgment has come and now restoration is the major theme. There is also the stylistic hint that these chapters are not so much oral as written.
2. Chapters 1-39 obviously deal with the Assyrian threat and Babylonian threat in type, specifically in chapters 13-14, 21 and 39. Chapters 40-55 deal with the Persian period and the restoration of God's people to the Promised Land.
3. The later chapters of Isaiah, 56-66, are eschatological, using historical metaphors from the Ancient Near East to foreshadow the universal monotheistic world worship of YHWH.

### D. The difficulty of outlining Isaiah

1. Most modern scholars divide the book into at least two sections: chapters 1-39 and 40-66. R. K. Harrison: chap. 1-33 and 34-66 because of a gap in DSS text. This obvious division in the DSS between chapters 33 and 34 has given rise to the suggestion that Isaiah was produced by his followers in two volumes. W. H. Brownlee has proposed that the two volumes mirror each other in structure.

	<b>Volume 1</b>	<b>Volume 2</b>
chapters 1-5	ruin and restoration	chapters 34-35
chapters 6-8	biographical material	chapters 36-40
chapters 9-12	agents of divine blessing and judgment	chapters 41-45
chapters 13-23	oracles against foreign powers	chapters 46-48
chapters 24-27	universal redemption and the deliverance of Israel	chapters 49-55
chapters 28-31	ethical sermons	chapters 56-59
chapters 32-33	the restoration of the nation	chapters 60-66

2. Some outlines focus on the historical setting, while others focus on the Messianic content

	<b>NIV</b>	<b>Leupold</b>
chap. 7-12	“Prophecies occasioned by the Aramean and Israelite threat against Judah”	“Immanuel Book”
chap. 28-33	“Six Woes: Five on the Unfaithful in Israel and One on Assyria”	“The Book of Zion” (the Cornerstone)

3. Some examples of the uncertainty of literary units (chaps. 1-12)

- a. Outline of chapters 1-12 by E. Y. Young, pp. 211-214
  - (1) 1:1-12:6 Prophecies concerning Judah and Jerusalem
    - (a) 1:1-31 The great arraignment
    - (b) 2:1-4:6 Messiah’s reign and judgment upon the people
    - (c) 3:5-30 The prevalent iniquities of Judah
    - (d) 6:1-13 Isaiah’s vision of the Lord
    - (e) 7:1-12:6 Prophecies uttered during Ahaz’s reign
- b. Outline of chapters 1-2 by R. K. Harrison, p. 764
  - (1) Prophecies about the ruin and restoration of Judah, chaps. 1-5
  - (2) The call of Isaiah; biographical material, chaps. 6-8
  - (3) Present world empires and their roles, chaps. 9-12
- c. Outline of chapters 1-12 by The NIV Study Bible, p. 1016
  - (1) chapters 1-6
    - (a) Introduction: charges against Judah for breaking the Covenant, ch. 1
    - (b) The future discipline and glory of Judah and Jerusalem, chs. 2-4
      - i Jerusalem’s future blessings (2:1-5)
      - ii The Lord’s discipline of Judah (2:6-4:1)
      - iii The restoration of Zion (4:2-6)
    - (c) The nation’s judgment and exile (ch. 5)
    - (d) Isaiah’s unique commission (ch. 6)
  - (2) chapters 7-12
    - (a) Ahaz warned not to fear the Aramean and Israelite alliance (ch. 7)
    - (b) Isaiah’s son and David’s son (8:1-9:7)
    - (c) Judgment against Israel (9:8-10:4)
    - (d) The Assyrian Empire and the Davidic Kingdom (10:5-12:6)
      - i The destruction of Assyria (10:5-34)
      - ii The establishment of the Davidic king and his kingdom (ch. 11)
      - iii Songs of joy for deliverance (ch. 12)

## IX. MAIN TRUTHS

- A. Isaiah held Judah to fidelity to the Davidic covenant (II Samuel 7), but he also went back to the original purpose of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 12:1-3), which was God choosing Israel to choose the world (i.e., Exod. 19:5-6). What a shock this universal reign of YHWH must have been. God will not only restore Israel, but will extend God's redemptive plan to the entire world!
- B. Isaiah specifically predicted the movement of world events in his own day and in the future, leading to the restoration of the Davidic Kingdom through God's Messiah (so too, Micah). This kingdom is holy and universal (so too, Micah). These are both aspects of Isaiah's monotheistic, holy, redemptive Deity.
- C. Isaiah clearly shows the futility of God's people trusting in worldly, fallen, human resources. Deliverance will come from YHWH only!
- D. Isaiah reveals the three most powerful characteristics of God's redemptive plan.
  - 1. the coming Messiah
  - 2. the Messiah as Suffering Servant
  - 3. the universal reign of the Messiah





# ISAIAH 1

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS\*

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Rebellion of God's People		Superscription		Title
1:1-3 (2-3)	1:1  The Wickedness of Judah	1:1  First Series of Oracles	1:1  God Reprimands His People	1:1  Against an Ungrateful People
	1:2-4 (2-3)	1:2-31 (2-3)	1:2-3	1:2-9 (2-9)
1:4 (4)	(4)	(4)	1:4-6	
1:5-6 (5-6)	1:5-9 (5-6)	(5-6)		
1:7-9 (7-9)	(7-9)	(7-9)	1:7-9	
God Has Had Enough				Against Hypocrisy
1:10-15 (10-15)	1:10-17 (10-11) (12-15)	(10-17)	1:10-14	1:10-20 (10)
			1:15-17	(11-17)
1:16-17 (16-17)	(16-17)			
Let Us Reason				
1:18-20 (18-20)	1:18-20 (18-20)	(18-20)	1:18-20	(18-20)
Zion Corrupted, To Be Redeemed	The Degenerate City		The Sinful City	Lament of Jerusalem
1:21-23 (21-23)	1:21-23 (21-23)	(21-23)	1:21-23	1:21-28 (21)  (22-23)
1:24-26 (24-26)	1:24-31 (24-26)	(24-26)	1:24-26	(24) (25) (26)

\*Although not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraph divisions as they understand them. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own way. As you read the text, which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions?

In every chapter you must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs). Then compare your understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation at the paragraph level, can one truly understand the Bible. Only the original author was inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility to apply the inspired truth to their day and lives.

**Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in Appendices One, Two and Three.**

1:27-31 (27-31)	(27-31)	(27-31)	1:27-28	(27-28)
				Against Sacred Trees
			1:29-31	1:29-31 (29-31)

### **READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)**

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### **CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS**

- A. The prophets typically used three standard metaphorical literary forms to communicate their messages.
  1. court case (cf. vv. 2,18)
  2. funeral dirge (cf. vv. 24-26, Hebrew meter)
  3. promise oracle
- B. It is surprising that Isaiah's call is recorded in chapter 6. There is only the brief introduction in v. 1. However, this brief introduction tells about the length and time of Isaiah's ministry. Obviously only a few selected visions, poems, and revelations to Isaiah are recorded, either by himself late in his ministry or by followers after his death. R. K. Harrison calls the book an anthology.
- C. Chapter 1 may be a summary of the entire book. The same themes are repeated through Isaiah's writings. Most prominent is the vision of Judah's sins of
  1. intentional covenant violations
  2. trust in formalism and liturgy
  3. social injustice
  4. idolatry

The consequences of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 must come to bear if God is true to His word! The consequences of known sin are as real as the promises of YHWH's love, care,

and protection. They are two sides of one covenant! Remember the purpose of judgment was the restoration of intimate fellowship, like the Garden of Eden before the Fall, before the image and likeness of God were damaged!

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:1-3

<sup>1</sup>The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz concerning Judah and Jerusalem, which he saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

<sup>2</sup>Listen, O heavens, and hear, O earth;

For the LORD speaks,

"Sons I have reared and brought up,

But they have revolted against Me.

<sup>3</sup>An ox knows its owner,

And a donkey its master's manger,

But Israel does not know,

My people do not understand."

**1:1 “vision”** This term (BDB 302) is used in the sense of a “revelatory message” (cf. 29:7; Mic. 3:6). The terms “visions” and “dreams” are parallel in 29:7 (cf. Dan. 7:1). Usually dreams occur at night and visions both day and night. It appears to describe an altered state of consciousness whereby God, through metaphors, idioms, and physical objects, communicates special revelation. These truths are divine, not human. Isaiah probably structured the messages, but the content was from God! It is hard to describe the mechanisms of inspiration, but the results are a divine, authoritative message.

Here, in this context of an opening verse, the term is used as a title for Isaiah’s messages (cf. 2:1; 13:1; Amos 1:1; Micah 1:1; Hab. 1:1).

▣ **“Isaiah”** The name (BDB 447) means “YHWH saves” or “salvation is of YHWH” (there is no VERB). When “iah” appears on the end of a Hebrew name, it implies royalty and also stands for the covenant name of God, YHWH (cf. Exod. 3:14).

### SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAMES FOR DEITY

#### A. *El* (BDB 42, KB 48)

1. The original meaning of the generic ancient term for deity is uncertain, though many scholars believe it comes from the Akkadian root, “to be strong” or “to be powerful” (cf. Gen. 17:1; Num. 23:19; Deut. 7:21; Ps. 50:1).
2. In the Canaanite pantheon the high god is *El* (Ras Shamra texts)
3. In the Bible *El* is not usually compounded with other terms. These combinations became a way to characterize God.
  - a. *El-Elyon* (God Most High, BDB 42 & 751 II), Gen. 14:18-22; Deut. 32:8; Isa. 14:14
  - b. *El-Roi* (“God who sees” or “God who reveals Himself,” BDB 42 & 909), Gen. 16:13

- c. *El-Shaddai* (“God Almighty” or “God the All Compassion” or “God of the mountain,” BDB 42 & 994), Gen. 17:1; 35:11; 43:14; 49:25; Exod. 6:3
  - d. *El-Olam* (the Everlasting God, BDB 42 & 761), Gen. 21:33. This term is theologically linked to God’s promise to David, II Sam. 7:13,16
  - e. *El-Berit* (“God of the Covenant,” BDB 42 & 136), Jdgs. 9:46
4. *El* is equated with
- a. YHWH in Ps. 85:8; Isa. 42:5
  - b. *Elohim* in Gen. 46:3; Job 5:8, “I am *El*, the *Elohim* of your father”
  - c. *Shaddai* in Gen. 49:25
  - d. “jealousy” in Exod. 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15
  - e. “mercy” in Deut. 4:31; Neh. 9:31;
  - f. “faithful” in Deut. 7:9; 32:4
  - g. “great and awesome” in Deut. 7:21; 10:17; Neh. 1:5; 9:32; Dan. 9:4
  - h. “knowledge” in I Sam. 2:3
  - i. “my strong refuge” in II Sam. 22:33
  - j. “my avenger” in II Sam. 22:48
  - k. “holy one” in Isa. 5:16
  - l. “might” in Isa. 10:21
  - m. “my salvation” in Isa. 12:2
  - n. “great and powerful” in Jer. 32:18
  - o. “retribution” in Jer. 51:56
5. A combination of all the major OT names for God is found in Joshua 22:22 (*El, Elohim, YHWH*, repeated)
- B. *Elyon* (BDB 751, KB 832)
- 1. Its basic meaning is “high,” “exalted,” or “lifted up” (cf. Gen. 40:17; I Kgs. 9:8; II Kgs. 18:17; Neh. 3:25; Jer. 20:2; 36:10; Ps. 18:13).
  - 2. It is used in a parallel sense to several other names/titles of God.
    - a. *Elohim* - Ps. 47:1-2; 73:11; 107:11
    - b. YHWH - Gen. 14:22; II Sam. 22:14
    - c. *El-Shaddai* - Ps. 91:1,9
    - d. *El* - Num. 24:16
    - e. *Elah* - used often in Daniel 2-6 and Ezra 4-7, linked with *illair* (Aramaic for “High God”) in Dan. 3:26; 4:2; 5:18,21
  - 3. It is often used by non-Israelites.
    - a. Melchizedek, Gen. 14:18-22
    - b. Balaam, Num. 24:16
    - c. Moses, speaking of the nations in Deut. 32:8
    - d. Luke’s Gospel in the NT, writing to Gentiles, also uses the Greek equivalent *Hupsistos* (cf. 1:32,35,76; 6:35; 8:28; Acts 7:48; 16:17)
- C. *Elohim* (PLURAL), *Eloah* (SINGULAR), used primarily in poetry (BDB 43, KB 52)
- 1. This term is not found outside the Old Testament.

2. This word can designate the God of Israel or the gods of the nations (cf. Exod. 3:6; 20:3). Abraham's family were polytheistic (cf. Josh. 24:2).
3. It can refer to Israeli judges (cf. Exod. 21:6; Ps. 82:6).
4. The term *elohim* is also used of other spiritual beings (angels, the demonic) as in Deut. 32:8 (LXX); Ps. 8:5; Job 1:6; 38:7.
5. In the Bible it is the first title/name for Deity (cf. Gen. 1:1). It is used exclusively until Gen. 2:4, where it is combined with YHWH. It basically (theologically) refers to God as creator, sustainer, and provider of all life on this planet (cf. Ps. 104).

It is synonymous with *El* (cf. Deut. 32:15-19). It can also parallel YHWH as in Psalm 14 (*Elohim*, vv. 1,2,5); (YHWH, vv. 2:6); even (*Adon* v. 4)

6. Although PLURAL and used of other gods, this term often designates the God of Israel, but usually it has the SINGULAR VERB to denote the monotheistic usage.
7. It is strange that a common name for the monotheistic God of Israel is PLURAL! Although there is no certainty, here are the theories.
  - a. Hebrew has many PLURALS, often used for emphasis. Closely related to this is the later Hebrew grammatical feature called "the plural of majesty," where the PLURAL is used to magnify a concept.
  - b. This may refer to the angelic council, with whom God meets in heaven and who does His bidding (cf. I Kgs. 22:19-23; Job 1:6; Ps. 82:1; 89:5,7).
  - c. It is even possible this reflects the NT revelation of the one God in three persons. In Gen. 1:1 God creates; Gen. 1:2 the Spirit broods, and from the NT Jesus is God the Father's agent in creation (cf. John 1:3,10; Rom. 11:36; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:2; 2:10).

#### D. YHWH (BDB 217, KB 394)

1. This is the name which reflects Deity as the covenant-making God; God as savior, redeemer! Humans break covenants, but God is loyal to His word, promise, covenant (cf. Psalm 103).

This name is first mentioned in combination with *Elohim* in Gen. 2:4. There are not two creation accounts in Genesis 1-2, but two emphases: (1) God as the creator of the universe (the physical) and (2) God as the special creator of humanity. Genesis 2:4-3:24 begins the special revelation about the privileged position and purpose of mankind, as well as the problem of sin and rebellion associated with the unique position.

2. In Gen. 4:26 it is said "*men* began to call upon the name of the LORD" (YHWH). However, Exod. 6:3 implies that early covenant people (the Patriarchs and their families) knew God only as *El-Shaddai*. The name YHWH is explained only one time in Exod. 3:13-16, esp. v. 14. However, the writings of Moses often interpret words by popular word plays, not etymologies (cf. Gen. 17:5; 27:36; 29:13-35). There have been several theories as to the meaning of this name (taken from IDB, vol. 2, pp. 409-11).
  - a. from an Arabic root, "to show fervent love"
  - b. from an Arabic root "to blow" (YHWH as storm God)
  - c. from a Ugaritic (Canaanite) root "to speak"
  - d. following a Phoenician inscription, a CAUSATIVE PARTICIPLE meaning "the One who sustains," or "the One who establishes"
  - e. from the Hebrew *Qal* form "the One who is," or "the One who is present" (in future sense, "the One who will be")

- f. from the Hebrew *Hiphil* form “the One who causes to be”
  - g. from the Hebrew root “to live” (e.g., Gen. 3:21), meaning “the ever-living, only-living One”
  - h. from the context of Exod. 3:13-16 a play on the IMPERFECT form used in a PERFECT sense, “I shall continue to be what I used to be” or “I shall continue to be what I have always been” (cf. J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Old Testament*, p. 67). The full name YHWH is often expressed in abbreviation or possibly an original form
    - (1) *Yah* (e.g., Hallelu - yah, BDB 219, cf. Exod. 15:2; 17:16; Ps. 89:8; 104:35)
    - (2) *Yahu* (“iah” ending of names, e.g., Isaiah)
    - (3) *Yo* (“Jo” beginning of names, e.g., Joshua or Joel)
3. In later Judaism this covenant name became so holy (the tetragrammaton) that Jews were afraid to say it lest they break the command of Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11; 6:13. So they substituted the Hebrew term for “owner,” “master,” “husband,” “lord”—*adon* or *adonai* (my lord). When they came to YHWH in their reading of OT texts they pronounced “lord.” This is why YHWH is written LORD in English translations.
4. As with *El*, YHWH is often combined with other terms to emphasize certain characteristics of the Covenant God of Israel. While there are many possible combination terms, here are some.
- a. *YHWH - Yireh* (YHWH will provide, BDB 217 & 906), Gen. 22:14
  - b. *YHWH - Rophekha* (YHWH is your healer, BDB 217 & 950, *Qal* PARTICIPLE), Exod. 15:26
  - c. *YHWH - Nissi* (YHWH is my banner, BDB 217 & 651), Exod. 17:15
  - d. *YHWH - Meqaddishkem* (YHWH the One who sanctifies you, BDB 217 & 872, *Piel* PARTICIPLE), Exod. 31:13
  - e. *YHWH - Shalom* (YHWH is Peace, BDB 217 & 1022), Jdgs. 6:24
  - f. *YHWH - Sabbaoth* (YHWH of hosts, BDB 217 & 878), I Sam. 1:3,11; 4:4; 15:2; often in the Prophets
  - g. *YHWH - Ro’I* (YHWH is my shepherd, BDB 217 & 944, *Qal* PARTICIPLE), Ps. 23:1
  - h. *YHWH - Sidqenu* (YHWH is our righteousness, BDB 217 & 841), Jer. 23:6
  - i. *YHWH - Shammah* (YHWH is there, BDB 217 & 1027), Ezek. 48:35

▣ **“Amoz”** This person (BDB 55) is mentioned only in connection to Isaiah. The basic root means “strength,” “strong,” or “mighty.”

▣ **“he saw”** This VERB, (חָזַק, BDB 302, KB 301, *Qal* PERFECT) is from a similar root, “visions” (חִזְיוֹן) and the same as “seer” (חֹזֵה). It is used repeatedly in Isaiah (cf. Micah 1:1).

▣ **“Uzziah”** Tradition says that Isaiah was related to Uzziah (“YHWH is my strength”). This cannot be corroborated, but the evidence points in this direction. This godly king died of leprosy in 742 B.C. He is also known in the Bible as Amaziah (“YHWH is my help”).

▣ For the dates of these kings and their relationship to the kings of Israel, see Appendix Four.

**1:2 “Listen, O heavens, and hear, O earth”** These two IMPERATIVES are from different roots, but mean basically the same.

1. listen, BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. vv. 10,15,19; 6:8,9 (twice),10, etc.
2. hear, BDB 24, KB 27, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. 1:2,10; 8:9; 28:23; 32:9; etc.

This was a striking way to jolt His people into acknowledging their rebellion. YHWH was initiating a court case against His own people! This opening is similar to Micah 1:2, Isaiah’s contemporary Judean prophet.

This sets the stage for chapter 2, which is also a court scene. God is taking his people to trial. This is a common literary technique in the Prophets (i.e., Mic. 6:6-8; Jer. 2:1ff; Rom. 8:31ff). This is a common procedure in the OT of providing two witnesses to confirm a testimony (cf. Deut. 4:26; 30:19; 31:28; 32:1; Ps. 50:4).

“Heaven” (BDB 1029) here refers to the atmosphere above the earth which was part of original creation (cf. Genesis 1). In this context it does not refer to “God’s abode.”

▣ **“For the LORD speaks”** This is the covenant name for Israel’s Deity. See Special Topic: Names For Deity at 1:1.

▣ **“Sons I have reared and brought up”** Here again God is described in anthropomorphic, familiar terms as a loving parent of Hosea 11:1-4 (also note Exod. 4:22; Deut. 32:6; Jer. 3:4; 31:9, see Special Topic at 6:1). The best human analogies to comprehend the character and actions of YHWH are (1) parent; (2) marriage partner; and (3) kinsman redeemer.

▣ **“revolt”** This VERB (BDB 833, KB 981, *Qal* PERFECT) implies active, violent, open-eyed, personal rebellion (cf. 1:28; 43:27; 46:8; 53:12; 59:13; 66:24).

▣ **“Me”** Sin is primarily a violation against God (cf. Gen. 39:9; II Sam. 12:13; Ps. 41:4; 51:4). Norman H. Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*, says “(the prophets) thought of it (sin) as rebellion rather than transgression” (p. 65). Sin is a perversion of the divine image and likeness of God in humankind (cf. Gen. 1:26,27). God wants the world to know Him! He chose a person (Abram), a family (Jacob), and a nation (Israel) to reveal Himself to all humanity (see Special Topic at 1:3), but Israel failed to reflect the holiness and compassion of YHWH. They rebelled against Him with “opened eyes.” The essence of sin is “me,” more for me at any cost!

**1:3** This verse may have been a well known, cultural proverb. Even dumb animals do not bite the hand that feeds them, but Judah does!

▣ **“Israel does not know”** The VERB “know” (BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* PERFECT) does not imply facts about a subject, but personal knowledge of someone (cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5). Israel did not know their own creator, savior, and protector because they would not listen (cf. 5:12,13; 6:9-13; 30:9).

▣ **“My people”** This is covenant language (cf. Hosea 1-3,11). It must be remembered that in the OT, election is God’s primary initiating choice of Abraham and Israel. There is commensurate responsibility after God’s initial choice known as covenant. This involves responsibility on both sides.

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: BOB’S EVANGELICAL BIASES**

I must admit to you the reader that I am biased at this point. My systematic theology is not Calvinism or Dispensationalism (i.e., Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8), but it is Great Commission evangelism (i.e., Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8). I believe God had an eternal

plan for the redemption of all mankind (e.g., Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 18; 36:22-38; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29; Rom. 3:9-18,19-20,21-31), all those created in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). All OT covenants are united in Christ (cf. Gal. 3:28-29; Col. 3:11). Jesus is the mystery of God, hidden but now revealed (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13)! The NT gospel, not Israel, is key to Scripture.

This pre-understanding colors all my interpretations of Scripture. I read all texts through it! It is surely a bias (all interpreters have them!), but it is a Scripturally-informed presupposition.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: ELECTION/PREDESTINATION AND THE NEED FOR A THEOLOGICAL BALANCE**

Election is a wonderful doctrine. However, it is not a call to favoritism, but a call to be a channel, a tool, or means of others' redemption! In the Old Testament the term was used primarily for service; in the New Testament it is used primarily for salvation which issues in service. The Bible never reconciles the seeming contradiction between God's sovereignty and mankind's free will, but affirms them both! A good example of the biblical tension would be Romans 9 on God's sovereign choice and Romans 10 on mankind's necessary response (cf. 10:11,13).

The key to this theological tension may be found in Ephesians 1:4. Jesus is God's elect man and all are potentially elect in Him (Karl Barth). Jesus is God's "yes" to fallen mankind's need (Karl Barth). Ephesians 1:4 also helps clarify the issue by asserting that the goal of predestination is not heaven, but holiness (Christlikeness). We are often attracted to the benefits of the gospel and ignore the responsibilities! God's call (election) is for time as well as eternity!

Doctrines come in relation to other truths, not as single, unrelated truths. A good analogy would be a constellation versus a single star. God presents truth in eastern, not western, genres. We must not remove the tension caused by dialectical (paradoxical) pairs of doctrinal truths:

1. Predestination vs. human free will
2. Security of the believers vs. the need for perseverance
3. Original sin vs. volitional sin
4. Sinlessness (perfectionism) vs. sinning less
5. Initial instantaneous justification and sanctification vs. progressive sanctification
6. Christian freedom vs. Christian responsibility
7. God's transcendence vs. God's immanence
8. God as ultimately unknowable vs. God as knowable in Scripture
9. The Kingdom of God as present vs. future consummation
10. Repentance as a gift of God vs. repentance as a necessary human covenantal response
11. Jesus as divine vs. Jesus as human
12. Jesus is equal to the Father vs. Jesus as subservient to the Father

The theological concept of "covenant" unites the sovereignty of God (who always takes the initiative and sets the agenda) with a mandatory initial and continuing repentant, faith response from humans. Be careful of proof-texting one side of the paradox and depreciating the other! Be careful of asserting only your favorite doctrine or system of theology!

▣ **"do not understand"** This VERB (BDB 106, KB 122, *Hithpalel* PERFECT) in this stem means "to be inattentive." The problem was not lack of knowledge, but their unwillingness to obey (cf. 6:9,10; Deut. 4:6; 32:29). They were content with a facade of religiosity (the cultus of Israel), but without the necessary lifelong faith, repentance, and personal trust! Their true nature is described in 5:18-23, esp. v.



21 (cf. Micah 4:12). They were covenant people in title, but not covenant people in heart (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; 9:6)!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:4**

**<sup>4</sup>Alas, sinful nation,  
People weighed down with iniquity,  
Offspring of evildoers,  
Sons who act corruptly!  
They have abandoned the LORD,  
They have despised the Holy One of Israel,  
They have turned away from Him.**

**1:4 “Alas”** The INTERJECTION (BDB 222) introduces declarations of judgment (cf. 10:5; 17:12; 28:1; 29:15; 31:1; 45:9,10; Amos 5:18; 6:1).

▣ **“sinful nation”** The common term “sinful” (BDB 306, KB 305, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) means “to miss the mark.” The term “nation” is *goy* (BDB 156). This term is often used for the Gentiles, but it can refer to Israel (cf. Exod. 19:5-6). Israel was meant to be a holy nation (cf. Exod. 19:5-6), yet she turned out to be a sinful nation. What a reversal of expectations!

▣ **“People weighed down with iniquity”** This term “to be bent” or “heavy” (BDB 458) is another metaphor to describe sin as a burden on mankind’s back (cf. Matt. 11:28). All of the Hebrew words for sin are related to crookedness or being bent (i.e., miss the mark) because the Hebrew term for righteousness used of God means a “measuring reed” or “ruler.”

**SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS**

“Righteousness” is such a crucial topic that a Bible student must make a personal extensive study of the concept.

In the OT God’s character is described as “just” or “righteous” (BDB 841). The Mesopotamian term itself comes from a river reed which was used as a construction tool to judge the horizontal straightness of walls and fences. God chose the term to be used metaphorically of His own nature. He is the straight edge (ruler) by which all things are evaluated. This concept asserts God’s righteousness as well as His right to judge.

Man was created in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1,3; 9:6). Mankind was created for fellowship with God. All of creation is a stage or backdrop for God and mankind’s interaction. God wanted His highest creation, mankind, to know Him, love Him, serve Him, and be like Him! Mankind’s loyalty was tested (cf. Genesis 3) and the original couple failed the test. This resulted in a disruption of the relationship between God and humanity (cf. Genesis 3; Rom. 5:12-21).

God promised to repair and restore the fellowship (cf. Gen. 3:15). He does this through His own will and His own Son. Humans were incapable of restoring the breach (cf. Rom. 1:18-3:20).

After the Fall, God’s first step toward restoration was the concept of covenant based on His invitation and mankind’s repentant, faithful, obedient response. Because of the Fall, humans were incapable of appropriate action (cf. Rom. 3:21-31; Galatians 3). God Himself had to take the initiative to restore covenant-breaking humans. He did this by

1. declaring mankind righteous through the work of Christ (i.e., forensic righteousness).
2. freely giving mankind righteousness through the work of Christ (i.e., imputed righteousness).

3. providing the indwelling Spirit who produces righteousness (i.e., Christlikeness, the restoration of the image of God) in mankind.

However, God requires a covenantal response. God decrees (i.e., freely gives) and provides, but humans must respond and continue to respond in

1. repentance
2. faith
3. lifestyle obedience
4. perseverance

Righteousness, therefore, is a covenantal, reciprocal action between God and His highest creation. Based on the character of God, the work of Christ, and the enabling of the Spirit, to which each individual must personally and continually respond appropriately. The concept is called “justification by faith.” The concept is revealed in the Gospels, but not in these terms. It is primarily defined by Paul, who uses the Greek term “righteousness” in its various forms over 100 times.

Paul, being a trained rabbi, uses the term *dikaioσunē* in its Hebrew sense of the term *SDQ* used in the Septuagint, not from Greek literature. In Greek writings the term is connected to someone who conformed to the expectations of Deity and society. In the Hebrew sense it is always structured in covenantal terms. YHWH is a just, ethical, moral God. He wants His people to reflect His character. Redeemed mankind becomes a new creature. This newness results in a new lifestyle of godliness (Roman Catholic focus of justification). Since Israel was a theocracy there was no clear delineation between the secular (society’s norms) and the sacred (God’s will). This distinction is expressed in the Hebrew and Greek terms being translated into English as “justice” (relating to society) and “righteousness” (relating to religion).

The gospel (good news) of Jesus is that fallen mankind has been restored to fellowship with God. This has been accomplished through the Father’s love, mercy, and grace; the Son’s life, death, and resurrection; and the Spirit’s wooing and drawing to the gospel. Justification is a free act of God, but it must issue in godliness (Augustine’s position, which reflects both the Reformation emphasis on the freeness of the gospel and Roman Catholic emphasis on a changed life of love and faithfulness). For Reformers the term “the righteousness of God” is an OBJECTIVE GENITIVE (i.e., the act of making sinful mankind acceptable to God [positional sanctification], while for the Catholics it is a SUBJECTIVE GENITIVE, which is the process of becoming more like God [experiential progressive sanctification]. In reality it is surely both!!)

In my view all of the Bible from Genesis 4 - Revelation 20 is a record of God’s restoring the fellowship of Eden. The Bible starts with God and mankind in fellowship in an earthly setting (cf. Genesis 1-2) and the Bible ends with the same setting (cf. Revelation 21-22). God’s image and purpose will be restored!

To document the above discussions note the following selected NT passages illustrating the Greek word group.

1. God is righteous (often connected to God as Judge)
  - a. Romans 3:26
  - b. II Thessalonians 1:5-6
  - c. II Timothy 4:8
  - d. Revelation 16:5
2. Jesus is righteous
  - a. Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14 (title of Messiah)
  - b. Matthew 27:19

- c. I John 2:1,29; 3:7
- 3. God's will for His creation is righteousness
  - a. Leviticus 19:2
  - b. Matthew 5:48 (cf. 5:17-20)
- 4. God's means of providing and producing righteousness
  - a. Romans 3:21-31
  - b. Romans 4
  - c. Romans 5:6-11
  - d. Galatians 3:6-14
  - e. Given by God
    - 1) Romans 3:24; 6:23
    - 2) I Corinthians 1:30
    - 3) Ephesians 2:8-9
  - f. Received by faith
    - 1) Romans 1:17; 3:22,26; 4:3,5,13; 9:30; 10:4,6,10
    - 2) II Corinthians 5:21
  - g. Through acts of the Son
    - 1) Romans 5:21
    - 2) II Corinthians 5:21
    - 3) Philippians 2:6-11
- 5. God's will is that His followers be righteous
  - a. Matthew 5:3-48; 7:24-27
  - b. Romans 2:13; 5:1-5; 6:1-23
  - c. I Timothy 6:11
  - d. II Timothy 2:22; 3:16
  - e. I John 3:7
  - f. I Peter 2:24
- 6. God will judge the world by righteousness
  - a. Acts 17:31
  - b. II Timothy 4:8

Righteousness is a characteristic of God, freely given to sinful mankind through Christ. It is

- 1. a decree of God
- 2. a gift of God
- 3. an act of Christ

But it is also a process of becoming righteous that must be vigorously and steadfastly pursued, which will one day be consummated at the Second Coming. Fellowship with God is restored at salvation, but progresses throughout life to become a face-to-face encounter at death or the *Parousia*!

Here is a good quote to conclude this discussion. It is taken from *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* from IVP

“Calvin, more so than Luther, emphasizes the relational aspect of the righteousness of God. Luther’s view of the righteousness of God seems to contain the aspect of acquittal. Calvin emphasizes the marvelous nature of the communication or imparting of God’s righteousness to us” (p. 834).

For me the believer’s relationship to God has three aspects.

1. the gospel is a person (emphasis of the Eastern Church and Calvin)
2. the gospel is truth (emphasis of Augustine and Luther)
3. the gospel is a changed life (Catholic emphasis)

They are all true and must be held together for a healthy, sound, biblical Christianity. If any one is over emphasized or depreciated, problems occur.

We must welcome Jesus!

We must believe the gospel!

We must pursue Christlikeness!

### ▣ “Offspring of evil-doers,

**Sons who act corruptly”** This seems to relate to Exod. 20:5 where the evil lifestyles of the parent are communicated to the children.

Notice the parallelism.

1. sinful nation, v. 4
2. weighed down with iniquity, v. 4
3. offspring of evildoers, v. 4
4. sons who act corruptly, v. 4

Also notice the parallel clauses that follow.

1. they have abandoned (BDB 736, KB 806, *Qal* PERFECT) the Lord
2. they have despised (BDB 610, KB 658, *Piel* PERFECT) the Holy One of Israel
3. they have turned away (BDB 266, KB 267, *Niphal* PERFECT) from Him

All speak of the actions of an informed, but rebellious, covenant people (notice the number of different word pictures for sin). By their actions and choices they are rejecting YHWH! These PERFECT stems denote a settled attitude!

These people were to be the blessed “seed” (BDB 282) of Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:7; 13:15,16; 16:10; 22:17,18; 24:7; 26:3,4,24; 28:13,14; 32:12), but they had become the “seed” of evildoers! What a tragedy of wasted revelation and opportunity (cf. Luke 12:48)!

▣ **“the Holy One of Israel”** This is a favorite title for Deity in Isaiah (cf. 1:4; 5:19; 10:17,20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19,23; 30:11,12,15; 31:1; 37:23; also in the second part of Isaiah, 40:25; 41:14,16,20; 43:3,14,15; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5; 55:5; 60:9,14). Because He is “holy,” His people should be holy (cf. Lev. 19:2; Matt. 5:48; I Pet. 1:16).

This title, in a sense, expresses the impossible tension of a sinful, fallen people conforming to a holy standard. The Mosaic Covenant was impossible to keep (cf. Acts 15; Galatians 3; Hebrews). The old covenant was a way to show the impossibility of humans to conform to God’s standard, yet He was with them, for them, preparing them for His answer to their fallen condition. He does not lower His standard, but provides it through His Messiah. The new covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38) is a covenant of faith and repentance, not human performance, though it issues in Christlikeness (cf. James 2:14-26). God wants a people who reflect His character to the nations (cf. Matt. 5:48).

## SPECIAL TOPIC: SANCTIFICATION

The NT asserts that when sinners turn to Jesus in repentance and faith, they are instantaneously justified and sanctified. This is their new position in Christ. His righteousness has been imputed to them (cf. Rom. 4). They are declared right and holy (a forensic act of God).

But the NT also urges believers on to holiness or sanctification. It is both a theological position in the finished work of Jesus Christ and a call to be Christlike in attitude and actions in daily life. As salvation is a free gift and a cost-everything lifestyle, so too, is sanctification.

### Initial Response

Acts 20:32; 26:18  
Romans 15:16  
I Corinthians 1:2-3; 6:11  
II Thessalonians 2:13  
Hebrews 2:11; 10:10,14; 13:12  
I Peter 1:2

### A Progressive Christlikeness

Romans 6:19  
II Corinthians 7:1  
Ephesians 1:4; 2:10  
I Thess. 3:13; 4:3-4,7; 5:23  
I Timothy 2:15  
II Timothy 2:21  
Hebrews 12:14  
I Peter 1:15-16

▣ **“They have turned away from Him”** This literally is “turned away backward” (BDB 30, cf. 44:25). We would say, “they have willfully turned their back on Him” (cf. v. 2).

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:5-6**

**<sup>5</sup>Where will you be stricken again,  
As you continue in *your* rebellion?  
The whole head is sick  
And the whole heart is faint.  
<sup>6</sup>From the sole of the foot even to the head  
There is nothing sound in it,  
*Only* bruises, welts and raw wounds,  
Not pressed out or bandaged,  
Nor softened with oil.**

**1:5** Here God’s people are personified as physically sick individuals. This is a good example of physical sickness as a metaphor for sin (cf. 53:4-6; Ps. 103:3; Hos. 5:13). Physical healing is not part of the promise of atonement, but a full and complete forgiveness is! Sin and sickness are related (cf. John 9:2; James 5:5).

▣ **“Where”** NKJV, NRSV, TEV, NIV, RSV, and ASV correctly translate this as “why” (BDB 752 II), which focuses on the reason for such continuing rebellion.

▣ **“As you continue in *your* rebellion”** This VERB (BDB 414, KB 418, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) denotes a repeated, continuing attitude of rebellion against God’s clearly revealed will.

▣ **“whole head. . .whole heart”** This parallelism denotes the whole person (thoughts, motives, and actions). The second phrase is also found in Jer. 8:18 and Lam. 1:22, which shows it was a common idiom.

**1:6 “soundness”** This NOUN (BDB 1071) denotes “completeness,” “innocence,” or “integrity.” In this context it functions as a metaphor of

1. a life without integrity (cf. Gen. 20:5,6; Ps. 78:72; 101:2)
2. an unhealthy person (cf. Ps. 38:3)

The remainder of v. 6 describes ancient medical procedures.

1. pressed out
2. bandaged
3. softened with oil (oil as medication, cf. Luke 10:34; James 5:14)

A person (or nation) whose wound was not properly cleaned and bandaged could not hope to recover (cf. Hosea 6:1).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:7-9**

**<sup>7</sup>Your land is desolate,  
Your cities are burned with fire,  
Your fields — strangers are devouring them in your presence;  
It is desolation, as overthrown by strangers.  
<sup>8</sup>The daughter of Zion is left like a shelter in a vineyard,  
Like a watchman's hut in a cucumber field, like a besieged city.  
<sup>9</sup>Unless the LORD of hosts  
Had left us a few survivors,  
We would be like Sodom,  
We would be like Gomorrah.**

**1:7** This reflects an exile, probably either the Assyrian attack in 701 B.C. and invasion of Israel in 723 B.C. or possibly the Babylonian invasion of Judah in 586 B.C. Remember Isaiah, the book, is a compilation of his messages. The exact historical setting is not stated. Often his poems can refer to different invasions. They may even have been structured for purposeful ambiguity. It reflects the curses of Deuteronomy 28.

▣

**NASB, NKJV** “strangers”  
**NRSV** “aliens”  
**TEV, NJB** “foreigners”

This PARTICIPLE (BDB 266, KB 267, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, twice) denotes someone from a different family, tribe, nation (cf. 25:2,5; 29:5; 61:5), usually an enemy of the covenant people. YHWH judges His people by the use of pagan enemies (cf. 10:5).

**1:8 “The daughter of Zion”** The parent-child motif is begun in v. 2. Here it is continued into a metaphor that will recur in prophetic literature.

1. daughter of Zion, Isa. 1:8; 10:32; 16:1; 37:22; 52:2; 62:11; Jer. 4:31; 6:23; Lam. 1:6; 2:1,4,8; 2:18; Mic. 4:8,10,13; Zeph. 3:14; Zech. 2:10; 9:9
2. daughter of Jerusalem, Isa. 37:22
3. daughter of Judah, Lam. 2:2,5,13,15; Micah 4:8

4. daughter of Tyre, Ps. 45:12
5. daughter of Babylon, Ps. 137:8; Isa. 47:1 (virgin daughter); Jer. 50:42; 51:33; Zech. 2:7
6. daughter of My people, Isa. 22:4; Jer. 4:11; 6:26; 8:11,19,21,22; 9:1,7; Lam. 2:11; 3:48; 4:6,10
7. virgin daughter, Isa. 23:12; 37:22; Jer. 14:17; 46:11; Lam. 1:15; 2:13
8. daughter of Egypt, Jer. 46:24
9. daughter of Edom, Lam. 4:21,22
10. daughter of Tarshish, Isa. 23:10
11. daughter of the Chaldeans, Isa. 47:1,5
12. faithless daughter, Jer. 31:22

Obviously it was a tender idiom referring to the inhabitants of a nation, region, or city.

▣ **“Like a watchman’s hut in a cucumber field”** This refers to the very fragile, flimsy structure (cf. 24:20) that is erected during harvest time as a shelter for guards to protect the crop from robbers. Without God His people have no protection or hope (cf. v. 9).

**1:9 “the Lord of Hosts”** See Special Topic following,

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: LORD OF HOSTS**

This title, “LORD of Hosts” is made up of

- A. the covenant name for God, YHWH. See Special Topic: Names For Deity at 1:1
- B. the term “hosts” (BDB 838) can denote
  1. angels in general (cf. Neh. 9:6)
  2. the heavenly army of angels (cf. I Sam. 17:45; Dan. 8:10; Luke 2:13)
  3. the angelic council (cf. I Kgs. 22:19; Dan. 7:10)
  4. human army (i.e., Num. 2:4,6; Jdgs. 8:6; 9:29)
  5. the lights in the night sky thought to be spiritual powers (i.e., Babylonian astral worship, cf. Deut. 4:19; 17:3; II Kgs. 17:16; 21:3,5; 23:4-5; II Chr. 33:3,5; Jer. 8:2; 19:13)
  6. It became a title for YHWH in Amos 4:13; 5:27 (with ARTICLE in Amos 3:13; 6:14; 9:5 and without ARTICLE in Amos 5:14,15,16; 6:8; I Kgs. 19:10,14). It denoted YHWH fighting on Israel’s behalf.
  7. There is a specialized use in Josh. 5:14-15, which may refer to Michael the angelic guardian of Israel. This is in some way parallel to the Angel of the Lord as a representation of Deity Himself.

▣ **“Had left us a few survivors”** This refers to the terrible judgment of the Assyrian and/or the Babylonian exiles of God’s people from the Promised Land.

It denotes the concept of “a faithful remnant” of believers (cf. 10:20-22; 11:11,16; 37:4,31,32; 46:3, see Special Topic below), which Paul refers to and expands to include Gentiles in Rom. 9:19-29! Not everyone will be redeemed!

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE REMNANT, THREE SENSES**

The OT concept of “a faithful remnant” is a recurrent theme of the Prophets (mostly in the eighth century prophets and Jeremiah). It is used in three senses.

1. those who survived the Exile (e.g., Isaiah 10:20-23; 17:4-6; 37:31-32; Jeremiah 42:15,19; 44:12,14,28; Amos 1:8)
2. those who remain faithful to YHWH (e.g., Isa. 4:1-5; 11:11,16; 28:5; Joel 2:32; Amos 5:14-15; Micah 2:12-13; 4:6-7; 5:7-9; 7:18-20)
3. those who are a part of the eschatological renewal and recreation (e.g., Amos 9:11-15)

▣ **“Sodom and Gomorrah”** This is a historical allusion to God’s judgment recorded in Genesis 18-19. These Canaanite cities became a proverb for both evil and God’s judgment of evil.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:10-15**

<sup>10</sup>**Hear the word of the LORD,  
You rulers of Sodom;  
Give ear to the instruction of our God,  
You people of Gomorrah.**

<sup>11</sup>**“What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?”  
Says the LORD.  
“I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams  
And the fat of fed cattle;  
And I take no pleasure in the blood of bulls, lambs or goats.**

<sup>12</sup>**When you come to appear before Me,  
Who requires of you this trampling of My courts?**

<sup>13</sup>**Bring your worthless offerings no longer,  
Incense is an abomination to Me.  
New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies —  
I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly.**

<sup>14</sup>**I hate your new moon *festivals* and your appointed feasts,  
They have become a burden to Me;  
I am weary of bearing *them*.**

<sup>15</sup>**So when you spread out your hands *in prayer*,  
I will hide My eyes from you;  
Yes, even though you multiply prayers,  
I will not listen.  
Your hands are covered with blood.”**

**1:10-15** Israel’s defense against God’s charges of vv. 2-6 is her religiosity!

**1:10 “Hear. . .Give ear”** The two IMPERATIVES of v. 2 are repeated.

▣ **“You rulers of Sodom. . .You people of Gomorrah”** Judah is like Sodom and Gomorrah, both her leaders and people are morally corrupt. This phrase was a shocking slur on the covenant people, as was *goy* of v. 4.





**NASB** “instruction”  
**NKJV** “law”  
**NRSV, TEV** “teaching”

This is the term Torah (BDB 435). Notice the possible connotations. In this context it could refer to (1) Scripture; (2) the preaching of the prophets; or (3) the teachings of the priests. They knew God’s revealed will, but chose not to follow it.

**1:11 “What are your multiplied sacrifices to me”** It must be remembered, this is not an attack on sacrifice as such, but the attitudes in which people bring their sacrifices (cf. 29:13; Hos. 6:6; Amos 5:21-27; Mic. 6:6-8). Ritual can be meaningful if accompanied by a right attitude toward God (cf. Ps. 50). See *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 207-208, 274-275.

▣ **“I have had enough”** This VERB (BDB 959, KB 1302, *Qal* PERFECT) means bloated or sated.

▣ **“burnt offerings”** This refers to totally burnt sacrifices which symbolized total dedication to God.

▣ **“The fat of fed cattle”** This refers to sacrifices when only part of the animal (fat of lower viscera) was offered on the altar and the rest was given to the priest or to the person bringing the sacrifice to eat as a communal meal with God and family, friends, and neighbors. The meat of large animals could not be preserved and had to be eaten quickly.

▣ **“I take no pleasure in”** This VERB (BDB 342, KB 339, *Qal* PERFECT) denoted YHWH’s acceptance of a sacrifice. The usual idiom was “a soothing aroma” (cf. Gen. 8:21; Exod. 29:18,25). However, YHWH rejected these people’s worship (cf. vv. 10-15).

**1:12 “to appear before Me”** This refers to one’s personal attendance at the Tabernacle/Temple (i.e., Exod. 23:17). They were not coming for true worship, but for ritual liturgy!

**1:13 “worthless offerings”** This term (BDB 996) means “empty,” “vain,” “nothing.” It can refer to

1. idolatry (Jonah 2:8; Ps. 31:6)
2. offerings (here)
3. evil people (Isa. 5:18)
4. use of God’s name (Exod. 20:17; Deut. 5:11; Ps. 139:20)
5. lying words (Isa. 59:4)

▣ **“Incense is an abomination to Me”** The term “incense” (BDB 882) means “that which goes up.” Therefore, it could refer to

1. the smoke of sacrifices
2. the smell of incense (usually spices placed on top of the sacrifice) or smoke from the incense altar before the inner veil of the tabernacle/temple

These are strong words! It reminds me of Jeremiah’s “Temple sermons” of Jeremiah 7. Ritual and liturgy had replaced repentance and faith. They were blind and deaf (cf. Isa. 6:9-10). They had a form of godliness, but denied true faith (cf. II Tim. 3:5). The tragedy is that they thought they were right with God! They thought they were His people! They were wrong, as are so many religious, normal, active religionists in every age.

The term “abomination” (“BDB 1072, this is not the same term used in Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11) is used primarily in Deuteronomy, Proverbs, and Ezekiel. It describes God’s reaction to many things.

1. homosexuality, Lev. 18:22

2. other sexual sins, Lev. 18:26,27,29,30
3. idolatry, Deut. 7:25,26; 12:31; 14:3; 17:4; 27:15; 32:16; II Kgs. 16:3; 23:13; Jer. 32:35
4. blemished animal sacrifices, Deut. 17:1
5. occult practices, Deut. 18:9,12
6. confusion of gender, Deut. 22:5
7. sacred prostitution, Deut. 23:18; I Kgs. 14:24
8. remarriage after divorce, Deut. 24:4
9. commercial cheating, Deut. 25:16; Pro. 11:1; 20:10,23
10. the crooked man, Pro. 3:32; 6:16; 8:7; 11:20; 12:22; 15:26; Jer. 7:10
11. sacrifice of the wicked, Pro. 15:8,9; 21:27
12. the proud, Pro. 16:5
13. arrogant leaders, Pro. 16:12
14. bribed judges, Pro. 17:15
15. ritualistic offering of incense without lifestyle faith, Isa. 1:13

▣ **“New moon and Sabbath, the calling of assemblies”** Remember the Hebrews used the lunar calendar. Every Sabbath was significant and every new moon (cf. Num. 28:11-15; II Kgs. 4:23; Isa. 66:23) had a religious orientation as well as the three yearly feasts appointed in the Mosaic law (cf. Exod. 23:14-17; 34:18-26; Leviticus 23; Deut. 16:1-17).

**1:14** The Hebrew syntax here is broken because of the great emotion expressed by Isaiah on behalf of God. The first three VERBS are all PERFECTS (completed).

**1:15 “you spread out your hands *in prayer*”** Notice that “in prayer” is in italics, which means it is not in the Hebrew text. The spreading out of hands (cf. Exod. 9:29,33; I Kgs. 8:38,54; II Chr. 6:12) and the lifting up of the eyes to heaven (cf. John 11:41; 17:1) were the normal Jewish postures for prayer. God refuses to hear (cf. 8:17; 54:8; 59:2; Deut. 31:17; Jer. 11:11; Ezek.8:18) the prayer of sinful Judeans in their time of need because they came to Him in prayer like they came to Him in sacrifice. Whereas, many sacrifices do not appeal to YHWH, neither does much prayer without heart-felt faith and repentance.

▣ **“Your hands are covered with blood”** This refers to violent murder or premeditated murder of the innocent.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:16-17**

- <sup>16</sup>“Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean;  
 Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight.  
 Cease to do evil,  
<sup>17</sup>Learn to do good;  
 Seek justice,  
 Reprove the ruthless,  
 Defend the orphan,  
 Plead for the widow.”

**1:16-17** The prophet expresses the heart of YHWH in a series of commands.

1. wash yourselves, BDB 934, KB 1220, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. make yourselves clean, BDB 269, KB 269, *Hithpael* IMPERATIVE
3. remove the evil, BDB 693, KB 747, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

4. cease to do evil, BDB 292, KB 292, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
5. learn to do good, BDB 540, KB 531, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
6. seek justice, BDB 205, KB 233, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
7. reprove the ruthless, BDB 80, KB 97, *Piel* IMPERATIVE (possibly “rebuke the oppressor”)
8. defend the orphan, BDB 1047, KB 1622, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
9. plead for the widow, BDB 936, KB 1224, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

Notice that YHWH’s will is expressed in terms of a person’s righteous acts of compassion (cf. Matt. 25:31-46). One cannot be rightly related to God and hateful and neglectful toward his covenant brother/sister.

Often there is confusion about biblical faith. Is it based on the character of God (i.e., grace, mercy) or on the actions of believers? And the answer is “yes”! A good example of the covenant reciprocity (always initiated by God) is comparing Ezek. 18:31 with Ezek. 36:26-27 (also note Eph. 2:8-9,10)!

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: EASTERN LITERATURE**

### The Big Picture - Biblical paradoxes

1. This insight has been the most helpful to me personally as one who loves and trusts the Bible as God’s Word. In trying to take the Bible seriously it became obvious that different texts reveal truth in selected, not systematic ways. One inspired text cannot cancel or depreciate another inspired text! Truth comes in knowing all Scripture (all Scripture, not just some, is inspired, cf. II Tim. 3:16-17), not quoting a single passage (proof-texting)!
2. Most biblical truths (eastern literature) are presented in dialectical or paradoxical pairs (remember the NT authors, except Luke, are Hebrew thinkers, writing in common Greek. Wisdom Literature and Poetic Literature present truth in parallel lines. The antithetical parallelism functions like the paradox. This synthetic parallelism functions like parallel passages). Somehow both are equally true! These paradoxes are painful to our cherished, simplistic traditions!
  - a. predestination versus human free will
  - b. security of the believer versus the need for perseverance
  - c. original sin versus volitional sin
  - d. Jesus as God versus Jesus as man
  - e. Jesus as equal with the Father versus Jesus as subservient to the Father
  - f. Bible as God’s Word versus human authorship
  - g. sinlessness (perfectionism, cf. Romans 6) versus sinning less
  - h. initial instantaneous justification and sanctification versus progressive sanctification
  - i. justification by faith (Romans 4) versus justification confirmed by works (cf. James 2:14-26)
  - j. Christian freedom (cf. Rom. 14:1-23; I Cor. 8:1-13; 10:23-33) versus Christian responsibility (cf. Gal. 5:16-21; Eph. 4:1)
  - k. God’s transcendence versus His immanence
  - l. God as ultimately unknowable versus knowable in Scripture and Christ
  - m. Paul’s many metaphors for salvation
    - (1) adoption
    - (2) sanctification
    - (3) justification

- (4) redemption
- (5) glorification
- (6) predestination
- (7) reconciliation
- n. the kingdom of God as present versus future consummation
- o. repentance as a gift of God versus repentance as a mandated response for salvation (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21)
- p. the OT is permanent versus the OT has passed away and is null and void (cf. Matt. 3:17-19 vs. 5:21-48; Romans 7 vs. Galatians 3)
- q. believers are servants/slaves or children/heirs

**1:17**

**NASB** “reprove the ruthless”  
**NKJV** “reprove the oppressor”  
**NRSV** “rescue the oppressed”  
**TEV** “help those who are oppressed”  
**NJB** “discipline the violent”  
**LXX** “deliver him that is suffering wrong”  
**Peshitta** “do good to the oppressed”

The MT has “set right the oppressors” (found only here), but the VERB means “called blessed” or “set right” (BDB 80, KB 97, *Piel* IMPERATIVE), which does not fit this context. It is probably best to change the vowel points of the MT from “the oppressors” to “those who are oppressed” (i.e., *Qal* PARTICIPLE, BDB 330).

☐ **“orphan. . .widow”** This pair is a symbol of all oppressed and socially disempowered people (cf. Exod. 22:21-22; Deut. 24:17,19,20,21; Job 24:3; Ps. 68:5; Jer. 7:6; Lam. 5:3; Ezek. 22:7; Zech. 7:10; Mal. 3:5). They are used together many times in Deuteronomy as the object of YHWH’s personal care and attention (i.e., Deut. 10:18; Ps. 10:14,18; 68:5; Jer. 49:11).

It was especially the office of king in the ANE that was responsible for social justice and fairness!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:18-20**

<sup>18</sup>“Come now, and let us reason together,”

Says the LORD,

“Though your sins are as scarlet,

They will be as white as snow;

Though they are red like crimson,

They will be like wool.

<sup>19</sup>If you consent and obey,

You will eat the best of the land;

<sup>20</sup>But if you refuse and rebel,

You will be devoured by the sword.”

Truly, the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

**1:18-20 “Come now, and let us reason together”** The prophet has used the literary metaphor of a “court scene” (i.e., YHWH divorcing His people) to communicate the message of personal responsibility and its consequences! This courtroom analogy continues.

YHWH is ready to forgive if His people will repent and obey! If they refuse, the consequences of covenant obedience will come (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28).

There are two VERBS expressing God’s invitation for Judah to dialog with the Divine Judge.

1. come now (lit. “walk,” “go”), BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. let us reason together, BDB 406, KB 410, *Niphal* COHORTATIVE, cf. Job 23:7

Notice the result if (first “if” clause, v. 19) they respond appropriately (i.e., consent and obey, v. 19).

1. sins forgiven (from scarlet to white as snow)
2. sins forgiven (from red to white wool)
3. eat the best of the land

Notice the result (2<sup>nd</sup> “if” clause) if they refuse (BDB 549, KB 540, *Piel* IMPERFECT) and rebel (BDB 598, KB 632, *Qal* PERFECT). They will be devoured (BDB 37, KB 46, *Qal* PASSIVE IMPERFECT).

It is interesting that the Sovereign God calls on His covenant people to respond appropriately. This is the mystery of predestination and free will. Both are true. They form the basic orientation of the covenant relationship initiated by God, but requiring a response on the part of His people. The fellowship of Genesis 1-2 is restored in a redeemed, covenant relationship. The effects of the Fall can be reversed (even within time). See Special Topic: Covenant at 1:19.

▣ **“Though your sins are as scarlet”** Remember that dyed material in the ancient world could not be changed (i.e., they had no bleach). God’s forgiveness (and forgetfulness) is miraculous but possible (cf. Ps. 103:11-14; Isa. 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; Mic. 7:19)! When God forgives, He forgets! Wow!

The color red as a metaphor for sin may come from the previous phrase “hands are full of bloodshed” mentioned in v. 15.

**1:19** There is a wordplay between v. 19, “obedience will open the door for abundance” (lit. “eat the best of the land”; the VERB [BDB 37, KB 46, *Qal* IMPERFECT], which has always been God’s will) and the same VERB in v. 20 translated “devoured” (*Qal* PASSIVE IMPERFECT or *Pual* IMPERFECT), if they do not repent and obey. There are covenant blessings and responsibilities and they are connected (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27-29)!

▣ **“If you consent and obey”** Remember the covenants in the OT are both conditional and unconditional. They are unconditional as far as God’s promises, but they are conditional on mankind’s response (cf. Luke 6:46; James 2:14-26).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT**

The OT term *berith* (BDB 136), covenant, is not easy to define. There is no matching VERB in Hebrew. All attempts to derive an etymological definition have proved unconvincing. However, the obvious centrality of the concept has forced scholars to examine the word usage to attempt to determine its functional meaning.

Covenant is the means by which the one true God deals with His human creation. The concept of covenant, treaty, or agreement is crucial in understanding the biblical revelation. The tension between God’s sovereignty and human free-will are clearly seen in the concept of covenant. Some covenants are based exclusively on God’s character and actions.

1. creation itself (cf. Genesis 1-2)
2. the call of Abraham (cf. Genesis 12)

3. the covenant with Abraham (cf. Genesis 15)
4. the preservation and promise to Noah (cf. Genesis 6-9)

However, the very nature of covenant demands a response.

1. by faith Adam must obey God and not eat of the tree in the midst of Eden
2. by faith Abraham must leave his family, follow God, and believe in future descendants
3. by faith Noah must build a huge boat far from water and gather the animals
4. by faith Moses brought the Israelites out of Egypt to Mt. Sinai and received specific guidelines for religious and social life with promises of blessings and cursings (cf. Deuteronomy 27-28)

This same tension involving God's relationship to humanity is addressed in the "new covenant." The tension can be clearly seen in comparing Ezekiel 18 with Ezek. 36:27-38 (YHWH's action). Is the covenant based on God's gracious actions or mandated human response? This is the burning issue of the Old Covenant and the New. The goals of both are the same: (1) the restoration of fellowship with YHWH lost in Genesis 3 and (2) the establishment of a righteous people who reflect God's character.

The new covenant of Jer. 31:31-34 solves the tension by removing human performance as the means of attaining acceptance. God's law becomes an internal desire instead of an external law code. The goal of a godly, righteous people remains the same, but the methodology changes. Fallen mankind proved themselves inadequate to be God's reflected image. The problem was not God's covenant, but human sinfulness and weakness (cf. Romans 7; Galatians 3).

The same tension between OT unconditional and conditional covenants remains in the NT. Salvation is absolutely free in the finished work of Jesus Christ, but it requires repentance and faith (both initially and continually). It is both a legal pronouncement and a call to Christlikeness, an indicative statement of acceptance and an imperative to holiness! Believers are not saved by their performance, but unto obedience (cf. Eph. 2:8-10). Godly living becomes the evidence of salvation, not the means of salvation. However, eternal life has observable characteristics! This tension is clearly seen in Hebrews.

**1:20 "Truly, the mouth of the LORD has spoken"** God's Word will come to pass (cf. Isa. 24:3; 25:8; 40:8; 55:10-11; Matt. 5:18; 24:35; Luke 16:17)!

Believers' hope rests on

1. the unchanging character of God
2. the merciful character of God
3. the trustworthiness of His promises
4. the accuracy of His revelation

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:21-23**

**<sup>21</sup>How the faithful city has become a harlot,**

**She *who* was full of justice!**

**Righteousness once lodged in her,**

**But now murderers.**

**<sup>22</sup>Your silver has become dross,**

**Your drink diluted with water.**

**<sup>23</sup>Your rulers are rebels**

**And companions of thieves;**

**Everyone loves a bribe  
 And chases after rewards.  
 They do not defend the orphan,  
 Nor does the widow's plea come before them.**

**1:21-23** This section deals with Jerusalem of Isaiah's day, the special place where YHWH caused His name to dwell (cf. Deut. 12:5,11,14). It has become unfaithful and does not fulfill covenant stipulations (cf. v. 23). This section is characterized by Hebrew lament meter or beats, which is another common prophetic literary device (i.e., funeral dirge).

Notice her covenant violations.

1. murderers (cf. Exod. 20:13, premeditated, intentional taking of life, BDB 953, KB 1283, cf. Jer. 7:9; Hos. 4:2)
2. rulers as rebels
3. rulers as companions of thieves
4. lovers of bribes (cf. 5:23; Exod. 23:6,8; Deut. 16:19; I Sam. 8:3; Ps. 26:10; Amos 5:12; Micah 3:11; 7:3)
5. chasers of rewards
6. not defenders of orphans
7. not supplicants for widows (cf. Exod. 22:21-24; Jer. 5:28; 7:6; 22:3; Ezek. 22:7; Zech. 7:10)

These are violations of the Mosaic covenant summarized in Deuteronomy. Note that Judah is condemned for covenant violations, not idolatry in this context (unless the word "harlot" in v. 21 implies Canaanite fertility worship).

**1:21 "faithful"** See Special Topic: Believe, Trust, Faith, and Faithfulness in the OT at 22:23.

**1:22** These are two metaphors for Judah's moral corruptness. She was initially pure, but now she has become corrupted by her own choices and actions!



**NASB** "drink"  
**NKJV, NRSV,**  
**TEV, NJB** "wine"

This is not the normal term for wine (see Special Topic following). This SINGULAR FEMININE occurs only here. Because of the related cognate root in Akkadian, it may refer to beer, beer that has been diluted (i.e., ruined) by water.

**SPECIAL TOPIC: BIBLICAL ATTITUDES TOWARD ALCOHOL AND ALCOHOLISM**

I. Biblical Terms

A. Old Testament

1. *Yayin* – This is the general term for wine (BDB 406), which is used 141 times. The etymology is uncertain because it is not from a Hebrew root. It always means fermented fruit juice, usually grape. Some typical passages are Gen. 9:21; Exod. 29:40; Num. 15:5,10.
2. *Tirosh* – This is "new wine" (BDB 440). Because of climatic conditions of the Near East, fermentation started as soon as six hours after extracting the juice. This term refers to wine in the process of fermenting. For some typical passages see Deut. 12:17; 18:4; Isa. 62:8-9; Hos. 4:11.

3. *Asis* – This is obviously alcoholic beverages (“sweet wine,” BDB 779, e.g. Joel 1:5; Isa. 49:26).
4. *Sekar* – This is the term “strong drink” (BDB 1016). The Hebrew root is used in the term “drunk” or “drunkard.” It had something added to it to make it more intoxicating. It is parallel to *yayin* (cf. Prov. 20:1; 31:6; Isa. 28:7).

#### B. New Testament

1. *Oinos* – the Greek equivalent of *yayin*
2. *Eos oinos* (new wine) – the Greek equivalent of *tirosh* (cf. Mark 2:22).
3. *Gleuchos vinos* (sweet wine, *asis*) – wine in the early stages of fermentation (cf. Acts 2:13).

### II. Biblical Usage

#### A. Old Testament

1. Wine is a gift of God (Gen. 27:28; Ps. 104:14-15; Eccl. 9:7; Hos. 2:8-9; Joel 2:19,24; Amos 9:13; Zech. 10:7).
2. Wine is a part of a sacrificial offering (Exod. 29:40; Lev. 23:13; Num. 15:7,10; 28:14; Deut. 14:26; Jdgs. 9:13).
3. Wine is used as medicine (II Sam. 16:2; Pro. 31:6-7).
4. Wine can be a real problem (Noah–Gen. 9:21; Lot–Gen. 19:33,35; Nabal–I Sam. 25:36; Uriah–II Sam. 11:13; Amnon–II Sam. 13:28; Elah–I Kgs. 16:9; Benhadad–I Kgs. 20:12; Rulers–Amos 6:6; and Ladies–Amos 4).
5. Wine can be abused (Pro. 20:1; 23:29-35; 31:4-5; Isa. 5:11,22; 19:14; 28:7-8; Hosea 4:11).
6. Wine was prohibited to certain groups (priests on duty, Lev. 10:9; Ezek. 44:21; Nazarites, Num. 6; and rulers, Pro. 31:4-5; Isa. 56:11-12; Hosea 7:5).
7. Wine is used in an eschatological setting (Amos 9:13; Joel 3:18; Zech. 9:17).

#### B. Interbiblical

1. Wine in moderation is very helpful (Ecclesiasticus 31:27-30).
2. The rabbis say, “Wine is the greatest of all medicine, where wine is lacking, then drugs are needed.” (BB 58b).

#### C. New Testament

1. Jesus changed a large quantity of water into wine (John 2:1-11).
2. Jesus drank wine (Matt. 11:18-19; Luke 7:33-34; 22:17ff).
3. Peter accused of drunkenness on “new wine” at Pentecost (Acts 2:13).
4. Wine can be used as medicine (Mark 15:23; Luke 10:34; I Tim. 5:23).
5. Leaders are not to be abusers. This does not mean total abstainers (I Tim. 3:3,8; Titus 1:7; 2:3; I Pet. 4:3).
6. Wine used in eschatological settings (Matt. 22:1ff; Rev. 19:9).
7. Drunkenness is deplored (Matt. 24:49; Luke 12:45; 21:34; I Cor. 5:11-13; 6:10; Gal. 5:21; I Pet. 4:3; Rom. 13:13-14).

### III. Theological Insight

#### A. Dialectical tension

1. Wine is the gift of God.
2. Drunkenness is a major problem.



3. Believers in some cultures must limit their freedoms for the sake of the gospel (Matt. 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23; I Corinthians 8-10; Romans 14).

B. Tendency to go beyond given bounds

1. God is the source of all good things.

2. Fallen mankind has abused all of God's gifts by taking them beyond God-given bounds.

C. Abuse is in us, not in things. There is nothing evil in the physical creation (cf. Mark 7:18-23; Rom. 14:14,20; I Cor. 10:25-26; I Tim. 4:4; Titus 1:15).

#### IV. First Century Jewish Culture and Fermentation

A. Fermentation begins very soon, approximately 6 hours after the grape is crushed.

B. Jewish tradition says that when a slight foam appeared on the surface (sign of fermentation), it is liable to the wine-tithe (*Ma aseroth* 1:7). It was called "new wine" or "sweet wine."

C. The primary violent fermentation was complete after one week.

D. The secondary fermentation took about 40 days. At this state it is considered "aged wine" and could be offered on the altar (*Edhuyyoth* 6:1).

E. Wine that had rested on its lees (old wine) was considered good, but had to be strained well before use.

F. Wine was considered to be properly aged usually after one year of fermentation. Three years was the longest period of time that wine could be safely stored. It was called "old wine" and had to be diluted with water.

G. Only in the last 100 years with a sterile environment and chemical additives has fermentation been postponed. The ancient world could not stop the natural process of fermentation.

#### V. Closing Statements

A. Be sure your experience, theology, and biblical interpretation do not depreciate Jesus and first century Jewish/Christian culture! They were obviously not total-abstainers.

B. I am not advocating the social use of alcohol. However, many have overstated the Bible's position on this subject and now claim superior righteousness based on a cultural or denominational bias.

C. For me, Romans 14 and I Corinthians 8-10 have provided insight and guidelines based on love and respect for fellow believers and the spread of the gospel in our cultures, not personal freedom or judgmental criticism. If the Bible is the only source for faith and practice, then maybe we must all rethink this issue.

D. If we push total abstinence as God's will, what do we imply about Jesus, as well as those modern cultures that regularly use wine (e.g., Europe, Israel, Argentina)?

**1:23**

**NASB, NKJV,**

**LXX, Peshitta "rewards"**

**NRSV, TEV,**

**REB "gifts"**

**NJB**

**"presents"**

This term (BDB 1024) occurs only here in the OT. BDB says it means "rewards" or "bribe" (parallel to bribe [BDB 1005] in the previous line). The basic root may be related to (1) *shalom* (BDB 1024), "peace," "health," "wholeness," or (2) "recompense" (BDB 1024, cf. 59:18; NIDOTTE, vol. 4, p. 143). In Jerusalem the only peace was for wicked, wealthy, powerful groups in society.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:24-26**

**<sup>24</sup>Therefore the Lord GOD of hosts,  
The Mighty One of Israel, declares,  
"Ah, I will be relieved of My adversaries  
And avenge Myself on My foes.  
<sup>25</sup>I will also turn My hand against you,  
And will smelt away your dross as with lye  
And will remove all your alloy.  
<sup>26</sup>Then I will restore your judges as at the first,  
And your counselors as at the beginning;  
After that you will be called the city of righteousness,  
A faithful city."**

**1:24-26** YHWH speaks of His future plans of restoring His people (cf. v.26) after judgment on the wicked leadership.

1. "I will be relieved of My adversaries," v. 24, BDB 636, KB 688, *Niphal* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
2. "I will avenge Myself on My foes," v. 24, BDB 667, KB 721, *Niphal* COHORTATIVE
3. "I will also turn My hand against you," v. 25. BDB 996, KB 1427, *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE
4. "I will smelt away your dross as with lye," v. 25, BDB 864, KB 1057, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
5. "I will remove all your alloy," v. 25, BDB 693, KB 747, *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE
6. "I will restore your judges," v. 26, BDB 996, KB 1427 *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE
7. "I will restore your counselors," v. 26 (same as #6, one VERB, two OBJECTS; these must relate to the Exodus period)

Note that the purpose of judgment is restoration (cf. v. 27)!

**1:24** Notice the two Divine names in v. 24!

1. the Lord, GOD of hosts (*adon* YHWH, cf. Ps. 110:1; NIDOTTE, vol. 4, pp.1297-1298)
2. the Mighty One of Israel (cf. Gen. 49:24; Ps. 132:2,5; Isa. 49:26; 60:16)

**1:25-26 "you. . .your"** These two verses use FEMININE SINGULARS to denote that YHWH is addressing the unfaithful capital city of Judah, Jerusalem, with all her economic, military, and religious power structures.

As vv. 19 and 20 used the same VERB in contrasting ways, so too, vv. 25 and 26 with

1. I will turn My hand against you, BDB 996, KB 1427, *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE
2. I will restore, BDB 996, KB 1427, *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE

The same term is used in v. 27, "the returnees" (BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) to describe those touched by God's justice and righteousness.

**1:26 "A faithful city"** Is this an obvious reversal of the sarcasm of v. 21? Jerusalem is no longer "a harlot," but a restored, faithful woman (i.e., "city" is FEMININE). She has finally become true to her title, faithful to God, faithful to His covenant, and faithful to each other!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:27-31**

**<sup>27</sup>Zion will be redeemed with justice**

**And her repentant ones with righteousness.**

**<sup>28</sup>But transgressors and sinners will be crushed together,**

**And those who forsake the LORD will come to an end.**

**<sup>29</sup>Surely you will be ashamed of the oaks which you have desired,**

**And you will be embarrassed at the gardens which you have chosen.**

**<sup>30</sup>For you will be like an oak whose leaf fades away**

**Or as a garden that has no water.**

**<sup>31</sup>The strong man will become tinder,**

**His work also a spark.**

**Thus they shall both burn together**

**And there will be none to quench *them*.**

**1:27-28** Note the parallelism.

1. v. 27, the people of the restored city (v. 26 lines 3 and 4) will be characterized by “justice” and “righteousness”
2. v. 28, the one who refuses to repent (turn back) will be “crushed” and “come to an end”

Therefore, there is synonymous parallelism within vv. 27 and 28, but antithetical parallelism between vv. 27 and 28.

There is some question about v. 27. Does it describe what God is doing and will do or does it describe faithful covenant people? The answer is “yes.” God wants a righteous people to reflect His character to the lost nations. These qualities are objective (God) and subjective (believers).

**1:29** This verse describes Judah’s idolatry. It could refer to

1. *Ba’al*, *Asherah* worship at local shrines (i.e., *Asherah* was symbolized by a live tree or carved stake, cf. 57:5, which also mentions the sacrificing of children to *Molech*)
2. worship at sacred trees (local gods, cf. 65:3; 66:17)
3. worship in sacred gardens often associated with a secret place for idolatry. In ANE literature temples and special gardens were often connected.

It must be added that it is possible that the paragraph (vv. 27-31) refers to the exploitation and materialism of the wealthy classes of Judean society. The references in v. 29 are to choice property (i.e., violation of YHWH’s special love toward the poor, ostracized, powerless) and not idolatry (i.e., violation of YHWH’s uniqueness).

Read the chapter and decide for yourself! Whichever it is, it fails to reflect YHWH’s character to the nations!

**1:30 “fades”** This VERB (BDB 615, KB 663, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) is used metaphorically for the fleetingness of human existence (cf. 34:4; 64:6; Ps. 90:5-6).

**1:31** Fire is often associated with judgment or cleansing (i.e., 6:13; Jer. 4:4; 7:20; Amos 5:6).

## SPECIAL TOPIC: FIRE

Fire has both positive and negative connotations in Scripture.

### A. Positive

1. warms (cf. Isa. 44:15; John 18:18)
2. lights (cf. Isa. 50:11; Matt. 25:1-13)
3. cooks (cf. Exod. 12:8; Isa. 44:15-16; John 21:9)
4. purifies (cf. Num. 31:22-23; Prov. 17:3; Isa. 1:25; 6:6-8; Jer. 6:29; Mal. 3:2-3)
5. holiness (cf. Gen. 15:17; Exod. 3:2; 19:18; Ezek. 1:27; Heb. 12:29)
6. God's leadership (cf. Exod. 13:21; Num. 14:14; I Kgs. 18:24)
7. God's empowering (cf. Acts 2:3)

### B. Negative

1. burns (cf. Josh. 6:24; 8:8; 11:11; Matt. 22:7)
2. destroys (cf. Gen. 19:24; Lev. 10:1-2)
3. anger (cf. Num. 21:28; Isa. 10:16; Zech. 12:6)
4. punishment (cf. Gen. 38:24; Lev. 20:14; 21:9; Josh. 7:15)
5. false eschatological sign (cf. Rev. 13:13)

### C. God's anger against sin is expressed in fire metaphors

1. His anger burns (cf. Hos. 8:5; Zeph. 3:8)
2. He pours out fire (cf. Nah. 1:6)
3. eternal fire (cf. Jer. 15:14; 17:4)
4. eschatological judgment (cf. Matt. 3:10; 13:40; John 15:6; II Thess. 1:7; II Pet. 3:7-10; Rev. 8:7; 16:8)

### D. Like so many metaphors in the Bible (i.e., leaven, lion) fire can be a blessing or a curse, depending on the context.



NASB	“the strong man”
NKJV, NRSV, NJB	“the strong”
LXX, Peshitta	“their strength”
REB	“the strongest tree”
JB	“the men of high estate”

This ADJECTIVE (BDB 340) is found only here and Amos 2:9, both in context that relates to trees (cf. vv. 29,30). Possibly the REB is best. It refers to idolatry involving wood, trees, or a garden.

▣ **“tinder”** This term (BDB 654), in its VERBAL form, usually means “shaken out” (cf. 33:9,15), but the NOUN, used only twice in the OT, refers to the string/rope (tow) from flax (cf. Jdgs. 16:9).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How long did Isaiah serve as the chief prophet for Judah?
2. Why is God spoken of in such anthropomorphic terms?
3. Is God displeased with sacrifice?
4. Define a person's responsibility in salvation, OT and NT.



# ISAIAH 2

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God's Universal Reign	The Future House of God	Second Superscription	Everlasting Peace	Everlasting Peace
2:1	2:1-4	2:1	2:1-5	2:1-5
		The New Hope		
2:2-4 (2-4)	(2-4)	2:2-4 (2-4)	(2-3) (4)	(2-3) (4)
		The Day of the Lord		
2:5-11 (5-11)	2:5-9 (5) (6-9)	2:5-22 (5-22)	Arrogance Will Be Destroyed 2:6-8 2:9 2:10-18	(5) The Brilliance of Yahweh's Majesty 2:6-22 (6-8) (9-10)
A Day of Reckoning Coming				(11-16)
2:12-22 (12-22)	2:12-22 (12-18) (19) (20-21) (22)		2:19-21 2:22	(17) (18-19) (21) (22)

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to

following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Chapter 2 begins with another introductory phrase, like 1:1. It is possible that editors or compilers put Isaiah's sermons/visions/messages together based on
  1. chronology (under which king)
  2. topic
  3. catch words
  4. unknown literary scheme
  5. a written copy of several Isaiah messagesSee note in *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 787.
- B. This chapter is typical of the prophet's messages.
  1. hope for all nations through His covenant people (vv. 2-4)
  2. judgment for covenant violations and wickedness (vv. 5-22)
- C. YHWH wants a righteous, holy, covenant people to reflect His character to the nations so that they can respond to Him in faith and righteousness (cf. 45:22; 49:6; 60:3; 66:18,23).
- D. Remember in these poetic literary units (visions), do not push the details or single lexical studies, but the overall pattern of parallelism, word plays, and contrasts! The whole poem is meant to convey one major truth! Be careful of picking and choosing themes, words, or truths you are comfortable with or that fit you're á priori systematic theology. Let Isaiah speak!
- E. Because of the unifying theme of Jerusalem (judged and blessed), chapters 2-4 form a literary unit.
- F. A book that has helped me understand the language of prophecy and apocalyptic is D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic*, IVP, ISBN 0-83-8-2653-X.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:1**

**<sup>1</sup>The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.**



**2:1** It is uncertain why Isaiah's messages are described as

1. vision, 1:1; 29:7 (BDB 302, cf. Micah 3:6)
2. he saw, 1:1; 2:1; 13:1; 26:11; 33:17; 48:6; 57:18 (cf. Micah 1:1)

This is the mystery of revelation. It comes in different ways to different biblical authors (visions, dreams, theophanies, words, etc.). Moderns do not know how much freedom the individual writers (authors, editors, compilers) had to structure and present God's message. They obviously used their own language skills and vocabularies. Even without a full and complete understanding of the way revelation works, the concept is crucial! These are God's messages given through a historically conditioned person, to a particular time and group, yet they are relevant for all people in all times! The key for a proper interpretation is that the intent of an original inspired author must be the criteria for interpretation (one meaning but many significances/applications).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:2-4**

**Now it will come about that**

**<sup>2</sup>In the last days**

**The mountain of the house of the LORD**

**Will be established as the chief of the mountains,**

**And will be raised above the hills;**

**And all the nations will stream to it.**

**<sup>3</sup>And many peoples will come and say,**

**"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,**

**To the house of the God of Jacob;**

**That He may teach us concerning His ways**

**And that we may walk in His paths."**

**For the law will go forth from Zion**

**And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.**

**<sup>4</sup>And He will judge between the nations,**

**And will render decisions for many peoples;**

**And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.**

**Nation will not lift up sword against nation,**

**And never again will they learn war.**

**2:2-4** This brief paragraph summarizes the OT perspective on the place and purpose of the covenant people (similar to Micah 4:1-5). They were to be a light to the nations (cf. 51:4,5; Luke 24:47)! See the Special Topic: Bob's Evangelical Biases at 1:3.

**2:2 "In the last days"** This phrase refers to the future horizon of the particular biblical writer (see G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*, chapter 14, "The Language of Eschatology," pp. 243-271). It denoted a time of fulfillment of God's purposes.

1. the Messianic kingdom, Gen. 49:10; Num. 24:17; Isa. 2:2; Jer. 48:47; 49:39; Ezek. 38:8,16
2. Israel's rebellion, Deut. 31:29
3. Israel's return to YHWH in repentance and faith, Deut. 4:30; Hos. 3:5; Jer. 23:19-22 (esp. 23:20)
4. an end-time attack on the covenant people, Ezek. 38:16; Dan. 2:28; 10:14 (possibly Psalm 2)
5. exile, Amos 4:2

Only context can clarify which period. Be careful of your systematic theology!

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: THIS AGE AND THE AGE TO COME**

The OT prophets viewed the future as an extension of the present. For them the future will be a restoration of geographical Israel. However, even they saw it as a new day (cf. Isa. 65:17; 66:22). With the continued willful rejection of YHWH by the descendants of Abraham (even after the exile) a new paradigm developed in Jewish intertestamental apocalyptic literature (i.e., I Enoch, IV Ezra, II Baruch). These writings begin to distinguish between two ages: a current evil age dominated by Satan and a coming age of righteousness dominated by the Spirit and inaugurated by the Messiah (often a dynamic warrior).

In this area of theology (eschatology) there is an obvious development. Theologians call this “progressive revelation.” The NT affirms this new cosmic reality of two ages (i.e., a temporal dualism).

<u>Jesus</u>	<u>Paul</u>	<u>Hebrews</u>
Matthew 12:32	Romans 12:2	1:2
Mark 10:30	I Cor. 1:20; 2:6,8; 3:18	6:5
Luke 16:8	II Cor. 4:4	11:3
Luke 18:30	Galatians 1:4	
Luke 20:34-35	Eph. 1:21; 2:7; 6:12	
	I Timothy 6:17	
	II Timothy 4:10	
	Titus 2:12	

In NT theology these two Jewish ages have been overlapped because of the unexpected and overlooked predictions of the two comings of the Messiah. The incarnation of Jesus fulfilled the OT prophecies of the inauguration of the new age (Dan. 2:44-45). However, the OT also saw His coming as Judge and Conqueror, yet He came at first as the Suffering Servant (cf. Isaiah 53), humble and meek (cf. Zechariah 9:9). He will return in power just as the OT predicted (cf. Revelation 19). This two-stage fulfillment caused the Kingdom to be present (inaugurated), but future (not fully consummated). This is the NT tension of the already, but not yet!

▣ **“The mountain of the house of the LORD”** This refers to the temple located on Mt. Moriah in Jerusalem. It was the place of centralized worship of YHWH (the place He caused His name to dwell, cf. Deut. 12:5,11,14,18,21,26; 14:25; 15:20; 16:2,6,11,15; 17:8,10; 18:6; 26:2; 31:11).

The NIV Study Bible (pp. 962-3) comments how common in Isaiah is the theme of the mountain of the Lord where all the nations come in the last days (cf. 11:9; 27:13; 56:7; 57:13; 65:25; 66:20).

In a sense this elevation of Mt. Zion (i.e., Jerusalem, the site of the temple of YHWH) is depicted in Canaanite myth (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 4, pp. 1314-1321). For the Canaanites the gods dwelt on Mt. Zaphon in the far north (cf. Isa. 14:13), but Ps. 48:2 changes the imagery to Mt. Zion. YHWH is above all Canaanite deities!

This same concept of a temple or a city being raised is also found in Mesopotamian literature (cf. The Weidner Chronicle, Assyrian inscriptions, Marduk Prophecy). So the concept is not unique to Isaiah.

▣ Notice the metaphorical language used to describe the chief place of YHWH’s revelation to Abraham’s descendants.

1. “the chief of the mountains,” i.e., the place of true revelation
2. “raised above the hills,” a symbol of preeminence and exclusiveness
3. “all the nations will stream to it,” this has always been YHWH’s goal, cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; Isa. 56:6-8! This is the natural result of monotheism

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: WHY ARE THE END-TIME EVENTS SO CONTROVERSIAL?**

Through the years of my study of eschatology I have learned that most Christians do not have or want a developed, systematized, end-time chronology. There are some Christians who focus or major on this area of Christianity for theological, psychological, or denominational reasons. These Christians seem to become obsessed with how it will all end, and somehow miss the urgency of the gospel! Believers cannot affect God's eschatological (end-time) agenda, but they can participate in the gospel mandate (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). Most believers affirm a Second Coming of Christ and an end-time culmination of the promises of God. The interpretive problems arising from how to understand this temporal culmination come from several biblical paradoxes.

1. the tension between Old Covenant prophetic models and New Covenant apostolic models
2. the tension between the Bible's monotheism (one God for all) and the election of Israel (a special people)
3. the tension between the conditional aspect of biblical covenants and promises ("if . . . then") and the unconditional faithfulness of God to fallen mankind's redemption
4. the tension between Near Eastern literary genres and modern western literary models
5. the tension between the Kingdom of God as present, yet future.
6. the tension between belief in the imminent return of Christ and the belief that some events must happen first.

Let us discuss these tensions one at a time.

### **FIRST TENSION (OT racial, national, and geographical categories vs. all believers over all the world)**

The OT prophets predict a restoration of a Jewish kingdom in Palestine centered in Jerusalem where all the nations of the earth gather to praise and serve a Davidic ruler, but Jesus nor the NT Apostles ever focus on this agenda. Is not the OT inspired (cf. Matt. 5:17-19)? Have the NT authors omitted crucial end-time events?

There are several sources of information about the end of the world:

1. OT prophets (Isaiah, Micah, Malachi)
2. OT apocalyptic writers (cf. Ezek. 37-39; Dan. 7-12; Zech.)
3. intertestamental, non-canonical Jewish apocalyptic writers (like I Enoch, which is alluded to in Jude)
4. Jesus Himself (cf. Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21)
5. the writings of Paul (cf. I Cor. 15; II Cor. 5; I Thess. 4-5; II Thess. 2)
6. the writings of John (I John and Revelation).

Do these all clearly teach an end-time agenda (events, chronology, persons)? If not, why? Are they not all inspired (except the Jewish intertestamental writings)?

The Spirit revealed truths to the OT writers in terms and categories they could understand. However, through progressive revelation the Spirit has expanded these OT eschatological concepts to a universal scope ("the mystery of Christ," cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13). Here are some relevant examples:

1. The city of Jerusalem in the OT is used as a metaphor of the people of God (Zion), but is projected into the NT as a term expressing God's acceptance of all repentant, believing humans (the new Jerusalem of Revelation 21-22). The theological expansion of a literal, physical city into the new people of God (believing Jews and Gentiles) is foreshadowed in God's promise to redeem fallen mankind in Gen. 3:15, before there even were any Jews or a Jewish capital city. Even Abraham's call (cf. Gen. 12:1-3) involved the Gentiles (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5).
2. In the OT the enemies of God's people are the surrounding nations of the Ancient Near East, but in the NT they have been expanded to all unbelieving, anti-God, Satanically-inspired people. The battle has moved from a geographical, regional conflict to a worldwide, cosmic conflict (cf. Colossians).
3. The promise of a land which is so integral in the OT (the Patriarchal promises of Genesis, cf. Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 15:7,18; 17:8) has now become the whole earth. New Jerusalem comes down to a recreated earth, not the Near East only or exclusively (cf. Rev. 21-22).
4. Some other examples of OT prophetic concepts being expanded are
  - a. the seed of Abraham is now the spiritually circumcised (cf. Rom. 2:28-29)
  - b. the covenant people now include Gentiles (cf. Hos. 1:10; 2:23, quoted in Rom. 9:24-26; also Lev. 26:12; Exod. 29:45, quoted in II Cor. 6:16-18 and Exod. 19:5; Deut. 14:2, quoted in Titus 2:14)
  - c. the temple is now Jesus (cf. Matt. 26:61; 27:40; John 2:19-21) and through Him the local church (cf. I Cor. 3:16) or the individual believer (cf. I Cor. 6:19)
  - d. even Israel and its characteristic descriptive OT phrases now refer to the whole people of God (i.e., "Israel," cf. Rom. 9:6; Gal. 6:16, i.e., "kingdom of priests," cf. I Pet. 2:5, 9-10; Rev. 1:6)

The prophetic model has been fulfilled, expanded, and is now more inclusive. Jesus and the Apostolic writers do not present the end-time in the same way as the OT prophets (cf. Martin Wyngaarden, *The Future of The Kingdom in Prophecy and Fulfillment*). Modern interpreters who try to make the OT model literal or normative twist the Revelation into a very Jewish book and force meaning into atomized, ambiguous phrases of Jesus and Paul! The NT writers do not negate the OT prophets, but show their ultimate universal implication. There is no organized, logical system to Jesus' or Paul's eschatology. Their purpose is primarily redemptive or pastoral.

However, even within the NT there is tension. There is no clear systemization of eschatological events. In many ways the Revelation surprisingly uses OT allusions in describing the end instead of the teachings of Jesus (cf. Matt. 24; Mark 13)! It follows the literary genre initiated by Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah, but developed during the intertestamental period (Jewish apocalyptic literature). This may have been John's way of linking the Old and New Covenants. It shows the age-old pattern of human rebellion and God's commitment to redemption! But it must be noted that although Revelation uses OT language, persons, and events, it reinterprets them in light of first century Rome (cf. Rev. 1:7).

#### **SECOND TENSION** (monotheism vs. an elect people)

The biblical emphasis is on one personal, spiritual, creator-redeemer, God (cf. Exod. 8:10; Isa. 44:24; 45:5-7,14,18,21-22; 46:9; Jer. 10:6-7). The OT's uniqueness in its own day was its monotheism. All of the surrounding nations were polytheists. The oneness of God is the heart of OT revelation (cf. Deut. 6:4). Creation is a stage for the purpose of fellowship between God and mankind, made in His image and likeness (cf. Gen.1:26-27). However, mankind rebelled, sinning against God's love, leadership, and purpose (cf. Gen. 3). God's love and purpose was so strong and sure that He promised to redeem fallen humanity (cf. Gen. 3:15)!

The tension arises when God chooses to use one man, one family, one nation to reach the rest of mankind. God's election of Abraham and the Jews as a kingdom of priests (cf. Exod. 19:4-6) caused pride instead of service, exclusion instead of inclusion. God's call of Abraham involved the intentional blessing of all mankind (cf. Gen. 12:3). It must be remembered and emphasized that OT election was for service, not salvation. All Israel was never right with God, never eternally saved based solely on her birthright (cf. John 8:31-59; Matt. 3:9), but by personal faith and obedience (cf. Gen. 15:6, quoted in Rom. 4). Israel lost her mission (the church is now a kingdom of priests, cf. Rev. 1:6; II Pet.2:5,9), turned mandate into privilege, service into a special standing! God chose one to choose all!

#### **THIRD TENSION** (conditional covenants vs. unconditional covenants)

There is a theological tension or paradox between conditional and unconditional covenants. It is surely true that God's redemptive purpose/plan is unconditional (cf. Gen. 15:12-21). However, the mandated human response is always conditional!

The "if . . . then" pattern appears in both OT and NT. God is faithful; mankind is unfaithful. This tension has caused much confusion. Interpreters have tended to focus on only one "horn of the dilemma," God's faithfulness or human effort, God's sovereignty or mankind's free will. Both are biblical and necessary.

This relates to eschatology, to God's OT promises to Israel. If God promises it, that settles it! God is bound to His promises; His reputation is involved (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38). The unconditional and conditional covenants meet in Christ (cf. Isa. 53), not Israel! God's ultimate faithfulness lies in the redemption of all who will repent and believe, not in who was your father/mother! Christ, not Israel, is the key to all of God's covenants and promises. If there is a theological parenthesis in the Bible, it is not the Church, but Israel (cf. Acts 7 and Gal. 3).

The world mission of gospel proclamation has passed to the Church (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). It is still a conditional covenant! This is not to imply that God has totally rejected the Jews (cf. Rom. 9-11). There may be a place and purpose for end-time, believing Israel (cf. Zech. 12:10).

#### **FOURTH TENSION** (Near Eastern literary models vs. western models).

Genre is a critical element in correctly interpreting the Bible. The Church developed in a western (Greek) cultural setting. Eastern literature is much more figurative, metaphorical, and symbolic than modern, western culture's literary models. It focuses on people, encounters, and events more than succinct propositional truths. Christians have been guilty of using their history and literary models to interpret biblical prophecy (both OT and NT). Each generation and geographical entity has used its culture, history, and literalness to interpret Revelation. Every one of them has been wrong! It is arrogant to think that modern western culture is the focus of biblical prophecy!

The genre in which the original, inspired author chooses to write is a literary contract with the reader. The book of Revelation is not historical narrative. It is a combination of letter (chapters 1-3), prophecy, and mostly apocalyptic literature. It is as wrong to make the Bible say more than was intended by the original author as it is to make it say less than what he intended! Interpreters' arrogance and dogmatism are even more inappropriate in a book like Revelation.

The Church has never agreed on a proper interpretation of Revelation. My concern is to hear and deal with the whole Bible, not some selected part(s). The Bible's eastern mind-set presents truth in tension-filled pairs. Our western trend toward propositional truth is not invalid, but unbalanced! I think it is possible to remove at least some of the impasse in interpreting

Revelation by noting its changing purpose to successive generations of believers. It is obvious to most interpreters that Revelation must be interpreted in light of its own day and its genre. An historical approach to Revelation must deal with what the first readers would have, and could have, understood. In many ways modern interpreters have lost the meaning of many of the symbols of the book. Revelation's initial main thrust was to encourage persecuted believers. It showed God's control of history (as did the OT prophets); it affirmed that history is moving toward an appointed terminus, judgment or blessing (as did the OT prophets). It affirmed in first century Jewish apocalyptic terms God's love, presence, power, and sovereignty!

It functions in these same theological ways to every generation of believers. It depicts the cosmic struggle of good and evil. The first century details may have been lost to us, but not the powerful, comforting truths. When modern, western interpreters try to force the details of Revelation into their contemporary history, the pattern of false interpretations continues!

It is quite possible that the details of the book may become strikingly literal again (as did the OT in relation to the birth, life, and death of Christ) for the last generation of believers as they face the onslaught of an anti-God leader (cf. II Thess.2) and culture. No one can know these literal fulfillments of the Revelation until the words of Jesus (cf. Matt. 24; Mark.13; and Luke 21) and Paul (cf. I Cor. 15; I Thess. 4-5; and II Thess. 2) also become historically evident. Guessing, speculation, and dogmatism are all inappropriate. Apocalyptic literature allows this flexibility. Thank God for images and symbols that surpass historical narrative! God is in control; He reigns; He comes!

Most modern commentaries miss the point of the genre! Modern western interpreters often seek a clear, logical system of theology rather than being fair with an ambiguous, symbolic, dramatic genre of Jewish apocalyptic literature. This truth is expressed well by Ralph P. Martin in his article, "Approaches to New Testament Exegesis," in the book *New Testament Interpretation*, edited by I. Howard Marshall:

"Unless we recognize the dramatic quality of this writing and recall the way in which language is being used as a vehicle to express religious truth, we shall grievously err in our understanding of the Apocalypse, and mistakenly try to interpret its visions as though it were a book of literal prose and concerned to describe events of empirical and datable history. To attempt the latter course is to run into all manner of problems of interpretation. More seriously it leads to a distortion of the essential meaning of apocalyptic and so misses the great value of this part of the New Testament as a dramatic assertion in mythopoetic language of the sovereignty of God in Christ and the paradox of his rule which blends might and love (cf. 5:5,6; the Lion is the Lamb)" (p. 235).

W. Randolph Tate in his book *Biblical Interpretations* said:

"No other genre of the Bible has been so fervently read with such depressing results as apocalypse, especially the books of Daniel and Revelation. This genre had suffered from a disastrous history of misinterpretation due to a fundamental misunderstanding of its literary forms, structure, and purpose. Because of its very claim to reveal what is shortly to happen, apocalypse has been viewed as a road map into and a blueprint of the future. The tragic flaw in this view is the assumption that the books' frame of reference is the reader's contemporary age rather than the author's. This misguided approach to apocalypse (particularly Revelation) treats the work as if it were a cryptogram by which contemporary events can be used to interpret the symbol of the text. . .First, the interpreter must recognize that apocalyptic communicates its messages through symbolism. To interpret a symbol literally when it is metaphoric is simply to misinterpret. The issue is not whether the events in apocalyptic are historical. The events may be historical; they may have really happened, or might happen, but the author presents events and communicates meaning through images and archetypes" (p. 137).

From *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, edited by Ryken, Wilhost and Longman III:

"Today's readers are often puzzled and frustrated by this genre. The unexpected imagery and out-of-this-world experiences seem bizarre and out of sync with most of Scripture. Taking this literature at face value leaves many readers scrambling to determine 'what will happen when,' thus missing the intent of the apocalyptic message" (p. 35).

#### **FIFTH TENSION** (the Kingdom of God as present yet future)

The kingdom of God is present, yet future. This theological paradox becomes focused at the point of eschatology. If one expects a literal fulfillment of all OT prophecies to Israel then the Kingdom becomes mostly a restoration of Israel to a geographical locality and a theological pre-eminence! This would necessitate that the Church is secretly raptured out at chapter 5 and the remaining chapters relate to Israel (but note Rev. 22:16).

However, if the focus is on the kingdom being inaugurated by the promised OT Messiah, then it is present with Christ's first coming, and then the focus becomes the incarnation, life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Christ. The theological emphasis is on a current salvation. The kingdom has come, the OT is fulfilled in Christ's offer of salvation to all, not His millennial reign over some!

It is surely true that the Bible speaks of both of Christ's comings, but where is the emphasis to be placed? It seems to me that most OT prophecies focus on the first coming, the establishment of the Messianic kingdom (cf. Daniel 2). In many ways this is analogous to the eternal reign of God (cf. Daniel 7). In the OT the focus is on the eternal reign of God, yet the mechanism for that reign's manifestation is the ministry of the Messiah (cf. I Cor. 15:26-27). It is not a question of which is true; both are true, but where is the emphasis? It must be said that some interpreters become so focused on the millennial reign of the Messiah (cf. Revelation 20) that they have missed the biblical focus on the eternal reign of the Father. Christ's reign is a preliminary event. As the two comings of Christ were not obvious in the OT, neither is a temporal reign of the Messiah!

The key to Jesus' preaching and teaching is the kingdom of God. It is both present (in salvation and service), and future (in pervasiveness and power). Revelation, if it focuses on a Messianic millennial reign (cf. Revelation 20), is preliminary, not ultimate (cf. Revelation 21-22). It is not obvious from the OT that a temporal reign is necessary; as a matter of fact, the Messianic reign of Daniel 7 is eternal, not millennial.

#### **SIXTH TENSION** (imminent return of Christ vs. the delayed *Parousia*)

Most believers have been taught that Jesus is coming soon, suddenly, and unexpectedly (cf. Matt. 10:23; 24:27,34,44; Mark 9:1; 13:30; Rev. 1:1,3; 2:16; 3:11; 22:7,10,12,20). But every expectant generation of believers so far has been wrong! The soonness (immediacy) of Jesus' return is a powerful promised hope of every generation, but a reality to only one (and that one a persecuted one). Believers must live as if He were coming tomorrow, but plan and implement the Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:19-20) if He tarries.

Some passages in the Gospels (cf. Mark 13:10; Luke 17:22; 18:8) and I and II Thessalonians are based on a delayed Second Coming (*Parousia*). There are some historical events that must happen first:

1. world-wide evangelization (cf. Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10)
2. the revelation of "the man of Sin" (cf. Matt. 24:15; II Thess. 2; Rev. 13)
3. the great persecution (cf. Matt. 24:21,24; Rev. 13)

There is a purposeful ambiguity (cf. Matt. 24:42-51; Mark 13:32-36)! Live every day as if it were your last but plan and train for future ministry!

#### **CONSISTENCY AND BALANCE**

It must be said that the different schools of modern eschatological interpretation all contain half truths. They explain and interpret well some texts. The problem lies in consistency and balance. Often there is a set of presuppositions which use the biblical text to fill in the pre-set theological skeleton. The Bible does not reveal a logical, chronological, systematic eschatology. It is like a family album. The pictures are true, but not always in order, in context, in a logical sequence. Some of the pictures have fallen out of the album and later generations of family members do not know exactly how to put them back. The key to proper interpretation of Revelation is the intent of the original author as revealed in his choice of literary genre. Most interpreters try to carry their exegetical tools and procedures from other genres of the NT into their interpretations of Revelation. They focus on the OT instead of allowing the teachings of Jesus and Paul to set the theological structure and let Revelation act as illustrative.

I must admit that I approach this commentary on Revelation with some fear and trepidation, not because of the curse of Rev. 22:18-19, but because of the level of controversy the interpretation of this book has caused and continues to cause among God's people. I love God's revelation. It is true when all men are liars (cf. Rom. 3:4)! Please use this commentary as an attempt to be thought provoking and not definitive, as a sign post and not a road map, as a "what if," not a "thus says the Lord." I have come face to face with my own inadequacies, biases, and theological agenda. I have also seen those of other interpreters. It almost seems that people find in Revelation what they expect to find. The genre lends itself to abuse! However, it is in the Bible for a purpose. Its placement as the concluding "word" is not by accident. It has a message from God to His children of each and every generation. God wants us to understand! Let us join hands, not form camps; let us affirm what is clear and central, not all that may be, might be, could be true. God help us all!

▣ **"all the nations will stream to it"** This VERB (BDB 625, KB 676, *Qal* PERFECT) denotes an ever-flowing stream of water, like an artesian well. Here it is metaphorical of the unending flow of people to YHWH.

**2:3** Notice the request of the nations.

1. "come," BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. "let us go up to the mountain of the LORD," BDB 748, KB 828, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense

3. “That He may teach us concerning His ways,” BDB 434, KB 436, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
4. “that we may walk in His paths,” BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
5. “that the law (teachings) will go forth from Zion,” BDB 422, KB 425, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense

▣ **“His paths”** This term (BDB 73) is used several times in Isaiah (cf. 2:3; 3:12; 26:7,8; 30:11; 33:8; 40:14; 41:3) and prominently in Proverbs (cf. 1:19; 2:8,13,15,19,20; 3:6; 4:14,18; 5:6; 8:20; 9:15; 10:17; 12:28; 15:10,19,24; 17:23; 22:25). It metaphorically denoted a lifestyle faith that obeyed and walked in (cf. Exod. 16:4; Isa. 30:20; 42:24; Jer. 9:12; 26:4; 32:23; 44:10,23; Zech 7:12) God’s teachings. This metaphor for lifestyle, faithful living became the first title of the NT church, “The Way” (cf. John 14:6; Acts 9:2; 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22; 18:25-26).

▣ **“Zion”** Jerusalem (like Rome) was built on seven hills. Zion (BDB 851, meaning uncertain) was the hill on which the original Canaanite city of Jebus or Salem was built (cf. I Kgs. 8:1; II Chr. 5:2). As Jerusalem grew it became a way of referring to the whole city and temple (cf. v. 3, lines 6 and 7; Jer. 50:28; 51:10).

**2:4 “He will judge. . .render decisions”** These two VERBS (BDB 1047, KB 1622 and BDB 406, KB 410) describe the reasonings and decisions of a wise ruler. YHWH and His Messiah are the ultimate wise rulers!

▣ The Lord’s presence and teachings will cause the nations to abandon their attacks on God’s people (cf. Psalm 2; Ezekiel 38-39). They will pursue peace (cf. 9:6-7; 11:6-9; 57:19; Hos. 2:18; Zech. 9:10).

▣ **“swords into plowshares”** This is an idiom for peace. The opposite occurs in Joel 3:10.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:5-11**

<sup>5</sup>Come, house of Jacob, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.

<sup>6</sup>For You have abandoned Your people, the house of Jacob,  
Because they are filled with influences from the east,  
And *they are* soothsayers like the Philistines,  
And they strike *bargains* with the children of foreigners.

<sup>7</sup>Their land has also been filled with silver and gold  
And there is no end to their treasures;  
Their land has also been filled with horses  
And there is no end to their chariots.

<sup>8</sup>Their land has also been filled with idols;  
They worship the work of their hands,  
That which their fingers have made.

<sup>9</sup>So the *common* man has been humbled  
And the man *of importance* has been abased,  
But do not forgive them.

<sup>10</sup>Enter the rock and hide in the dust  
From the terror of the LORD and from the splendor of His majesty.

<sup>11</sup>The proud look of man will be abased

**And the loftiness of man will be humbled,  
And the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.**

**2:5** Notice the parallel between v. 3 (the nations) and v. 5 (the Israelites). Lifestyle faith is the evidence of a personal trusting relationship with God. Humans must know the truth, walk in the truth, and share it with others! The nations were to learn this from Israel, but they did not!

The “light of the LORD” is the true revelation (cf. 60:1-2,19-20). The worship of the lights of the night sky is false revelation. This verse may be a rejection of Babylonian astral worship (cf. v. 6). YHWH and His Messiah are the true light for the nations (cf. 9:2; 42:6; 49:6; 51:4; 53:11).

**2:6-9** These verses describe why YHWH abandoned (BDB 643, KB 695, *Qal* PERFECT) His own covenant people.

1. They are filled with influence from the east, v. 6.
2. They are soothsayers (BDB 778 II), like the Philistines, v. 6.
3. They strike bargains with the children of foreigners, v. 6.
4. They are wealthy and militarily strong (and trust in these things), v. 7 (notice the three-fold repetition of “filled,” BDB 567, KB 583, *Niphal* IMPERFECT in vv. 7 and 8).
5. They are idolatrous, v. 8 (cf. 17:8; 37:19; 40:19; 44:17).
6. They treat the common people with disdain, v. 9 (cf. vv. 11,17; it is possible that this verse is parallel to v. 8 and refers to idolatry, cf. NKJV).

What can the nations learn from people like this?!

Concerning #6 above (v. 9), the NASB and NKJV translate it as another in a series of descriptions of how the covenant people are acting, but NRSV and TEV translate it as a summary and the last line is a plea for YHWH, not to forgive them (Peshitta) or a statement by YHWH that He will not forgive them (LXX).

**2:6**

<b>NASB, NRSV</b>	<b>“from the east”</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>“eastern ways”</b>
<b>TEV, JPSOA</b>	<b>“from the East”</b>
<b>Peshitta</b>	<b>“olden days”</b>
<b>REB</b>	<b>“traders”</b>

The *UBS Hebrew OT Text Project* gives “from the east” or “from olden times” (both possible meanings of this NOUN, BDB 869) a “B” rating (some doubt). The NEB and REB add one consonant and make it “traders.” It seems to refer to religious influences from the east (i.e., Syria, Assyria, Babylon) which corrupted Israel’s faith.

▣ **“soothsayers”** If this was meant to be a strict parallelism with the line above, it is possible that a NOUN parallel to “soothsayer,” such as “diviners” (cf. Lev. 19:26; Deut. 18:9-12), has inadvertently dropped out of the MT. The MT is not the earliest or most original Hebrew text. It does have textual problems! However, remember that these kinds of problems do not affect major doctrines.

▣

<b>NASB</b>	<b>“they strike <i>bargains</i> with the children of foreigners”</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>“they are pleased with the children of foreigners”</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>“they clasp hands with foreigners”</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>“they follow foreign customs”</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>“is overrun with foreigners”</b>
<b>LXX</b>	<b>“many strange children were born to them”</b>



**Peshitta** “they reared many alien children”  
**REB** “the children of foreigners are everywhere”  
**JPSOA** “they abound in customs of the aliens”

The term “children” is not in the MT. The VERB (1) “they strike hands” (BDB 706 I, KB 765, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) or (2) “abound” (BDB 974, cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 1769) is ambiguous. It can refer to

1. a commercial transaction
2. a political alliance
3. a friendship
4. an affirmation of the customs of foreigners

Obviously in context the unique faith of Israel is being compromised!

**2:7** This description of Judean leadership is in direct contradiction to Deut. 17:16-17. Humans who have resources tend to trust in them (cf. 31:1), but v. 22 (cf. 31:3) shows the failure of trusting in physical or human resources!

**2:9 “man. . . man”** Verse 9 is a two-line, synonymous parallelism (cf. II Kgs. 7:10). The two most common terms for man/mankind are parallel.

1. *adam*, BDB 9, cf. Gen. 1:26; 6:1,5,6,7; 9:5,6
2. *ish*, BDB 35, Gen. 2:23; Num. 23:19



**NASB, NKJV,**  
**NRSV, TEV** “do not forgive them”  
**NJB, NIV** “do not raise them again”  
**LXX** “do not pardon them”  
**REB** (omits as gloss, cf. Dead Sea Scroll and JB footnote)

The VERB (BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense) means “to lift” or “to carry.” Here it has the sense of “carry away” (i.e., remove their sin). This may be an exclamation from Isaiah, himself.

**2:10-11** These two verses describe YHWH’s advice to these covenant violators (v. 10a).

1. enter the rock, BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (i.e., this relates to vv. 19-21, cf. Rev. 6:15-17)
2. hide in the dust, BDB 380, KB 377, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE

They are to hide from (v. 10b)

1. the terror of the Lord, cf. vv. 19,21
2. the splendor of His majesty (cf. vv. 11c, 19,21; II Thess. 1:9)

The result will be (v. 11, note parallel in v. 17)

1. the proud look of men will be abased, BDB 1050, KB 1631, *Qal* PERFECT (opposite of v. 9)
2. the loftiness of man will be humbled, BDB 1005, KB 1458, *Qal* PERFECT (opposite of v. 9, cf. 13:11; 23:9; II Cor. 10:5)
3. the Lord alone will be exalted in that day, BDB 960, KB 1305, *Niphal* PERFECT (note parallel in v. 17 and the phrase about the “terror” and “splendor” of YHWH in vv. 19c and 21b)

Some commentators think that v. 10 is encouraging the righteous to hide from YHWH’s coming judgment on the wicked (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 377), but in context (i.e., vv. 19-21) it refers to the covenant violators.

**2:11 “in that day”** This refers to the last days of v. 2a. It becomes a dominate theme in Amos. The theme in Isaiah is resumed in v. 12 (cf. 2:20; 3:17; 5:30; 28:5-6; Amos 2:16; 8:9; Hos. 2:18).

Conscious creation (humans and angels) will one day stand before its Creator and give account of the stewardship of the gift of life. YHWH is a moral, ethical God; creation is a moral, ethical creation. Humans do not break God's laws so much as break themselves on God's laws. The laws are for our protection in a fallen world, but humans see them as restrictions and loss of personal freedoms. One day every conscious creation, human and angel, will give an account before God!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:12-22**

**<sup>12</sup>For the LORD of hosts will have a day of reckoning**

**Against everyone who is proud and lofty**

**And against everyone who is lifted up,**

**That he may be abased.**

**<sup>13</sup>And *it will be* against all the cedars of Lebanon that are lofty and lifted up,**

**Against all the oaks of Bashan,**

**<sup>14</sup>Against all the lofty mountains,**

**Against all the hills that are lifted up,**

**<sup>15</sup>Against every high tower,**

**Against every fortified wall,**

**<sup>16</sup>Against all the ships of Tarshish**

**And against all the beautiful craft.**

**<sup>17</sup>The pride of man will be humbled**

**And the loftiness of men will be abased;**

**And the LORD alone will be exalted in that day,**

**<sup>18</sup>But the idols will completely vanish.**

**<sup>19</sup>*Men* will go into caves of the rocks**

**And into holes of the ground**

**Before the terror of the LORD**

**And the splendor of His majesty,**

**When He arises to make the earth tremble.**

**<sup>20</sup>In that day men will cast away to the moles and the bats**

**Their idols of silver and their idols of gold,**

**Which they made for themselves to worship,**

**<sup>21</sup>In order to go into the caverns of the rocks and the clefts of the cliffs**

**Before the terror of the LORD and the splendor of His majesty,**

**When He arises to make the earth tremble.**

**<sup>22</sup>Stop regarding man, whose breath *of life* is in his nostrils;**

**For why should he be esteemed?**

**2:12-13** Notice the recurrent use of terms denoting arrogant, prideful humans and nations.

1. "everyone who is proud" (BDB 144)
2. "and lofty" (BDB 926, KB 1202, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE (note the same form in vv. 13, 14), v. 12)
3. "everyone who is lifted up" (BDB 669, KB 724, *Niphal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE (note the same form in vv. 13,14), v. 12)
4. "all the cedars of Lebanon that are lofty and lifted up," v. 13 (metaphor for humans and nations)

**2:12 “For the LORD of hosts will have a day of reckoning”** This does not follow the Hebrew text. The MT has “For the day of the LORD of hosts” (cf. NKJV). The NASB translation is trying to link this back to 1:18.

**2:12-16** Note the repeated use of “against” (BDB 752).

1. against everyone who is proud and lofty, v. 12
2. against all that is lifted up, v. 12
3. against all the cedars of Lebanon that are lofty and lifted up, v. 13
4. against all the oaks of Bashan (who are also lofty and lifted up), v. 13
5. against all the lofty mountains, v. 14
6. against all the hills that are lifted up, v. 14
7. against every high tower, v. 15
8. against every fortified wall, v. 15
9. against all the ships of Tarshish, v. 16
10. against all beautiful craft, v. 16 (this word “craft” [BDB 967] appears only here and its meaning is uncertain; it seems to be parallel to “ships of Tarshish” in v. 16a)

The Lord opposes the proud (cf. vv. 11 and 17).

**2:13** Because of the allusion to idolatry with trees (1:29) and gardens (1:29-30) and that YHWH will burn them, one wonders if this mention of lofty trees reflects

1. the pride and arrogance of nations
2. the worship of idols connected with trees/wood

Because of the larger context (i.e., “against” series) the first option seems best. The problem of human pride is summarized in v. 17 (which may be the theme of the entire book).

**2:16 “all the ships of Tarshish”** See note at 23:1.

**2:17** This is parallel in thought to v. 11, which is the opposite of what evil leaders and wealthy socialites had done to the poor and humble in v. 9. Many see this verse as a summary theme of the entire book!

**2:18** Idolatry will cease completely (cf. 21:9) because the worship of them is “emptiness” (cf. 30:22; 31:7; 40:18-20; 44:9-20; 46:5-7)!

**2:19 “When He arises to make the earth tremble”** The first VERBAL “arise” (BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) can denote

1. appear on the scene, Exod. 1:8; Deut. 34:10; Jdgs. 5:7; II Kgs. 23:25
2. arise for action (from His throne), Num. 10:35; II Chr. 6:41; Job 31:14; Ps. 76:9; 132:8

The second VERBAL “tremble” (BDB 791, KB 888, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) describes physical creation as its creator approaches (cf. 13:13; 24:1,19,20; Ps. 18:7; 68:7-8; Hag. 2:6). YHWH can come for blessing or judgment. In this context it is for judgment!

**2:20-21** To clarify the first line of v. 10, humans will try to hide from God

1. in caves in the rocks (cf. v. 21)
2. in holes in the ground

They will try to get rid of their precious idols

1. cast away to moles (the meaning of the word is uncertain. LXX has “vanities”; REB has “dung-beetles”; JPSOA has “flying foxes” [a type of bat, therefore, parallel to the next line of poetry]. It seems to be related to the VERB “to dig” [BDB 343])

2. cast away to bats

These two verses have a series of INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTS.

1. to worship (lit. “bow down”), BDB 1005, KB 295, *Hishtaphel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT
2. to the moles (lit. “to dig”), BDB 343, KB 340, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT
3. to go into, BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT
4. arises, BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, same form as v. 19 (line 5)
5. tremble (lit. “to frighten,” BDB 791, KB 888, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, same as v. 19 (line 5))

In the IVP *Bible Background Commentary* “a Sumerian Hymn of Enheduanna to the goddess Inanna from the third millennium depicts gods fluttering away like bats to their caves from the goddess’s terrible presence” (p. 588). This means that it must remain a possibility that it is the idols themselves that were carried down by insects (beetles) or digging animals seeking refuge from the coming of YHWH because they could not move themselves.

**2:22** YHWH commands respect for human life (“cease,” BDB 292, KB 292, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) because it is contingent of God’s gift of life (“breath,” *ruah*). Mankind is transitory (cf. Ps. 144:3-4). This is a truth that atheistic humanism needs to hear!

# ISAIAH 3

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God Will Remove the Leaders	Judgment on Judah and Jerusalem	Anarchy in Jerusalem	Chaos in Jerusalem	Anarchy in Jerusalem
3:1-12 (1b-12)	3:1-9 (1-3) (4-5) (6-7) (8-9) 3:10-12 (10-12)	3:1-15 (1-5)  (6-8)  (9-12)	3:1-5  3:6 3:7 3:8-9  3:10-11  3:12a 3:12b	3:1-15 (1-15)
God Will Judge	Oppression and Luxury Condemned		The LORD Judges His People	
3:13-15 (13-15)	3:13-4:1 (13-15)	(13-15)	3:13-15	
Judah's Women Denounced		The Humiliation of Jerusalem's Women	A Warning to the Women of Jerusalem	The Women of Jerusalem
3:16-26 (16-17)  (24-26)	(16-17) (18-23) (24-26)	3:16-4:1 (16-17)  (24b-4:1)	3:16-17  3:18-23 3:24  3:25-4:1	3:16-17 (16-17) 3:18-23 3:24 (24)  Misery in Jerusalem 3:25-4:1 (25)

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:1-12

<sup>1</sup>For behold, the Lord GOD of hosts is going to remove from Jerusalem and Judah

Both supply and support, the whole supply of bread

And the whole supply of water;

<sup>2</sup>The mighty man and the warrior,

The judge and the prophet,

The diviner and the elder,

<sup>3</sup>The captain of fifty and the honorable man,

The counselor and the expert artisan,

And the skillful enchanter.

<sup>4</sup>And I will make mere lads their princes,

And capricious children will rule over them,

<sup>5</sup>And the people will be oppressed,

Each one by another, and each one by his neighbor;

The youth will storm against the elder

And the inferior against the honorable.

<sup>6</sup>When a man lays hold of his brother in his father's house, *saying*,

"You have a cloak, you shall be our ruler,

And these ruins will be under your charge,"

<sup>7</sup>He will protest on that day, saying,

"I will not be *your* healer,

For in my house there is neither bread nor cloak;

You should not appoint me ruler of the people."

<sup>8</sup>For Jerusalem has stumbled and Judah has fallen,

Because their speech and their actions are against the LORD,

To rebel against His glorious presence.

<sup>9</sup>The expression of their faces bears witness against them,

And they display their sin like Sodom;

They do not *even* conceal it.

**Woe to them!**

**For they have brought evil on themselves.**

**<sup>10</sup>Say to the righteous that *it will go well with them,***

**For they will eat the fruit of their actions.**

**<sup>11</sup>Woe to the wicked! *It will go badly with him,***

**For what he deserves will be done to him.**

**<sup>12</sup>O My people! Their oppressors are children,**

**And women rule over them.**

**O My people! Those who guide you lead *you* astray**

**And confuse the direction of your paths."**

**3:1** Chapter three continues the prophet's prediction of YHWH's judgment on Jerusalem and Judah.

▣ **"Lord GOD of hosts"** This title for Israel's Deity is used several times early in Isaiah (cf. 1:24; 3:1; 10:16,33; 19:4). See full note at 1:24 and Special Topic at 1:1.

▣ **"is going to remove"** This VERB (BDB 693, KB 747, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE) in the *Hiphil* stem means "remove" or "take away."

1. YHWH to remove Israel's sickness, Exod. 23:25; Deut. 7:15
2. Israel to remove the accursed things (i.e., Achan's sin), Josh 7:13
3. Israel to put away foreign gods, Jdgs. 10:16
4. Saul removes mediums and spiritists, I Sam. 28:3
5. individuals did not put away God's laws, II Sam. 22:23; Ps. 18:23

But notice here it is God who removes all of Judah's support, strength, and idolatrous leadership.

1. supply (lit. "staff," BDB 1044) of bread, v. 1
2. supply (lit. "staff") of water, v. 1
3. mighty men, v. 21
4. warriors, v. 2
5. judge, v. 2
6. prophet, v. 2, cf. 9:14-15; 28:7; 29:10
7. diviner, v. 2
8. elder, v. 2, cf. 9:14-16
9. captain of fifty, v. 3
10. honorable man, v. 3
11. counselor, v. 3
12. expert artisan, v. 3, cf. 40:20 (idol maker)
13. skillful enchanter, v. 3

Remember, judgment was YHWH, the loving parent, disciplining His children so that they might be strong, stable, happy, and a light to the nations. His personal attention to Judah was a sign of His love and concern. He loved them enough not to leave them in their sin!

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: JUDGE, JUDGMENT, AND JUSTICE (טפֿשׁ) IN ISAIAH**

This is a widely used term (BDB 1047) in the OT. NIDOTTE, vol. 4, p. 214, has characterized its distribution and significance.

1. Pentateuch, 13%, human judges
2. History books, 34%, human leaders

3. Wisdom Literature, 22%, divine activity
4. Prophets, 31%, mostly divine activity

Note the following chart.

<b>YHWH as Judge</b>	<b>Messiah as Judge</b>	<b>Israel's Ideal Judges</b>	<b>Israel's Actual Judges</b>
2:4	9:7	1:17,21,23	3:2
3:14	11:3,4	26:8	5:7
4:4	16:5	56:1	10:2
5:16	32:1	58:2,8	59:4,9,11,14,15
28:6,17,26	40:14		
30:18	42:1,3,4		
33:5,22	51:4,5		
61:8	53:8		
66:16			

Israel was to reflect YHWH's character to the nations. She failed, so YHWH raised one "ideal" Israelite to fulfill His personal revelation to the world (i.e., the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, cf. Isa. 52:11-53:12)!



<b>NASB</b>	<b>"Both supply and support"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"the stock and store"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"support and staff"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"everything and everyone that the people depend on"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"of resources and provisions"</b>
<b>LXX</b>	<b>"the mighty man and the mighty woman"</b>
<b>Peshitta</b>	<b>"stay and staff"</b>
<b>REB</b>	<b>"every prop and stay"</b>

The MT has MASCULINE and FEMININE forms of  $\text{קַשְׁטָוֹ}$ , which BDB defines as "support and staff" (cf. II Sam. 22:19). In Leviticus 26:26 it is "the staff of bread."

### 3:3

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"skillful enchanter"</b>
<b>NKJV, NRSV,</b>	
<b>REB</b>	<b>"expert enchanter"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"everyone who uses magic to control events"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"soothsayer"</b>
<b>LXX</b>	<b>"intelligent hearer"</b>
<b>Peshitta</b>	<b>"expert counselor"</b>

The NOUN (BDB 538) means "whispering" or "charming." It originally referred to snake charming (cf. Ps. 58:6; Eccl. 10:11; Jer. 8:17). It came to denote soft speaking (cf. 26:16; II Sam. 12:19; Ps. 41:8).

The same term is used in 3:20 for amulets worn by Judean women. It refers to magical practices and charms, forbidden to Israel and Judah.



**3:4** Judah's elder leadership will be removed (by YHWH Himself) even to the highest levels. Ineffective and senseless young people will lead (cf. Eccl. 10:16).



**NASB** "children"  
**NKJV, NRSV** "babes"  
**NJB** "lads"  
**LXX, Peshitta** "mockers"

The difference is between the MT עוללים (BDB 760, "wantonness," cf. Deut. 22:14,17; Ps. 141:4) and an emendation to עוללים (BDB 760, "children," cf. Ps. 8:2). Both seem to fit the context.

**3:5-6** The oppression and abuse are described.

1. oppressed by one another
2. oppressed by neighbors
3. generational tensions
4. societal tensions
5. family tensions

**3:7-12** The person the family chooses to lead will not accept the position because of the current crisis (Judah is wounded [1:6], only God can heal [30:26]) and the family's (i.e., Judah) rebellion against YHWH.

1. their speech is against YHWH, v. 8
2. their actions are against YHWH, v. 8
3. they rebel against His glorious presence, v. 8
4. their partiality shows on their faces, v. 9
5. their sin is displayed like Sodom's, v. 9
6. they have brought evil on themselves, v. 9
7. they reap what they sow, vv. 10-11
  - a. the righteous
  - b. the wicked
8. they are oppressed by youthful leaders (cf. V. 4), v. 12
9. they are ruled over by women, v. 12
10. their leaders lead them astray, v. 12
11. their paths (i.e., plans and goals) are confused, v. 12

These consequences of rebellion are a reflection of Deut. 28:15-68.

JPSOA puts vv. 10 and 11 in a parenthesis.

**3:8**

**NASB, NRSV** "His glorious presence"  
**NKJV** "the eyes of His glory"  
**TEV** "God himself"  
**NJB** "his glorious gaze"  
**LXX** "their glory"  
**Peshitta** "the majesty of his glory"  
**REB** "his glory"

The MT is followed closely by NKJV. The "eyes" represented God's personal presence. The term "glory" (*kabod*, BDB 458) is common, but has a wide semantic field.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY

The biblical concept of “glory” is difficult to define. Believers’ glory is that they understand the gospel and glory in God, not in themselves (cf. Jer. 9:23-24).

In the OT the most common Hebrew word for “glory” (*kbd*) was originally a commercial term relating to scales (“to be heavy”). That which was heavy was valuable or had intrinsic worth. Often the concept of brightness was added to the word to express God’s majesty (cf. Exod. 19:16-18; 24:17; Isa. 60:1-2). He alone is worthy and honorable. He is too brilliant for fallen mankind to behold (cf. Exod 33:17-23; Isa. 6:5). YHWH can only be truly known through Christ (cf. John 1:14,18; 12:45; 14:9; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3).

The term “glory” is somewhat ambiguous: (1) it may be parallel to “the righteousness of God”; (2) it may refer to the “holiness” or “perfection” of God; or (3) it could refer to the image of God in which mankind was created (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6), but which was later marred through rebellion (cf. Gen. 3:1-21). It is first used of YHWH’s presence with His people during the wilderness wandering period in Exod. 16:7,10; Lev. 9:23; and Num. 14:10.

**3:9 “The expression of their faces bears witness against them”** The Aramaic Targums have “their partiality in judgment (legal abuses and bribery) accuse them.” This may be a play on the eyes of the Lord mentioned in v. 8 versus the look of sinful Judeans in v. 9.

▣ **“They display their sin like Sodom”** Again, as in 1:10, Isaiah compares the sins of Judean society to the sins of Sodom (cf. Genesis 19). These Judean leaders (and their families) were flaunting publicly their pride, wealth, and exploitation of the weak and powerless of society.

Sodom was arrogant (Ezek. 16:50) and YHWH destroyed them, so too, now Judah (v. 16) and they also will be destroyed (vv. 16-26, the subject moves from prideful women to prideful Jerusalem).

▣ **“brought evil on themselves”** They reap what they sow (cf. vv. 10-11). This is a spiritual principle. God is ethical/moral and so is His creation. Humans break themselves on God’s standards. We reap what we sow. This is true for believers (but does not affect salvation) and unbelievers (cf. Job 34:11; Ps. 28:4; 62:12; Pro. 24:12; Eccl. 12:14; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; I Cor. 3:8; II Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:7-10; II Tim. 4:14; I Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12).

### 3:12

NASB, NKJV,  
NRSV

**“Their oppressors are children,  
And women rule over them”**

TEV

**“moneylenders oppress my people and their creditors cheat them”**

NJB

**“the oppressors pillage them, and extortioners rule over them”**

LXX

**“exacters strip you,  
and extortioners rule over you”**

Peshitta

**“The princes shall pluck my people out, and women shall rule over them”**

REB

**“Moneylenders strip my people bare,  
And usurers lord it over them”**

JPSOA

**“My people’s rulers are babes,  
It is governed by women”**

The MT has “my people, their oppressors, children and women rule over them.” Obviously TEV, NJB, and REB follow the LXX (change “women,” ׀ַשׁוֹנִים, BDB 61 to “creditors” [1] BDB 673 I, cf. 24:2, ACTIVE PARTICIPLE PLURAL of נָשָׂא, cf. 24:2 or [2] BDB 674 I, ACTIVE PARTICIPLE PLURAL of נָשָׂא, cf. Exod. 22:25).

These phrases could be

1. literal
  - a. child king
  - b. controlled by
    - (1) a strong “Queen mother”
    - (2) the child king’s wives
    - (3) the women at court
2. figurative of weak and inexperienced leadership



**NASB, NRSV** “confuse”  
**NKJV** “destroy”  
**NJB** “efface”  
**LXX** “pervert”  
**Peshitta** “disturbed”  
**REB** “to ruin”

The VERB (BDB 118, KB 134, *Piel* PERFECT) means “engulf” or “swallow up” (cf. Exod. 15:12; Num. 16:30,32,34; 26:10; Deut. 11:6). In the *Piel* stem it also denotes “shallowing,” but is also used as a metaphor for destruction or something being confounded (cf. 9:16; 19:3; 28:7).

Scholars are still discussing the possibility of one, two, or three Hebrew roots/cognates using these same three letters (עלע).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:13-15**

**<sup>13</sup>The LORD arises to contend,  
And stands to judge the people.  
<sup>14</sup>The LORD enters into judgment with the elders and princes of His people,  
"It is you who have devoured the vineyard;  
The plunder of the poor is in your houses.  
<sup>15</sup>What do you mean by crushing My people  
And grinding the face of the poor?"  
Declares the Lord GOD of hosts.**

**3:13-15** YHWH enters into a dispute (i.e., court scene, cf. 1:2) with His people’s leaders (elders and princes). They have destroyed His community (i.e., “vineyard,” v. 14). They have taken advantage of the poor, helpless, and powerless of society.

They used the legal system inappropriately (cf. v. 9) to their advantage, and must now stand before YHWH’s judgment.

The prophets hold Israel/Judah accountable to the requirements of the Mosaic covenant, obedience had consequences and disobedience had consequences!

**3:13**

**NASB, NKJV,**  
**TEV, NJB,**  
**LXX, Peshitta,**  
**REB** “people”  
**NRSV** “peoples”

The SINGULAR comes from the LXX followed by the Peshitta. The MT has the PLURAL. In this context the SINGULAR fits best because the prophet is addressing Judea (i.e., v. 14). In other contexts in

Isaiah “the nations,” “the peoples,” is used. Context, context, context! The MT is not inerrant! Context must be the final guide!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:16-26**

<sup>16</sup>Moreover, the LORD said, "Because the daughters of Zion are proud

And walk with heads held high and seductive eyes,

And go along with mincing steps

And tinkle the bangles on their feet,

<sup>17</sup>Therefore the LORD will afflict the scalp of the daughters of Zion with scabs,

And the LORD will make their foreheads bare."

<sup>18</sup>In that day the LORD will take away the beauty of *their* anklets, headbands, crescent ornaments, <sup>19</sup>dangling earrings, bracelets, veils, <sup>20</sup>headdresses, ankle chains, sashes, perfume boxes, amulets, <sup>21</sup>finger rings, nose rings, <sup>22</sup>festal robes, outer tunics, cloaks, money purses, <sup>23</sup>hand mirrors, undergarments, turbans and veils.

<sup>24</sup>Now it will come about that instead of sweet perfume there will be putrefaction;

Instead of a belt, a rope;

Instead of well-set hair, a plucked-out scalp;

Instead of fine clothes, a donning of sackcloth;

And branding instead of beauty.

<sup>25</sup>Your men will fall by the sword

And your mighty ones in battle.

<sup>26</sup>And her gates will lament and mourn,

And deserted she will sit on the ground.

**3:16-26** YHWH condemns the wives and daughters of the wealthy, elite leadership.

1. prideful walk (“head high” or “outstretched neck”)
2. seductive (i.e., painted eyes)
3. flirtatious steps (i.e., quick, small steps, like a child)
4. attractive, musical ankle jewelry

YHWH will (typical biblical reversal)

1. afflict the scalp with scabs (only here, BDB 705, KB 764)
2. strip away their jewelry
3. strip away their festive clothes
4. take away their cosmetics and perfumes
5. kill their husbands and lovers

The Jewish Study Bible, using the JPSOA translation and footnotes, mentions that many of the items in vv. 18-24 are uncertain. They may refer to specific items of beauty or idolatrous symbols. They were worn by men and women.

**3:16**

**NASB, NJB** “tinkle the bangles”

**NKJV, Peshitta** “making a jingling”

**NRSV** “tinkling”

**TEV** “bracelets on their ankles jingle”

The VERB (BDB 747, KB 824, *Piel* IMPERFECT) denotes the sound made by ankle bracelets as a person walks (i.e., to draw attention). The root is found only here and Pro. 7:22.

3:17

NASB, NJB,

REB

“make their foreheads bare”

NKJV

“uncover their secret parts”

NRSV, Peshitta

“lay bear their secret parts”

TEV

“shave their heads and leave them bald”

LXX

“expose their form”

The MT uses a rare word (BDB 834) meaning

1. sockets (for a door), 1 Kgs. 7:50
2. secret parts (feminine reproductive organs), Isa. 3:17 (?)

There is an Akkadian root (KB 983) which means “forehead,” which is also an option. These proud, well-dressed, wealthy exploiters will be humbled!

**3:18 “headbands”** The IVP *Biblical Background Commentary* says these refer to “sun ornaments.” So as the “crescent ornaments” reflect moon worship these represent sun worship.

▣ **“crescent ornaments”** This (BDB 962) was a symbol of moon worship.

1. on the military camels, Jdgs. 8:21
2. on Midianite kings, Jdgs. 8:26
3. on wealthy Judean women, Isa. 3:18

Another example of their open idolatry!

## SPECIAL TOPIC: MOON WORSHIP

Moon worship was the most widespread mythology of the Ancient Near East starting with Sumer (the first known civilization). There was both a male and female aspect to the myth. Originally the moon god came from the rape of the grain goddess, *Ninlil*, by *Enlil*, the sky god. *Enlil* was cast out of the pantheon and condemned to the underworld for his act, but when *Ninlil* found out she was with child she joined him. The child, *Sin* (or *Zin*), was allowed to climb into the sky each night.

The worship of the moon is designed by its different phases.

1. new moon – *Asimbabbar*
2. crescent moon – *Sin*
3. full moon – *Nanaa* (Sumerian “illumination” from *En-su*, “lord of wisdom”)

These names basically mean “wise lord” (i.e., *Suen*) or “illumination” (*Nanaa*), worshiped at Ur of the Chaldees. The city itself was often called the city of Nannar. The fertility pair were worshiped at ziggurats (large pyramids with flat tops) located in the city. The sun god (*Shamash*) was the firstborn of the couple and later *Ereshkigal* (the Queen of the Underworld) and *Nanna* (the Queen of Heaven/sky).

The cult was spread all across the ANE, but the major centers of worship were

1. Ur
2. Haran
3. Tema
4. Canaan
5. Mecca

Basically this mythology combined the fertility emphasis with astral worship.

The OT rejects astral worship (cf. Deut. 4:19; 17:3; II Kgs. 21:3,5; 23:5; Jer. 8:2; 19:13; Zeph. 1:5) and fertility worship (i.e., *Ba'al* and *Asherah*, Ugarit poems). The Hebrews, originally nomads, were very careful to resist moon worship because in general moon worship was characteristic of nomadic peoples who traveled at night, while the sun was much more generally worshiped by settled or agricultural peoples. Eventually nomads settled and then astral worship in general became the problem.

**3:20 “perfume boxes”** The term (BDB 108) translated “boxes” is literally “houses.” The Tyndale OT Commentaries, J. Alec Motyer thinks it may refer to a “high collar” (p. 58). There is so much that we moderns do not know about the details of ANE cultures that often our interpretations are educated guesses based on cognates and context. None of these details are crucial to an understanding of the larger concept and theological issues. The vast majority are interesting, but not important to understanding the central truth of the strophe or paragraph. Do not focus on the minutia.

**3:24 “Instead of a belt, a rope”** This seems to refer to prisoners being tied together and marched into exile by Assyria.



<b>NASB, NKJV</b>	<b>“and branding instead of beauty”</b>
<b>NRSV, TEV</b>	<b>“instead of beauty, shame”</b>
<b>NJB, REB</b>	<b>“brand marks instead of beauty”</b>
<b>Peshitta</b>	<b>“for their beauty shall be destroyed”</b>
<b>LXX</b>	<b>-----omitted-----</b>

The MT has “branding instead of beauty.” The term “branding” is from BDB 464 (burn, scorch, brand). The word “shame” in NRSV and TEV is not in the MT, but is found in the Isaiah scroll from the DSS (1QIsa.).

**3:26** Jerusalem (“her,” FEMININE, vv. 25,26) is personified as weeping over the losses. Zion’s festival clothing is restored in Isa. 61:3, also note Zech. 3:4 (only v. 22 and Zech. 3:4 share the same rare term for festival clothing).

# ISAIAH 4

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Remnant Prepared	The Renewal of Zion	Jerusalem's Restoration	Jerusalem Will Be Restored	Yahweh's Seedling
4:1				
4:2-6	4:2 (2) 4:3-6	4:2-6	4:2-6	4:2-6 (2-6)

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:1**

**<sup>1</sup>For seven women will take hold of one man in that day, saying, "We will eat our own bread and wear our own clothes, only let us be called by your name; take away our reproach!"**

**4:1-4** The JPSOA translation divides the text into two poetic sections and one prose.

1. verses 1b-3
2. verse 4
3. verses 5-6 as prose

Most other versions take 4:1 with chapter 3:16-4:1. They also do not structure these verses as poetry. The NKJV has v. 2 and NJB has vv. 2-6 as one long poetic context (JB had poetic division at vv. 2-3 and 4-6), but most of the others as prose. This should show us how difficult it is to know when a text is

elevated prose or poetry and also where the natural/subject breaks occur. Be careful of modern chapter and verse divisions! They are not an inspired guide!

**4:1** This verse seems to link with 3:6 (different VERBS, 3:6, BDB 1074 and 4:1, BDB 304, but both mean “to grasp firmly”). It may surely link to the Messianic age (i.e., 4:2, “Branch”). Hebrew poetry is difficult to “lock down.” It is often a play on words and similar actions.

▣ **“seven women”** Seven is the number for perfection in Jewish thought relating to Genesis 1. Therefore, this , like 3:25-26, refers to all inhabitants of Jerusalem/Judah.

▣ **“take hold”** This VERB (BDB 304, KB 302, *Hiphil* PERFECT) denotes someone taking a firm grip on another person or some object (i.e., Deut. 22:25; 25:11; I Sam. 15:27; II Sam. 1:11; I Kgs. 1:50; II Kgs. 2:12; 4:27; Pro. 7:13; 26:17; Zech. 8:23).

▣ **“let us be called by your name”** The name was a symbol of the person and his characteristics. The purpose of this action is revealed in the next phrase, “take away our reproach” (BDB 62, KB 74, *Qal* IMPERFECT). Who can do this?

1. the righteous of 3:10
2. the Messianic “Branch” of 4:2-6

▣ **“take away our reproach”** This NOUN (BDB 357) may refer to

1. a symbol of their sin and rebellion against YHWH
2. their widowhood with no children because all the men were killed in battle (NASB Study Bible, p. 965, NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 75)

Isaiah 54:4 fits both options because “widowhood” could refer to being divorced (i.e., legal metaphor) by YHWH.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:2-6**

**<sup>2</sup>In that day the Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth will be the pride and the adornment of the survivors of Israel. <sup>3</sup>It will come about that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy—everyone who is recorded for life in Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup>When the LORD has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and purged the bloodshed of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, <sup>5</sup>then the LORD will create over the whole area of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, even smoke, and the brightness of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory will be a canopy. <sup>6</sup>There will be a shelter to give shade from the heat by day, and refuge and protection from the storm and the rain.**

**4:2 “In that day”** This refers to a future time when YHWH comes (for blessing or judgment) to His people (cf. 2:2,11,12,20; 3:7,18; 4:1,2). This is a recurrent theme in Isaiah. It is hard to be certain if this referred in Isaiah’s mind to

1. restoration from exile by Zerubbabel and Joshua in the Persian period (i.e., Ezra and Nehemiah)
2. restoration by the Maccabees in the Selucid period
3. Jesus’ first coming (inauguration of the New Age)
4. Jesus’ second coming (consummation of the New Age)

Notice how the Prophet swings from radical, complete judgment to radical complete forgiveness and restoration! This is typical in the prophetic literature. One could not be presented without the other! The purpose of judgment is always restoration.



▣ **“the Branch of the LORD”** To describe this title (BDB 855, Targums interpreted it as the Messiah) let me quote from my commentary on Daniel and Zechariah where the term is also used (but just a note of caution, we must be careful about assigning a technical meaning everywhere a word or phrase is used—context, context, context is crucial). This term may have developed over time from a reference to ideal abundance to God’s special Servant who will restore that abundance (i.e., a shoot, a branch).

Let me share notes from my commentary on Zechariah.

**Zech. 3:8 “the Branch”** This may be “sprout” (BDB 855). This is another Messianic title (cf. 6:12; Isa. 4:2; 11:1; 53:2; Jer. 23:5; 33:15). See full discussion and Special Topic: Jesus the Nazarene at Dan. 4:15.

This title is used of Zerubbabel in 6:12 as a symbol of the royal Davidic line. It is surprising that it is used in this context, which emphasizes the priestly aspect of the Messiah. The twin aspects of redeemer (priestly, cf. Isaiah 53) and administrative leader (kingly, cf. Isa. 9:6-7) are merged in the book of Zechariah (cf. chapter 4).

**Zech. 6:12 “Branch”** This word (BDB 855) means “sprout” (cf. 3:8; 6:12; Isa. 4:2; 11:1; 53:2; Jer. 23:5; 33:15). This is a title for the Messiah. In Zechariah it refers to Zerubbabel as a type of the Messiah (cf. Ibn Ezra and Rashi). The name, Zerubbabel, in Akkadian, means “shoot of Babylon.” This was possibly a play on his name since he rebuilt the temple in 516 B.C., but it is really an ultimate reference to Jesus. This title and the matching VERB (“will branch out,” *Qal* IMPERFECT) appear together in this verse.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: JESUS THE NAZARENE

There are several different Greek terms that the NT uses to precisely designate which Jesus is being referenced.

### 1. NT Terms

- a. Nazareth - the city in Galilee (cf. Luke 1:26; 2:4,39,51; 4:16; Acts 10:38). This city is not mentioned in contemporary sources, but has been found in later inscriptions.

For Jesus to be from Nazareth was not a compliment (cf. John 1:46). The sign over Jesus’ cross, which included this place name, was a sign of Jewish contempt.

- b. *Nazarēnos* - seems to also refer to a geographical location (cf. Luke 4:34; 24:19).
- c. *Nazōraios* - may refer to a city, but could also be a play on the Hebrew Messianic term “Branch” (*netzer*, cf. Isa. 4:2; 11:1; 53:2; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12; in the NT Rev. 22:16). Luke uses this of Jesus in 18:37 and Acts 2:22; 3:6; 4:10; 6:14; 22:8; 24:5; 26:9.
- d. Related to #c., *nāzir*, which means consecrated one by means of a vow.

### 2. Historical usages outside the NT. This designation has other historical usages.

- a. It denoted a Jewish (pre-Christian) heretical group (Aramaic *nāsōrayyā*).
- b. It was used in Jewish circles to describe believers in Christ (cf. Acts 24:5,14; 28:22, *nosri*).
- c. It became the regular term to denote believers in the Syrian (Aramaic) churches. “Christian” was used in the Greek churches to denote believers.
- d. Sometime after the fall of Jerusalem, the Pharisees reorganized at Jamnia and instigated a formal separation between the synagogue and the church. An example of the type of

curse formulas against Christians is found in “the Eighteen Benedictions” from *Berakoth* 28b-29a, which calls the believers “Nazarenes.”

“May the Nazarenes and heretics disappear in a moment; they shall be erased from the book of life and not be written with the faithful.”

e. It was used by Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 126:1 who used Isaiah’s *netzer* of Jesus.

3. Author’s opinion

I am surprised by so many spellings of the term, although I know this is not unheard of in the OT as “Joshua” has several different spellings in Hebrew. Yet, because of

- a. the close association with the Messianic term “Branch”
- b. combined with the negative context
- c. little or no contemporary attestation to the city of Nazareth in Galilee
- d. it coming from the mouth of a demon in an eschatological sense (i.e., “Have you come to destroy us?”),

I remain uncertain as to its precise meaning.

For a full bibliography of studies of this word group by scholarship see Colin Brown (ed.), *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 2, p. 346, or Raymond E. Brown, *Birth*, pp. 209-213, 223-225.

▣ A description of YHWH’s “Branch” (NKJV, NRSV, JB)

1. beautiful, BDB 840, cf. Jer. 3:19 (often used of Promised Land in Dan. 8:9; 11:16,41)
2. glorious, BDB 458 means “abundance,” “honor,” and “glory” (“glory,” BDB 802, also in this verse)

These two terms are often used together (cf. 13:19; 28:1,4,5).

Some versions take this verse as a reference to plant growth in the period of restoration (LXX, Peshitta, TEV, NJB, REB, NET Bible). In a sense the Messiah and the age of restoration are lexically linked (first part of v. 2; second part fruitful Promised Land).

▣ “**the survivors of Israel**” Isaiah addresses them and describes them often (cf. 10:20; 37:31,32; see Special Topic at 1:9), but which group did he address? See opening comment on v. 2.

The Spirit is the true author of Scripture. In prophecy and apocalyptic passages often the human author did not fully realize the full extent of his own messages. I do think this means that these passages had multiple meanings (i.e., *Sensus Plenier*), but that progressive revelation clarified the intended meaning. Often the concept of multiple fulfillment is what links the full intent of the Spirit’s message (i.e., 7:14). However, proper hermeneutics must begin with “authorial intent” as the place to begin and evaluate an interpretation of any biblical text and any genre.

**4:3** This verse is probably what caused the Jews of Jeremiah’s day who were not exiled to view themselves as YHWH’s favored people, but Ezekiel shows this was not the case. YHWH would primarily deal with the returnees (cf. Ezra and Nehemiah).

▣ “**everyone who is recorded for life in Jerusalem**” There are two interpretive issues.

1. Is this referring to life in Jerusalem the capital of Judah or “new Jerusalem,” the symbol of the new age (cf. Revelation 21)? Is it historical or eschatological?
2. The book of life (see Special Topic following)

## SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TWO BOOKS OF GOD

A. In one sense the title of this Special Topic could describe

1. nature (i.e., creation, cf. Ps.19:1-6)
2. Scripture (cf. Ps. 19:7-14)

This is why I do not think that ultimately there should be a conflict between science and faith, all truth is God's truth. Please see my commentary on Genesis 1-11 online free at [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org)

B. There are two books mentioned in the Bible (cf. Dan. 7:10; Rev. 20:12)

1. The book that contains all the deeds of humans, both good and bad. In a sense it is a metaphor of God's memory and that one day all humans will give an account to their Creator of their stewardship of the gift of life.
  - a. Psalm 56:8; 139:16
  - b. Isaiah 65:6
  - c. Malachi 3:16
  - d. Rev. 20:12-13
2. The book that lists those who have a faith/repentant/obedient relationship with YHWH/Jesus. This is a metaphor of God's memory of those who are redeemed and heaven-bound.
  - a. Exodus 32:32-33
  - b. Psalm 69:28
  - c. Isaiah 4:3
  - d. Daniel 12:1
  - e. Philippians 4:3
  - f. Hebrew 12:23
  - g. Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12,15; 21:27
  - h. also mentioned in I Enoch 47:3; 81:1-2; 103:2; 108:3

These books represent God's faithfulness to His Word. For those who rebel and refuse, He remembers; for those who repent, believe, obey, serve, and persevere, He forgets (cf. Ps. 103:11-13; Isa. 1:18; 38:17; 43:25; 44:22; Micah 7:19). There is abundant assurance and confidence in God's unchanging, merciful, character, promises, and provisions. God is trustworthy!

**4:4** This verse has two metaphors for spiritual cleansing.

1. washing
  - a. wash away, BDB 934, KB 122, *Qal* PERFECT
  - b. purged (lit. "rinsed away"), BDB 188, KB 216, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT (had sacrificial connotation, cf. II Chr. 4:6; Ezek. 40:38)
2. fire
  - a. by a spirit of judgment, cf. 28:6
  - b. by a spirit of burning, cf. 1:31; 9:19 (see Special Topic: Fire at 1:31).

It is quite possible that "spirit" (*ruah*) should be understood as a violent, destructive wind of YHWH's judgment. Judah will be judged and cleansed of her willful rebellion.

▣ **“filth”** This is a strong term (BDB 844) which is used of sin.

1. Isaiah 28:8 of human vomit
2. Isaiah 36:12 of human feces (cf. Deut. 23:14; Ezek. 4:12)

▣ **“the daughters of Zion”** This is the metaphor used of Jerusalem in 3:16-26. It is parallel with “Jerusalem.”

▣ **“bloodshed”** This (BDB 196) is metaphorical for the premeditated taking of life. Here it probably refers to the exploitation of the poor and socially ostracized (i.e., “from her midst”).

**4:5** This is a historical allusion to YHWH’s personal presence and care during the Exodus and Wilderness Wandering Periods. It refers to the *Shekinah* cloud of glory (i.e., Exod. 13:21,22; 40:38; Num. 9:15-23; Ps. 78:14; 99:7; 105:39). He (or His angel) would personally lead His people again and provide for all their needs in abundance.

▣ **“the LORD will create”** This VERB (BDB 135, KB 153, *Qal* PERFECT) is used only of God’s creating (cf. Gen. 1:1).

▣ **“canopy”** The term (BDB 342 I) can refer to

1. a protective covering like the *Shekinah* cloud (over the whole of the people, like the Exodus and Wilderness Wanderings)
2. a covering for a wedding (cf. Ps. 19:5; Joel 2:16)

Some link this wedding metaphor to the desperate women of 4:1, while other commentators link it to the Tabernacle and a future restored Temple in Jerusalem, which would denote the union of YHWH/Messiah and His people in a marriage metaphor (cf. 5:1; Hosea 1-3; Eph. 5:22-33).

**4:6** There are several metaphors combined to show YHWH’s protection (from heat and storm)

1. shelter, BDB 697, cf. 1:8; Ps. 27:5; 31:20; same concept in 32:2
2. refuge, BDB 340
  - a. NOUN, Isa. 25:4
  - b. VERB, Isa. 14:32; 57:13
  - c. in Psalms, 14:6; 46:1; 61:4; 62:7,8; 71:7; 73:28; 91:2,9; 94:22; 142:5
3. from other texts in Isaiah, a “defense,” BDB 731, cf. 17:10; 27:5

Often these metaphors refer to YHWH as

1. a protective mother bird (i.e., under the shelter of its wings)
2. a high fortress or stronghold (cf. Ps. 18:2)

Believers can trust the protection and tender care of their covenant God! He is with us and for us, if we only repent, believe, obey, serve, and persevere. The covenant has promises (benefits) and responsibilities (obligations). Both have consequences!

# ISAIAH 5

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Parable of the Vineyard	God's Disappointing Vineyard	Song of the Vineyard	The Song of the Vineyard	The Song of the Vineyard
5:1-2 (1-2)	5:1-7 (1b-2)	5:1-2 (1-2)	5:1-2 (1-2)	5:1-4 (1-4)
5:3-6 (3-6)	(3-6)	5:3-4 (3-4)	5:3-4	
		5:5-6 (5-6)	5:5-6	5:5-7 (5-7)
5:7 (7)	(7)	5:7-10 (7-10)	5:7 (7)	
Woes for the Wicked	Impending Judgment on Excesses		The Evil That People Do	Curses
5:8-12 (8-12)	5:8-10 (8-10)		5:8-10	5:8-10 (8-10)
	5:11-12 (11-12)	5:11-13 (11-13)	5:11-14	5:11-14 (11-14)
5:13-17 (13-17)	5:13-17 (13-17)	5:14-17 (14-17)		
			5:15-17	5:15-17 (15-17)
5:18-23 (18-23)	5:18-19 (18-19)	5:18-24 (18-24)	5:18-19	5:18-19 (18-19)
	5:20 (20)		5:20	5:20 (20)
	5:21 (21)		5:21	5:21 (21)
	5:22-23 (22-23)		5:22-25	5:22-24 (22-24)
5:24-25 (24-25)	5:24-25a (24-25a)			Yahweh's Anger
	5:25b (25b)	5:25-30 (25-30)		5:25 (25)
				Yahweh Summons the Invaders
5:26-30 (26-30)	5:26-30 (26-30)		5:26-29	5:26 (26)
				5:27 (27)
				5:28 (28)

	5:29 (29)
5:30	5:30 (30)

**READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)**  
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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

**BACKGROUND STUDY**

- A. It is difficult to know the historical context of this chapter. It may apply to any part of the preaching ministry of Isaiah. Moderns do not know how the prophetic books were compiled.
- B. Apparently this folk ballad was sung at some gathering of the nation of Judah. Whether it was in a temple or in the marketplace is uncertain.
- C. It is important to remember that privilege brings responsibility (Luke 12:48).
- D. Allusions to the folk song are found in several places in the NT (cf. Matt. 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19).
- E. It must be remembered that Judah, during most of Isaiah's prophetic ministry, was an extremely successful and prosperous nation. This prosperity brought spiritual weakness and a dependency upon human resources instead of on God and His covenant promises and requirements.

## BRIEF OUTLINE

- A. The Parabolic Song, vv. 1-6
- B. The Ironical Interpretation, v. 7
- C. The Resultant Judgment of YHWH, vv. 8-30
  - 1. series of woes, vv. 8-23
  - 2. judgment, vv. 24-30
    - a. natural, v. 25
    - b. invader, vv. 26-30

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:1-2

<sup>1</sup>Let me sing now for my well-beloved  
A song of my beloved concerning His vineyard.  
My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill.  
<sup>2</sup>He dug it all around, removed its stones,  
And planted it with the choicest vine.  
And He built a tower in the middle of it  
And also hewed out a wine vat in it;  
Then He expected *it* to produce *good* grapes,  
But it produced *only* worthless ones.

**5:1 “Let me sing”** This introductory VERB (BDB 1010, KB 1479, *Qal* COHORTATIVE) is also used in 26:1 and 42:10. The NOUN also appears in v. 1. Often songs were used to mark events (cf. Exod. 15:1; Num. 21:17; Jdgs. 5:1; I Sam. 18:6).

Here the song is used to draw the attention of the passers-by, so that they would stop and listen.

▣ **“well-beloved. . .beloved”** These are two different Hebrew words. The first one (BDB 391) is usually used in poetry of a family member. The second one (BDB 1871) is used often in Song of Songs for the lover. Here it refers to a special friend for which the owner had special expectations. This would have resonated well with Judah’s agricultural society.

▣ **“vineyard”** The grapevine (or vineyard) was a symbol of national Israel (i.e., Exod. 15:17; Ps. 80:8; Jer. 2:21; 12:10) as were the olive tree and the dove. Judah was seen by the prophets as the only true “people of God.”

▣ **“fertile hill”** “Hill” is literally the word “horn” (BDB 901) used in the sense of an isolated hill positioned just right to receive the sunlight and sloped just right for the rain to drain. The perfect “hill,” perfectly prepared to be planted with the “best” grapevines, for the best harvest!

The ADJECTIVE “fertile” is literally “son of oil” or “son of fat” (BDB 1032), which is a metaphor for fertility and abundance (cf. 28:1,4).

**5:2** There is a play on the VERB (BDB 793, KB 889) in vv. 2-5, used seven times. It is translated

- 1. yield, v. 2 (twice)
- 2. do, v. 4 (twice), what God will do for His vineyard
- 3. yield, v. 4 (twice)

4. do, v. 5, what God will do to His rebellious, ungrateful vineyard
5. also note the VERB'S use in v. 10, "yield" (twice)

▣ **"He dug it all around, removed its stones"** This first VERB (BDB 740, KB 810, *Piel* IMPERFECT) is found only here in the OT. The KJV has "fenced." Although I do not believe this is an accurate translation of the Hebrew word, it does fit the context. When stones were dug out of a rocky field in Palestine, they were usually stacked into a fence. Often the vineyards were protected by a ditch (also possible meaning of first VERB) with a stone hedge (LXX, Peshitta, Vulgate). It is surely possible that Isaiah is describing terracing techniques. The stones would be used to level parts of the field.

It is also possible that the stones were put in piles and used to keep the grape clusters off the ground (James Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, pp. 360-363).

▣ **"the choicest vine"** This refers to the bright red grapes known as "sorek" (BDB 977 I, cf. Jer. 2:21). These grapes got their name from a valley in Palestine (cf. Jdgs. 16:4). They are mentioned in Jer. 2:21 as being the most expensive and sought after variety of grapes. This grapevine species is even mentioned in a Messianic passage (cf. Gen. 49:11).

▣ **"tower"** This (BDB 153, "watchtower" built from stones dug out of the field) was for security purposes and was usually occupied only during the planting time and the harvest time in September (it would serve the same purpose as the word "booth" mentioned in 1:8). This same word can refer to a military tower (cf. Isa. 2:15). Context, context, context!

▣ **"hewed out a wine vat"** This would have been a shallow man-made depression in a rock surface which allowed the women to crush the grapes with their feet and then a channel in the rock to a deeper depression where the juice would be stored.

▣  
 NASB "worthless one"  
 NKJV, NRSV,  
 NJB, REB "wild grapes"  
 TEV, JB "every grape was sour"  
 LXX "thorns"

- The Hebrew term (BDB 93) can refer to
1. stinking or noxious weeds, SINGULAR, cf. Job 31:40
  2. stinking things, worthless things, PLURAL

The basic root refers to the stink of

1. corpses, Isa. 34:3 (cf. 5:25); Joel 2:20; Amos 4:10
2. locusts, Joel 2:20 (metaphor for dead army)

The MT in this context refers to "wild grapes," which were not sweet and plump, but small and sour, unfit to make wine.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:3-6**

**<sup>3</sup>And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah,  
 Judge between Me and My vineyard.**

**<sup>4</sup>What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it?**

**Why, when I expected *it* to produce *good* grapes did it produce worthless ones?**

**<sup>5</sup>So now let Me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard:**

**I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed;**



**I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground.**

**<sup>6</sup>I will lay it waste;**

**It will not be pruned or hoed,**

**But briars and thorns will come up.**

**I will also charge the clouds to rain no rain on it."**

**5:3** The prophet is bringing his audience into a decision-making process. This is the point of the genre of parable. They will judge themselves!

The VERB "judge" (BDB 1047, KB 1622) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE and is similar to Matt. 21:40.

**5:4** This question is the heart of the parable song. God did everything for His people, but they rejected Him.

**5:5-6** The prophet, speaking for YHWH, declares (BDB 393, KB 390, *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE) what He will do to His disappointing vineyard (i.e., Judah).

1. remove its hedge, consequently it will be consumed by animals
2. break down its protective wall, consequently the vines will be trampled to the ground
3. refuse to tend it, consequently the briars and thorns will come up (cf. 7:23,25; 9:18; 27:4)
4. refuse to send rain, consequently it will dry up and die (cf. Deut. 28:23-24)

**5:6 "I will lay it waste"** The VERB (BDB 1011, KB 1483) is a *Qal* IMPERFECT. YHWH will make His vineyard a "waste" (BDB 144). The term is found only here. It can mean "end" or "destruction." The judgment of YHWH is total and final (cf. v. 30)! Thank God for chapters 7-12! There will be a new day (chapters 40-55) and a new heaven and earth (chapters 56-66).

☐ **"I will also charge the clouds to rain no rain on it"** Nature has been, and continues to be, affected by mankind's sin (cf. Gen. 3:17-19 and Rom. 8:19-25). It is used by God for blessing or judgment (i.e., Lev. 26:4; Deut. 11:14; 28:12; Amos 4:7; Zech. 14:17).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:7**

**<sup>7</sup>For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel**

**And the men of Judah His delightful plant.**

**Thus He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed;**

**For righteousness, but behold, a cry of distress.**

**5:7 "the house of Israel"** This term normally seems to refer to all of the Jewish people collectively before the political split in 922 B.C., although in this verse the term refers to Judah. At this time in the history of the people of God, their nation was split into the northern ten tribes known as Israel, Ephraim, or Samaria and the southern three tribes known as Judah, which included Benjamin, Simeon, and most of the Levites/priests.

☐ **"justice. . .bloodshed. . .righteousness. . .a cry of distress"** This is a play on two different sounds in Hebrew that cannot be reproduced in an English translation: מִשְׁפָּט, Mishpat (justice) vs. מִשְׁפָּח, Mispach (bloodshed, BDB 705) and צְדָקָה, Zedakah (righteousness) vs. צַעַק, Zeakah (cry of distress). Another biblical reversal of expectations.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:8-12**

**<sup>8</sup>Woe to those who add house to house *and* join field to field,  
Until there is no more room,  
So that you have to live alone in the midst of the land!**

**<sup>9</sup>In my ears the LORD of hosts *has sworn*, "Surely, many houses shall become desolate,  
*Even* great and fine ones, without occupants.**

**<sup>10</sup>For ten acres of vineyard will yield *only* one bath *of wine*,  
And a homer of seed will yield *but* an ephah of grain."**

**<sup>11</sup>Woe to those who rise early in the morning that they may pursue strong drink,  
Who stay up late in the evening that wine may inflame them!**

**<sup>12</sup>Their banquets are *accompanied* by lyre and harp, by tambourine and flute, and by wine;  
But they do not pay attention to the deeds of the LORD,  
Nor do they consider the work of His hands.**

**5:8**

NASB, NKJV,

NJB, REB "Woe"

NRSV, JPSOA "Ah"

TEV "You are doomed"

There is some debate among commentators as to whether there are six or seven "woes" (BDB 222) listed. This is not literally the Hebrew term "woe" (BDB 17, which denotes a lament, cf. 3:9,11; 6:5; 24:16). This translation suggestion from BDB is "ah," "alas," or "ha" (cf. 1:4; 10:1,5; 17:12; 28:1). It expresses painful dissatisfaction with the current situation or consequences.

They begin the consequences of judgment on Judah because of their straying from God's covenant. They are basically a listing of the sins of the Judean society.

▣ **"to those who add house to house *and* join field to field"** This refers to the greedy land owners who exploited the poor by taking their ancestral lands (i.e., the land division by Joshua) to accumulate more and more land for themselves (cf. Jer. 22:13-17; Micah 2:2). The law of Moses protected the allotted lands by enacting "the Year of Jubilee" (cf. Lev. 25:8-55; Num. 36:4). All land must return to the original tribal family owners every fiftieth year. Although there is no record in the OT of Israel ever honoring this release, it was still the expressed will of God.

**5:9** The opening of v. 9 is very emphatic, with no VERB, literally "in my ears, the LORD of hosts." This is a clear claim of verbal divine revelation (cf. 22:14)! This is not Isaiah's message, nor Isaiah's emotion! YHWH is shouting through His prophet to His wayward people.

This judgment is similar to Amos 5:11 and Micah 6:15. The expectations of the rich and exploitive elements of society will not materialize. They will not enjoy their ill-gotten gain! We reap what we sow.

**5:10 "for ten acres of vineyard"** "Acres" is literally "a couple" or "a pair" (BDB 855, cf. I Sam. 14:14), which denoted animals yoked together for agricultural purposes. One "yoke" was the amount of land an oxen could plow in one day.

▣ **"will yield *only* one bath of wine"** The term "bath" (BDB 144 II) is a liquid measurement in Hebrew and it is equal to eight to ten gallons. In this context it is a metaphor for the fruitlessness of the usurped land.

**SPECIAL TOPIC: ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN WEIGHTS AND VOLUMES (METROLOGY)**

The weights and measurements used in commerce were crucial in ancient agricultural economy. The Bible urges the Jews to be fair in their dealings with one another (cf. Lev. 19:35-36; Deut. 25:13-16; Pro. 11:1; 16:11; 20:10). The real problem was not only honesty, but the non-standardized terms and systems used in Palestine. It seems that there were two sets of weights; a “light” and a “heavy” of each amount (see *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 4, p. 831). Also the decimal system (base of 10) of Egypt had been combined with the sexagesimal (base of 6) of Mesopotamia.

Many of the “sizes” and “amounts” used were based on human body parts, animal loads, and farmer’s containers, none of which were standardized. Therefore, the charts are only estimations and are tentative. The easiest way to show weights and measures is on a relational chart.

I. Volume terms used most often

A. Dry measures

1. Homer (BDB 330, possibly a “donkey-load,” BDB 331), e.g., Lev. 27:16; Hosea 3:2
2. Letekh (or letech, BDB 547, possibly alluded to in Hosea 3:2)
3. Ephah (BDB 35), e.g., Exod. 16:36; Lev. 19:36; Ezek. 45:10-11,13,24
4. Se’ah (BDB 684, e.g., Gen. 18:6; I Sam. 25:18; I Kgs. 18:32; II Kgs. 7:1,16,18
5. Omer (BDB 771 II, possibly “a sheaf” [a row of fallen grain], BDB 771 I), e.g., Exod. 16:16,22,36; Lev. 23:10-15
6. ‘Issaron (BDB 798, “a tenth part” of an ephah), e.g., Exod. 29:40; Lev. 14:21; Num. 15:4; 28:5,13
7. Qav (or Kab, BDB 866), cf. II Kgs. 6:25

B. Liquid Measures

1. Kor (BDB 499), e.g., Ezek. 45:14 (can be a dry measure also, cf. II Chr. 2:10; 27:5)
2. Bath (BDB 144 II, e.g., I Kgs. 7:26; II Chr. 2:10; 4:5; Isa. 5:10; Ezek. 45:10-11,14
3. Hin (BDB 228), e.g., Exod. 29:40; Lev. 19:36; Ezek. 45:24
4. Log (BDB 528), cf. Lev. 14:10,12,15,21,24

C. Chart (taken from Roland deVaux, *Ancient Israel*, vol. 1, p. 201 and *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 16, p. 379)

homer (dry) = kor (liquid or dry)							
ephah (dry) = bath (liquid)	10	1					
se’ah (dry)	30	3	1				
hin (liquid)	60	6	2	1			
omer/issaron (dry)	100	10	-	-	1		
qav/kab (dry)	180	18	6	3	-	1	
log (liquid)	720	72	24	12	-	4	1

II. Weight terms used most often

A. The three most common weights are the talent, the shekel, and the gerah.

1. The largest weight in the OT is the talent. From Exod. 38:25-26 we learn that one talent equals 3,000 shekels (i.e., “round weight,” BDB 503).
2. The term shekel (BDB 1053, “weight”) is used so often that it is assumed, but not stated in the text. There are several values of shekel mentioned in the OT.
  - a. “commercial standard” (NASB of Gen. 23:16)

- b. “the shekel of the sanctuary” (NASB of Exod. 30:13)
- c. “by the king’s weight” (NASB of II Sam. 14:26), also called “royal weight” in the Elephantine papyri.
- 3. The gerah (BDB 176 II) is valued at 20 per shekel (cf. Exod. 30:13; Lev. 27:25; Num. 3:47; 18:16; Ezek. 45:12). These ratios vary from Mesopotamia to Egypt. Israel followed the evaluation most common in Canaan (Ugarit).
- 4. The mina (BDB 584) is valued at either 50 or 60 shekels. This term is found mostly in later OT books (i.e., Ezek. 45:12; Ezra 2:69; Neh. 7:71-72). Ezekiel used the 60 to 1 ratio, while Canaan used the 50 to 1 ratio.
- 5. The beka (BDB 132, “half a shekel,” cf. Gen. 24:22) is used only twice in the OT (cf. Gen. 24:22; Exod. 38:26) and is valued at one-half a shekel. Its name means “to divide.”

B. Chart

1. Based on Pentateuch

talent	1				
mina	60	1			
shekel	3,000	50	1		
beka	6,000	100	2	1	
gerah	60,000	1,000	20	10	1

2. Based on Ezekiel

talent	1				
mina	60	1			
shekel	3,600	60	1		
beka	7,200	120	2	1	
gerah	72,000	1,200	20	10	1

☐ “**And a homer of seed will yield *but* an ephah of grain**” Again this is a striking metaphor for the fruitlessness of the usurped land. We learn from Ezek. 45:11 that there were ten ephahs in one homer; therefore, this is stating that if a farmer plants one hundred pounds, he will only harvest ten.

**5:11 “Woe to those who rise early in the morning that they may pursue strong drink”** The next sin mentioned is one of riotous pleasure-seeking from morning to evening. It needs to be stressed that the Bible does not condemn wine, but it does condemn the abuse of wine. This same metaphor of strong drink is used in Isaiah 28. Other poignant passages on this subject are found in Pro. 20:1 and 23:29-35. However, one must add the balance of Ps. 104:14-15. “Strong drink” (BDB 1016) is a Hebrew term describing the addition of intoxicating grain liquors to wine. See Special Topic: Alcohol and Alcoholism at 1:22.

**5:12 “Their banquets are *accompanied by*”** This is a way of speaking of the cultural entertainment of the day. It depicts a wealthy class given to worldly pleasures.

☐ “**But they do not pay attention to the deeds of the LORD,**

**Nor do they consider the work of His hands”** God’s covenant people’s refusal to hear and understand God’s will is a recurrent theme (cf. 1:2-3,10a; 5:12,13,24; 6:9-10; 30:9). God had given

them spiritual ears and eyes (cf. Deut. 29:4), but their collective blindness and deafness had caused God to remove the possibility of comprehension (cf. Isa. 6:9-10; 29:9-10).

The tragedy of these verses is that the Judeans of Isaiah's day were depending on their own resources and schemes instead of the provision of their Covenant God. One should compare v. 24d,e with Deut. 8:11-20.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:13-17**

**<sup>13</sup>Therefore My people go into exile for their lack of knowledge;**

**And their honorable men are famished,**

**And their multitude is parched with thirst.**

**<sup>14</sup>Therefore Sheol has enlarged its throat and opened its mouth without measure;**

**And Jerusalem's splendor, her multitude, her din of revelry and the jubilant within her, descend into it.**

**<sup>15</sup>So the common man will be humbled and the man of importance abased,**

**The eyes of the proud also will be abased.**

**<sup>16</sup>But the LORD of hosts will be exalted in judgment,**

**And the holy God will show Himself holy in righteousness.**

**<sup>17</sup>Then the lambs will graze as in their pasture,**

**And strangers will eat in the waste places of the wealthy.**

**5:13-17** Here is a list of what will happen to Judah's wealthy, exploitive citizens.

1. exiled, b. 13
2. famished, v. 13
3. parched, v. 13
4. swallowed by Sheol, v. 14
5. humbled, v. 15
6. abased, v. 15 (twice)
7. strangers eat of the fat of the wealthy, v. 17

**5:13 "Therefore My people go into exile for their lack of knowledge"** This is obviously a prediction of exile. There has been some speculation about whether it refers to the Assyrian exile (722 B.C.) of the northern ten tribes or the Babylonian exile of Judah (i.e., 605, 597, 586, 582 B.C.) of the southern three tribes. The immediate context seems to lend itself to either (this is so common in Isaiah, maybe purposeful). Assyria is mentioned specifically in Isa. 7:18 and 10:5ff. I think that 13:1-14:27 also refers to Assyria who destroyed the city of Babylon and Assyria's king took the title, "King of Babylon."

The mention of an exile out of the Promised Land was shocking. Canaan was promised to Abraham's seed. Now the covenant with the Patriarchs was being rescinded because of Judah's disobedience to the covenant requirements. They rejoiced in and clung to the promises, but ignored the requirements (cf. Jeremiah 7).

In a theological sense this parallels Genesis 2 (God's ideal fellowship with mankind) and Genesis 3 (Adam and Eve's open-eyed rebellion). Mankind was driven out of the Garden of Eden (cf. Gen. 3:24). This was unexpected and shocking! So too, the revelation of an exile. What was thought to be a permanent promise by God was affected by human sin. In a similar way "the New Covenant" of Jer. 31:31-34 and Ezek. 36:22-38 was a shocking revelation. The everlasting covenants were being superceded because of human inability to perform their part of the covenant. Therefore, a new relationship with God would need to be established based on

1. God's performance (new heart, new mind)

2. mankind's enabling by God's Spirit to be obedient  
 God still wants a righteous people to reflect His character to a lost and needy world (i.e., the nations). The means of that "righteousness" have changed. Human ability proved to be inadequate (cf. Galatians 3). The OT was a means of showing mankind's inability!

▣ **"for their lack of knowledge"** This is a willful rejection of knowledge, not ignorance (cf. Isa. 1:3; Hos. 4:6,14). Judah rebelled against the revealed will of God (i.e., the Mosaic Covenant). She left the clearly marked path!

**5:14 "Sheol has enlarged its throat and opened its mouth without measure"** "Sheol" is a Hebrew term (BDB 982) which refers to "the realm of the dead." Here it is personified as an animal with a ravenous appetite (cf. Pro. 1:12; 27:20; Hab. 2:5).

### SPECIAL TOPIC: WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

- I. Old Testament
  - A. All humans go to *Sheol* (etymology uncertain, BDB 1066), which is a way of referring to death or the grave, mostly in Wisdom Literature and Isaiah. In the OT it was a shadowy, conscious, but joyless existence (cf. Job 10:21-22; 38:17; Ps. 107:10,14).
  - B. *Sheol* characterized
    1. associated with God's judgment (fire), Deut. 32:22
    2. associated with punishment even before Judgment Day, Ps. 18:4-5
    3. associated with *Abaddon* (destruction), in which God is also present, Job 26:6; Ps. 139:8; Amos 9:2
    4. associated with "the Pit" (grave), Ps. 16:10; Isa. 14:15; Ezek. 31:15-17
    5. wicked descend alive into *Sheol*, Num. 16:30,33; Ps. 55:15
    6. personified often as an animal with a large mouth, Num. 16:30; Isa. 5:14; 14:9; Hab. 2:5
    7. people there called *Repha'im* (i.e. "spirits of the dead") Isa. 14:9-11
- II. New Testament
  - A. The Hebrew *Sheol* is translated by the Greek *Hades* (the unseen world)
  - B. *Hades* characterized
    1. refers to death, Matt. 16:18
    2. linked to death, Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13-14
    3. often analogous to the place of permanent punishment (*Gehenna*), Matt. 11:23 (OT quote); Luke 10:15; 16:23-24
    4. often analogous to the grave, Luke 16:23
  - C. Possibly divided (rabbis)
    1. righteous part called paradise (really another name for heaven, cf. II Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7), Luke 23:43
    2. wicked part called *Tartarus*, II Peter 2:4, where it is a holding place for evil angels (cf. Genesis 6; I Enoch)
  - D. *Gehenna*
    1. Reflects the OT phrase, "the valley of the sons of Hinnom," (south of Jerusalem). It was the place where the Phoenician fire god, *Molech* (BDB 574), was worshiped by child sacrifice (cf. II Kgs. 16:3; 21:6; II Chr. 28:3; 33:6), which was forbidden in Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5.

2. Jeremiah changed it from a place of pagan worship into a site of YHWH's judgment (cf. Jer. 7:32; 19:6-7). It became the place of fiery, eternal judgment in I Enoch 90:26-27 and Sib. 1:103.
3. The Jews of Jesus' day were so appalled by their ancestors' participation in pagan worship by child sacrifice, that they turned this area into the garbage dump for Jerusalem. Many of Jesus' metaphors for eternal judgment came from this landfill (fire, smoke, worms, stench, cf. Mark 9:44,46). The term *Gehenna* is used only by Jesus (except in James 3:6).
4. Jesus' usage of *Gehenna*
  - a. fire, Matt. 5:22; 18:9; Mark 9:43
  - b. permanent, Mark 9:48 (Matt. 25:46)
  - c. place of destruction (both soul and body), Matt. 10:28
  - d. paralleled to *Sheol*, Matt. 5:29-30; 18:9
  - e. characterizes the wicked as "son of hell," Matt. 23:15
  - f. result of judicial sentence, Matt. 23:33; Luke 12:5
  - g. the concept of *Gehenna* is parallel to the second death (cf. Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14) or the lake of fire (cf. Matt. 13:42,50; Rev. 19:20; 20:10,14-15; 21:8). It is possible the lake of fire becomes the permanent dwelling place of humans (from *Sheol*) and evil angels (from *Tartarus*, II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6 or the abyss, cf. Luke 8:31; Rev. 9:1-11; 20:1,3).
  - h. it was not designed for humans, but for Satan and his angels, Matt. 25:41
- E. It is possible, because of the overlap of *Sheol*, *Hades*, and *Gehenna* that
  1. originally all humans went to *Sheol/Hades*
  2. their experience there (good/bad) is exacerbated after Judgment Day, but the place of the wicked remains the same (this is why the KJV translated *hades* (grave) as *gehenna* (hell)).
  3. the only NT text to mention torment before Judgment is the parable of Luke 16:19-31 (Lazarus and the Rich Man). *Sheol* is also described as a place of punishment now (cf. Deut. 32:22; Ps. 18:1-5). However, one cannot establish a doctrine on a parable.

### III. Intermediate state between death and resurrection

- A. The NT does not teach the "immortality of the soul," which is one of several ancient views of the after life.
  1. human souls exist before their physical life
  2. human souls are eternal before and after physical death
  3. often the physical body is seen as a prison and death as release back to pre-existent state
- B. The NT hints at a disembodied state between death and resurrection
  1. Jesus speaks of a division between body and soul, Matt. 10:28
  2. Abraham may have a body now, Mark 12:26-27; Luke 16:23
  3. Moses and Elijah have a physical body at the transfiguration, Matthew 17
  4. Paul asserts that at the Second Coming the souls with Christ will get their new bodies first, I Thess. 4:13-18
  5. Paul asserts that believers get their new spiritual bodies on Resurrection Day, I Cor. 15:23,52

6. Paul asserts that believers do not go to *Hades*, but at death are with Jesus, II Cor. 5:6,8; Phil. 1:23. Jesus overcame death and took the righteous to heaven with Him, I Pet. 3:18-22.

#### IV. Heaven

- A. This term is used in three senses in the Bible.
1. the atmosphere above the earth, Gen. 1:1,8; Isa. 42:5; 45:18
  2. the starry heavens, Gen. 1:14; Deut. 10:14; Ps. 148:4; Heb. 4:14; 7:26
  3. the place of God's throne, Deut. 10:14; I Kgs. 8:27; Ps. 148:4; Eph. 4:10; Heb. 9:24 (third heaven, II Cor. 12:2)
- B. The Bible does not reveal much about the afterlife, probably because fallen humans have no way or capacity to understand (cf. I Cor. 2:9).
- C. Heaven is both a place (cf. John 14:2-3) and a person (cf. II Cor. 5:6,8). Heaven may be a restored Garden of Eden (Genesis 1-2; Revelation 21-22). The earth will be cleansed and restored (cf. Acts 3:21; Rom. 8:21; II Pet. 3:10). The image of God (Gen. 1:26-27) is restored in Christ. Now the intimate fellowship of the Garden of Eden is possible again.

However, this may be metaphorical (heaven as a huge, cubed city of Rev. 21:9-27) and not literal. I Corinthians 15 describes the difference between the physical body and the spiritual body as the seed to the mature plant. Again, I Cor. 2:9 (a quote from Isa. 64:4 and 65:17) is a great promise and hope! I know that when we see Him we will be like Him (cf. I John 3:2).

#### V. Helpful resources

- A. William Hendriksen, *The Bible On the Life Hereafter*
- B. Maurice Rawlings, *Beyond Death's Door*

☐ **“And Jerusalem’s splendor, her multitude, her din of revelry, and the jubilant within her, descent into it”** This shows a total reversal of expectations!

**5:15 “So the common man will be humbled, and the man of importance abased”** This is referring to judgment on an entire society (cf. 2:9,12,17). There seems to be no contextual contrast between the Hebrew terms for man, which are *adam* (NASB, “common man”) and *Issah* (NASB, “man of importance”).

☐ **“The eyes of the proud will also be abased”** This is a recurrent theme throughout Scripture and is repeated in a slightly different way in vv. 20 and 21 through the metaphors of light and darkness.

**5:16 “But the LORD of hosts will be exalted in judgment”** The descendants of Abraham were chosen to reveal God. They were to reveal Him in their faithfulness resulting in a stable and abundant society or they will reveal Him in their waywardness resulting in God’s judgment. Believers are witnesses (cf. Matt. 5:13-16). The question is, what kind of witnesses are we?

☐ **“the holy God will show Himself holy in righteousness”** This is in a synonymous parallel relationship to the previous line of poetry. Hebrew poetry must be interpreted in light of its parallelism!

**5:17 “Then the lambs will graze as in their pasture,**

**And strangers will eat in the waste places of the wealthy”** There has been much discussion among commentators about the exact relationship of this verse to the preceding context. Some say



1. it refers to God's care for those remaining in the land
2. it refers to God's judgment of the wealthy landowners
3. it refers to the remaining Jewish remnant after the exile
4. it refers to Gentiles resettled in Judah's territory after the exile of her citizens

It seems to me that the immediate context of judgment must relate it to the destruction and judgment of the wealthy and the ruin of their illegally procured land. It is public land now!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:18-23**

**<sup>18</sup>Woe to those who drag iniquity with the cords of falsehood,  
And sin as if with cart ropes;**

**<sup>19</sup>Who say, "Let Him make speed, let Him hasten His work, that we may see *it*;  
And let the purpose of the Holy One of Israel draw near  
And come to pass, that we may know *it*!"**

**<sup>20</sup>Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil;  
Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness;  
Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!**

**<sup>21</sup>Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes  
And clever in their own sight!**

**<sup>22</sup>Woe to those who are heroes in drinking wine  
And valiant men in mixing strong drink,**

**<sup>23</sup>Who justify the wicked for a bribe,  
And take away the rights of the ones who are in the right!**

**5:18-23** Another strophe of “woes” on the wicked is enumerated because

1. v. 18, they lead evil around like an animal on a leash
2. v. 19, they demand YHWH to quickly fulfill His covenant promises (without regard for the covenant requirements)
3. v. 20, this may be related to v. 19. When God does not act the way they wanted, they called His acts evil, dark, and bitter
4. v. 21, they assume their own wisdom to be true and God's false (vv. 19-20)
5. v. 22, they are drunkards
6. v. 23, they use bribery to achieve their ends

These are manipulative egotists!

**5:18-19 “Woe to those who drag iniquity with the cords of falsehood,**

**And sin as if with cart ropes”** The Hebrew is uncertain. This seems to refer to a group of people whom I have designated as practical atheists. They admit God's existence theologically, but refuse to walk in this knowledge. They choose to live as if there were no God and even taunt His existence (cf. v. 19). They hold on to their sin at any cost! They are tied/bound to their self-centered lifestyles!

**5:19** There are several commands in this verse.

1. let Him make speed, BDB 554, KB 553, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. let Him hasten, BDB 301, KB 300, *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE
3. let the purpose of the Holy One of Israel draw near, BDB 897, KB 1132, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (“the Holy One of Israel” is a title for Deity so common in Isaiah; see note at 1:4)

4. come to pass, BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
5. that we may know it, BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* COHORTATIVE

This verse may relate contextually to v. 12! They really do not want to understand God's will and purpose because they are so set on their own will and purpose. The results of the fall (Genesis 3) continue!

The NASB Study Bible makes an interesting comment about #1 and #2 above.

“The Hebrew for the words ‘make speed’ and ‘hasten’ correspond to that of the first and third elements of the name ‘Maher-shalal-hash-baz’ (meaning ‘swift is the booty, speedy is the prey,’ see 8:1,3), he may have been responding to the sarcastic taunts of their sinners” (p. 967).

**5:20 “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil”** Many say that this refers to the judges of Israel. Although that fits vv. 18-23, it seems to me that this is a reference to the society as a whole, not limited to a group of judges. This is a poignant example of the tragedy of what happens when our light becomes darkness (cf. Matt. 6:22-23). The fall of Genesis 3 has affected the moral compass of the creatures made in the image and likeness of the God of Justice, Righteousness, and Fairness!

**5:21 “Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes,**

**And clever in their own sight”** This again refers to the sin of prideful arrogance (i.e., results of Genesis 3). Probably one of the most classical passages of this is Jer. 9:23-24. Real wisdom is in knowing and trusting God! Humans are smoke-blinded by self, sin, and their own importance (cf. Pro. 26:5,12,16; 28:11).

**5:22 “Woe to those who are heroes in drinking wine”** Isaiah is using sarcasm because the term “heroes” normally refers to “mighty men of war,” but in this context it refers to “drinking bouts” and not military exploits.

▣ **“mixing strong drink”** There has been some question as to what this (BDB 1016) refers.

1. mixing wine with water, 1:22, like the Greeks and Romans, but the Isaiah texts refer to bad wine, not normal drinking wine
2. old strong wine mixed with new wine
3. wine mixed with other distilled fruit or honey liquors, which made it more intoxicating (they did not have fermented drinks with high alcohol content, as are available today)

This is the NOUN form of the VERB “to become drunk.” Drunkenness is condemned often in Scripture (cf. 5:11,22; 28:7; 56:12; Pro. 20:1; 23:29-35; Micah 2:11). It is even used as a metaphor for the judgment of YHWH (cf. Ps. 75:8). See Special Topic at 1:22.

**5:23 “Who justify the wicked for a bribe”** This is the place in the strophe where commentators discuss the absence of a seventh woe. The interpretive question is whether there are seven woes (the perfect number) or six woes (the number of human imperfection).

Bribery was regularly condemned in Isa. 1:23; 10:1-2 (cf. Exod. 23:8; Deut. 10:17; 16:19; Pro. 17:23; Micah 3:11; 7:3).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:24-25**

**<sup>24</sup>Therefore, as a tongue of fire consumes stubble**

**And dry grass collapses into the flame,**

**So their root will become like rot and their blossom blow away as dust;**

**For they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts,**

**And despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.**

**<sup>25</sup>On this account the anger of the LORD has burned against His people,  
And He has stretched out His hand against them and struck them down.  
And the mountains quaked, and their corpses lay like refuse in the middle of the streets.  
For all this His anger is not spent,  
But His hand is still stretched out.**

**5:24** Fire is a metaphor for judgment and cleansing (i.e., chaff and stubble burn quickly and completely, cf. 33:11; 47:14; Joel 2:5; Matt. 3:10; 13:40). See Special Topic: Fire at 1:31.

▣ **“So their root will become like rot and their blossom blow away as dust”** This is a Hebrew metaphor for total destruction.

▣ **“For they have rejected the law of the LORD of hosts,  
And despised the word of the Holy One of Israel”** This is the reason for judgment. It was the willful, purposeful rejection of the Judean people of their covenant God (esp. v. 19). Notice the two titles for Deity. See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 1:1.

**5:25 “On this account the anger of the LORD has burned against His people”** Judgment will begin with the household of God. God’s anger is as biblical a theme as is His love! The anger is even accentuated in the presence of great light (cf. Luke 12:48).

▣ **“And the mountains quaked”** Many have assumed that this refers to the violent earthquake recorded in the days of Uzziah (cf. Amos 1:1; Zech. 14:5). However, it may well be hyperbole of a Theophany. Nature quakes at the coming of her Creator. This imagery is common in the OT (i.e., 64:3; Exod. 19:18; Jer. 4:24; Joel 2:10; Nah. 1:5).

▣ **“their corpses lay like refuse in the middle of the streets”** OT people were shocked by unburied bodies, rotting, exposed, or eaten by animals (i.e., Ezek. 39:4,17-20; Nahum 3:3). A proper burial affected one’s joy in the afterlife. It was a curse and horror to be unburied (cf. I Sam. 31:8-13).

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: BURIAL PRACTICES**

- I. Mesopotamia
  - A. Proper burial was very important to a happy afterlife.
  - B. An example of a Mesopotamian curse is, “May the earth not receive your corpses.”
- II. Old Testament
  - A. Proper burial was very important (cf. Eccl. 6:3).
  - B. It was done very quickly (cf. Sarah in Genesis 23 and Rachel in Gen. 35:19 and notice Deut. 21:23).
  - C. Improper burial was a sign of rejection and sin.
    - 1. Deuteronomy 28:26
    - 2. Isaiah 14:20
    - 3. Jeremiah 8:2; 22:19

- D. Burial was done if possible in family vaults in the home area.
- E. There was no embalming, like Egypt. Mankind came from dust and must return to dust (ex. Gen. 3:19; Ps. 103:14; 104:29).
- F. In rabbinical Judaism it was difficult to balance a proper respect and handling of the body with the concept of ceremonial defilement connected to dead bodies.

### III. New Testament

- A. Burial followed death quickly, usually within twenty-four hours. The Jews often watched the grave for three days, believing that the soul could return to the body within that time frame (cf. John 11:39).
- B. Burial involved the cleaning and wrapping of the body with spices (cf. John 11:44; 19:39-40).
- C. There were no distinctive Jewish or Christian burial procedures or items placed in the grave in first century Palestine.

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:26-30

- <sup>26</sup>**He will also lift up a standard to the distant nation,  
And will whistle for it from the ends of the earth;  
And behold, it will come with speed swiftly.**
- <sup>27</sup>**No one in it is weary or stumbles,  
None slumbers or sleeps;  
Nor is the belt at its waist undone,  
Nor its sandal strap broken.**
- <sup>28</sup>**Its arrows are sharp and all its bows are bent;  
The hoofs of its horses seem like flint and its *chariot* wheels like a whirlwind.**
- <sup>29</sup>**Its roaring is like a lioness, and it roars like young lions;  
It growls as it seizes the prey  
And carries *it* off with no one to deliver *it*.**
- <sup>30</sup>**And it will growl over it in that day like the roaring of the sea.  
If one looks to the land, behold, there is darkness *and* distress;  
Even the light is darkened by its clouds.**

**5:26 “He will also lift up a standard to the distant nations”** A “standard” (BDB 651) was a way for armies to communicate (cf. 11:12; 18:3; 30:17; 31:9; 49:22). It can be positive (restoration) or negative (invasion) depending on the context. In this context it signals the invaders to come!

This is an extremely significant passage for the following reasons: (1) notice that God is in control of history, all history, as well as nature; (2) notice that God lifts up a standard to the Gentile nations. Many have seen this verse as an allusion to Deut. 28:49-57.

Within the book of Isaiah it seems to be a reference to the inclusion of the Gentiles (cf. Isa. 2:2-4; 11:9,10,11; 27:13; 49:22; 56:7; 62:10; 66:19)!

The term “nations” in the Masoretic text is PLURAL, *goyim*. Most modern translations change it to SINGULAR, however, the PLURAL possibly refers to an invading mercenary army made up of many nations. Assyria and Babylon conscripted the soldiers of defeated armies into their ranks.

▣ **“will whistle for it”** This is a metaphor for YHWH calling Gentile nations into conflict with His own sinful people (cf. 7:18).

The same root (BDB 1056) also means “kiss” as a sign of disgust, amazement, or derision.

▣ **“from the ends of the earth”** This is a hyperbolic phrase. It denotes a nation out of the local sphere of regular trade and politic. It reflects the covenant curse of Deut. 28:49.

**5:27-30** This strophe describes the invincible invading army. The shock of this description is that it follows the very terms used to describe faithful Israel in Isa. 40:29-31. God is against His own covenant people! He will fight on behalf of the invading pagan enemy (cf. Habakkuk 1-2).

**5:28 “like a whirlwind”** The term (BDB 693) describes a destructive storm.

1. literally, Isa. 17:13; 21:1; Job 21:18; 37:9; Ps. 83:15
2. metaphor, Isa. 29:6; Jer. 4:12-13
  - a. of YHWH’s chariot, Isa. 66:15; Jer. 4:13
  - b. the invaders YHWH sends, Isa. 5:28

**5:29 “no one to deliver it”** This PARTICIPLE (BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE ) means “to snatch away” or “deliver” (cf. 42:22; 43:13; 47:14; Hos. 5:14; Micah 5:8). YHWH’s actions are sure. No one or no thing can thwart His will (i.e., judgment or salvation).

**5:30b,c** The land of the light of YHWH has become the land of darkness and gloom. The pagan army revels over its divinely appointed victory! What a reversal of expectations!!!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did Isaiah choose this method (folk song) of presenting truth?
2. What is the difference between active, temporal judgment and passive temporal judgment? (cf. Romans 1:24, 28)
3. What is the central truth of this parable song? How does it apply to our day?
4. List the sins alluded to in vv. 8-23.
5. What nation do vv. 26ff refer to and why?

# ISAIAH 6

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Isaiah's Vision	Isaiah Called to Be a Prophet	The Call of Isaiah	God Calls Isaiah to Be a Prophet	The Call of Isaiah
6:1-5 (3b)	6:1-5 (3b)	6:1-5 (3b)	6:1-3 (3b)	6:1-3 (3b)
(5b)	(5b)		6:4	6:4-5
6:6-7	6:6-7 (7b)	6:6-13	6:5	(5b)
			6:6-7	6:6-10 (7b)
Isaiah's Commission				
6:8-13	6:8		6:8a	
	(8b)		6:8b (8b)	(8b)
(9b-10)	6:9-10 (9b) (10)	(9b-13)	6:9-10	(9b-10)
(11b-13)	6:11-13 (11b-13)		6:11a	6:11-13
			6:11b-13a	
			6:13b	

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. There has always been a question about why Isaiah's call to ministry occurs in chapter 6 and not chapter 1.
1. The OT books are arranged in ways that moderns, especially westerners, do not understand. Often they are not chronological, which surprises modern western interpreters. They are thematic, but in word plays or parallelisms on a strophe level.
  2. It is surely possible that chapters 1-5 are a general introduction to the content of the entire book. Many, if not all, of the major themes are introduced.
    - a. the covenant people's sin
    - b. the consequences of disobedience
    - c. restoration through the special Coming One
    - d. a new day of righteousness
    - e. the universal reign of God in an idealistic setting (Eden restored)
- B. The Jewish Study Bible (p. 796) makes an interesting comment about the placement of chapter 6. The footnotes assert that chapter 6 is not the beginning of Isaiah's ministry, but a new assignment. In chapters 1-5 the prophet calls on Judah to repent, but after the revelation of 6:9-10, never again in all the prophecy (chapters 7-66) does he call on them to repent. Judgment is sure and unavoidable. There is hope in a new day, but it is a future hope only.
- C. As chapter 6 reveals the terrible and complete judgment of YHWH on the disobedient covenant people, chapter 12 reveals the new day of hope and restoration. Even the missionary mandate is renewed (cf. 12:4-5). This theological tension is characteristic of the prophet's message. They enforce the Mosaic covenant's
1. consequences for disobedience and
  2. promises for obedience.

## BRIEF OUTLINE

- A. Isaiah saw God as He is. vv. 1-4
- B. Isaiah saw himself as he was. v. 5
- C. Isaiah saw his society for what it was. v.5
- D. Isaiah was cleansed to serve. vv. 6-7
- E. Isaiah was ready to go. vv. 8-13

## WORD PHRASE STUDY

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:1-5**

**<sup>1</sup>In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. <sup>2</sup>Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. <sup>3</sup>And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His**

glory." <sup>4</sup>And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke.

<sup>5</sup>Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined!

Because I am a man of unclean lips,

And I live among a people of unclean lips;

For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

**6:1 "King Uzziah's"** Uzziah (792-740 B.C.) was one of the godly kings of Judah (cf. II Kgs. 15:3; II Chr. 26:4-5). It is possible that Isaiah and Uzziah were related ("iah" may have been a royal ending to names). Uzziah offered incense (which only Levitical priests could do) and was struck by God with leprosy (cf. II Kgs. 15:5; II Chr. 26:16-23).

Uzziah is called Azariah in II Kings 15 and Uzziah in II Chronicles 26. Uzziah ("my strength is YHWH") was a throne name or we learn from II Chr. 26:17 that the High Priest was also named Azariah, so to avoid confusion II Chronicles uses Uzziah. It was a dark day for Isaiah and Judah when he died in 740 B.C. Judah had become stable under his reign.

▣ **"I saw the Lord"** It was a common belief that to see God meant death (cf. Gen. 16:13; Exod. 33:20; I Kgs. 19:13; Isa. 6:5; John 1:18; 6:46; I Tim. 6:16). This was a very traumatic moment! Apparently, Isaiah saw God's throne and dress, but not His face (cf. John 12:41).

There are some OT texts that imply God can be seen.

1. Moses, Exod. 33:11; Num. 12:8; Deut. 34:10

2. Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders, Exod. 24:10-11

The question has to do with the results of a sinful person in the presence of a holy God. It is a question of intimate personal fellowship. Apparently sight is not the key, but a relationship initiated by God!

▣ **"the Lord"** This is translated from the Hebrew word *adonai* (BDB 10, see Special Topic at 1:1). Some ancient Hebrew Manuscripts have "YHWH."

▣ **"throne"** YHWH depicted as sitting on a throne is first found in the vision of the heavenly court of I Kgs. 22:19; Ps. 103:19; and later in Isa. 66:1. In Ezekiel 1 and 10 YHWH's throne is His portable throne chariot (i.e., away from the temple in Jerusalem).

This is ANE anthropomorphic language (cf. v. 5; Rev. 4:2,3; 20:11, see N. T. Wright, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*, pp. 172-182).

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: GOD DESCRIBED AS A HUMAN (ANTHROPOMORPHIC LANGUAGE)**

I. This type of language is very common in the OT (some examples)

A. Physical body parts

1. eyes – Gen. 1:4,31; 6:8; Exod. 33:17; Num. 14:14; Deut. 11:12; Zech. 4:10

2. hands – Exod. 15:17; Num. 11:23; Deut. 2:15

3. arm – Exod. 6:6; 15:16; Deut. 4:34; 5:15; 26:8

4. ears – Num. 11:18; I Sam. 8:21; II Kgs. 19:16; Ps. 5:1; 10:17; 18:6

5. face – Exod. 33:11; Num. 6:25; 12:8; Deut. 34:10

6. finger – Exod. 8:19; 31:18; Deut. 9:10; Ps. 8:3

7. voice – Gen. 3:8,10; Exod. 15:26; 19:19; Deut. 26:17; 27:10

8. feet – Exod. 24:10; Ezek. 43:7



9. human form – Exod. 24:9-11; Ps. 47; Isa. 6:1; Ezek. 1:26
10. the angel of the Lord - Gen. 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16; Exod. 3:4,13-21; 14:19; Jdgs. 2:1; 6:22-23; 13:3-22

B. Physical actions

1. speaking as the mechanism of creation - Gen. 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26
2. walking (i.e., sound of) in Eden – Gen. 3:8; Lev. 26:12; Deut. 23:14
3. closing the door of Noah’s ark – Gen. 7:16
4. smelling sacrifices – Gen. 8:21; Exod. 29:18,25; Lev. 26:31
5. coming down – Gen. 11:5; 18:21; Exod. 3:8; 19:11,18,20
6. burying Moses – Deut. 34:6

C. Human emotions (some examples)

1. regret/repent – Gen. 6:6,7; Exod. 32:14; Jdgs. 2:18; I Sam. 15:29,35; Amos 7:3,6
2. anger – Exod. 4:14; 15:7; Num. 11:10; 12:9; 22:22; 25:3,4; 32:10,13,14; Deut. 6:15; 7:4; 29:20
3. jealousy – Exod. 20:5; 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15; 32:16,21; Josh. 24:19
4. loath/abhor – Lev. 20:23; 26:30; Deut. 32:19

D. Family terms (some examples)

1. Father
  - a. of Israel – Exod. 4:22; Deut. 14:1; Isa. 1:2; 63:16; 64:8
  - b. of the king – II Sam. 7:11-16; Ps. 2:7
  - c. metaphors of fatherly action – Deut. 1:31; 8:5; Ps. 27:10; Pro. 3:12; Jer. 3:4,22; 31:20; Hosea 11:1-4; Mal. 3:17
2. Parent – Hosea 11:1-4
3. Mother – Ps. 27:10 (analogy to nursing mother); Isa. 49:15; 66:9-13
4. Young faithful lover – Hosea 1-3

II. Reasons for the use of this type of language

- A. It is a necessity for God to reveal Himself to human beings. The very pervasive concept of God as male is an anthropomorphism because God is spirit!
- B. God takes the most meaningful aspects of human life and uses them to reveal Himself to fallen humanity (father, mother, parent, lover).
- C. Though necessary, God does not want to be limited to any physical form (cf. Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5).
- D. The ultimate anthropomorphism is the incarnation of Jesus! God became physical, touchable (cf. I John 1:1-3). The message of God became the Word of God (cf. John 1:1-18).

▣ **“train of His robe”** Kingly robes were of very long length. Isaiah saw God as the people of his day expected Him to be. He was in the heavenly Temple (cf. Heb. 9:11,24; Revelation 5-6).

Many commentators have seen this long flowing robe as a way to hide the features of God’s face (as is the smoke of v. 4). It functioned as a covering, something like the *Shekinah* Cloud of Glory during the Wilderness Wandering Period.

**6:2 “Seraphim”** See Special Topic following.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: *SERAPHIM***

- A. This is the only mention of them in the Bible. It is possible that the “flying serpents” of 14:29; 30:6 (BDB 977 I plus BDB 733) are in mind. There is even a possibility the name comes from an Egyptian word “serref” (“guardian griffin).
- B. They seem to be a particular order of angels. Their name means “burning ones” (BDB 977 II). The word is from the root “to burn” (BDB 976).
- C. In Revelation 4:8, it seems that the Seraphim and the Cherubim are combined. “The Beasts” look like Cherubs which have two wings (Exod. 25:19) or four wings (Ezek. 1:6-14), but in Revelation they have six wings and occupy the place of Seraphim.

**6:2 “six wings”** It is interesting what their wings are used for.

1. to cover the eyes. God’s glory is overwhelming even to throne angels.
2. to cover the feet. Be careful of turning the details of a Theophany into literal objects or creatures. Often feet are euphemistic of the genitalia (cf. 7:20; Exod. 4:25; Jdgs. 3:24; Ruth 3:4,7,8,14; I Sam. 24:3), but here, because of Matt. 22:30, probably not. This may be a sign of humility in the presence of holiness (cf. Exod. 3:5).
3. to fly to do God’s bidding quickly (cf. v. 6)

**6:3 “Holy, Holy, Holy”** Holiness is a central theme in Isaiah.

1. **שׁוֹדֵק**, ADJECTIVE, BDB 872, “holy,” “sacred”
  - a. holiness of
    - (1) God, 5:16; 6:3 (thrice)
    - (2) His name, 57:15
    - (3) His abode, 57:15
    - (4) His Sabbath, 58:13
2. **שׁוֹדֵק**, VERB, BDB 872, “to be set apart,” “consecrated”
  - a. God’s character, 5:16; 29:23
  - b. God, 8:13; 65:5
  - c. God’s angels, 13:3
  - d. God’s name, 29:23
  - e. festival, 30:29
  - f. consecrated humans, 66:17
3. **שׁוֹדֵק**, NOUN, BDB 871, “apartness,” “sacredness”
  - a. holy seed, 6:13
  - b. holy mountain, 11:9; 27:13; 56:7; 57:13; 65:11,25; 66:20
  - c. set apart, 23:18
  - d. way of holiness, 35:8
  - e. sanctuary, 43:28; 62:9; 64:11
  - f. holy city, 48:2; 52:1
  - g. holy One, 49:7
  - h. holy arm, 52:10
  - i. Holy day, 58:13
  - j. holy people, 62:12
  - k. Holy Spirit, 63:10,11
  - l. God’s throne, 63:15
  - m. holy place, 63:18
  - n. holy cities, 64:10

The threefold repetition denotes a Hebrew SUPERLATIVE (cf. Jer. 7:4; Ezek. 21:27).

## SPECIAL TOPIC: HOLY

- I. Old Testament Usage
  - A. The etymology of the term (*kadosh*, BDB 872) is uncertain, possibly Canaanite. It is possible that part of the root (i.e., *kds*) means “to divide.” This is the source of the popular definition “separated (from Canaanite culture, cf. Deut. 7:6; 14:2,21; 26:19) for God’s use.”
  - B. It relates to cultic things, places, times, and persons. It is common in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers.
  - C. In the prophetic literature (esp. Isaiah and Hosea) the personal element previously present, but not emphasized, comes to the fore. It becomes a way of designating the essence of God (cf. Isa. 6:3). God is holy; His name representing His character is Holy; His people who are to reveal His character to a needy world are holy (if they obey the covenant in faith).
  - D. God’s mercy and love are inseparable from the theological concepts of covenants, justice, and essential character. Herein is the tension in God toward an unholy, fallen, rebellious humanity. There is a very interesting article on the relationship between God as “merciful” and God as “holy” in Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 112-113.
- II. The New Testament
  - A. The writers of the NT are Hebrew thinkers (except Luke), but influenced by Koine Greek (i.e., the Septuagint). It is the Greek translation of the OT that controls their vocabulary, not Classical Greek literature, thought, or religion.
  - B. Jesus is holy because He is of God and is God (cf. Luke 1:35; 4:34; Acts 3:14; 4:27,30). He is the Holy and Righteous One (cf. Acts 3:14; 22:14). Jesus is holy because He is sinless (cf. John 8:46; II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; I Pet. 1:19; 2:22; I John 3:5).
  - C. Because God is holy, His children are to be holy (cf. Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7,26; Matt. 5:48; I Pet. 1:16). Because Jesus is holy His followers are to be holy (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; II Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; I Thess. 3:13; 4:3; I Pet. 1:15). Christians are saved to serve in Christlikeness.

▣ **“LORD of hosts”** This literally is “Captain of armies of heaven.” See Special Topic at 1:9.

▣ **“the whole earth”** This is the implication of monotheism. God has always been the God of all humans (cf. Gen. 1:26,27; 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5,6; Num. 14:21; Ps. 2:8; 22:27-28; 59:13; 72:8,19; Isa. 45:21-22; 49:6; 52:10; Micah 5:4). Isaiah’s theology is universal (i.e., 12:5; 24:14-16; 42:10-12).

**6:4 “of him who called out”** This can refer to the voice of God (cf. v. 8) or, in context, the Seraphim (i.e., “Holy, Holy, Holy,” of v. 3).

▣ **“was filling with smoke”** The VERB (BDB 569, KB 583, *Niphal* IMPERFECT) is also used in Ezek. 10:4. It may reflect Num. 14:21; Ps. 72:19; and Hab. 2:14. This refers to either (1) a symbol of God’s judgment; (2) a reference to the *Shekinah* cloud, which symbolized but hid God’s presence (cf. Exod. 40:34; or (3) smoke from an incense altar so that God could not be seen.

**6:5 “Woe is me, for I am ruined”** This VERB (BDB 198 II, KB 225, *Niphal* PERFECT) denotes the destruction (i.e., silencing”) of someone or something.

1. of cities
  - a. of Moab, Isa. 15:1
  - b. of Philistia, Jer. 47:5
2. of people

- a. Israel, Hosea 4:6
- b. Jerusalem, Zeph. 1:11
- c. Edom, Obadiah v. 5
- 3. of kings
  - a. Israel, Hosea 10:7,15
  - b. Egypt, Ezek. 32:2
- 4. of humans under the metaphor of animals, Ps. 49:12,20
- 5. of Isaiah, because he saw YHWH, Isa. 6:5

The holiness of God informed Isaiah of his lack of righteousness accompanied by the biblical demanded response of judgment! Grace is key, but holiness is the goal (cf. Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7,26; Deut. 18:13; Matt. 5:48)! One cannot remain the same person after contact with God, yet this is exactly what His people did.

▣ **“unclean lips”** Human speech reflects the heart (cf. Matt. 15:18; Mark 7:20,23). This is reflected in Isa. 29:13 (Matt. 15:8-9) and Ezek. 33:30-32.

Isaiah is acknowledging his own sin (i.e., individual covenant responsibility, cf. Ezekiel 18 and 36) and the sin of his community (corporate responsibility). Both are true and have consequences and benefits! God’s people were to reflect YHWH’s character to the nations, but they had been corrupted by the nations. Perhaps the “pure in heart can see God” (cf. Matt. 5:8), but Isaiah knew he was not one of them, nor were the covenant people. This is “the” tension of “conditional covenants” and the hope for an “unconditional covenant” that will issue in a godly people (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38).

▣ **“my eyes have seen the King”** See note at v. 1.

▣ **“the King”** Judah’s kings represented YHWH who was the true king of the Covenant people (i.e., Exod. 15:18; Num. 23:21; Jdgs. 8:23; I Sam. 8:7; 12:12; I Kgs. 22:19; Jer. 46:18; 48:15; 51:57).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:6-13**

**<sup>6</sup>Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. <sup>7</sup>He touched my mouth *with it* and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven." <sup>8</sup>Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I. Send me!"**

**<sup>9</sup>He said, "Go, and tell this people:**

**'Keep on listening, but do not perceive;  
Keep on looking, but do not understand.'**

**<sup>10</sup>Render the hearts of this people insensitive,**

**Their ears dull,  
And their eyes dim,  
Otherwise they might see with their eyes,**

**Hear with their ears,  
Understand with their hearts,  
And return and be healed."**

**<sup>11</sup>Then I said, "Lord, how long?" And He answered,  
"Until cities are devastated *and* without inhabitant,**

**Houses are without people  
And the land is utterly desolate,**

**<sup>12</sup>The LORD has removed men far away,**

**And the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.**

**<sup>13</sup>Yet there will be a tenth portion in it,  
And it will again be *subject* to burning,  
Like a terebinth or an oak  
Whose stump remains when it is felled.  
The holy seed is its stump."**

**6:6** This verse is very detailed imagery. Isaiah was having a vision of the heavenly temple, the abode of Deity. It is always hard to know what is real and what is imagery! We see through a fog into the spiritual realm. We are not meant to develop a detailed understanding of heaven from texts like this. It is the general impression/truth that is crucial.

The amazing thing is that God has initiated revelation with fallen humanity. He reveals (1) Himself; (2) His plans; and (3) continuing, as well as future, rejection of His people (cf. 6:9-13). Judah refuses to hear and see, but Isaiah, who admits his sin, is cleansed and is available (cf. v. 8).

▣ **“the altar”** This (BDB 258) seems to refer to either (1) the incense altar before the veil or (2) altar of sacrifice in front of the Holy Place. It touching Isaiah’s mouth symbolized ritual, cultic cleansing.

**6:7 “touched my mouth”** This method of cleansing and commissioning is similar to Jer. 1:9 and Dan. 10:16. However, Ezekiel was told to eat a scroll (cf. Ezek. 2:8-10; 3:3), which is similar to Jer. 15:16 and Rev. 10:8-11. All of these are metaphors for internalizing the Word of God so as to speak it truly to others.

▣ **“your iniquity is taken away”** The VERB (BDB 693, KB 747, *Qal* PERFECT) means “to turn aside” or “take away.” Here it is parallel to “forgiven” (lit. “covered,” “atoned for,” BDB 497, KB 493, *Pual* IMPERFECT, cf. 22:14; 27:9; 28:18). Isaiah has been changed in his confrontation with YHWH. The past has been effectively dealt with and the future will be different. This is declared by the Seraphim, who speaks for YHWH! This is a tremendous passage on grace, much like Paul’s Damascus road encounter with the risen Christ (cf. Acts 9).

The mechanism for the full and complete forgiveness and atonement is not clearly stated in this text, but from 53:5-6 the key role of the Messiah, the Suffering Servant, and the concept of “vicarious, substitutionary atonement” is revealed (i.e., Gen. 3:15; Mark 10:45; Rom. 5:12-21; II Cor. 5:21).

**6:8 “who will go for Us”** The “us” implies plurality (there are several places in the OT where this plurality is seen (cf. “Us” in Gen. 1:26; 3:22; 11:7; “LORD...Lord” in Ps. 110), as does the PLURAL title *Elohim*, Gen. 1:1; 5:1. Philo and Eben Ezra say this is “the plural of majesty”; others claim it is “the heavenly council” (i.e., Rashi, cf. I Kgs. 22:19-23; Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6). It could refer to a foreshadowing of the concept of a Triune God.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY**

Notice the activity of all three Persons of the Trinity in unified contexts. The term “trinity,” first coined by Tertullian, is not a biblical word, but the concept is pervasive.

#### A. the Gospels

1. Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19 (and parallels)
2. John 14:26

B. Acts – Acts 2:32-33, 38-39

C. Paul

1. Rom. 1:4-5; 5:1,5; 8:1-4,8-10
2. I Cor. 2:8-10; 12:4-6
3. II Cor. 1:21; 13:14
4. Gal. 4:4-6
5. Eph. 1:3-14,17; 2:18; 3:14-17; 4:4-6
6. I Thess. 1:2-5
7. II Thess. 2:13
8. Titus 3:4-6

D. Peter – I Pet. 1:2

E. Jude – vv. 20-21

A plurality in God is hinted at in the OT.

A. Use of PLURALS for God

1. Name *Elohim* is PLURAL, but when used of God always has a SINGULAR VERB
2. “Us” in Genesis 1:26-27; 3:22; 11:7

B. The Angel of the Lord was a visible representative of Deity

1. Genesis 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16
2. Exodus 3:2,4; 13:21; 14:19
3. Judges 2:1; 6:22-23; 13:3-22
4. Zechariah 3:1-2

C. God and His Spirit are separate, Gen. 1:1-2; Ps. 104:30; Isa. 63:9-11; Ezek. 37:13-14

D. God (YHWH) and Messiah (*Adon*) are separate, Ps. 45:6-7; 110:1; Zech. 2:8-11; 10:9-12

E. The Messiah and the Spirit are separate, Zech. 12:10

F. All three are mentioned in Isa. 48:16; 61:1

The Deity of Jesus and the personality of the Spirit caused problems for the strict, monotheistic, early believers.

1. Tertullian – subordinated the Son to the Father
2. Origen – subordinated the divine essence of the Son and the Spirit
3. Arius – denied Deity to the Son and Spirit
4. Monarchianism – believed in a successive manifestation of the one God as Father, Son, then Spirit

The trinity is a historically developed formulation informed by the biblical material

1. the full Deity of Jesus, equal to the Father, and was affirmed in A.D. 325 by the Council of Nicea
2. the full personality and Deity of the Spirit equal to the Father and Son was affirmed by the Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381)
3. the doctrine of the trinity is fully expressed in Augustine’s work *De Trinitate*

There is truly mystery here. But the NT seems to affirm one divine essence with three eternal personal manifestations.

▣ **“Here am I”** This is a common Hebrew idiom for availability (cf. Gen. 22:1,7,11; 27:1; 31:11; 46:2; Exod. 3:4; I Sam. 3:4,5,6,8,16; 22:12; II Sam. 1:7).

▣ **“Send me”** The VERB “send” (BDB 1018, KB 1511) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE used as a prayer request. This is Isaiah’s response to YHWH’s question. It clearly reveals his availability.

One wonders how much this Hebrew concept of “divinely sent one” is typological of Jesus as “the sent one” in John’s Gospel and believers as His “sent ones” into the world (cf. John 17:18; 20:21). God is reaching out to His rebellious creation! I recently heard a line from a new Christian song that says “God sent His Son, He sends His children still.” Powerful words about God and about His people!

**6:9-10** As YHWH reveals His purpose for Isaiah’s ministry, He also reveals to Isaiah the response his message will have on Judah.

1. go, v. 9, BDB 229, KB , *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. tell, v. 9, BDB 55, KB , *Qal* PERFECT
3. keep listening, v. 9, *Qal* IMPERATIVE and *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE of BDB 1033, KB 1570
4. but do not perceive, v. 9, BDB 106, KB 122, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. 1:3; 5:21; 10:13; 29:14
5. keep looking, *Qal* IMPERATIVE and *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE of BDB 906, KB 1157
6. but do not understand, v. 9, BDB 393, KB 380, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
7. render the hearts of this people insensitive (lit. “fat”), v. 10, BDB 1031, KB 1566, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
8. their ears dull, v. 10, BDB 457, KB 455, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
9. and their eyes dim, v. 10, BDB 1044, KB 1612, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

These IMPERATIVES are followed by the consequences (three IMPERFECTS of previously used VERBS, “see,” “hear,” and “perceive”). God knows (either by His foreknowledge or His hardening of their already wayward hearts/minds) that they will not respond and be saved.

1. lest they repent, BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* PERFECT negated
2. lest they be healed, BDB 950, KB 1272, *Qal* PERFECT negated

Isaiah will preach and though some may respond, the vast majority of his people/his society will not (cf. Rom. 1:24,26,28; Eph. 4:19) or cannot respond (cf. 29:9,10; Deut. 29:4; Matt. 13:13; Rom. 11:8)! Isaiah is not an evangelist here, but a prophet of covenant disobedience/consequences (cf. Matt. 13:13; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10). His message of hope is for a future day, not his day!

**6:10 “dim”** This (BDB 1044, KB 1612) is literally “covered with secretions” (cf. 29:9; 32:3).

▣ **“repent”** In the OT this term (BDB 996, KB 1427) means “a change of action.” In the NT repentance means a “change of mind.” Both concepts are involved!

## SPECIAL TOPIC: REPENTANCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

This concept is crucial but difficult to define. Most of us have a definition which comes from our denominational affiliation. However, usually a “set” theological definition is imposed on several Hebrew (and Greek) words which do not specifically imply this “set” definition. It must be remembered that NT authors (except Luke) were Hebrew thinkers using Koine Greek terms, so the place to start is the Hebrew terms themselves, of which there are primarily two.

1. *nhm* (נחם, BDB 636, KB 688)
2. *swb* (שוב, BDB 996, KB 1427)

The first, *nhm*, which originally seems to have meant to draw a deep breath, is used in several senses.

- a. “rest” or “comfort” (e.g., Gen. 5:29; 24:67; 27:42; 37:35; 38:12; 50:22; often used in names, cf. II Kgs. 15:14; I Chr. 4:19; Neh. 1:1; 7:7; Nahum 1:1)

- b. “grieved” (e.g., Gen. 6:6,7)
- c. “changed mind” (e.g., Exod. 13:17; 32:12,14; Num. 23:19)
- d. “compassion” (e.g., Deut. 32:36)

Notice that all of these involve deep emotion! Here is the key: deep feelings that lead to action. This change of action is often directed at other persons, but also toward God. It is this change of attitude and action toward God that infuses this term with such theological significance. But here care must be exercised. God is said to “repent” (cf. Gen. 6:6,7; Exod. 32:14; Jdgs. 2:18; I Sam. 15:11,35; Ps. 106:45), but this does not result from sorrow over sin or error, but a literary way of showing God’s compassion and care (cf. Num. 23:19; I Sam. 15:29; Ps. 110:4; Jer. 4:27-28; Ezek.24:14). Due punishment for sin and rebellion is forgiven if the sinner truly turns away from his/her/their sin and turns to God.

This term has a wide semantical field. Context is crucial in determining its intended meaning.

The second term, *swb*, means “to turn” (turn from, turn back, turn to). If it is true that the two covenant requirements are “repentance” and “faith” (e.g., Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:4,15; 2:17; Luke 3:3,8; 5:32; 13:3,5; 15:7; 17:3), then *nhm* refers to the intense feelings of recognizing one’s sin and turning from it, while *swb* would refer to the turning from sin to the turning to God (one example of these two spiritual actions is Amos 4:6-11, “you have not returned to Me” [five times] and Amos 5:4,6,14, “seek Me. . .seek the LORD. . .seek good and not evil”).

The first great example of the power of repentance is David’s sin with Bathsheba (cf. II Samuel 12; Psalm 32, 51). There were continuing consequences for David, his family, and Israel, but David was restored to fellowship with God! Even wicked Manasseh can repent and be forgiven (cf. II Chr. 33:12-13).

Both of these terms are used in parallel in Ps. 90:13. There must be a recognition of sin and a purposeful, personal turning from it, as well as a desire to seek God and His righteousness (cf. Isa. 1:16-20). Repentance has a cognitive aspect, a personal aspect, and a moral aspect. All three are required, both to start a new relationship with God and to maintain the new relationship. The deep emotion of regret turns into an abiding devotion to God and for God!

**6:11 “how long”** This refers to the length of time God’s message will be rejected.

**6:12 “has removed men far away”** This refers to an exile, but whether Assyria taking the northern tribes or Babylon taking the southern tribes is uncertain (possibly purposeful ambiguity).

**6:13 “Yet there will be a tenth portion in it”** See Special Topic: The Remnant, Three Senses at 1:9. Also note (1) Isaiah’s son, Shear-jashub, 7:3, means “a remnant shall return” also (2) note the discussion at 10:20-22.

▣ **“it will be *subject to burning*”** Verse 13, lines b and c, could be understood in two ways.

1. literary context – God’s people in the metaphor of a great tree has been cut and burned, but there is life in the stump. A shoot will come forth (i.e., the Messiah or Messianic community, cf. 4:2; 11:1; 53:2; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12). But future problems remain (i.e., burning).
2. historically, culturally – the Canaanite fertility idols (i.e., *Asherah*) will be completely burned. God’s people will be freed from idolatry one day!

▣ **“Whose stump remains when it is felled”** Verse 13 has two words used only here in the OT, key words!



1. “felled,” BDB 1021 I, same root used of a gate in the temple (cf. I Chr. 26:16). The root’s basic meaning is “to throw,” “to cast,” or “to fling.”
2. “stump,” BDB 663, usually used of sacred stone pillars
  - a. by Patriarchs and Moses
  - b. by Canaanite fertility worshipers (i.e., *Ba'al*)

▣ **“The holy seed is its stump”** This, like 4:2, has Messianic connotations. See note at Isa. 11:1. This phrase is left out of the LXX.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did Uzziah’s death affect Isaiah so deeply?
2. Who did Isaiah see?
3. Why was Isaiah’s message rejected?
4. How does Isaiah’s day compare to our own?

# ISAIAH 7

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
War Against Jerusalem	Isaiah Sent to King Ahab	Isaiah and The Syro Ephraimite War (71:1- 8:15)	A Message for King Ahab	Isaiah Intervenes
7:1-2	7:1-2	7:1-2	7:1 7:2	7:1-2
7:3-9	7:3-9 (7b-9)	7:3-9 (7b-9)	7:3-6 7:7-9a 7:9b	7:3-9 (7b-9)
The Child Immanuel	The Immanuel Prophecy	Sign of Immanuel	The Sign of Immanuel	Isaiah Intervenes Again
7:10-17	7:10-17	7:10-17	7:10-11 7:12 7:13-16 7:17	7:10-12 (11) (13b-17) Prediction of An Invasion
7:18-20	7:18-22 (18-19) (20)	7:18-19 7:20	7:18-19 7:20	7:18-25 (18-25)
7:21-22	(21-22)	7:21-22	7:21-22	
7:23-25	7:23-25 (23-24) (25)	7:23-25	7:23-25	

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph

3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## BACKGROUND STUDY

- A. This literary unit (chapters 7-12) is often called “Immanuel’s Book” because the constant theme is the marvelous child of the new age that will be born to deliver and restore the people of God.
- B. The setting of this passage is the historical events involved in the Syro-Ephraimate war about 735-733 B.C. and the invasion of Syria and Palestine by Assyria under Tiglath-Pileser III (also called *Pul*, cf. II Kgs. 15:19).
  1. chapters 7-10:4 are dated around 735 B.C. (days of Tiglath-Pileser III, 745-729 B.C.)
  3. chapters 10:5-34 are dated around 701 B.C. (days of Sennacherib, 705-681 B.C.)
  4. chapters 11:1-12:6 foreshadows the Messianic Age.
- C. This entire section deals with children as symbols of historical events
  1. Isaiah’s first child (Shear-Jashub), 7:3
  2. the child as a sign to Ahaz, 7:14-16
  3. Isaiah’s second child (Maher-shalal-hash-baz), 8:1,3
  4. The Messiah as a child, 7:14, 9:6-7, 11:1-5
  5. The children of the new age, 11:6-9
- D. Read the following parallel historical accounts
  1. chapter 7-10:4 read II Kings 16 and II Chronicles 28
  2. chapter 10:5-34 read II Kings 18:17-20:11 and II Chronicles 32:9-24
- E. There is a contrast between the lack of faith shown by King Ahaz and the faith shown by his son, King Hezekiah (cf. 37:14-20,30). Remember that the main character in Scripture is God! He wants to be with His people (i.e., Immanuel) but their faith/trust is crucial!

## WORD PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:1-2

**<sup>1</sup>Now it came about in the days of Ahaz, the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Aram and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not conquer it. <sup>2</sup>When it was reported to the house of David, saying, "The Arameans have camped in Ephraim," his heart and the hearts of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake with the wind.**

**7:1 “in the days of Ahaz”** Ahaz reigned from 735-715 B.C. The setting of this chapter is the invasion of Judah by both Syria and Israel because Judah would not participate in their military coalition against Assyria.

▣ **“Pekah”** He was the usurper of the throne (i.e., dates of his reign, Bright, 737-732; Young, 736-730; NIV Study Bible, 752-732) of the Northern Ten Tribes. See Chart of “Kings of the Divided Monarchy” in Appendix Four, #3.

**7:2 “it was reported to the house of David”** This refers to a report given to the entire royal family or the report was made public at court.

▣

NASB **“has camped in”**

NKJV **“are deployed in”**

NRSV **“had allied it with”**

TEV **“were already in”**

NJB **“has halted in”**

LXX **“has conspired with”**

Peshitta **“is confederate with”**

REB **“had made an alliance with”**

The VERB (BDB 628, KB 679, *Qal* PERFECT) means “rest.” In this context it means establish a permanent camp in the midst of. This implies Syria was the stronger, dominant one of the political alliance.

Notice this same VERB is used in v. 19 to describe a large invading army.

▣ **“his heart and the hearts of his people”** This could refer to the royal family or the inhabitants of Jerusalem who had heard the report.

▣ **“shook as the trees of the forest shake with the wind”** There is a repetition of the VERB “totter,” or “stagger” (BDB 631, KB 681, *Qal* IMPERATIVE and *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT). Usually intensity is expressed by an IMPERFECT VERB and an INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE, but here it is the repetition of the VERB and INFINITIVE in a similar form.

Judah and her leadership were afraid. They did not have a trusting confidence in YHWH’s presence or promises!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:3-9**

<sup>3</sup>Then the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out now to meet Ahaz, you and your son Shear-jashub, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, on the highway to the fuller's field, <sup>4</sup>and say to him, 'Take care and be calm, have no fear and do not be fainthearted because of these two stubs of smoldering firebrands, on account of the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and the son of Remaliah.

<sup>5</sup>Because Aram, *with* Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has planned evil against you, saying, <sup>6</sup>"Let us go up against Judah and terrorize it, and make for ourselves a breach in its walls and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it," <sup>7</sup>thus says the Lord GOD: "It shall not stand nor shall it come to pass. <sup>8</sup>For the head of Aram is Damascus and the head of Damascus is Rezin (now within another 65 years Ephraim will be shattered, *so that it is no longer a people*), <sup>9</sup>and the head of Ephraim is Samaria and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah. If you will not believe, you surely shall not last.'"

**7:3 “Isaiah”** His name is a combination of two NOUNS, “salvation” and “YHWH.” To assert the understood or implied meaning, a VERB must be assumed, “YHWH is salvation,” “YHWH brings salvation,” etc.

▣ **“Shear-jashub”** This is Isaiah’s first son. His name means “a remnant shall return” of chapter 10:20-23. The very fact that Isaiah is told to take his son to meet the king shows that his name had relevance to the subject of the meeting. It could refer to

1. only a small part of the invading army will survive to return home
2. only a small part of faithless Judah will survive. Isaiah uses the concept of “a faithful remnant” often. See Special Topic at 1:9.

▣ **“at the end of the conduit of the upper pool”** This relates to the Gihon spring which supplies Jerusalem with water during sieges. This spring was also used in the coronation of the kings of Judah. Ahaz was checking the preparations for a siege. He was checking his resources!

**7:4-9** This is YHWH’s message to Ahaz through Isaiah. The first part addresses Ahaz.

1. take care, BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE
2. be calm, BDB 1052, KB 1641, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
3. have no fear, BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
4. do not be fainthearted, BDB 939, KB 1236, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

The cause of Ahaz’s fear was the invasion plans of Syria and Israel (v. 5).

YHWH characterizes the thoughts of the Syro-Ephraimite coalition (v. 6).

1. let us go up against Judah, BDB 748, KB 828, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
2. cause it a sickening dread (NASB margin), BDB 880, KB 1089, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
3. make for ourselves a breach in its walls, BDB 131, KB 149, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
4. set up the son of Tabeel as king, BDB 573, KB 590, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense

YHWH describes His plans in v. 7.

1. it shall not stand, BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. nor shall it come to pass, BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* IMPERFECT

YHWH is in control of history, not human armies, whether Syria/Israel or Assyria. However, there is a requirement on behalf of Judah’s leadership—they must believe/trust YHWH’s word (v. 9)!

1. believe, BDB 52, KB 63, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, PLURAL (royal court and leadership, cf. vv. 13,14)
2. shall not last (lit. “be confirmed”), BDB 52, KB 63, *Niphal* IMPERFECT, PLURAL

This same play on the meaning of  $\text{ןָבַח}$  is found in II Chr. 20:20. This same VERB is used in II Sam. 7:16 in relation to the permanence of the Davidic kingship. In a covenant relationship YHWH chooses not to act if His covenant partners refuse to believe/trust in Him (cf. 30:15). See Special Topic on “Believe” at 22:23.

▣ **“these two stubs of smoldering firebrands”** The two invaders are depicted as soon-to-be “has-beens.” Syria (i.e., Damascus) fell to the Assyrians in 732 B.C. and Israel (i.e., Samaria) fell in 722 B.C. The number (65 years) found in v. 8 is difficult to reconcile with our current historical information about this period of history.

**7:6**

**NASB** “make. . .a breach in its walls”  
**NKJV** “make a gap in its walls”  
**NRSV** “conquer it”  
**NJB** “destroy it”  
**Peshitta** “make a breach in it”  
**REB** “break her spirit”

This VERB (BDB 131, KB 149, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense) basically means “to break open” or “to break through”(cf. II Kgs. 3:26).

▣ The name “Tabeel” (BDB 370) is an Assyrian name. There are two known uses: (1) a tribe of people in Gilead or (2) the name of a king of Tyre (To-ba-il, LXX Tabeel, also known by Ethba’al); however, the MT adds vowels to the name and changes it to “Tabeal,” which in Hebrew means “good-for-nothing.” The changing of names was common in the OT to show the author’s view of the character of the person. However, in context this refers to an unknown Assyrian supporter within Judah.

**7:7 “thus says the Lord GOD, ‘It shall not stand nor shall it come to pass’”** This is one of several verses in this context that teaches God’s control and sovereignty over all nations and all history (cf. vv. 17, 18 & 20). Also note 8:10 and 28:18.

**7:8 “(now within another 65 years)”** This time element is difficult to understand. It may relate to Esarhaddon completing the deportation and resettlement of the land of Israel (cf. II Kings 17:24; Ezra 4:2). This could be a good example of (1) the ambiguity of predictive prophecy in the OT; (2) a later scribe updating the text of Isaiah with an editorial comment; or (3) both.

The NIV expresses Isaiah’s word play as “If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.”

**7:9 “If you will not believe”** See Special Topic: Believe, Trust, Faith, and Faithfulness in the OT at 22:23.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:10-17**

**<sup>10</sup>Then the LORD spoke again to Ahaz, saying, <sup>11</sup>“Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; make it deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” <sup>12</sup>But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!” <sup>13</sup>Then he said, “Listen now, O house of David! Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well? <sup>14</sup>Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. <sup>15</sup>He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows *enough* to refuse evil and choose good. <sup>16</sup>For before the boy will know *enough* to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken. <sup>17</sup>The LORD will bring on you, on your people, and on your father's house such days as have never come since the day that Ephraim separated from Judah, the king of Assyria.”**

**7:11** There are two ways to understand the Hebrew text of v. 11.

1. two uses of the VERB “ask” (BDB 981, KB 1371, *Qal* IMPERATIVE), cf. NKJV, Peshitta
2. one use of the VERB (שאלה) and one used of the word *Sheol* (שאלה), cf. NASB, Vulgate, TEV, NJB, REB (LXX has “depth”)

The UBS Preliminary Report on the Hebrew Text has given two “asks” (IMPERATIVES) a “B” rating (i.e., some doubt). Both fit the immediate context. Here again the exact wording is unsure, but the meaning of the verse is clear. This is true of the vast majority of these kinds of textual problems. Remember, the central idea of the stanza (or paragraph), not the details, is the key to a proper understanding of God’s revelation to us. The desire to know more, more than others, is not from God!

Amazingly, God is willing to help His fainthearted servant believe in His word. He gives signs to His covenant people (cf. 37:30; 38:7,8; 55:13). This kind of physical confirmation is not available or promised to all believers (cf. Matt. 12:38-39; 16:1,4; Mark 8:11-12; 13:4; Luke 11:16,29; John 2:18; 4:48; 6:30; I Cor. 1:22). Signs and/or miracles can often be satanic tricks (cf. Matt. 7:21-22; 24:24; Mark 13:22)!

▣ **“from the LORD your God”** It is interesting to note the play between “your God” vs. “My God.” However, many OT persons of faith use the term “your God” in conversations with others. It is an idiom with no theological intent.

▣ **“make it as deep as Sheol or as high as heaven”** The Prophet is asserting that Ahaz can ask for any sign on the earth, under the earth, or in the sky above to verify God’s truthfulness. God is willing to clearly reveal His will to Ahaz.

For a discussion of *Sheol* see Special Topic: Where Are the Dead? at 5:14.

**7:12 “But Ahaz said, ‘I will not ask, nor will I test the Lord’”** This sounds like a worthy statement because God’s people are told not to “test” (BDB 650, KB 702) God (cf. Exod. 17:2,7; Num. 14:22; Deut. 6:16; Ps. 78:18,41,56; 95:9; 106:14). However, the motive of this king is that he has already made up his mind to consult with Assyria, not with God, for help. It was not respect for God. God Himself gave the Davidic king this opportunity to confirm his trust in His word, protection, and provision, but he would not!

**7:13 “Listen now”** This VERB (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, PLURAL) is used so often in Isaiah, but only here in “Immanuel’s book” (i.e., chapters 7-12). God wants to be heard and obeyed!

▣ **“house of David”** In this context this phrase, which could be corporate, is referring to Ahaz as a representative of Davidic kingship (cf. II Samuel 7).

▣ **“Is it too slight a thing”** This is a Hebrew idiom (BDB 589, cf. Num. 16:13; Josh. 22:17; Ezek. 16:20; 34:18). The people were treating God and His revealed will (the Mosaic law) as a small thing, an unimportant thing.

▣ **“try the patience”** This VERB (BDB 521, KB 512) is used twice.

1. once referring to humans (*Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT)
2. once referring to God (*Hiphil* IMPERFECT)

Ahaz has not performed his duties as YHWH’s representative (cf. II Sam. 7) among the people well!

**7:14 “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign”** This sign (BDB 16) must initially apply to Ahaz’s day (esp. vv. 15-16)!

▣ **“virgin”** The Hebrew term here is *almah* (BDB 761). This term is used for a young woman of marriageable age (cf. Gen. 24:43; Exod. 2:8; Pro. 30:19). It designates a woman who is sexually mature. There is another Hebrew term for virgin, *bethulah* (BDB 143), which is used by Isaiah in 23:4, 12; 37:22; 47:1; 62:5. The Septuagint translates this verse with the Greek term “virgin.” These terms are semantically overlapping and all of the young girls in Israeli culture were considered to be virgins. However, I do not believe in two virgin births, but one. There was a normal conception in Ahaz’s day as a sign and a (“the,” MT) virgin conception in Jesus’ day (cf. Matt. 1:18-23; Luke 1:26-38). This is a multi-fulfillment prophecy!

I think the reason that the NT does not emphasize this more (only appears in the two birth narratives [i.e., Matt. 1:23; Luke 1:31,34] and never in a sermon in Acts or an Epistle by any Apostle) is because of the possible misunderstanding of Greco-Roman religion where the cohabitation of gods and humans, resulting in offspring, was common.

To try to base a doctrine of sin as transmitted through male sperm and, therefore, show the reason for a virgin birth is, in my opinion, folly! In reality it is similar to the barren wives of the Patriarchs having children only at God’s instigation. God is in control of the Messiah! An even greater truth is

revealed in the NT where the Messiah is presented clearly as incarnated Deity (i.e., John 1:1; 5:18; 10:33; 14:9-11; Phil. 2:6)! Thus the need for a virgin birth!



NASB	“will be with child and bear a son”
NKJV, Peshitta	“shall conceive and bear a son”
NRSV	“is with child and shall bear a son”
TEV	“who is pregnant will have a son”
NJB, REB	“is with child and will give birth to a son”
LXX	“shall be with child and bear a son”

The ADJECTIVE (BDB 248) usually denotes someone who is already pregnant, but there is some ambiguity, as is obvious from the versions.

This must refer to some lady in Isaiah’s day; whether it was the king’s wife (i.e., birth of Hezekiah), the prophet’s wife, or a young woman at court is uncertain, but Hezekiah (Ahaz’s son) fits the Davidic context best.

▣ **“Immanuel”** This name (BDB 769) means “God with us” (cf. 8:8,10). In Isaiah’s day many children were named with names involving Deity. The name of the child is the sign, not his unique birth! These people were not expecting a supernatural, virgin born, incarnate Deity, supernatural child! This is not an OT truth, but a NT progressive revelation truth!

**7:15-16** These verses are parallels (three repeated VERBALS). This parallelism is characteristic of Hebrew literary style (both in a literary unit, and on a paragraph and verse level).

**7:15 “He will eat curds and honey”** There are two theories as to the meaning of the phrase: this means either he will come at a time of great abundance (i.e., Exod. 3:8), or just the opposite, that he will come at a time of great scarcity (cf. vv. 21-22).

▣ **“at the time He knows *enough* to refuse evil and choose good”** This seems to refer to

1. the “age of accountability” (i.e., the results of religious training)
2. that he will be a young child who knows what is forbidden or appropriate. In later Jewish life this would normally be around thirteen years of age (i.e., *Bar-Mitzvah*). However, 8:4 implies much earlier!

**7:16 “the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken”** This refers to the defeat and exile of Syria (cf. Amos 1:3-5) and Israel (cf. 17:3) by Assyria. The capital of Israel, Samaria, fell to Assyria in 722 B.C. after an extended siege. The vast majority of these tribes never returned to Canaan, but were absorbed by the populations where they were exiled (i.e., Media).

**7:17 “The LORD will bring on you”** This is a good example that every historical crisis in the nation of Israel was controlled by YHWH for His purposes.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:18-19**

**<sup>18</sup>In that day the LORD will whistle for the fly that is in the remotest part of the rivers of Egypt and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. <sup>19</sup>They will all come and settle on the steep ravines, on the ledges of the cliffs, on all the thorn bushes and on all the watering places.**



**7:18 “In that day”** “That day” is the day of the Lord’s fulfillment of His promises (cf. vv. 18,20,21, 23). It can refer to a near future time (fall of Syria and Israel, cf. v. 16) or an end-time, eschatological setting (i.e., Messianic age, age of the true one virgin birth).

▣ **“whistle”** See note at 5:26.

▣ **“Egypt”** God’s people were still caught in the power struggle between the empires of the Fertile Crescent and the Nile River. Egypt is referred to in Hosea 7:11; 8:13; 9:3, 6; 11:5, 11; 12:1.

**7:19 “on the ledges of the cliffs, on all the thorn bushes and on all the watering places”** This is a series of metaphors to describe the large invading army that will occupy even the remotest regions of the Promised Land.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:20**

**<sup>20</sup>In that day the Lord will shave with a razor, hired from regions beyond the Euphrates (*that is, with the king of Assyria*), the head and the hair of the legs; and it will also remove the beard.**

**7:20 “In that day the Lord will shave with a razor”** This seems to refer to Ahaz’s sending tribute to hire Assyria to help her out, II Kings 16:7-9. The head and the beard being shaved was a sign of shame and mourning (cf. II Sam. 10:4-5; I Chr. 19:4; Jer. 48:37).

The phrase “the hair of the legs” seems to relate to the pubic hair of the young men (cf. 6:2; Jdgs. 3:24; I Sam. 24:3), which would denote shame.

The Hebrew term “feet” (BDB 919) in several places can refer to

1. male genitalia, Exod. 4:25; Judg. 3:24; Ruth 3:4,7; I Sam. 24:3
2. female genitalia, Deut. 28:57; Ezek. 16:25
3. even angelic creatures, Seraphim, Isa. 6:2; Cherubim, Ezek. 1:23

In Isaiah 36:12 urine is called “water of feet” (NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 1048).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:21-22**

**<sup>21</sup>Now in that day a man may keep alive a heifer and a pair of sheep; <sup>22</sup>and because of the abundance of the milk produced he will eat curds, for everyone that is left within the land will eat curds and honey.**

**7:21** There is much discussion of whether this refers to prosperity or scarcity just like v. 15.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:23-25**

**<sup>23</sup>And it will come about in that day, that every place where there used to be a thousand vines, *valued* at a thousand *shekels* of silver, will become briars and thorns. <sup>24</sup>People will come there with bows and arrows because all the land will be briars and thorns. <sup>25</sup>As for all the hills which used to be cultivated with the hoe, you will not go there for fear of briars and thorns; but they will become a place for pasturing oxen and for sheep to trample.**

**7:24-25** This refers to the large number of wild beasts that will occupy the Promised Land because of the absence of people (both of which relate to the covenant curses of Deuteronomy 28).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Were the Jewish people expecting the Messiah to be God incarnate?
2. Is Isaiah 7:14 predicting a virgin birth in Ahaz's day?
3. Why are the names of children so significant in these chapters?

# ISAIAH 8

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB (follows LXX)
Damascus and Samaria Fall	Assyria Will Invade the Land	The Sign of Maher-shalal- hash-baz	Isaiah's Son as A Sign to the People	The Birth of A Son to Isaiah
8:1-4	8:1-4	8:1-4	8:1-2 8:3-4	8:1-2 8:3-4
8:5-8 (5b-8)	8:5-8	8:5-8	The Emperor of Assyria Is Coming 8:5-8a	Shiloah and the Euphrates 8:5-10
A Believing Remnant	(6-8)		8:8b	
8:9-10 (9-10)	8:9-10 (9-10)	8:9-10 (9-10)	8:9-10	(9-10)
8:11-15 (12-15)	Fear God, Heed His Word 8:11-15 (12-15)	The Testimony and the Teaching 8:11-15	The LORD Warns the Prophet 8:11-15	Isaiah's Mission 8:11-20 (11-20)
8:16-18	8:16-18 (16-18)	8:16-22	Warning Against Consulting the Dead 8:16-17	
8:19-22	8:19-22		8:18 8:19 8:20	
			A Time of Trouble 8:21-9:1a	Wandering in Darkness 8:21-23a (21-23a) Deliverance 8:23b-9:6

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This chapter illustrates the problem of trying to outline poetic prophecy by stanzas. It is unsure how these stanzas are structured. It is even unsure to whom they are spoken!
- B. In chapters like this it is best to try to find the main truth of each stanza. Then see if there are any "key" repeated words or concepts. Be careful of pushing details into dogmatic or systematic theologies. Hebrew poetry is notoriously ambiguous. See Appendix One.
- C. Ambiguity is characteristic of Hebrew Poetry and Prophecy. Exegesis of the details kills the artistry (word plays, parallelism) and often loses the meaning in the minutia. These stanzas were originally separate. They were designed to be heard! They were meant to have an immediate emotional impact! Only with time, prayer, and progressive revelation do the truths become clear!
- D. Chapters 6-8 have many SINGULAR PRONOUNS. YHWH is addressing the prophet and he often addresses groups as collective.

## WORD PHRASE STUDY

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:1-4**

**<sup>1</sup>Then the LORD said to me, "Take for yourself a large tablet and write on it in ordinary letters: Swift is the booty, speedy is the prey. <sup>2</sup>And I will take to Myself faithful witnesses for testimony, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah." <sup>3</sup>So I approached the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. Then the LORD said to me, "Name him Maher-shalal-hash-baz; <sup>4</sup>for before the boy knows how to cry out 'My father' or 'My mother,' the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria."**

**8:1-4** Isaiah's second son (cf. v. 3) is a prophecy about the destruction of Judah's main invader (i.e., Syro-Ephraimite war), Syria (capital of Damascus). Damascus was captured by Assyria in 732 B.C. and the inhabitants of the land were exiled. In some ways Isaiah's second son parallels the promised child of 7:14-16.

**8:1 “Take for yourself a large tablet and write on it”** YHWH gives Isaiah two commands.

1. “take,” BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. “write,” BDB 507, KB 503, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, often used of an engraving tool, cf. Exod. 32:4,16

Notice that what YHWH will reveal must be written for contemporary, as well as future, readers and that it will take a “large” (BDB 152) piece of writing material or clay tablet or seal (cf. 30:8). The Hebrew word (BDB 163) does not designate what kind of material (notice its use in 3:23, where it could refer to cylindrical seals worn around the neck, cf. JB footnote, p. 1155, and the IVP *Bible Background Commentary*, p. 594). It is not certain from the text if the message is long or that it is just a phrase written in large letters!



**NASB** “in ordinary letters”  
**NKJV, LXX** “with a man’s pen”  
**NRSV, REB,**  
**JPSOA** “in common characters”  
**TEV** “in large letters”  
**NJB** “with an ordinary stylus”  
**Peshitta** “on it plainly”

This is obviously an ambiguous phrase because it is the only place with this word for “man” (BDB 60) is used for an inanimate object. YHWH wants His message recorded so that all His people can easily understand His message.



**NASB** “Swift is the booty, speedy is the pray”  
**NKJV, NRSV** “Maher-shalal-hash-baz”  
**TEV** “Quick loot, fast plunder”  
**Peshitta** “to hasten the captivity, and to record the spoil”  
**JB footnote** “Speed-spoil-quick-booty”  
**REB footnote** “Speedy for spoil, hastening for plunder”

This is the name of Isaiah’s second son, “Maher-shalal-hash-baz” (cf. v. 3). The same two VERBS are in the sarcastic statement of 5:19. It may be YHWH’s reaction to that Judean arrogance. It had (as all Isaiah’s sons’ names) a prophetic meaning for the people of his day. It seems to refer to Assyrian invasion because of Ahaz’s unbelief. This invasion overwhelms Judah as well as Syria and Israel.

In Hab. 1:6-8 the same two VERBS describe the Babylonian invasion of Judah.

## 8:2

**NASB** “I will take to Myself”  
**NKJV** “I will take for Myself”  
**NRSV** “have it attested for me”  
**NJB** “take”  
**LXX** “make me”  
**Peshitta** “I took to me”  
**JB** “find me”  
**REB** “I had it witnessed for me”  
**JPSOA** “call”

The VERB in the MT is “bear witness” (BDB 729, KB 795, *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE). The Dead Sea Scrolls, LXX, and Peshitta change the VERB to an IMPERATIVE and are followed by NRSV, REB. In context God is looking for two faithful witnesses (cf. Deut. 4:26; 30:19; 31:28) to corroborate His message (i.e., heaven and earth, see note at 1:2).

The first named witness, “Uriah the priest,” is mentioned in II Kgs. 16:10-16 (in a rather poor light). The other witness (Zechariah, son of Jeberechiah) is not known unless it refers to the Zechariah of Uzziah’s day in II Chronicles 26.

The NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 336, thinks it is Isaiah himself who wants the two witnesses to be present when he names his second son.

### 8:3

**NASB** “I approached”

**NKJV, NRSV,**

**LXX** “I went to”

**NJB** “I had intercourse with”

**REB** “I lay with”

The VERB (BDB 897, KB 1132, *Qal* IMPERFECT) denotes sexual contact (cf. Gen. 20:4; Lev. 18:6,14,19; Deut. 22:14; Ezek. 18:6).

Again the question of “who” is pregnant in 7:14 arises. There are two main possibilities.

1. the special child reflects an ideal Davidic king and, therefore, probably Hezekiah, Ahaz’s son
2. Isaiah may have been related to Ahaz, if so, his child could also be a Davidic king. The proximity of 8:3 to 7:14 makes Isaiah’s second child a possible “near term” fulfillment.

**8:3 “the prophetess”** This is obviously a reference to Isaiah’s wife. She was (1) also a prophet (BDB 612, FEMININE SINGULAR) or (2) was married to a prophet.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: WOMEN IN THE BIBLE

### I. The Old Testament

#### A. Culturally women were considered property.

1. included in list of property (Exod. 20:17)
2. treatment of slave women (Exod. 21:7-11)
3. women’s vows annulable by socially responsible male (Num. 30)
4. women as spoils of war (Deut. 20:10-14; 21:10-14)

#### B. Practically there was a mutuality

1. male and female made in God’s image (Gen. 1:26-27)
2. honor father and mother (Exod. 20:12 [Deut. 5:16])
3. reverence mother and father (Lev. 19:3; 20:9)
4. men and women could be Nazirites (Num. 6:1-2)
5. daughters have right of inheritance (Num. 27:1-11)
6. part of covenant people (Deut. 29:10-12)
7. observe teaching of father and mother (Prov. 1:8; 6:20)
8. sons and daughters of Heman (Levite family) led music in Temple (I Chr. 25:5-6)
9. sons and daughters will prophesy in new age (Joel 2:28-29)

#### C. Women were in leadership roles

1. Moses’ sister, Miriam, called a prophetess (Exod. 15:20-21)
2. women gifted by God to construct Tabernacle (Exod. 35:25-26)
3. a woman, Deborah, also a prophetess (cf. Jdgs. 4:4), led all the tribes (Jdgs. 4:4-5; 5:7)

4. Huldah was a prophetess whom King Josiah invoked to read and interpret the newly-found "Book of the Law" (II Kings 22:14; II Chr. 34:22-27)
5. Ruth, godly woman was ancestress of David
6. Esther, godly woman saved Jews in Persia

## II. The New Testament

- A. Culturally women in both Judaism and the Greco-Roman world were second class citizens with few rights or privileges (the exception was Macedonia).
- B. Women in leadership roles
  1. Elizabeth and Mary, godly women available to God (Luke 1-2)
  2. Anna, godly woman serving at the Temple (Luke 2:36)
  3. Lydia, believer and leader of a house church (Acts 16:14,40)
  4. Philip's four daughters, were prophetesses (Acts 21:8-9)
  5. Phoebe, deaconess of church at Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1)
  6. Prisca (Priscilla), Paul's fellow-worker and teacher of Apollos (Acts 18:26; Rom. 16:3)
  7. Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, Julia, Nereus' sister, several women co-workers of Paul (Rom. 16:6-16)
  8. Junia (KJV), possibly a woman apostle (Rom. 16:7)
  9. Euodia and Syntyche, co-workers with Paul (Phil. 4:2-3)

## III. How does a modern believer balance the divergent biblical examples?

- A. How does one determine historical or cultural truths which apply to the original context from eternal truths valid for all churches, all believers of all ages?
  1. We must take the intent of the original inspired author very seriously. The Bible is the Word of God and the only source for faith and practice.
  2. We must deal with the obviously historically conditioned inspired texts
    - a. the cultus (i.e., ritual and liturgy) of Israel
    - b. first century Judaism
    - c. Paul's obviously historically conditioned statements in I Corinthians
      - (1) the legal system of pagan Rome
      - (2) remaining a slave (7:20-24)
      - (3) celibacy (7:1-35)
      - (4) virgins (7:36-38)
      - (5) food sacrificed to an idol (8; 10:23-33)
      - (6) unworthy actions at Lord's Supper (11)
  3. God fully and clearly revealed Himself to a particular culture, a particular day. We must take seriously the revelation, but not every aspect of its historical accommodation. The Word of God was written in the words of men.
- B. Biblical interpretation must seek the original author's intent. What was he saying to his day? This is foundational and crucial for proper interpretation, but then we must apply this to our own day. Now, here is the problem with women in leadership (the real interpretive problem may be defining the term. Were there more ministries than pastors who were seen as leadership? Were deaconesses or prophetesses seen as leaders?) It is quite clear that Paul, in

I Cor. 14:34-35 and I Tim. 2:9-15, is asserting that women should not take the lead in public worship! But how do I apply that today? I do not want Paul's culture or my culture to silence God's Word and will. Possibly Paul's day was too limiting, but also my day may be too open. I feel so uncomfortable saying that Paul's words and teachings are conditional, first century, local situational truths. Who am I that I should let my mind or my culture negate an inspired author?!

However, what do I do when there are biblical examples of women leaders (even in Paul's writings, cf. Romans 16)? A good example of this is Paul's discussion of public worship in I Cor. 11-14. In 11:5 he seems to allow women's preaching and praying in public worship with their heads covered, yet in 14:34-35, he demands they remain silent! There were deaconesses (cf. Rom. 16:1) and prophetesses (cf. Acts 21:9). It is this diversity that allows me freedom to identify Paul's comments (as relates to restrictions on women) as limited to first century Corinth and Ephesus. In both churches, there were problems with women exercising their new-found freedom (cf. Bruce Winter, *Corinth After Paul Left*), which could have caused difficulty for their church in reaching their society for Christ. Their freedom had to be limited so that the gospel could be more effective.

My day is just the opposite of Paul's. In my day the gospel might be limited if trained, articulate women are not allowed to share the gospel, not allowed to lead! What is the ultimate goal of public worship? Is it not evangelism and discipleship? Can God be honored and pleased with women leaders? The Bible as a whole seems to say "yes"!

I want to yield to Paul; my theology is primarily Pauline. I do not want to be overly influenced or manipulated by modern feminism! However, I feel the church has been slow to respond to obvious biblical truths, like the inappropriateness of slavery, racism, bigotry, and sexism. It has also been slow to respond appropriately to the abuse of women in the modern world. God in Christ set free the slave and the woman. I dare not let a culture-bound text reshackle them.

One more point: as an interpreter I know that Corinth was a very disrupted church. The charismatic gifts were prized and flaunted. Women may have been caught up in this. I also believe that Ephesus was being affected by false teachers who were taking advantage of women and using them as surrogate speakers in the house churches of Ephesus.

C. Suggestions for further reading

*How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth* by Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart (pp. 61-77)

*Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics* by Gordon Fee

*Hard Sayings of the Bible* by Walter C. Kaiser, Peter H. Davids, F. F. Bruce, and Manfred T. Branch (pp. 613-616; 665-667)

**8:4** This seems to parallel the time frame and message of 7:15-16 (and v. 4).  
Isaiah's son's name depicts this very event by Assyria (cf. 10:5-7).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:5-8**

<sup>5</sup>Again the Lord spoke to me further, saying,

<sup>6</sup>"Inasmuch as these people have rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloah

And rejoice in Rezin and the son of Remaliah;

<sup>7</sup>Now therefore, behold, the Lord is about to bring on them the strong and abundant waters of the Euphrates,



**Even the king of Assyria and all his glory;**

**And it will rise up over all its channels and go over all its banks.**

**<sup>8</sup>Then it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass through,**

**It will reach even to the neck;**

**And the spread of its wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel."**

**8:5-6** This stanza continues the message of YHWH's judgment on Syria and Israel by Assyria, but adds the terrible results that will also affect Judah (i.e., Jerusalem spared, cf. v. 8b). She will not be destroyed, but only barely survive.

**8:6 "these people"** To whom does this refer?

1. Israel
2. Judah

The answer is found in v. 6b. Judah did not rejoice in Rezin, but Israel ("son of Remaliah") made a political and military alliance with him (cf. 7:4-5,8,9). Therefore, v. 7 must refer to the destruction of not only Damascus (cf. 7:20), but Samaria (i.e., Israel). It is possible it refers to a group within Judah who wanted to join the coalition.

Motyer, in Tyndale Old Testament Commentary Series (p. 81), notes that the phrase "this people" can refer to

1. Judah, 28:14
2. a foreign power, 23:13
3. Israel, 9:16 (and here)

▣ **"the gently flowing waters of Shiloh"** This was a small wadi east of Jerusalem which carried the water from the spring Gihon into the city (cf. II Kgs. 20:20; II Chr. 32:30). It is a symbol of (1) YHWH's neglected acts or words (cf. 5:24; 30:12) or (2) YHWH's provision for Jerusalem, the house of David, Judah, during a siege.

▣ **"And rejoice in Rezin and the son of Remaliah"** Syria was a part of the conspiracy to overthrow the throne of David (cf. 7:6). Israel had put her trust in political and military alliances.

▣ **"rejoice"** This term (BDB 965) means "exult" or "rejoice," which does not fit the context. It is possible that it was chosen to fit the poetry of the verse, not the dictionary. The VERBS "reject," v. 6 and "rejoice," v. 6, sound similarly. This prophecy would have been read aloud. There are several theories about who it refers to.

1. Damascus' joy
2. a group of Judeans who oppose Ahaz's Assyrian alliance
3. "melt" in fear, not rejoice (emendation)
4. Judah's joy at Assyria invading Syria and Israel

Obviously the context is uncertain as to whom it refers.

**8:7 "the Lord is about to bring on them"** YHWH is in control of history (cf. 5:26; 7:7,18; 10:5; 13:2-3). History is not random, but teleological. It has a terminus point. History moves by the consequences of human sin and the purposes of God!

▣ **"waters of the Euphrates"** This is one of the two main rivers of Mesopotamia. The Tigris and Euphrates formed a fertile crescent that reached from the Persian Gulf to close to the coast of the Mediterranean in Lebanon. A desert separated the empires of Mesopotamia (i.e., Assyria and Babylon) from Canaan. Therefore, the armies followed the waters of the Euphrates and moved down the coast

lands of Lebanon and Canaan. This geographical route became the source of the biblical imagery of the “north” as the direction of evil.

**8:8** This verse shows the consequences of an Assyrian takeover of Canaan. Judah will survive as a nation, but just barely. Ahaz did not listen to Isaiah, did not believe in YHWH’s promises.

▣ **“the spread of its wings will fill the breadth of your land”** The NASB, NRSV, NJB, REB link this to the destruction caused by Assyria (“wing” used as a metaphor for “end,” cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 670, thereby denoting the invasion of all the land), but TEV and JPSOA take the change of metaphor (i.e., from a flood to describe an Assyrian invasion) to the spreading of a bird’s wings (BDB 642 CONSTRUCT BDB 489, cf. 8:8; Ps. 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:1,4; 63:7; 91:1,4) to relate to God’s promised special child of 7:14; also note vv. 9-10!

Isaiah, unlike Jeremiah, saw that God would protect Jerusalem! Jeremiah later explains the difference by noting that the promise was related to a conditional covenant which demanded faith and obedience. Without faith, Jerusalem’s divine protection would send the wrong message (similar to people today seeing the state of Israel as a divine act of restoration, but the problem is she is not a faith-oriented or faithful-living covenant people)! Israel today is secular!

▣ **“O Immanuel”** The title here seems as if it refers to the Davidic king at the time (i.e., Ahaz). This may be a textual evidence that the child of 7:14 was Hezekiah. Ultimately, it refers to Jesus, but in Isaiah it had to refer to a contemporary, naturally conceived male child (i.e., 7:15-16)

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:9-10**

**9”Be broken, O peoples, and be shattered;  
And give ear, all remote places of the earth.  
Gird yourselves, yet be shattered;  
Gird yourselves, yet be shattered.  
10Devise a plan, but it will be thwarted;  
State a proposal, but it will not stand,  
For God is with us.”**

**8:9-10** The NASB of 1970 thought that verses 9-15 were one stanza, but the NASB 1995 Update makes vv. 9-10 a separate stanza (I think rightly so, cf. NKJV, NRSV, Peshitta).

YHWH addresses the invading mercenary army.

1. be broken, v. 9, BDB 949, KB 1270, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. be shattered, v. 9, BDB 369, KB 365, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. 7:8; 30:31; I Sam. 2:10; Jer. 48:1,2; 49:37; 50:2; 51:56
3. give ear, v. 9, BDB 24, KB 27, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
- 4-5. gird yourselves (twice), v. 9, BDB 25, KB 28, *Hithpael* IMPERATIVE
6. be shattered, same as #2
7. devise a plan, v. 10, BDB 734, KB 801, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
8. state a proposal, v. 10, BDB 180, KB 210, *Piel* IMPERATIVE

For each action of the invaders there is an opposing plan of God. All their evil will come to naught. Now remember originally God called them to invade because of His people’s sin, but after judgment God will again deliver His people so as to accomplish His purposes through them. See Special Topic: Bob’s Evangelical Biases at 1:3.

**8:10 “Devise a plan”** This term (BDB 734) is used of human plans. Often these plans are different, even contrary, to YHWH’s plans (cf. 14:24-27; Pro. 19:21). God will accomplish His plans (cf. 46:10; 55:8-11; Ps. 33:11). God neither needs nor seeks counselors (40:13). His plans are sure and eternal! He has a redemptive plan for all humans (see Special Topic at 1:3).

▣ **“For God is with us”** This is the meaning of the name “Immanuel” from 7:14; 8:8. In this context this title refers to Ahaz (the Davidic King).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:11-15**

<sup>11</sup>**For thus the LORD spoke to me with mighty power and instructed me not to walk in the way of this people, saying,**

<sup>12</sup>**“You are not to say, ‘It is a conspiracy!’**

**In regard to all that this people call a conspiracy,**

**And you are not to fear what they fear or be in dread of it.**

<sup>13</sup>**It is the LORD of hosts whom you should regard as holy.**

**And He shall be your fear,**

**And He shall be your dread.**

<sup>14</sup>**Then He shall become a sanctuary;**

**But to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over,**

**And a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem.**

<sup>15</sup>**Many will stumble over them,**

**Then they will fall and be broken;**

**They will even be snared and caught.”**

**8:11-15** This stanza is another message related to

1. YHWH’s judgment on His own sinful people
2. YHWH’s prophet is thinking and saying His thoughts, not those of his contemporaries or society

This stanza reflects the message to Ahaz in 7:9, now widened to the whole community. It is a message of judgment that could have been faith/hope!

**8:11**

**NASB “with mighty power”**

**NKJV, LXX “with a strong hand”**

“Hand” (BDB 388) is used often in an anthropomorphical sense (see Special Topic at 6:1) to speak of God’s actions within the world.

1. special metaphor of revelation, Isa. 8:11; Jer. 15:17; Ezek. 1:3; 3:14,22; 8:1; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1
2. metaphor for deliverance from Egypt, Exod. 3:20; 6:1; 13:3; 14:31
3. metaphor for oath and/or judgment
  - a. swing His hand, 19:16; Zech. 2:9
  - b. lifts up His hand, 26:11; 49:22; Deut. 32:40; Ezek. 20:5
  - c. stretches out His hand, 14:26-27; Exod. 7:5; Jer. 6:12
4. metaphor for creation, 19:25; 45:11-12; 48:13; 60:21; 64:8

▣ **“not to walk in the way of this people”** Verse 11 is addressed to Isaiah, but v. 12 is PLURAL. “Walk” is a metaphor for lifestyle (i.e., Ps. 1:6). God’s people (of the Abrahamic covenant promise)

were not God's people (in the Mosaic covenant obedience). They had become a corrupted witness to the nations (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38).

In the new day, the day of the special child, a new way will be made available (cf. 57:14; 62:10). This is the concept John the Baptist saw as his mission (i.e., prepare the way, cf. Isa. 40:3; Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4-6).

**8:12** This refers to 7:2. They heard about the Syro-Ephraimite coalition and were terrified!

It is also possible that it refers to Isaiah's opposition to Ahaz's Assyrian alliance policy. The prophet would have been considered a troublemaker or worse, a traitor!

**8:13** What they should have feared/awed was the holy LORD of hosts. He is the captain of the truly powerful army (cf. 41:10,13,14; 43:1,5; 44:2; 54:4). He is truly in control of events (cf. 7:7,18,20).

There is no VERB with

1. He shall be your fear (BDB 432, or "let him be. . .")
2. He shall be your dread (BDB 791, or "let him be. . .")

This intensifies the phrases. There is an appropriate (cf. Ps. 76:12; Mal. 2:5) and inappropriate fear (cf. Luke 12:4; John 12:43)! To fear YHWH is wisdom (cf. Pro. 1:7) and faithfulness; to fear human power is a lack of faith in YHWH's presence and promises!

**8:14-15** YHWH describes His reaction to being rejected by His own covenant people with two metaphors of judgments.

1. a sanctuary (cf. Ezek. 11:16) built of stones (YHWH was the sanctuary, cf. Ezek. 11:16)
2. an animal snare and trap

His people, Israel ("both the houses of Israel"), will stumble over (BDB 505, KB 502, *Qal* PERFECT) the stones of the sanctuary. This metaphor is later developed into the rejected cornerstone (the Messiah). See Special Topic following.

Many of His people, Judah, will fall over (BDB 656, KB 709, *Qal* PERFECT) a stone or into a trap (i.e., pit) or be caught in a snare (cf. 28:13) and perish (cf. 24:18)! However, some (i.e., the faithful remnant), will trust in Him (cf. vv. 16-18).

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: CORNERSTONE**

### **I. OT Usages**

- A. The concept of a stone as a hard durable item which made a good foundation was used to describe YHWH (cf. Ps. 18:2).
- B. It then developed into a Messianic title (cf. Gen. 49:24; Ps. 118:22; Isa. 28:16).
- C. It came to represent a judgment from YHWH by the Messiah (cf. Isa. 8:14; Dan. 2:34-35,44-45).
- D. This developed into a building metaphor.
  1. a foundation stone, the first placed, which was secure and set the angles for the rest of the building, called "the cornerstone"
  2. it could also refer to the final stone put in place, which holds the walls together (cf. Zech. 4:7; Eph. 2:20,21), called "the cap stone," from the Hebrew *rush* (i.e., head)
  3. it could refer to the "key stone," which is in the center of the doorway arch and holds the weight of the entire wall

### **II. NT Usages**

- A. Jesus quoted Psalm 118 several times in reference to Himself (cf. Matt. 21:41-46; Mark 12:10-11; Luke 20:17)

- B. Paul uses Psalm 118 in connection with YHWH's rejection of faithless, rebellious Israel (cf. Rom. 9:33)
- C. Paul uses the concept of a "cap stone" in Eph. 2:20-22 in reference to Christ
- D. Peter uses this concept of Jesus in I Pet. 2:1-10. Jesus is the cornerstone and believers are the living stones (i.e., believers as temples, cf. I Cor. 6:19), built on Him (i.e., Jesus is the new Temple, cf. Mark 14:58; Matt. 12:6; John 2:19-20).

The Jews rejected the very foundation of their hope when they rejected Jesus as Messiah.

### III. Theological Statements

- A. YHWH allowed David/Solomon to build a temple. He told them that if they kept the covenant He would bless them and be with them, but if they did not the temple would be in ruins (cf. I Kgs. 9:1-9)!
- B. Rabbinical Judaism focused on form and ritual and neglected the personal aspect of faith (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38). God seeks a daily, personal, godly relationship with those created in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). Luke 20:17-18 contains frightening words of judgment as does Matt. 5:20, directed at Judaism.
- C. Jesus used the concept of a temple to represent His physical body. This continues and expands the concept of personal faith in Jesus as the Messiah as key to a relationship with YHWH (i.e., John 14:6; I John 5:10-12).
- D. Salvation is meant to restore the damaged image of God in human beings (Gen. 1:26-27 and chap. 3) so that fellowship with God is possible. The goal of Christianity is Christlikeness now. Believers are to become living stones (i.e., little temples) built on/patterned after Christ.
- E. Jesus is the foundation of our faith and the cap stone of our faith (i.e., the Alpha and Omega). Yet also the stone of stumbling and the rock of offense. To miss Him is to miss everything. There can be no middle ground here!

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:16-18

**<sup>16</sup>Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. <sup>17</sup>And I will wait for the LORD who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob; I will even look eagerly for Him. <sup>18</sup>Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are for signs and wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion.**

**8:16-18** This stanza links to the beginning of the chapter (cf. vv. 1-2). These prophetic messages are for YHWH's faithful disciples (in every age). There has been/always will be a group of faithful disciples (BDB 541). Isaiah uniquely uses this connotation (i.e., disciples) of this term (cf. 8:16; 50:4 [twice]; 54:13), usually translated "teach," "train," "learn."

Who then do vv. 19-22 describe? It could refer to (1) faithless Judeans (i.e., Southern Kingdom) or (2) faithless Israelites (i.e., the Northern Kingdom).

**8:16** Isaiah is to

1. bind, BDB 864, KB 1058, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. seal, BDB 367, KB 364, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (i.e., put a wax seal on the outer edge)

These are metaphors denoting preservation and security!

**8:17** Isaiah speaks on behalf of the faithful remnant during times of divine punishment. They will "wait" (BDB 314, KB 313, *Piel* PERFECT), which can also mean "hope," "wait patiently," or "long for,"

usually used of hoping/waiting for God (8:17; 25:9; 26:8; 33:2; 40:31; 51:5; 60:9; 64:4; Zeph. 3:8). Faith is expressed by patience and hope through trials and the passing of time.

▣ **“the LORD who is hiding His face”** This is a metaphor for a broken relationship (cf. Deut. 31:17-18).

▣ **“I will even look eagerly for Him”** This VERB (BDB 875, KB 1082, *Piel* PERFECT) denotes intense longing.

1. used of YHWH in 5:2,7
2. used of His disciples in 25:9; 33:2; 60:9

This stresses the interpersonal aspect of faith. It is not God’s blessings, but His presence that believers ultimately desire! This is what the title “Immanuel” implies.

**8:18** This refers in context to Isaiah in the eighth century, but ultimately it applies best to Jesus (cf. Heb. 2:13).

▣ **“who dwells on Mount Zion”** In reality YHWH dwelt in heaven, but the Ark of the Covenant was His footstool (i.e., cf. I Chr. 28:2; Ps. 99:5; 132:7, the place where heaven and earth met).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:19-22**

**<sup>19</sup>When they say to you, "Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter," should not a people consult their God? *Should they consult* the dead on behalf of the living? <sup>20</sup>To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn. <sup>21</sup>They will pass through the land hard-pressed and famished, and it will turn out that when they are hungry, they will be enraged and curse their king and their God as they face upward. <sup>22</sup>Then they will look to the earth, and behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and *they will be driven away into darkness.***

**8:19-22** This prose paragraph contrasts the false faith involved in seeking mediums and wizards with the true faith of trusting in and seeking YHWH. The prohibitions against mediums and wizards are found in Deut. 18:9-11 and Lev. 19:26, 31; 20:6,27.

**8:19 “Consult”** This VERB (BDB 205, KB 233) is used twice in this verse.

1. seek, consult, inquire of false gods (occult), *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. seek, consult, inquire of YHWH, *Qal* IMPERFECT

In 11:10 this same VERB is used of the nations coming to the root of Jesse (i.e., the Davidic Messiah).

YHWH’s hand was on Isaiah in 8:11, but these false prophets spoke from their own imagination or demonic influence. What a contrast between the true speaker and false speakers. Yet, fallen humans flock to false teachers!

▣ Notice the lists of occultic practices that God’s people had assimilated from the surrounding nations.

1. mediums, The PARTICIPLE’s (BDB 981, KB 1371) basic meaning is to “ask” or “inquire.” Here to inquire of the spirit realm (e.g., YHWH, Josh. 9:14 or idols, Hosea 4:12).

The first NOUN, “medium” (BDB 15) is a difficult term to define. Some see the term as it is used in Lev. 19:31; 20:6,27 as (1) a pit or grave where spirits are lured, (2) form of “father” which refers to ancestor worship. It is translated in the LXX in Isa. 8:19 as “ventriloquist.” Because of this and Isa. 29:4 some think it means “to chirp” or “to mutter.” This would imply to “talk with a different voice.” However, from I Sam. 28:7-9, it is related to the ability to

call or talk to someone in the ground or to communicate with the dead or spirits of the underworld, i.e., necromancy.

The second NOUN, “spiritists” (BDB 396) was a form of the Hebrew word “to know” (BDB 395). It refers to one who has knowledge of the spiritual realm or has contact with those in the spiritual realm who have knowledge (cf. Isa. 8:19; 19:3).

2. wizards, This (BDB 396) is the term describing males with familiar spirits who communicate with the dead (cf. 19:3; Lev. 19:31; 20:6,27; Deut. 18:11; I Sam. 28:3,9; II Kgs. 21:6; 23:24
  - a. they whisper, BDB 861, KB 1050, *Pilpel* PARTICIPLE, cf. 29:4
  - b. they mutter, BDB 211, KB 237, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE

**8:20 “To the law and to the testimony”** The NRSV and REB translations see this phrase as finishing the sentence begun in v. 19. God’s people are to seek Him (i.e., 19:3; 31:1) and His word, not the dead, for truth and life!

But false speakers cannot know truth because they have no light (“dawn,” cf. 47:12-13). God has provided His prophets, His message, His written record (cf. 8:1,2,16).

**8:21 “they”** Literally all the VERBS in vv. 21 and 22 are SINGULAR, cf. NJB. This refers to the covenant people. They seek knowledge in false religions and wonder why their gods cannot produce prosperity. Prosperity is one of the covenant promises of Deuteronomy 27-28, but it is inseparably related to covenant fidelity!

In the end (i.e., the results of agricultural judgment, cf. v. 22; 5:13-17) they will speak evil of the civic leaders and their false gods (cf. NRSV and REB, which follow LXX).

It is possible that speaking evil is an allusion to Exod. 22:28 and Lev. 24:15-16. If so, then it is another example of covenant violations. For me the context of vv. 19-20 links it to false gods.

**8:22** This verses goes with chapter 9. The context is a play between gloom/darkness and light. Notice the parallel in 5:30. This was the opposite of YHWH’s initial creative purposes (cf. Jer. 4:23-26,27-28).





# ISAIAH 9

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB (follows LXX versing)
Birth and Reign of the Prince of Peace	The Government of the Promised Son	Transitional Verse	A Time of Trouble (8:21-9:1)	Deliverance (8:23b-10:4)
9:1-7	9:1-7 (1-2)	9:1	9:1a	9:1-2 (1-2)
(2-7)		The Messianic King	The Future King	
		9:2-7 (2-7)	9:1b-7 (2-7)	
	(3-5)			9:3 (3)
				9:4 (4)
	(6-7)			9:5-6 (5-6)
			The LORD Will Punish Israel	The Orders of the Northern Kingdom (9:7-10:4)
God's Anger with Israel's Arrogance	The Punishment of Samaria	Ephraim's Judgment, An Object Lesson for Judah (9:8-10:4)		9:7-11 (7-11)
9:8-12 (8-12)	9:8-12 (8-12a) (12b)	9:8-12 (8-12)	9:8-10	
			9:11-12	9:12-16 (12-16)
9:13-17 (13-17)	9:13-17 (13-17)	9:13-17 (13-17)	9:13-17	9:17-20 (17-20)
9:18-21 (18-21)	9:18-21 (18-21a) (21b)	9:18-21 (18-21)	9:18-10:4	

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Chapter 9 is in strong contrast, but linked to chapter 8:19-22 by word plays (i.e., darkness, gloom vs. light).
- B. Notice the play on the words
  1. darkness (BDB 365), 5:20; 8:22; 9:2; 29:18; 42:7; 45:3,7,19; 47:5; 49:9; 58:10; 59:9; 60:2
  2. gloom (BDB 734), 8:22; 9:1
  3. thick darkness (BDB 66), 8:22; 58:10; 59:9
  4. He will make glorious (BDB 457, KB 455, *Hiphil* PERFECT), 9:1
  5. "a great light" (BDB 21, ADJECTIVE, 152), 9:2 (twice)
  6. "deep darkness" (BDB 853), 9:2; Job often; Ps. 23:4; 44:19; 107:10,14; Jer.2:6; 13:16; Amos 5:8
  7. light will shine on them (BDB 618, KB 667, *Qal* PERFECT), 9:2These are powerful metaphors of judgment and restoration. God is light (cf. I John 1:5,7; 2:8,9,10; Rev. 21:22-25)!
- C. This chapter contains many PERFECT VERBS which denote completed action. It can refer to a past event or a future certainty. The purposeful ambiguity fits the multiple fulfillment prophecies. This was a current crisis and a future crisis; a current prophetic focus and a future prophetic focus (i.e., 7:14).
- D. It is common in prophetic literature for the strophes to swing from
  1. judgment to hope
  2. darkness to lightGod's word has benefits and consequences. Be careful of just focusing on one!

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:1-7

<sup>1</sup>But there will be no *more* gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make *it* glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.

**<sup>2</sup>The people who walk in darkness**

**Will see a great light;**

**Those who live in a dark land,**

**The light will shine on them.**

**<sup>3</sup>You shall multiply the nation,**

**You shall increase their gladness;**

**They will be glad in Your presence**

**As with the gladness of harvest,**

**As men rejoice when they divide the spoil.**

**<sup>4</sup>For You shall break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders,**

**The rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian.**

**<sup>5</sup>For every boot of the booted warrior in the *battle* tumult,**

**And cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire.**

**<sup>6</sup>For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;**

**And the government will rest on His shoulders;**

**And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,**

**Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.**

**<sup>7</sup>There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace,**

**On the throne of David and over his kingdom,**

**To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness**

**From then on and forevermore.**

**The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.**

**9:1 “no more gloom”** The MT has twenty three verses in chapter 8, but the LXX makes v. 23 chapter 9 verse 1.

The term “gloom” (BDB 734) appears in 8:22 and 8:23 (9:1) only. It links these contexts together. It is hard to know where prophecies start and stop. Be careful of letting modern chapter, verse, capitalization, and paragraphing cause you to miss related themes. An editor (or Isaiah himself or one of his disciples) compiled his sermons, oracles, and poems into an anthology. Often the only connections are word plays, historical setting, or eschatological contexts.

The term “no” can be understood (1) in a negative sense (if so, this verse concludes the previous context) or (2) if one adds “more” (NASB), then it is positive and starts the next context.

▣ **“for her who was in anguish”** The PRONOUN “her” probably refers to “land” (BDB 75, ארץ). Because two of the northern tribes of Israel are mentioned specifically, this must refer to (1) the northern tribes or (2) the covenant people as a whole.

**9:1,3 “He. . .He. . .You. . .You”** The translators of the NASB capitalize these PRONOUNS because they see them as referring to God’s activity.

▣ **“the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali”** There is a strong contrast between 8:19-22 and 9:1ff. Apparently, these northern two tribal allocations had suffered greatly in 732 B.C. under Tiglath-Pileser III (i.e., *Pul*, cf. II Kings 15:29). No one thought that anything good could come out of this region. This sets the stage for the fulfillment in Jesus’ day of His Galilean ministry (“but later He shall make it glorious,” cf. Matt. 4:12-17).

Because of the desert between Mesopotamia and Canaan, the armies had to follow the Euphrates River to its source and then drop down the coastal plain. That means they invaded from the north. Zebulun and Naphtali (along with the city of Dan) would be the first to suffer.

▣ **“Galilee of the Gentiles”** This literally means “circle of the nations” (BDB 165 II CONSTRUCT BDB 156). Assyria resettled many conquered people in this area. The term for Gentiles here is the normal term for the nations, *goy* (BDB 156, cf. 9:3). Sometimes it is used of Israel herself (cf. Gen. 12:2; 18:18; Exod. 19:6; Isa. 1:4).

In Jesus’ day this refers to (1) Galilean Jewry or (2) the Gentiles, which shows the universal nature of the coming ministry of the Messiah, which fits Isaiah’s emphasis on the inclusion of the nations.

**9:2 “Will see a great light”** Light is metaphorical for YHWH’s presence (cf. Deut. 33:2; Hab. 3:3; Rev. 21:22-24). Here, light (BDB 21) is metaphorical of the gospel (cf. Isa. 42:6; 49:6; 51:4; 60:1,3). No one expected the Messiah to minister to the “not-so-kosher” Galileans. This verse is a surprising prophecy of the specific area of Jesus’ ministry! No one expected “Galilee of the Gentiles” to become the initial out-bursting of “good news”!

**9:3 “You shall multiply the nation”** This (VERB, BDB 915, KB 1176, *Hiphil* PERFECT) may refer to YHWH’s original promise to the Patriarchs to increase Abraham’s seed.

1. stars of the sky (cf. Gen. 15:5; 26:4; Deut. 10:22; 28:62)
2. sand of the seashore (cf. Gen. 22:17; 32:12)
3. dust of the earth (cf. Gen. 13:16; 28:14; Num. 23:10)

▣ **“You shall increase their gladness”** The Hebrew MT (Kethiv) has the word “not” (BDB 518), but NASB translates it as “their.” The MT editors suggested in the margin (Qere) it be changed to “him” (they do this fourteen other places also). The LXX also has “him.”

The NOUN “gladness” (BDB 970) appears twice in the verse (also possibly in v. 17), as does the related VERB “rejoice” (BDB 162, KB 189, *Qal* IMPERFECT). The VERB form of “gladness” (BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* PERFECT) occurs in the verse. Obviously Isaiah is emphasizing this concept!

They are glad because of YHWH’s presence. The covenant God is with His people (i.e., Immanuel). Their gladness is described in two metaphorical expressions.

1. the harvest
2. dividing spoil

**9:4-5** Because YHWH is present (v. 3), He fights on their behalf (i.e., Holy War).

1. break the yoke of their burden (i.e., release from foreign domination, cf. Jer. 28:2; Ezek. 34:27)
2. break the staff on their shoulders
3. break the rod of their oppressor (staff and rod are symbols of foreign kings and their control, cf. 10:27)

The same VERB, “break,” is to be applied to all three, BDB 369, KB 365, *Hiphil* PERFECT, cf. 7:8; 8:9 (thrice).

As a God-empowered representative (i.e., Gideon) defeated the Midianites, so now God’s chosen instrument, Babylon, will destroy the Assyrian domination of Canaan. God is in control of world history and is particularly conscious of Canaan because of the seed of Abraham (i.e., the coming Messiah).

▣ **“as at the battle of Midian”** See 10:26 and Judges 6-8.

**9:5** The covenant people's enemies will be defeated and their clothing (i.e., shoes and cloaks) used for fuel for the fire. This is metaphorical of a complete and total victory. Several texts speak of the destruction of the military weaponry of the foreign armies because His people's trust and security must be in Him and His covenant promises, not their captured military weaponry (cf. Ps. 46:9; 76:3; Hos. 2:18).

The Divine Warrior of the conquest is again fighting for His people. Verse 4 is the perfect example!

**9:6-7** The NKJV marks these two verses off as a separate paragraph.

Verse 6 describes the special child, Immanuel.

1. government will rest on His shoulders; the special child, the hope of a righteous Davidic seed (cf. II Sam. 7) returns into view
2. His name (the character of His God)
  - a. Wonderful Counselor, this denotes a divine plan, cf. 14:26,27; 19:17
  - b. Mighty God, cf. 10:21
  - c. Eternal Father
  - d. Prince of Peace, Mic. 5:5

The first name could be two separate titles, but the other three are two word combinations. The fivefold names may reflect current practice in Egypt, where the new Pharaoh was given five new throne names at his coronation.

There are four compound titles. These are probably the child's new names when coronated king. The term Immanuel in 7:14 and 8:8-10, as well as the term "Mighty God" in 9:6, does not automatically imply Deity, but reflects the ideal king. The names reflect God's character which hopefully characterized the Davidic King. It must be remembered that these titles deal with (1) the area of administration, (2) military power, (3) pastoral care, and (4) the quality of the reign. The Deity of the Messiah is also implied, though not specifically, in Dan. 7:14; Jer. 32:18. It must be remembered that the Jews were not expecting the Messiah to be the physical incarnation of YHWH because of Israel's unique emphasis on monotheism! The Deity of Jesus and the personality of the Spirit are real problems for monotheism (i.e., Exod. 8:10; 9:14; Deut. 4:35,39; Isa. 40:18,25; 46:5). Only "Progressive Revelation" teaches this truth (cf. John 1:1-14; Phil. 2:6; Heb. 1:2-3). If the NT is true then OT monotheism must be nuanced (i.e., one divine essence with three eternal personal manifestations). The hyperbolic OT language has become literal! But the literal fulfillment of OT prophecies about geographical and national Israel have been universalized to include "the nations." See Special Topic at 1:3. Genesis 3:15 is realized and summarized in John 3:16; 4:42; I Tim. 2:4; Titus 2:11; II Pet. 3:9; I John 2:1; 4:14).

Verse 7 describes His reign.

1. eternal and universal government (cf. Mic. 5:4)
2. eternal and universal peace (cf. Mic. 5:5a)
3. reigns on Davidic throne (cf. 16:5; II Samuel 7)
4. establishes justice and righteousness forever (these two NOUNS often used together, cf. 32:16; 33:5; 59:14)
5. the zeal of YHWH is the guarantee of its reality

Verse 7 certainly sounds like an eternal reign (cf. Dan. 2:44; 4:3,34; 6:26; 7:13-14,27; Ezek. 37:25; Mic. 4:7; 5:4; II Pet. 1:11), not a limited millennial reign (see my notes in the Revelation Commentary, "Crucial Introduction" and Introduction to chapter 20 at [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org)). This promise is the essence of the concept of a new age of the Spirit! The total and complete reversal of the Fall. The reinstatement of God' ideal (i.e., the fellowship of the Garden of Eden).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:8-12**

<sup>8</sup>The Lord sends a message against Jacob,  
And it falls on Israel.

<sup>9</sup>And all the people know *it*,  
*That is*, Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria,  
Asserting in pride and in arrogance of heart:

<sup>10</sup>"The bricks have fallen down, But we will rebuild with smooth stones;  
The sycamores have been cut down,  
But we will replace *them* with cedars."

<sup>11</sup>Therefore the LORD raises against them adversaries from Rezin  
And spurs their enemies on,

<sup>12</sup>The Arameans on the east and the Philistines on the west;  
And they devour Israel with gaping jaws.  
In *spite of* all this, His anger does not turn away  
And His hand is still stretched out.

**9:8-12** God has sent a clear message to the Northern Tribes. They have heard it and understood it (cf. v. 9a), yet their response is unacceptable.

1. They assert in pride (BDB 144) and arrogance (BDB 152)
  - a. they will rebuild after God's judgment, even better, v. 10
  - b. they will replant after God's judgment, even better, v. 10
2. YHWH raises (BDB 960, KB 1305, *Piel* IMPERFECT) and stirs up (BDB 1127, *Pilpel* IMPERFECT, only here and possibly 19:2)
  - a. Syria
  - b. Philistines
3. Yet still YHWH is agitated (cf. vv. 12,17,21)
  - a. His anger does not turn away
  - b. His hand is still stretched out

**9:8-9** "Israel. . .Ephraim. . .Samaria" These three names designate the Northern Ten Tribes after the split in 922 B.C.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:13-17**

<sup>13</sup>Yet the people do not turn back to Him who struck them,  
Nor do they seek the LORD of hosts.

<sup>14</sup>So the Lord cuts off head and tail from Israel,  
*Both* palm branch and bulrush in a single day.

<sup>15</sup>The head is the elder and honorable man,  
And the prophet who teaches falsehood is the tail.

<sup>16</sup>For those who guide this people are leading *them* astray;  
And those who are guided by them are brought to confusion.

<sup>17</sup>Therefore the Lord does not take pleasure in their young men,  
Nor does He have pity on their orphans or their widows;  
For every one of them is godless and an evildoer,  
And every mouth is speaking foolishness.

**In spite of all this, His anger does not turn away  
And His hand is still stretched out.**

**9:13-17** The reason for YHWH's continued anger is the lack of Israel's response.

1. They do not turn back (i.e., repent, lit. "turn," BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* PERFECT)
2. They do not seek (BDB 205, KB 233, *Qal* PERFECT) the LORD of hosts

Therefore, they are completely (head ["the elders"] and tail [prophets] cut off) destroyed! They are leading the people astray (BDB 1073, KB 1766, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE) so they will be confused (lit. "shallowed up," BDB 118, KB 134, *Pual* PARTICIPLE). Jesus refers to this kind of leader in Matt. 15:14; 23:16,24. When your light has become darkness, how great is the darkness! He has no pity on (NRSV, MT, "rejoice over")

1. young men (v. 17)
2. orphans (v. 17)
3. widows (v. 17)

Usually YHWH defends these (i.e., Deut. 10:18), but here they are judged along with the rest of the rebellious people of God!

Because they are all

1. godless (BDB 338)
2. evil doers (BDB 949, KB 1269, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE)
3. speaking foolishness (BDB 615)

Verses 8-12 are unified by the recurrent phrase ("His hand is still stretched out") at 12c,d; 17e,f; and 21c,d. Also notice the context probably runs through 10:4, where the phrase is repeated again. Be careful of relying too much on chapter and verse divisions. They are not original, not inspired!

**9:16**

**NASB** "brought to confusion"

**NKJV** "are destroyed"

**NRSV** "were left in confusion"

**TEV** "totally confused them"

**NJB** "are swallowed up"

**LXX** "devour them"

**Peshitta** "to sink low"

**REB** "are engulfed"

The Hebrew root (BDB 118, KB 134) basically means "to swallow down," "to swallow up" (cf. 25:7,8; 28:4; 49:19), but there are possibly other roots

1. to announce (KB 135 II, cf. Pro. 19:28)
2. to confuse (KB 135 III, cf. 3:12; 19:3; 28:7) with too much wine (NASB)

"Confused" fits the parallelism best! Remember, context, context, context determines meaning, not a lexicon!

**9:17** "nor does He have pity on their orphans or their widows" This is the ultimate symbol of God's turning away. It is exactly the opposite of God's promises in Deuteronomy.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:18-21**

<sup>18</sup>For wickedness burns like a fire;

It consumes briars and thorns;

It even sets the thickets of the forest aflame

And they roll upward in a column of smoke.

<sup>19</sup>By the fury of the LORD of hosts the land is burned up,  
And the people are like fuel for the fire;  
No man spares his brother.

<sup>20</sup>They slice off *what is* on the right hand but *still* are hungry,  
And they eat *what is* on the left hand but they are not satisfied;  
Each of them eats the flesh of his own arm.

<sup>21</sup>Manasseh *devours* Ephraim, and Ephraim Manasseh,  
And together they are against Judah.  
In *spite of* all this, His anger does not turn away  
And His hand is still stretched out.

**9:18-21** These verses describe the judgment of God on the Northern Tribes. The judgment is characterized as a fire that consumes the land. See Special Topic: Fire at 1:31. Even the people are fuel for the fire!

The evil of the people is described as

1. no man spares his brother
2. steal but are still hungry
3. eat but are not satisfied (even their own bodies, cf. Jer. 19:9; the Targums translate it as “fellow” and thereby JPSOA “his own kindred”)

God’s covenant people are against each other!

**9:18 “wickedness burns like a fire”** It is interesting that fire can be positive or negative.

1. here, negative (wickedness)
2. 62:1, positive (salvation)

Context, context, context determines meaning. Be careful of a preset definition of biblical words!



# ISAIAH 10

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Assyria Is God's Instrument	The Punishment of Samaria (9:8-10:4)	Ephraim's Judgment An Object Lesson for Judah (9:8-10:4)	The LORD Will Punish Israel (9:8-10:4)	The Ordeals of the Northern Kingdom (9:7-10:4)
10:1-4 (1-4)	10:1-4 (1-4)	10:1-4 (1-4)	10:1-4	10:1-4
	Arrogant Assyria Also Judged	Woe, O Assyria!	The Emperor of Assyria As the Instrument of God	Against the King of Assyria
10:5-11 (5-11)	10:5-11 (5-11)	10:5-11 (5-11)	10:5-6 10:7-11	10:5-11 (5-11)
10:12-14 (13-14)	10:12-14 (13-14)	10:12-14 (13-14)	10:12 10:13-14	10:12-14 (13-14)
10:15-19 (15-19)	10:15-19 (15-19)	10:15-19 (15-19)	10:15 10:16-19	10:15-19 (15-19)
A Remnant Will Return	The Returning Remnant of Israel	Only a Remnant Will Return	A Few Will Come Back	The Little Remnant
10:20-23 (21-22)	10:20-23 (20-23)	10:20-23 Oracle of Promise	10:20-23 The LORD Will Punish Assyria	10:20-23 (20-23) Trust in God
10:24-27	10:24-27 (27)	10:24-27a The Approach of the Assyrians 10:27b-32 (27b-32)	10:24-27 The Invader Attacks	20:24-27 (24b-27) The Invasion
10:28-32 (28-32)	10:28-32 (28-32)	The LORD, the Forester, Will Cut Down Assyria	10:28-32	10:28-34 (28-34)
10:33-34 (33-34)	10:33-34 (33-34)	10:33-34 (33-34)	10:33-34	

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to

following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:1-4

<sup>1</sup>**Woe to those who enact evil statutes  
And to those who constantly record unjust decisions,**  
<sup>2</sup>**So as to deprive the needy of justice  
And rob the poor of My people of *their* rights,  
So that widows may be their spoil  
And that they may plunder the orphans.**  
<sup>3</sup>**Now what will you do in the day of punishment,  
And in the devastation which will come from afar?  
To whom will you flee for help?  
And where will you leave your wealth?**  
<sup>4</sup>**Nothing *remains* but to crouch among the captives  
Or fall among the slain.  
In *spite of* all this, His anger does not turn away  
And His hand is still stretched out.**

**10:1 “Woe”** This INTERJECTION (BDB 222) is used often in Isaiah (and Jeremiah). It is translated (NASB 1995 Update)

1. “alas,” 1:4; 17:12
2. “ah,” 1:24
3. “woe,” 5:8,11,18,20,21,22; 10:1,5; 18:1; 28:1; 29:1,15; 30:1; 31:1; 33:1; 45:9,10 (i.e., woe oracles)
4. “ho,” 55:1; also possibly 10:5

It denotes anguish and pain or a summons (i.e., #4 above). There is another INTERJECTION (BDB 17), which is usually translated “woe,” which expresses grief and despair (cf. 3:9,11; 6:5; 24:16 and 8 times in Jeremiah).

▣ The parallelism of v. 1a and b links the civil leaders (i.e., those who enact evil statutes) and judges (who constantly record unjust decisions, cf. 5:23). Israel's leadership has knowingly violated the Mosaic covenant emphasis on care for the poor, socially ostracized, and socially powerless people (cf. v. 2; 1:17,23; 3:14,15; 11:4; Deut. 16:19; 24:17; 27:19; Pro. 17:23; 18:5; Amos 4:1; 5:12).

**10:2** Things are so upside down that the very ones YHWH seeks to protect (i.e., widows and orphans) have become the spoil and plunder!

**10:3** A series of questions spells out the fate of these exploiters! One day, whether temporally or eschatologically, the Creator will call His creatures, made in His image and likeness, to give an account of the stewardship of the gift of life (cf. v. 4). YHWH is a moral, ethical, compassionate Deity and He demands these characteristics in His covenant people so that “the nations” may know and come to Him!! Israel was giving a false message!

**10:4** “His hand is still stretched out” This is a recurrent phrase in this literary unit (cf. 9:12,17,21). It is an anthropomorphic (see Special Topic at 6:1) way of expressing God’s unrelenting judgment.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:5-11**

**<sup>5</sup>Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger  
And the staff in whose hands is My indignation,  
<sup>6</sup>I send it against a godless nation  
And commission it against the people of My fury  
To capture booty and to seize plunder,  
And to trample them down like mud in the streets.  
<sup>7</sup>Yet it does not so intend,  
Nor does it plan so in its heart,  
But rather it is its purpose to destroy  
And to cut off many nations.  
<sup>8</sup>For it says, "Are not my princes all kings?  
<sup>9</sup>Is not Calno like Carchemish,  
Or Hamath like Arpad,  
Or Samaria like Damascus?  
<sup>10</sup>As my hand has reached to the kingdoms of the idols,  
Whose graven images *were* greater than those of Jerusalem and Samaria,  
<sup>11</sup>Shall I not do to Jerusalem and her images  
Just as I have done to Samaria and her idols?"**

**10:5-19** This is a literary unit on God’s activity in the nation of Assyria. It was the cruelest ANE power. It was brutal toward captive people groups. YHWH will use this godless pagan nation to accomplish His purposes (cf. vv. 5b; 6b; as Hab. 1:12-17 asked God about His use of the Babylonian exile). God uses evil to do His bidding! He did not make them (i.e., Satan, demons, fallen angels, evil empires), but He directs them for the larger good (cf. Job 12:23; Ps.47:7-8; 66:7; Dan. 2:21; Acts 17:26, i.e., His universal redemptive plan, see Special Topic at 1:3).

However, evil reaps the consequences of their acts. One day they, too, will be judged (cf. Deut. 32:34-43; Isa. 14:24-27; 30:27-33; 31:5-9). What Assyria did to others, Babylon (cf. 13:5) will do to them!

**10:5** “Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger” God’s tool for punishing His people’s rebellion was the cruel nation of Assyria (cf. 7:17; 8:7). However, they were responsible for their acts (cf. 10:24-27). The arrogance of Assyria is seen in vv. 8-11,12.

**10:6 “a godless nation. . .the people of my fury”** Oh, my, this refers to the nation of Israel (cf. 9:17,19)! This same phrase is used of Israel in 19:17; 32:6. What irony, the covenant people are called “godless” and made morally equivalent to “godless” Assyria!

▣ **“To capture booty and to seize plunder”** As v. 21, “a remnant will return,” reflects Isaiah’s first son’s name (cf. 7:3), this reflects his second son’s symbolic name (cf. 8:1,3).

**10:7 “Yet it does not so intend**

**Nor does it plan so in its heart”** Assyria did not know that YHWH was directing its actions for His purposes. Assyria was only after more and more spoil.

The intent of YHWH for the king of Assyria is revealed in a series of *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTS (v. 6) against Israel.

1. take spoil (BDB 1021, KB 1531)
2. seize plunder (BDB 102, KB 117)
3. tread down (VERBAL BDB 962, KB 1321, NOUN BDB 942)

The intent of the King of Assyria is expressed in two *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTS in v. 7c,d.

1. to destroy (BDB 1029, KB 1552)
2. to cut off (BDB 503, KB 500)

**10:8-11** The King of Assyria’s thoughts (i.e., “boasts,” TEV) are revealed in these verses

1. all his military commanders are kings (NRSV, TEV, NJB, REB, Peshitta), v. 8
2. his (Tiglath-Pileser III or possibly Sennacherib in 701 B.C.) army has defeated several other trans-Euphrates cities and nations, along with all their gods, v. 9
  - a. Calno (or Calneh), city in northern Syria (cf. Amos 6:2) fell in 742 B.C. (all these dates are estimates only)
  - b. Carchemish, major city of the Hittites near the headwaters of the Euphrates, joined Assyrian coalition in 738 B.C.
  - c. Hamath, city on the northern boundary of Israel (cf. II Chr. 8:4) on the Orontes River, fell in 738 B.C.
  - d. Arpad, city in northwest Syria fell in 741 B.C
  - e. Samaria (capital of Israel) fell in 722 B.C to Sargon II
  - f. Damascus (capital of Syria) fell in 732 B.C.
3. he threatened to destroy Jerusalem and her “idols” as he had Samaria, v. 11. He had no knowledge of the distinction between “idols” (cf. 2:8) and the true worship of YHWH.

Just a word about which Assyrian invasion is depicted. The place names follow a traditional invasion route of ANE empires from Mesopotamia. Because of the desert, they had to follow the Euphrates River to its headwaters and then go south along the coastal plain. The problem with identifying which Assyrian invasion is complicated because Sennacherib, who did approach Jerusalem to besiege it, actually came from the south of the city in 701 B.C. The fall of the cities mentioned occurred under Tiglath-Pileser III (i.e., *Pul*). Therefore, I think the route was “idealized” as a northern invader.

**10:11 “images”** This is an interesting word (BDB 47). Its basic meaning is uncertain, but it is spelled similarly to *Elohim*, which has caused scholars to assume it refers to weak and non-existent idols (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 411). Monotheism is the uniqueness of Israel’s faith. There are other spiritual beings, but only one true God (cf. Deut. 4:35,39; 6:8; 32:39; Isa. 43:9-11; 45:21-22; Jer. 2:11; 5:7,10; Rom. 3:30; I Cor. 8:4,6; I Tim. 2:5; James 2:19). The idols represent nothing, only the false hopes and fears (superstitions) of fallen humanity realizing there is more to reality than the physical, but unable to comprehend spiritual truth (i.e., revelation).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:12-14**

<sup>12</sup>So it will be that when the Lord has completed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, *He will say*, "I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the pomp of his haughtiness."

<sup>13</sup>For he has said,

"By the power of my hand and by my wisdom I did *this*,

For I have understanding;

And I removed the boundaries of the peoples

And plundered their treasures,

And like a mighty man I brought down *their* inhabitants,

<sup>14</sup>And my hand reached to the riches of the peoples like a nest,

And as one gathers abandoned eggs, I gathered all the earth;

And there was not one that flapped its wing or opened *its* beak or chirped."

**10:12-14** YHWH asserts His control of Assyria and her victories. He will judge the king of Assyria (v. 12) for his

1. arrogant heart
2. haughtiness of his eyes

The Assyrian king's pride is shown in a series of self praises (vv. 12-14), which sound very much like Assyrian documents of the period (see *The IVP Bible Background Commentary OT*, p. 599)

1. by the power of my hand
2. by my wisdom

He robbed the nations on the west banks of the Euphrates as one robs a bird's nest!

**10:13**

**NASB** "like a mighty man"

**NKJV** "like a valiant man"

**NRSV, TEV,**

**REB** "like a bull"

**NJB** "like a hero"

The ADJECTIVE'S (BDB 7) basic meaning, "strong," can refer to

1. mighty/violent man, Job 24:22; 34:20; Jer. 46:15; Lam. 1:15
2. stubborn minded, Isa. 46:12
3. angels, Ps. 78:25
4. animals
  - a. bulls, Isa. 10:13 may refer to a bull because a winged bull was the symbol of Assyria (i.e., on the sides of the Ishtar gates, cf. Ps. 22:12; 68:30; Isa. 34:7)
  - b. horses, Jdgs. 5:22; Jer. 8:16; 47:3; 50:11

**10:14** The Bible often uses bird metaphors to describe God's protection and care (cf. Exod. 19:4; Deut. 32:11; Ruth 2:12; Isa. 31:5; Matt. 23:37; Luke 13:34), but here the metaphor is reversed! God has removed His protection!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:15-19**

<sup>15</sup>Is the axe to boast itself over the one who chops with it?

Is the saw to exalt itself over the one who wields it?

*That would be like a club wielding those who lift it,*

**Or like a rod lifting him who is not wood.**

**<sup>16</sup>Therefore the Lord, the GOD of hosts, will send a wasting disease among his stout warriors;  
And under his glory a fire will be kindled like a burning flame.**

**<sup>17</sup>And the light of Israel will become a fire and his Holy One a flame,  
And it will burn and devour his thorns and his briars in a single day.**

**<sup>18</sup>And He will destroy the glory of his forest and of his fruitful garden, both soul and body,  
And it will be as when a sick man wastes away.**

**<sup>19</sup>And the rest of the trees of his forest will be so small in number  
That a child could write them down.**

**10:15-19** YHWH responds to the boasts of the King of Assyria by questioning.

1. Is the power in the axe or the one who used the axe?
2. Is the power in the saw or the one who wields the saw?
3. Is the power in the club or the one who swings the club?
4. Is the power in a scepter or in the one who lifts the scepter?

YHWH will judge him and his army in one day (v. 17). This refers to (1) Tiglath-Pileser III or (2) specifically to Sennacherib (701 B.C.), recorded in Isaiah 36-38; II Kgs. 18:17-21:11; II Chr. 32:9-24, where 185,000 soldiers die before the walls of Jerusalem in response to the arrogance of the king of Assyria and his military leaders (#2 fits best, but did not happen until decades after Tiglath-Pileser III took Samaria). There is a difference between the God of Israel and the idols of the nations!

**10:16** YHWH is in control of history. This is the basic premise of monotheism linked to an involved Deity. He is present and active in His creation. In the OT all causality is attributed to YHWH (cf. Deut. 32:29; Job 5:18; Isa. 45:7; Hos. 6:1; Amos 3:6). It was a way to affirm monotheism. Exactly how, when, where He acts is unknown, but there is

1. an eternal redemptive plan
2. a covenant people
3. a coming Messiah
4. a heart for “the nations”

History is not cyclical, but teleological!

**10:17** Light (see note at 9:2) and fire are symbols of Deity (cf. 9:19; 29:6; 30:27; 31:9; 33:11-12,14). See Special Topic: Fire at 1:31.

**10:18 “both soul and body”** Mankind has both a physical component and a life force. We as humans are prepared for life on this planet and for fellowship with a non-corporeal Deity! We share planet-life with animals, but we are creatures of eternity!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:20-23**

**<sup>20</sup>Now in that day the remnant of Israel, and those of the house of Jacob who have escaped, will never again rely on the one who struck them, but will truly rely on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel.**

**<sup>21</sup>A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God.**

**<sup>22</sup>For though your people, O Israel, may be like the sand of the sea,**

**Only a remnant within them will return;**

**A destruction is determined, overflowing with righteousness.**

**<sup>23</sup>For a complete destruction, one that is decreed, the Lord GOD of hosts will execute in the midst of the whole land.**

**10:20-23** This paragraph focuses on two theological truths.

1. YHWH will protect and restore a faithful remnant (“truly rely on the LORD,” BDB 1043, KB 1612, *Niphal* PERFECT) to accomplish His purposes with Abraham’s seed.
2. “In that day” refers to a day of deliverance. One is never sure if this promise is fulfilled in Persia or the Maccabees or the end-time. The book that has really helped me understand the genre of Prophecy and Apocalyptic is D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic*.

**10:20** “will never again rely on the one who struck them” Ahaz trusted/relied on Assyria for help instead of YHWH, but not so in the future. They (i.e., the covenant people) will rely on YHWH alone!

**10:21** “A remnant will return” This remnant is described as from Jacob and Israel. In this context it must refer to the Northern Ten Tribes that split off in 922 B.C. and were exiled by Assyria in 722 B.C. Few of them returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel and Joshua after Cyrus’ edict in 538 B.C. allowed all the exiled people groups to return to their native lands. See Special Topic: The Remnant, Three Senses at 1:9. The phrase translates Isaiah’s first son’s name (Shear-jashub) who went with his father to confront King Ahaz (cf. 7:1-3).

▣ “to the mighty God” This is the same title used of the Messiah in 9:6. It is found only in these two places.

**10:22** “may be like the sand of the sea” This is a reference to the promise of many descendants, which was a major part of the Abrahamic covenant (cf. Gen. 22:17; 32:12).

What a sad contrast occurs when the promises of YHWH to the Patriarchs of many descendants

1. like the stars
2. like the dust
3. like the sand

is reduced through covenant disobedience and lack of personal trust (cf. v. 20) to only a few to return (cf. vv. 21-22). Here is the nexus of God’s intended blessing and fallen human ability!

▣ “A destruction is determined, overflowing with righteousness” Israel’s judgment has been

1. determined by YHWH, v. 22
2. decreed by YHWH, v. 23

Both of these words (NASB 1995) translate the same VERB (BDB 358, KB 356, cf. 28:22; Dan. 9:26,27; 11:36). God will judge His people (v. 22). Verse 23 is (1) parallel to this or (2) YHWH will judge all the earth (LXX, Peshitta, NRSV. Paul quotes the LXX in Rom. 9:27-28). Context fits option #1 better. YHWH said He would do it; He did it!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:24-27**

**<sup>24</sup>Therefore thus says the Lord GOD of hosts, "O My people who dwell in Zion, do not fear the Assyrian who strikes you with the rod and lifts up his staff against you, the way Egypt did. <sup>25</sup>For in a very little while My indignation against you will be spent and My anger will be directed to their destruction." <sup>26</sup>The LORD of hosts will arouse a scourge against him like the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb; and His staff will be over the sea and He will lift it up the way He did in Egypt.**

**<sup>27</sup>So it will be in that day, that his burden will be removed from your shoulders and his yoke from your neck, and the yoke will be broken because of fatness.**

**10:24-27** The paragraph again stresses YHWH's moral righteousness which is reflected in judgment against evil.

1. Israel experienced YHWH's righteous anger (cf. v. 22)
2. Assyria (cf. Isa. 37:26-28)
3. Like His wrath in Egypt during the Exodus (cf. Exod. 14:16,27)
4. Like Gideon against the Midianites (Judges 6-8)

YHWH's actions, past and future, described in v. 27, are parallel to His action (cf. 14:25) through the Messiah in 9:4, which also mentions the battle against Midia (an idiom of YHWH's total defeat of an enemy cf. 9:4; Ps. 83:9-11).

**10:24 “do not fear the Assyrian”** This VERB (BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is used as a JUSSIVE. The implication is “fear YHWH who will bring judgment on them” (vv. 25-27).

**10:26 “the rock of Oreb”** Gideon summoned the Ephraimites to help him wipe out the remaining retreating Midianites. Two of the leaders were caught and killed (cf. Jdgs. 7:24-25). The place where this occurred took on the names of the Midianite leaders, Oreb and Zeeb. The exact location is unknown.

#### **10:27**

**NASB “the yoke will be broken because of fatness”**

**NKJV “the yoke will be destroyed because of the anointing oil”**

**LXX, REB “the yoke will be destroyed from off your shoulders”**

**Peshitta “the yoke shall be destroyed from your neck because of your strength”**

From these translations you can see the options.

1. leave out the phrase “because of fatness,” LXX, REB
2. refers to the Messiah, NKJV (i.e., anointed)
3. Peshitta sees it as a reference to strength and growth (cf. Deut. 32:15), which may contrast v. 16.

Since chapters 7-12 relate to the special children of the New Age, including the Messiah, I like NKJV's understanding as the one that makes the most sense in this large literary unit.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:28-32**

**<sup>28</sup>He has come against Aiath,**

**He has passed through Migron;**

**At Michmash he deposited his baggage.**

**<sup>29</sup>They have gone through the pass, saying,**

**“Geba will be our lodging place.”**

**Ramah is terrified, and Gibeah of Saul has fled away.**

**<sup>30</sup>Cry aloud with your voice, O daughter of Gallim!**

**Pay attention, Laishah and wretched Anathoth!**

**<sup>31</sup>Madmenah has fled.**

**The inhabitants of Gebim have sought refuge.**

**<sup>32</sup>Yet today he will halt at Nob;**

**He shakes his fist at the mountain of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.**



**10:28-32** H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, vol. 1, p. 40, describes this stanza (strophe) as “The Strategic Assyrian Advance That Almost Took Zion Described in Terms of Bulletin-from-the-Front.” Many geographical locations are mentioned and what was occurring at that location as the Assyrian mercenary army approached.

▣ **“Aiath”** This is Ai close to Jericho. The places mentioned show the movement of the Assyrians toward Jerusalem from the north.

**10:30 “Cry aloud. . .Pay attention”** These are both IMPERATIVES.

1. BDB 843, KB 1007, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. BDB 904, KB 1151, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

This breaks the pattern of vv. 28-32. If this stanza is “reports from the front lines,” then v. 30 is a comment from the prophet, not an Assyrian messenger.

▣

<b>NASB</b>	<b>“wretched Anathoth”</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>“poor Anathoth”</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>“Answer her, O Anathoth”</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>“Answer, people of Anathoth”</b>
<b>NJB, REB</b>	<b>“Anathoth will listen”</b>
<b>Peshitta</b>	<b>“Answer me, O Anathoth”</b>

This is from either

1. the VERB “answer,” BDB 772, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. an ADJECTIVE “poor,” BDB 776

They both have the same consonants. UBS Hebrew Text Project gives #2 a “C” rating (considerable doubt). It is surely possible that “poor” and “Anathoth” are a sound play (NASB Study Bible, p. 974).

**10:32** The second line of poetry expresses the Assyrian’s contempt for Judah’s God and His temple.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:33-34**

**<sup>33</sup>Behold, the Lord, the GOD of hosts, will lop off the boughs with a terrible crash;  
Those also who are tall in stature will be cut down  
And those who are lofty will be abased.  
<sup>34</sup>He will cut down the thickets of the forest with an iron *axe*,  
And Lebanon will fall by the Mighty One.**

**10:33-34** Verses 33-34 are hard to define as to who is “lopped off.” It seems to be a literary link between vv. 16-19 and 11:1. Isaiah often used forestry imagery. Whoever compiled the scroll of Isaiah used word plays and themes as a way to link together Isaiah’s recorded prophetic messages. We must remember that the major truth of the literary unit and stanzas are more important than

1. the details
2. the exact historical setting of each literary building block

Our love for the Bible and desire to know more have caused us to treat the Bible in non-contextual, literal ways, which destroy the literary nature of Scripture and especially prophecy!

I think this is an elaboration of vv. 16-19. The imagery is the destruction of a forest, which symbolizes the Assyrian army and its leadership.

**10:33** The second half of this verse has several terms found only here in the OT. This is why the central truth of the paragraph (prose) or stanza (poetry) is crucial. The main truth or imagery is key, not each and every detail.

**10:34**

**NASB, NKJV** “by the Mighty One”

**NRSV** “with its majestic trees”

**TEV** “the finest trees”

**NJB** “of a Mighty One”

**LXX** “with its lofty ones”

**REB** “with its noble trees”

This phrase can refer to

1. God (cf. v. 33a; v. 34a)
2. the tall trees of Lebanon (cf. v. 33b,c; LXX)

# ISAIAH 11

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Righteous Reign of the Branch	The Reign of Jesse's Offspring	The Messianic King	The Peaceful Kingdom	A Descendant of David
11:1-9 (1-9)	11:1-5 (1-5)	11:1-3a (1-3a)	11:1  11:2-5 (2-5)	11:1-4 (1-4)
		11:3b (3b)		
		11:4-9 (4-9)		
				11:5 (5)
	11:6-9 (6-9)		11:6-9 (6-9)	11:6-9 (6-9)
		The Messianic Age	The Exiled People Will Return	Return From the Dispersion
11:10 (10)	11:10 (10)	11:10	11:10-16	11:10-16 (10-16)
The Restored Remnant				
11:11-16 (11-16)	11:11 (11)	11:11-16 (12-16)		
	11:12-16 (12-16)			

### **READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)**

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph

2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## BACKGROUND STUDY

- A. Chapter 11 is in sharp contrast to chapter 10, vv. 33-34, which describes the fall of Assyria (cf. 10:15-19).
- B. As Assyria is cut down as a great forest, so the Messiah will rise from the stump of Jesse. Isaiah often uses imagery from trees.
- C. Isaiah 11 reflects the promises to David's descendants found in II Samuel 7.
- D. This ideal eschatological period is also described in 2:2-4; 9:1-7. Chapter 11, v. 10 could go with vv. 1-9 or vv. 11-16 depending on how one views the scope of the Messianic reign (i.e., the Promised Land restored or the whole earth).

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:1-5

- <sup>1</sup>Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse,  
And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.**
- <sup>2</sup>The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him,  
The spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
The spirit of counsel and strength,  
The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.**
- <sup>3</sup>And He will delight in the fear of the LORD,  
And He will not judge by what His eyes see,  
Nor make a decision by what His ears hear;**
- <sup>4</sup>But with righteousness He will judge the poor,  
And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth;  
And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,  
And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.**
- <sup>5</sup>Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins,  
And faithfulness the belt about His waist.**

**11:1 “a shoot”** This rare word found only here in the OT, (“twig,” “branch,” or “shoot” translated “rod” in Pro. 14:3, BDB 310, KB 307) obviously refers to a supernatural Davidic descendant (cf. 6:13; II Samuel 7; Rev. 22:16) out of a seemingly dead stump (i.e., exiled Judah) will come a new king! This imagery (but different Hebrew word) is seen again in the Suffering Servant Song of Isaiah 52:13-53:12 (i.e., v. 2).

The Jewish Study Bible (p. 807) adds an interesting comment on “stump.”

“If the translation ‘stump’ is correct, then the passage may presume that the Davidic dynasty will (or has) come to an end; this reading would deviate significantly from Isaiah’s notion that Davidic kings will reign eternally (cf. II Sam. 7:8-16; Ps. 89:20-37). But the Hebrew ‘geza’ refers not only to a stump of a tree that has been cut down but also to the trunk of a living tree.”

I cannot confirm this meaning for “shoot” unless it is 40:24.

▣ **“from the stem of Jesse”** Jesse was King David’s father. This future descendant is mentioned in v. 10; 9:7; 16:5.

The OT gives the lineage of the Special Coming One, the Anointed One.

1. from the tribe of Judah, Gen. 49:8-12, esp. v. 10 and Rev. 5:5
2. from the family of Jesse, II Samuel 7

The special child of the new age has now been identified as a special ruler. His character will characterize the new age (cf. Jer. 23:5).

▣ **“a branch from his roots”** The NOUN “branch,” “sprout,” or “shoot” (BDB 666, cf. 14:19; 60:21; Dan. 11:7) is parallel to “branch” or “sprout” (BDB 855, cf. 4:2; 61:11). New growth will come! See Special Topic at 4:2.

▣ **“will bear fruit”** The MT has the VERB “bear fruit” (פרה, BDB 826, KB 963, *Qal* IMPERFECT, Dead Sea Scrolls, NASB), but most ancient and modern versions assume a similar VERB, פרח (BDB 827).

1. NKJV, NRSV, Peshitta, “shall grow out”
2. NJB, “will grow”
3. LXX, Targums, “shall come up”
4. REB, “will spring from”
5. JPSOA, “shall sprout”

The second option fits the parallelism best!

**11:2 “the Spirit”** Many have tried to relate this passage to the seven-fold spirits of Rev. 1:4. This seems doubtful to me. The MT lists six characteristics, but the LXX adds a seventh, “piety,” in place of “fear” in v. 2, but then adds “fear” from v. 3. However, this does relate to the titles of Isa. 9:6 and describes the king fully equipped by God in insight, administration, and piety. The Spirit of the Lord abides on him as He did on David (cf. I Sam. 16:13).

The personality of the “Spirit” is not fully revealed in the OT. In the OT the Spirit is YHWH’s personal influence to accomplish His purposes, much like the “Angel of the LORD.” It is not until the NT that His full personality and Deity are revealed. See Special Topic: The Trinity at 6:8. See Special Topic: The Personhood of the Spirit at 32:15-20.

The other problem with the word (BDB 924) is that it can refer to human characteristics or divine action.

▣ **“will rest on him”** The VERB (BDB 628, KB 679) is a *Qal* PERFECT denoting a settled condition. It will abide and remain. This same truth is stated in different ways in 42:1; 59:21; 61:1; Matt. 3:16; Luke 4:18.

▣ **“the spirit of. . .”** Basically there are three groups of gifts.

1. intellectual
  - a. wisdom, BDB 315 (opposite of 10:13)
  - b. understanding, BDB 108 (see first pair in Deut. 4:6)
2. effective administration (cf. 9:6-7)
  - a. counsel, BDB 420

- b. strength, BDB 150  
(Reign of peace through military power, cf. II Kgs. 18:20)
- 3. personal piety
  - a. knowledge of the Lord, BDB 395
  - b. fear of the LORD, BDB 432 (cf. v. 3)

This same type of description is found in 2:2-4; 9:6-7; 42:1-4. It will be a time of justice, righteousness, and peace.

**11:3 “will delight”** This is literally “breathe in” (BDB 926, KB 1195, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT). This is used in the sense of the pleasing smell of the sacrifice or incense rising to God (i.e., Gen. 8:21).

☐ **“in the fear of the LORD”** This term “fear” (BDB 432) denotes a respect for the awesomeness of God. It was meant to keep the covenant people from sinning (cf. Exod. 20:20; Deut. 4:10; 6:24). King David feared YHWH (cf. II Sam. 23:3). This Messiah, the new David, perfectly reflects this reverence as the ideal example of a “true Israelite.” Note how it forms the introduction to Proverbs (cf. 1:7; also note 2:5; 14:26,27)!

☐ **“He will not judge by what His eyes see”** Because of the gifts of the Spirit this special Davidic ruler will be able to discern truth and not be tricked by false testimony. He will be the perfect righteous judge. The kings of Israel functioned as the last resort for justice.

**11:4** Does it surprise you that poverty and oppression will continue into the new age? This is the kind of literalism that causes confusion. This verse’s purpose is the character of the Ruler, not a description of a millennial society! It was meant to show that He will bring conformity to the ideals of God’s revealed covenant. He will reflect YHWH’s character Himself and project this onto human relationships!

☐ **“righteousness”** See Special Topic at 1:4.

☐ **“with the rod of his mouth”** This sounds very similar to the phrase used in Rev. 1:16; 2:16, which speaks of the power of the spoken word (cf. Genesis 1; John 1) in the phrase “sword of my mouth.” The last two lines of poetry speak of the ruler’s effective power (cf. v. 2c).

**11:5** Clothing is a metaphor used to describe the qualities of the coming righteous Davidic ruler. Later Paul will use this to describe the believer’s provisions for spiritual conflict (cf. Eph. 6:14).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:6-9**

**<sup>6</sup>And the wolf will dwell with the lamb,  
And the leopard will lie down with the young goat,  
And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together;  
And a little boy will lead them.  
<sup>7</sup>Also the cow and the bear will graze,  
Their young will lie down together,  
And the lion will eat straw like the ox.  
<sup>8</sup>The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra,  
And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den.  
<sup>9</sup>They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain,**

**For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD**

**As the waters cover the sea.**

**11:6-9** This is a picture of the Messianic era, described in terms of Genesis 1 and used in Revelation 22. Nature has been affected by mankind's sin, Genesis 3. It will also be affected by the Messiah's salvation (cf. Rom. 8:19-25). Notice the emphasis again on the small child of the new age.

The fellowship between humans and animals reflects the Garden of Eden. Humans have so much in common with the animals that occupy the surface of this planet. They were also created for fellowship with God (i.e. Job 38:39-41:34; Ps. 104:24-26; Isa. 11:6-9; Jonah 4:11) and us! The Bible starts with God, humans, and animals in a garden setting (Genesis 1-2) and it concludes (Revelation 21-22) with God, humans, and with these passages in Isaiah, animals (cf. Isa. 65:25; Hosea 2:18). I personally do not think our pets will be in heaven, but I do think animals will be a part of eternity! They add a wonderful richness to life. They only became food and coverings after the Fall!

Another point about the inherent ambiguity involved in texts associated with the eschaton is the age of the persons mentioned. Little children (v. 6) and infants (v. 8) implies that physical birth continues. This assumes an earthly setting totally analogous to current life (cf. Matt. 24:38; Luke 17:27). However, Jesus asserts that there will be no sexual activity in the new age (cf. Matt. 22:29-30). Will humans in the eschaton be all different ages? Will they grow old? These are questions that have caused commentators to postulate a limited earthly period of restored righteousness (i.e., a millennium) and a future idealized state. Some have even postulated a split between a group in heaven and a group on earth. I prefer a single, visible Second Coming and an immediate idealized fellowship with God. If this is true, much of the OT and NT has to be viewed as accommodation related to the spiritual Kingdom of God. Please see my commentaries on Revelation, Daniel, Zechariah online free at [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org).

This new day of universal peace is described in idealistic, area-wide, inclusivistic terms. When is this new age to manifest itself?

1. return from exile under Zerubbabel and Joshua (i.e., Ezra and Nehemiah)
2. the Maccabean period (interbiblical)
3. the inauguration of the Kingdom of God in Jesus' lifetime (Gospels)
4. a millennial period (Rev. 20:1-10 only)
5. an eternal kingdom (cf. Dan. 7:14)

Each is viewed as a new opportunity, but with problems (#1-4). This is where different systematic (denominational) theologies take the ambiguous references and turn them into a "theological grid" through which to view all Scripture. The promises are sure! But the time frame and specifics are not.

One central question which deals with this issue is "how literal is the restoration of an earthly garden (i.e., Eden) to be taken (Genesis 1-3 and Revelation 21-22)"? Is (1) this planet the focus; (2) the kosmos the focus; or (3) a spiritual realm beyond time-space, possibly another dimension of reality (cf. John 4:21-24; 18:36)?

**11:6**

**NASB, NKJV,**

**NRSV "and the fatling"**

**REV, REB "will feed together"**

**NJB "fat-stock beast"**

The LXX and Peshitta add "ox" and also add the VERB "feed together." The MT has "fatling," but no VERB. With an emendation "and the fatling" (וּמְרִיָא) can be changed to "will be fed" (יִמְרוּ). The UBS Hebrew Text Project gives the VERB a "C" rating (considerable doubt). With the parallelism of the first two and fourth lines of poetry having VERBS, one would expect the third line to have one also. The Dead Sea Scroll of Isaiah and the Septuagint have the VERB "fed."

The fatling would have sacrificial connotations (cf. 1:11; Amos 5:22).

**11:9 “My holy mountain”** This does not refer to Jerusalem or Sinai, but to the entire earth as the parallel phrase in v. 9b shows. Also notice that the attributes of the Messiah have now been effectively communicated to all humans (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 3:15). He is the ideal covenant man!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:10**

**<sup>10</sup>Then in that day  
The nations will resort to the root of Jesse,  
Who will stand as a signal for the peoples;  
And His resting place will be glorious.**

**11:10** Verses like 4, 9, and 10 can be understood in one of two ways.

1. YHWH will restore His people to Canaan and the world will acknowledge them.
2. The emphasis of a worldwide reign of a Davidic seed fulfills the promise of Gen. 3:15 for the restoration of the image and likeness of God in all humanity, which was damaged by the Fall.

Are these Isaiah texts ultimately about Israel only or about the world? Are they literal, symbolic, or multiple fulfillment? Here is where one's overall view of Scripture begins to organize (for better or worse) texts. I have biases like everyone else! I have tried to list mine in the Special Topic: Bob's Evangelical Biases. You can read this at 1:3. It is difficult to be faithful to texts and context and all texts at the same time! No one does it well!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:11-16**

**<sup>11</sup>Then it will happen on that day that the LORD  
Will again recover the second time with His hand  
The remnant of His people, who will remain,  
From Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath,  
And from the islands of the sea.  
<sup>12</sup>And He will lift up a standard for the nations  
And assemble the banished ones of Israel,  
And will gather the dispersed of Judah  
From the four corners of the earth.  
<sup>13</sup>Then the jealousy of Ephraim will depart,  
And those who harass Judah will be cut off;  
Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah,  
And Judah will not harass Ephraim.  
<sup>14</sup>They will swoop down on the slopes of the Philistines on the west;  
Together they will plunder the sons of the east;  
They will possess Edom and Moab,  
And the sons of Ammon will be subject to them.  
<sup>15</sup>And the LORD will utterly destroy  
The tongue of the Sea of Egypt;  
And He will wave His hand over the River  
With His scorching wind;  
And He will strike it into seven streams  
And make *men* walk over dry-shod.**



**<sup>16</sup>And there will be a highway from Assyria  
For the remnant of His people who will be left,  
Just as there was for Israel  
In the day that they came up out of the land of Egypt.**

**11:11** This verse speaks of a climactic visitation by God (cf. 2:2,11,12,20; 3:7,18; 4:1,2; 7:17,18,20; 9:14; 10:3,17,20,27). Here it is a day of restoration! The covenant people (i.e., in this case the Northern Ten Tribes), scattered across the ANE, will return home (a symbol of returning to faith in YHWH).

However, the rest of the literary unit (chapters 7-12) has a universal element (cf. 2:2-4; 9:1-7)!

▣ **“with His hand”** This is an anthropomorphic idiom for divine activity within history. In Genesis 1 God speaks and things occur, but here He moves His hand (cf. v. 15; 1:25; 5:25; 8:11; 9:12,17,21; 10:4, etc.).

**11:12 “the four corners of the earth”** Four is the symbolic number for the whole earth.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: SYMBOLIC NUMBERS IN SCRIPTURE**

- A. Certain numbers functioned both as numerals and symbols.
1. One – God (e.g., Deut. 6:4; Eph. 4:4-6)
  2. Four – the whole earth (i.e., four corners, four winds)
  3. Six – human imperfection (one less than 7, e.g., Rev. 13:18)
  4. Seven – divine perfection (the seven days of creation). Notice the symbolic usages in Revelation.
    - a. seven candlesticks, 1:12,20; 2:1
    - b. seven stars, 1:16,20; 2:1
    - c. seven churches, 1:20
    - d. seven spirits of God, 3:1; 4:5; 5:6
    - e. seven lamps, 4:5
    - f. seven seals, 5:1,5
    - g. seven horns and seven eyes, 5:6
    - h. seven angels, 8:2,6; 15:1,6,7,8; 16:1; 17:1
    - i. seven trumpets, 8:2,6
    - j. seven thunders, 10:3,4
    - k. seven thousand, 11:13
    - l. seven heads, 13:1; 17:3,7,9
    - m. seven plagues, 15:1,6,8; 21:9
    - n. seven bowls, 15:7; 21:9
    - o. seven kings, 17:10
  5. Ten – completeness
    - a. use in Gospels
      - (1) Matt. 20:24; 25:1,28
      - (2) Mark 10:41
      - (3) Luke 14:31; 15:8; 17:12,17; 19:13,16,17,24,25

- b. use in Revelation
  - (1) 2:10, ten days of tribulation
  - (2) 12:3; 17:3,7,12,16, ten horns
  - (3) 13:1, ten crowns
- c. multiples of 10 in Revelation:
  - (1) 144,000 = 12x12x1000, cf. 7:4; 14:1,3
  - (2) 1,000 = 10x10x10, cf. 20:2,3,6
- 6. Twelve – human organization
  - a. twelve sons of Jacob (i.e., twelve tribes of Israel, Gen. 35:22; 49:28)
  - b. twelve pillars, Exod. 24:4
  - c. twelve stones on breast plate of High Priest, Exod. 28:21; 39:14
  - d. twelve loaves, for table in Holy Place (symbolic of God’s provision for the twelve tribes), Lev. 24:5; Exod. 25:30
  - e. twelve spies, Deut. 1:23; Josh. 3:22; 4:2,3,4,8,9,20
  - f. twelve apostles, Matt. 10:1
  - g. use in Revelation
    - (1) twelve thousand sealed, 7:5-8
    - (2) twelve stars, 12:1
    - (3) twelve gates, twelve angels, twelve tribes, 21:12
    - (4) twelve foundation stones, names of the twelve apostles, 21:14
    - (5) New Jerusalem was twelve thousand stadia squared, 21:16
    - (6) twelve gates made of twelve pearls, 21:12
    - (7) tree of life with twelve kinds of fruit, 22:2
- 7. Forty – number for time
  - a. sometimes literal (exodus and wilderness wanderings, e.g., Exod. 16:35); Deut. 2:7; 8:2
  - b. can be literal or symbolic
    - (1) flood, Gen. 7:4,17; 8:6
    - (2) Moses on Mt. Sinai, Exod. 24:18; 34:28; Deut. 9:9,11,18,25
    - (3) divisions of Moses life
      - (a) forty years in Egypt
      - (b) forty years in the desert
      - (c) forty years leading Israel
    - (4) Jesus fasted forty days, Matt. 4:2; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2
  - c. Note (by means of a Concordance) the number of times this number appears in time designation in the Bible!
- 8. Seventy – round number for people
  - a. Israel, Exod. 1:5
  - b. seventy elders, Exod. 24:1,9
  - c. eschatological, Dan. 9:2,24
  - d. mission team, Luke 10:1,17
  - e. forgiveness (70x7), Matt. 18:22

B. Good references

1. John J. Davis, *Biblical Numerology*
2. D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*

**11:13 “Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah,**

**And Judah will not harass Ephraim”** Notice in the new era unity will be the keynote, not the division that has characterized the people of God in the past.

**11:14** This verse is surprising! Is Isaiah prophesying a vindictive united Israel or is she to be the channel of revelation for “the nations” to come to YHWH in peace (cf. 2:2-4)?

▣ **“sons of the east”** This phrase can refer to several different people groups, depending on the context (cf. Gen. 29:1; Jdgs. 6:3,33; 7:12; 8:10; I Kgs. 4:30; Job 1:3; Isa. 11:14; Jer. 49:28; Ezek. 25:4,10).

**11:15** The covenant people’s traditional enemies will be utterly defeated.



NASB, NKJV,

NRSV “will utterly destroy”

TEV, NJB “will dry up”

LXX “make desolate”

Peshitta “will utterly dry up”

REB “will divide”

The NASB follows the MT (והחרים, BDB 355, KB 353, *Hiphil* PERFECT), which the UBS Hebrew Text Project gives a “B” rating (some doubt). The other reading is (והחריב, BDB 351, KB 349). The NEB and REB assume a proposed root (חרם, KB 354 II, *Hiphil* PERFECT), which means “split” or “divide” (cf. Exod. 14:16). This is an allusion to a new exodus (cf. v. 11)!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Are the titles of the child used in chapters 9 and 11 an assertion of his Deity?
2. Explain the historical background of chapters 7 through 10:4 and 10:4 through 34.
3. Will nature be a part of heaven?



# ISAIAH 12

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Thanksgiving Expressed	A Hymn of Praise	Two Songs	Hymn of Thanksgiving	Psalm
12:1-6	12:1-2	12:1-2	12:1-3	12:1-2
(1-6)	(1-2)	(1-2)	(1-3)	(1-2)
	12:3	12:3-4		12:3-6
	(3)	(3b-4)		(3-6)
	12:4-6		12:4-6	
	(4b-6)		(4b-6)	
		12:5-6		
		(5-6)		

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This (or these) hymns of praise closes out "Immanuel's book" (i.e., chapters 7-12).
- B. Because the opening phrase, "on that day" is repeated in v. 4, some (JB, NASB Study Bible) think there are two hymns.
  1. vv. 1-3, cf. Exod. 15:1-17; Psalm 118
  2. vv. 4-6, cf. Ps. 165:1; 148:13

- C. It is similar to Exodus 15 (the song of Moses) and Psalm 118. Often at times of great victory or deliverance, Israel composed hymns of praise to their God.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:1-6

<sup>1</sup>Then you will say on that day,  
"I will give thanks to You, O LORD;  
For although You were angry with me,  
Your anger is turned away,  
And You comfort me.  
<sup>2</sup>Behold, God is my salvation,  
I will trust and not be afraid;  
For the LORD GOD is my strength and song,  
And He has become my salvation."  
<sup>3</sup>Therefore you will joyously draw water  
From the springs of salvation.  
<sup>4</sup>And in that day you will say,  
"Give thanks to the LORD, call on His name.  
Make known His deeds among the peoples;  
Make *them* remember that His name is exalted."  
<sup>5</sup>Praise the LORD in song, for He has done excellent things;  
Let this be known throughout the earth.  
<sup>6</sup>Cry aloud and shout for joy, O inhabitant of Zion,  
For great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

**12:1 "you will say"** The VERB (BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* PERFECT) denotes a settled attitude of an individual Israelite (SINGULAR). It is much like the song of victory found in Exod. 15:1-17. This is also a song of praise for YHWH's deliverance. One person speaks on behalf of the covenant community.

This brief poem was placed here because it connects to the return from exile mentioned in 11:11-16. It also has a relation to the theological goal of the nations knowing and coming to YHWH (cf. 2:2-4; 11:10; 12:4-6).

▣ **"on that day"** This is an idiom for YHWH's action within history, either temporally or eschatologically. There is a time of reckoning coming. For some, a time of joy and victory, for others a time of judgment and rejection! Covenant disobedience affects time and eternity!

Because this phrase appears in both v.1 and v. 4 it is possible that this chapter is two hymns of praise (cf. JB).

▣ **"I will give thanks"** This VERB (BDB 392, KB 389 II, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense) basically means "to throw" or "to cast." However, especially in the Psalms, in the *Hiphil* stem it denotes "to confess" or "to praise." It is found in Isaiah in 12:1,4; 25:1; 38:18,19.

▣ **"O LORD"** See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 1:1.

▣ **“although You were angry with me”** This reflects YHWH’s reaction to His covenant love being violated repeatedly (cf. 40:1-2; 54:8; and many others). God’s wrath is difficult for many Bible readers to understand. For me a comparison of Deut. 5:9 with 5:10 and 7:9 helps. God’s anger is best understood as parental discipline (cf. Heb. 12:5-13).

▣ **“Your anger is turned away”** This VERB (996, KB 1427, *Qal* JUSSIVE) is often translated “repent,” when used of humans. In a sense YHWH repents (i.e., changed His mind and actions) toward His covenant people (i.e., Hos. 11:8-9). In the OT it is often specifically connected to their repentance. However, in the NT (and new covenant, Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38) it is motivated by His grace and mercy, apart from fallen humanity’s ability to perform/conform/reform!

▣ **“And You comfort me”** This VERB (BDB 636, KB688, *Piel* IMPERFECT) means “comfort,” or “console” (cf. 22:4; 40:1; 51:3,12,19; 61:2; 66:13). After judgment comes comfort; after discipline fellowship is restored! There is hope for rebels and sinners in the unchanging merciful character of YHWH (cf. Mal. 3:6).

**12:2 “God is my salvation”** There is no VERB in this line of poetry, which intensifies the phrase. For the term “salvation” (BDB 447) see Special Topic at 33:2.

▣ **“I will trust”** This VERB (BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* IMPERFECT) denotes that which is firm (i.e., reliable) or “to fall prostrate before.” This VERB expresses a confident reliance on God (cf. 26:3,4).

▣ **“and not be afraid”** This VERB (BDB 808, KB 922, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is the opposite of trust (cf. Deut. 28:66; Isa. 44:8,11). Because they trust YHWH, there is no reason to fear His wrath, but rely on His covenant love and promises (cf. I John 4:17-18)!

▣ **“the LORD GOD”** This is two related titles for Deity.

1. יה, BDB 219 contraction of YHWH (cf. Exod. 17:16; Ps. 118:14; Isa. 26:4; 38:11)
2. יהוה, BDB 217 (YHWH)

For a full discussion of the theories connected to the covenant name of God from the VERB “to be,” see Special Topic at 1:1.

▣ **“my strength and song”** Like 12:2a, there is no VERB with these two NOUNS, which are pointed by the Masoretic scholars.

1. strength, BDB 738, describes the “Servant” in 49:5 and Israel’s praise in Ps. 81:1
2. song, BDB 274 I; these same two NOUNS are found in Moses’ song of victory in Exod. 15:2, also in Ps. 118:14

The meaning of the second NOUN, זמרה is uncertain (BDB 275 II).

1. song, NASB, NKJV, NJB, Peshitta (BDB 274 I, KB 274 I)
2. might, NRSV, TEV, JPSOA (KB 274 II)
3. LXX has “my glory and my praise”
4. REB has “my refuge and defense”
5. the same form (זמרת) as here appears in Gen. 43:11, where it is translated “the best products of the land”)

▣ It is surprising that line 1 seems to affirm something that line 4 sees as progressive. Hebrew poetry is ambiguous. See opening articles on Hebrew Poetry.

**12:3** The VERB has two metaphors.

1. God's gift of life-giving water, so important to those who depend on agriculture and livestock. Good water was seen as a blessing from God (cf. Deuteronomy 27-29).
2. Salvation/deliverance is described as an abundant source of God's gift (cf. 48:18; Ps. 36:9; Jer. 2:13; 17:13).

▣ **“you”** The SINGULAR of vv. 1-2 changes to the PLURAL of collective joy (cf. vv. 4-6).

**12:4-6** These verses list the things God's joyful, grateful people (cf. v. 6b) should do and why (v. 5b; 6b)

1. give thanks, BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. v. 1 (i.e., worship setting)
2. call on His name, BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (i.e., worship setting)
3. make known His deeds among the peoples, BDB 393, KB 390, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
4. make them remember that His name is exalted, BDB 269, KB 269, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
5. praise the Lord in song, BDB 274 I, KB 273, *Piel* IMPERATIVE (i.e., worship setting)
6. let this be known through the earth, *Kethiv* (it is written) BDB 393, KB 390, *Pual* PARTICIPLE; *Qere* (it is read) BDB 393, KB 390, *Hophal* PARTICIPLE (Owens, *Analytical Key* has *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE)
7. cry aloud, BDB 843, KB 1007, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. 54:1
8. shout for joy, BDB 943, KB 1247, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. 54:1

Again notice the missionary mandate (cf. 2:2-4; 51:4-5).

**12:4 “call on His name”** This phrase implies participation in a worship setting (cf. Gen. 4:26; 12:8; 21:33; 26:25; Exod. 34:5-7; Rom. 10:9-13). The name would represent His person, His character! By calling on Him we acknowledge our need for Him and our desire to be like Him and pleasing to Him. This phrase denotes a desire for fellowship (cf. Isa. 43:1; 45:3,4)!

The NIDOTTE, vol. 4, p. 150, has a good list related to YHWH's name.

1. it can be praised, Joel 2:26
2. it can be loved, Ps. 5:11
3. it can be declared, Ps. 22:22
4. it can be feared, Mal. 4:2
5. it can be waited on, Ps. 52:9
6. it can be proclaimed, Isa. 12:4
7. it can be walked in, Mic. 4:5
8. it can be blasphemed, Isa. 52:5
9. it can be polluted, Jer. 34:16
10. it can be profaned, Ezek. 36:21-23

God's people can reflect Him positively or negatively, but we do reflect Him (cf. Matt. 5:13-16)!

**12:6** This verse is set in the Temple in Jerusalem. The space between the wings of the two Cherubim over the Ark of the Covenant was seen as YHWH's footstool, the place where heaven and earth met. This description parallels the child's name, “Immanuel,” which means “God is with us.” There is no greater blessing than the presence of YHWH and a personal relationship with Him!

▣ **“the Holy One of Israel”** See note at 1:24.



# ISAIAH 13

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prophecies About Babylon	Proclamation Against Babylon	Oracles Against Foreign Nations (13:1-23:18)	God Will Punish Babylon	Against Babylon
13:1-5 (2-5)	13:1  13:2-3 (2-3)	13:1  13:2-3 (2-3)	13:1  13:2-3	13:1  13:2-22 (2-22)
Judgment on the Day of the LORD	13:4-5 (4-5)	13:4-5 (4-5)	13:4-5	
13:6-16 (6-16)	13:6-10 (6-10)	13:6-22 (6-22)	13:6-10	
	13:11-16 (11-16)		13:11-13	
Babylon Will Fall to the Medes			13:14-16	
13:17-22 (17-22)	13:17-22 (17-22)		13:17-22	

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Chapter 13 marks a new division in the book of Isaiah that extends through 21:17 and also 23:1-18. This section of Isaiah deals with judgment of surrounding nations. It is a genre in and of itself. It is very similar to Jeremiah 46-51; Ezekiel 25-32; Amos 1-2; Obadiah, Nahum, and Zephaniah 2.

B. YHWH addresses the surrounding nations, both large and small, through His prophet; messages they will never hear or respond to. This demonstrates His universal sovereignty (cf. 2:1-4; 9:7; 11:9)! He is King of the earth; Lord of creation (cf. LXX of Deut. 32:8, asserts that He establishes the limits of the nations)!

C. The nations addressed are

1. Babylon (or Assyria using Babylonian throne name “King of Babylon”), 13:1-14:23
2. Assyria, 14:24-27
3. Philistia, 14:28-32
4. Moab, 15:1-16:14
5. Syria, 17:1-3
6. Israel, 17:4-14
7. Ethiopia (Cush), 18:1-7; 20:1-6
8. Egypt, 19:1-25; 20:1-6
9. Babylon, 21:1-10
10. Edom, 21:11-12
11. Arabia, 21:13-17
12. Jerusalem, 22:1-25
13. Tyre, 23:1-18

You will notice that Assyria seems to break into the context in 14:24-27. It is surprising that

1. Babylon is addressed first when the problem in Isaiah’s day was Assyria.
2. Babylon is addressed again in 21:1-10.
3. Assyria is abruptly mentioned only briefly in 14:24-27 with no new heading (i.e., “oracle”).

One way to contextually deal with these problems is to view all of 13:1-14:27 as directed toward Assyria. Assyria completely subjected and conquered Babylon in 689 B.C. and her kings took the title of “king of Babylon” (cf. 14:4). If this is right then it is not Neo-Babylon (i.e., Nebuchadnezzar), but earlier Babylon (Merodach-baladan) that fell to Assyria in 729 B.C. and the capital city of Babylon sacked and destroyed in 689 B.C. The NASB Study Bible (p. 976) notes that there is no new “oracle” heading at 14:24, which implies one literary unit from 13:1-14:32.

The one problem with this approach is that “the Medes,” who destroyed Neo-Babylon in 539 B.C., are mentioned in v. 17. However, with the weakening of Assyria in 660, Media and Babylon combined to rebel against the declining empire under Ashurbanipal (IVP Bible Background Commentary, p. 601). The capital of Assyria fell to a combined army of Media and Babylon in 612 B.C.

D. This is a good place to show how the poetic sections switch from first person (prophet speaking for God) to the third person (the prophet speaking about God).

1. Verses 1-3, first person
2. Verses 4-10, third person
3. Verses 11-16, first person
4. Verses 17-18, first person
5. Verses 19-22, third person

But, vv. 13 and 19 show how hard it is to follow this structure. In reality the prophet moves freely back and forth to reveal the message “poetically” (word plays, line beat, rare words, change of person).

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:1-16

<sup>1</sup>The oracle concerning Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw.

<sup>2</sup>Lift up a standard on the bare hill,  
Raise your voice to them,  
Wave the hand that they may enter the doors of the nobles.

<sup>3</sup>I have commanded My consecrated ones,  
I have even called My mighty warriors,  
My proudly exulting ones,  
To *execute* My anger.

<sup>4</sup>A sound of tumult on the mountains,  
Like that of many people!  
A sound of the uproar of kingdoms,  
Of nations gathered together!  
The LORD of hosts is mustering the army for battle.

<sup>5</sup>They are coming from a far country,  
From the farthest horizons,  
The LORD and His instruments of indignation,  
To destroy the whole land.

<sup>6</sup>Wail, for the day of the LORD is near!  
It will come as destruction from the Almighty.

<sup>7</sup>Therefore all hands will fall limp,  
And every man's heart will melt.

<sup>8</sup>They will be terrified,  
Pains and anguish will take hold of *them*;  
They will writhe like a woman in labor,  
They will look at one another in astonishment,  
Their faces aflame.

<sup>9</sup>Behold, the day of the LORD is coming,  
Cruel, with fury and burning anger,  
To make the land a desolation;  
And He will exterminate its sinners from it.

<sup>10</sup>For the stars of heaven and their constellations  
Will not flash forth their light;  
The sun will be dark when it rises  
And the moon will not shed its light.

<sup>11</sup>Thus I will punish the world for its evil  
And the wicked for their iniquity;  
I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud  
And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless.

<sup>12</sup>I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold  
And mankind than the gold of Ophir.

**<sup>13</sup>Therefore I will make the heavens tremble,  
 And the earth will be shaken from its place  
 At the fury of the LORD of hosts  
 In the day of His burning anger.**

**<sup>14</sup>And it will be that like a hunted gazelle,  
 Or like sheep with none to gather *them*,  
 They will each turn to his own people,  
 And each one flee to his own land.**

**<sup>15</sup>Anyone who is found will be thrust through,  
 And anyone who is captured will fall by the sword.**

**<sup>16</sup>Their little ones also will be dashed to pieces  
 Before their eyes;  
 Their houses will be plundered  
 And their wives ravished.**

**13:1**

**NASB, NRSV,**

**REB “oracle”**

**NKJV “burden**

**TEV “a message”**

**NJB “proclamation”**

**LXX “a vision”**

**Peshitta “the prophecy”**

This term (BDB 672, KB 639) can mean “burden” or “load.” It (BDB 672 III) is used ten times in this section (chapters 13-23) of Isaiah to describe oracles of future doom on the nations surrounding Israel. The term may simply denote

1. a voice lifted to proclaim a message
2. a message carried by someone to a recipient
3. a heaviness associated with a judgment oracle.

▣ **“Babylon”** This was an empire of the Fertile Crescent that affected the people of God. This first major world power of the Fertile Crescent to affect Israel was Assyria, then Neo-Babylon, then Medo-Persia. Babylon is used in the Bible as a symbol of oppression and cruelty (cf. I Pet. 5:13; Rev. 14:8; 16:19; 17:5). The downfall of Babylon is revealed in 13:1-14:23 (old Babylon) and 21:1-10 (new Babylon). See note in Contextual Insights, C, second paragraph.

▣ **“which Isaiah son of Amoz saw”** The immediate contemporary enemy of Israel and Judah in Isaiah’s day was Assyria. But as a prophet of God he was shown (“saw,” BDB 302, KB 301, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 1:1; 2:1; 13:1; Amos 1:1; Mic. 1:1; Hab. 1:1) the future demise of old Babylon, Assyria, Neo-Babylon, and the rise of Cyrus the Great (cf. v. 17; 44:28-45:1). Those who deny predictive prophecy exhibit a bias that affects all their interpretations! See Contextual Insights, C, second paragraph.

Predictive prophecy is the main evidence of a unique supernaturally-inspired Bible. See sermons “The Trustworthiness of the Old Testament” and “The Trustworthiness of the New Testament” online at [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org) in the “Video Sermons” section under Lakeside Baptist church.

**13:2** This describes the gathering of a mighty army (cf. v. 9). From v. 17 we learn that it is the army of (1) Assyria or (2) Medo-Persia under Cyrus II gathered by God to defeat either “old” or “new” Babylon (cf. 44:28; 45:1).

▣ **“Lift up a standard on a bare hill”** This describes how ancient armies communicated.

1. banners, flags in easily visible places, cf. 5:26; 31:9; Jer. 51:12
2. shouts (whistle, cf. 5:26)
3. hand movements, cf. 10:32; 19:16

There is a series of IMPERATIVES denoting YHWH’s will.

1. lift up, BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. raise, BDB 926, KB 1202, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
3. wave, BDB 631, KB 682, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. 10:32; 11:15; 19:16
4. enter, BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERFECT, but used in a JUSSIVE sense (NEB changes vowels and has “draw your swords, you nobles”)

**13:3 “I have commanded my consecrated ones”** God is in control of history! These Median warriors are not consecrated in a moral or religious sense. For the most part they are unknowing servants of God “set apart” (“consecrated ones,” BDB 872, KB 1073, *Pual* PARTICIPLE) to do His bidding. This same concept can be seen in Cyrus being called “my shepherd” in 44:28; “my anointed” in 45:1.

The Jewish Study Bible footnotes from JPSOA sees “My consecrated ones” (i.e., “My purified one”) as a reference to a sacrificial meal where the guests are told to prepare themselves (p. 809).

Another option is to see this poem as expressing “Holy War” terminology and if so, then these could refer to angels (cf. Josh. 5:13-15).

**13:4** This describes the sounds of battle and victory!

**13:5** YHWH is bringing large mercenary armies from the Fertile Crescent to punish His people in Canaan (cf. 5:26; 7:18).

▣

NASB	“farthest horizons”
NKJV, Peshitta	“the end of heaven”
NRSV	“the end of the heavens”
TEV	“the ends of the earth”
NJB	“from the far horizons”
LXX	“from the utmost foundation of heaven”

The NRSV is the most literal. It denotes the place where the sun rises, therefore, to the east, the very direction of the homelands of the Mesopotamian powers.

**13:6 “Wail”** This term (BDB 410, KB 413, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) refers to howling, wailing. Orientals are much more expressive of emotions in grieving than westerners. This term is used often in Isaiah (cf. 13:6; 14:31; 15:2,3; 16:7 [twice]; 23:1,6,14; 52:5; 65:14) and also in Jeremiah (cf. 4:8; 25:34; 47:2; 48:20,31,39; 49:3; 51:8).

▣ **“for the day of the LORD is near”** The creator God is a moral, ethical God. He approaches His creation and creatures in light of His character. Sometimes He approaches from affirmation and blessing, but other times (as here) He approaches from judgment (cf. Deuteronomy 27-29). All moral creatures must give an account both temporally and eschatologically (cf. Matt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:11-15) to the One who gave them life!

▣ **“the Almighty”** This is the Hebrew title *Shaddai*. This was the patriarchal name for YHWH (cf. Exod. 6:3). See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 1:1. There is a sound play (BDB 994) between “destruction” (דָּרַס, BDB 994) and “the Almighty” (יְהוָה, BDB 994). Note the connection with Joel 1:15.

**13:7-8** The approach of YHWH will cause certain fearful responses.

1. “wail,” v. 6
2. “all hands will fall limp,” v. 7, cf. Ezek. 7:17; 21:7
3. “every man’s heart will melt,” v. 7, cf. 19:1; Nah. 2:10
4. “they will be terrified,” v. 8
5. “pain and anguish will take hold of *them*,” v. 8
6. “writhe like a woman in labor,” v. 8, cf. 21:3; 26:17; 66:7
7. “look at one another in astonishment,” v. 8
8. “their faces aflame,” v. 8

**13:9** This verse describes the day of the Lord as it relates to sinners (cf. v. 10).

A wasted and unpopulated land is exactly opposite to God’s will for His creation (cf. Genesis 1-2).

**13:10** The approach of YHWH to His physical creation causes reactions in nature. These reactions are often referred to as apocalyptic, but in reality they are metaphorical in the OT prophets and only turn to apocalyptic in the inter-biblical period and NT.

1. stars and constellations cease to shine (the ancients thought these were life-controlling deities), v. 10
2. sun and moon grow dark, v. 10
3. the heavens tremble, v. 13
4. the earth will be shaken from its place, v. 13

The heavens, the abode of God, become dark and fearful (cf. Ezek. 32:7; Joel 2:10,31; 3:15; Matt. 24:29; Rev. 6:12-13). But there is a new light coming (cf. 2:5; 9:2; 60:1-3,19-20).

**13:11 “the world”** This (BDB 385) is a poetic synonym for אֶרֶץ (i.e., “land,” “earth,” cf. 14:21; 24:4; 34:1). It is obviously a hyperbole (or maybe not, cf. 24:4; 34:1), but it does express the theological concept of YHWH the creator and controller of this planet!

Notice how humans are characterized.

1. evil
2. wicked for their iniquity
3. arrogance of the proud
4. haughtiness of the ruthless

These same attributes describe the covenant people in 2:9,11,17; 5:15! The deadly tentacles (i.e., self, sin) of the Fall are everywhere (also note Gen. 6:5,11; 8:21)!

**13:12 “Ophir”** This refers geographically to southern Arabia. The allusion here is that living human beings will be very scarce on the day of judgment.

**13:14-16** This is a vivid description of the horrors of invasion.

1. hunted like gazelles
2. sheep with no shepherd
3. flee to family and homeland
4. inhabitants thrust through
5. inhabitants fall by the sword

6. little ones dashed to pieces in sight of their parents, cf. v. 18; II Kgs. 8:12; 15:16; Hos. 13:16; Nah. 3:10
7. houses plundered
8. wives ravished (NASB), cf. Deut. 28:30

Judgment by invasion was a terrible experience. These warlike nations gave this treatment and received this treatment (cf. Ps. 137:8-9)! The worst of these violent armies was Assyria.

**13:16** This footnote of the MT suggests that the VERB “ravish” (BDB 993, KB 1415, *Niphal* IMPERFECT, cf. Deut. 28:30; Jer. 3:2; Zech. 14:2) be read (*Qere*) as “be lain with” (BDB 1011, K 1486, *Niphal* IMPERFECT, cf. LXX; Leviticus 15,20; Deuteronomy 22,27; Mic. 7:5).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:17-22**

- <sup>17</sup>Behold, I am going to stir up the Medes against them,  
Who will not value silver or take pleasure in gold.**
- <sup>18</sup>And *their* bows will mow down the young men,  
They will not even have compassion on the fruit of the womb,  
Nor will their eye pity children.**
- <sup>19</sup>And Babylon, the beauty of kingdoms, the glory of the Chaldeans' pride,  
Will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.**
- <sup>20</sup>It will never be inhabited or lived in from generation to generation;  
Nor will the Arab pitch *his* tent there,  
Nor will shepherds make *their flocks* lie down there.**
- <sup>21</sup>But desert creatures will lie down there,  
And their houses will be full of owls;  
Ostriches also will live there, and shaggy goats will frolic there.**
- <sup>22</sup>Hyenas will howl in their fortified towers  
And jackals in their luxurious palaces.  
Her *fateful* time also will soon come  
And her days will not be prolonged.**

**13:17 “the Medes”** This is another major power of the Fertile Crescent north and east of Assyria. At first they were allied with “old” Babylon, but later they were incorporated with Persia under Cyrus II (cf. 44:28; 45:1; Jer. 51:11).

▣ **“Who will not value silver or take pleasure in gold”** This army will be so bent on revenge there will be no possibility of buying them off!

**13:18 “the fruit of the womb”** This refers to unborn children and their mothers or young children.

▣ **“eye”** It is used here to represent the attitudes/actions of a person (cf. Deut. 7:16; 13:8; 19:13; Ezek. 7:4; 16:5; 20:17). Here to denote that the invaders will have no pity even on children. This line of poetry is parallel with the line above!

The Median warriors had no compassion or pity (cf. Jer. 6:23; 21:7; 50:42).

**13:19** Babylon’s cultural beauty and sophistication were renowned (i.e., Daniel 4 of Neo-Babylon), but it will all be lost and destroyed! However, if this refers to Babylon during the Assyrian period, it was totally destroyed in 689 B.C. by Sennacherib.

▣ **“Chaldeans”** This was the name of the tribe of southern Babylon and is often used as a synonym for later nations of Neo-Babylon (i.e., Nebuchadnezzar). For other connotations of the term see Dan. 1:4.

▣ **“Sodom and Gomorrah”** These were cities of great wickedness, which God destroyed by fire and brimstone (cf. Gen. 19:24-28; Deut. 29:23).

**13:20-22** This is hyperbolic language (cf. Sumerian laments over Ur and visions of Nefertiti over the old Egyptian Kingdom). The city fell in Merodach-baladan’s day to Assyria with total destruction. The city fell to the Medo-Persian army in 539 B.C. without widespread destruction.

The book that has really helped me, as a modern western person, to understand eastern prophetic and apocalyptic literature is D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic*.

**13:20** The destruction was so complete that

1. it was uninhabited for generations
2. Arabs do not camp there
3. no flocks grazed there
4. building remains used only by wild animals (possibly demons, cf. vv. 21-22; 34:13-15; Rev. 18:2)
5. no longer a national entity

This fits “old” Babylon better than “new” Babylon. The Medes abandoned their alliance with Merodach-baladan and joined the Assyrians in destroying the capital city of Babylon in 689 B.C.



# ISAIAH 14

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Israel's Taunt	Mercy on Jacob	The Return From Exile	The Return From Exile	The End of the Exile
14:1-2	14:1-2	14:1-2	14:1-2	14:1-2
	Fall of the King of Babylon	"How are the Mighty Fallen"	The King of Babylon in the World of the Dead	The Death of the King of Babylon
14:3-23 (3-21)	14:3-4a	14:3-11	14:3-4a	14:3-8
	14:4b-8 (4b-8)	(4b-11)	14:4b-8	(4b-8)
	14:9-11 (9-11)		14:9-11	14:9-15 (9-15)
	The Fall of Lucifer			
	14:12-15 (12-15)	14:12-20a (12-20a)	14:12-15	
	14:16-17 (16-17)		14:16-17	14:16-21 (16-21)
	14:18-21 (18-21)		14:18-21	
	Babylon Destroyed	14:20b-21 (20b-21)	God Will Destroy Babylon	
	14:22-23 (22-23)	14:22-23	14:22-23	14:22-23
Judgment on Assyria	Assyria Destroyed	Against Assyria	God Will Destroy the Assyrians	Against Assyria
14:24-27	14:24-27 (24-27)	14:24-27 (24-27)	14:24-27	14:24 (24)
				14:25 (25)
				14:26 (26)
				14:27 (27)
	Philistia Destroyed	Against Philistia	God Will Destroy the Philistines	Against Philistines
14:28	14:28-31	14:28-31	14:28	14:28
Judgment on Philistia				
14:29-32 (29-32)	(29-31)	(29-31)	14:29-30	14:29 (29)
				14:30-31 (30-31)
			14:31	
	14:32 (32)	14:32 (32)	14:32	14:32

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

#### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. There has been much discussion on the relationship of 14:12-21 to Satan. It seems to me that we must take seriously the historical context and specific literary statements of Isaiah and assert that originally this referred to the king of Babylon (or kings of Assyria after Ashurbanipal). However, the king of Babylon's problem, as all conscious creatures, was pride. If we go back to Gen. 3:5, we see this desire to be like God. Not only has sin affected the angelic world, but also the material world (cf. Daniel 4; 11:36; Ezek. 28:13ff; II Thess. 2:4). It seems to me that "Babylon" in the Bible is a type of godless human government (cf. Rev. 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2,10,21). The king is a type of wicked leadership. Behind the wicked world leaders in the OT stood their national deities (cf. Dan. 10:13,20). From the NT we understand the personal force of evil known as Satan. The full blown identification in this chapter as Satan was probably influenced by
1. Jerome's *Vulgate* translating v. 12 as "Lucifer"
  2. Tertulian and Gregory the Great relating this passage to Luke 10:18
  3. This passage being used as a backdrop to both Dante's *Inferno* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*
- B. See Special Topic following.

#### SPECIAL TOPIC: SATAN

This is a very difficult subject for several reasons.

1. The OT reveals not an archenemy of good, but a servant of YHWH, who offers mankind an alternative and also accuses mankind of unrighteousness. There is only one God (monotheism), one power, one cause in the OT—YHWH.

2. The concept of a personal archenemy of God developed in the interbiblical (non-canonical) literature under the influence of Persian dualistic religions (*Zoroastrianism*). This, in turn, greatly influenced rabbinical Judaism and the Essene community (i.e., Dead Sea Scrolls).
3. The NT develops the OT themes in surprisingly stark, but selective, categories.

If one approaches the study of evil from the perspective of biblical theology (each book or author or genre studied and outlined separately), then very different views of evil are revealed. If, however, one approaches the study of evil from a non-biblical or extra-biblical approach of world religions or eastern religions, then much of the NT development is foreshadowed in Persian dualism and Greco-Roman spiritism.

If one is presuppositionally committed to the divine authority of Scripture, then the NT development must be seen as progressive revelation. Christians must guard against allowing Jewish folklore or western literature (Dante, Milton) to further influence the concept. There is certainly mystery and ambiguity in this area of revelation. God has chosen not to reveal all aspects of evil, its origin, its development, its purpose, but He has revealed its defeat!

In the OT the term “satan” or “accuser” (BDB 966) can relate to three separate groups.

1. human accusers (cf. I Sam. 29:4; II Sam. 19:22; I Kgs. 11:14,20,29; Ps. 109:6)
2. angelic accusers (cf. Num. 22:22-23; Job 1-2; Zech. 3:1)
3. demonic accusers (cf. I Chr. 21:1; I Kgs. 22:21; Zech. 13:2)

Only later in the intertestamental period is the serpent of Genesis 3 identified with Satan (cf. *Book of Wisdom* 2:23-24; *II Enoch* 31:3), and even later does this become a rabbinical option (cf. *Sot* 9b and *Sanh.* 29a). The “sons of God” of Genesis 6 become angels in *I Enoch* 54:6. I mention this, not to assert its theological accuracy, but to show its development. In the NT these OT activities are attributed to angelic, personified evil (cf. II Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9).

The origin of personified evil is difficult or impossible (depending on your point of view) to determine from the OT. One reason for this is Israel’s strong monotheism (cf. I Kgs. 22:20-22; Eccl. 7:14; Isa. 45:7; Amos 3:6). All causality was attributed to YHWH to demonstrate His uniqueness and primacy (cf. Isa. 43:11; 44:6,8,24; 45:5-6,14,18,21,22).

Sources of possible information are (1) Job 1-2, where Satan is one of the “sons of God” (i.e., angels) or (2) Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, where prideful near-eastern kings (Babylon and Tyre) are possibly used to illustrate the pride of Satan (cf. I Tim. 3:6). I have mixed emotions about this approach. Ezekiel uses Garden of Eden metaphors, not only for the king of Tyre as Satan (cf. Ezek. 28:12-16), but also for the king of Egypt as the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Ezek. 31). However, Isaiah 14, particularly vv. 12-14, seems to describe an angelic revolt through pride. If God wanted to reveal to us the specific nature and origin of Satan, this is a very oblique way and place to do it. We must guard against the trend of systematic theology of taking small, ambiguous parts of different testaments, authors, books, and genres and combining them as pieces of one divine puzzle.

I agree with Alfred Edersheim (*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2, appendices XIII [pp. 748-763] and XVI [pp.770-776]) that rabbinical Judaism has been overly influenced by Persian dualism and demonic speculation. The rabbis are not a good source for truth in this area. Jesus radically diverges from the teachings of the Synagogue in this area. I think that the concept of an archangelic enemy of YHWH developed from the two high gods of Iranian dualism, *Ahkiman* and *Ormaza*, and were then developed by the rabbis into a biblical dualism of YHWH and Satan.

There is surely progressive revelation in the NT as to the personification of evil, but not as elaborate as the rabbis. A good example of this difference is the “war in heaven.” The fall of Satan is a logical necessity, but the specifics are not given. Even what is given is veiled in apocalyptic genre (cf. Rev. 12:4,7,12-13). Although Satan is defeated in Jesus and exiled to earth, he still functions as a servant of YHWH (cf. Matt. 4:1; Luke 22:31-32; I Cor. 5:5; I Tim. 1:20).

We must curb our curiosity in this area. There is a personal force of temptation and evil, but there is still only one God and we are still responsible for our choices. There is a spiritual battle, both before and after salvation. Victory can only come and remain in and through the Triune God. Evil has been defeated and will be removed!

- C. I personally am feeling more and more uncomfortable using Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 as biblical texts for the origin and demise of an angelic tempter. I think our curiosity drives us to use contexts inappropriately. The Bible is silent on many issues that we are curious about. Systematic Theology must start with exegesis! In many ways the spiritual realm is purposefully clouded, concealed.
- D. For a similar context see Ezekiel 28 at [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org). “Old Testament Studies,” written commentaries.
- E. The Jewish Study Bible (p. 812) says of this poem “it describes the ignominious death of an Assyrian monarch of Isaiah’s time, probably Sargon II, who was killed in battle in 705. It was later reinterpreted as predicting the death of a Babylonian monarch.” I think Isaiah (or a disciple) may have used an earlier poem, or at least its imagery, to describe a series of arrogant eastern kings who were destroyed by YHWH.
- F. It is impossible to fit together all the historical allusions in this prophecy. Remember Hebrew prophecy is a historical “pointer,” not a detailed road map. Westerners misunderstand the imagery, ambiguity, and hyperbole! See D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic*.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:1-2

**<sup>1</sup>When the LORD will have compassion on Jacob and again choose Israel, and settle them in their own land, then strangers will join them and attach themselves to the house of Jacob. <sup>2</sup>The peoples will take them along and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel will possess them as an inheritance in the land of the LORD as male servants and female servants; and they will take their captors captive and will rule over their oppressors.**

**14:1 “the LORD will have compassion”** This VERB (BDB 933, KB 1216, *Piel* IMPERFECT, cf. 49:13,15; 54:7-8) denotes YHWH’s special relationship with His covenant people (cf. Hosea 1-2), as does “choose” (BDB 103, KB 119, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 41:8,9; 44:1; 49:7). In 9:17 Israel’s God will have no compassion on His covenant people (cf. Hosea 1-3) and in 13:18 the Medes will have no compassion on Babylon, but YHWH will again restore His unique relationship with Abraham’s seed!

After YHWH uses the powers of Mesopotamia to punish His covenant people’s disobedience, He will instigate a “new exodus” and a “new conquest”!

▣ **“Jacob. . .Israel”** These two terms could be used for both the Northern Ten Tribes and the Southern Two Tribes being united again.

**14:1-2 “strangers will join them and attach themselves to the house of Jacob. . .and the peoples”**

There are two options for interpreting vv. 1-2: (1) either vv. 1 and 2 go together and describe the same group (i.e., strangers. . .peoples) or (2) v. 1 describes the blessings of non-Jews (i.e., strangers) and v. 2 describes the defeated enemies of Israel as being their servants.

It is difficult in Isaiah and Micah to balance YHWH’s attitude and actions towards the nations.

1. He loves them and includes them into His covenant people (cf. 2:2-4; 11:10, see Special Topic at 1:3)
2. He judges them and puts them in servitude (i.e., 60:10; 61:5)

Somehow both are true! The prophets move back and forth, often in the same context, between these two poles. Option #1 reflects Genesis 1-3; 12, while option #2 reflects Israel’s history in Canaan.

In Isaiah the nations return the covenant people to their land (i.e., Canaan) and become one with them in the worship of YHWH (cf. 49:22; 60:4-9,10-14; 66:20). This may reflect the “new exodus.” Many foreign people left Egypt with Israel and others joined her along the way (wilderness wanderings and conquest). Maybe the imagery of v. 2 reflects this. If so, it would solve the problem of #2 above.

**14:3** There is a “role-reversal” between v. 2 (servitude of Israel’s enemies) and v. 3 (Israel’s servitude, which is now over). The “role-reversal” plot is common in the OT. YHWH acts in unexpected ways to affirm the choice of Abraham’s seed (cf. Genesis 12, 15, 17). The purpose of His special attention is not favoritism, but an eternal redemptive plan (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3) for all humans made in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27).

As so often in Isaiah, there is a short-term focus and a long-term focus. The prophet merges these two horizons. A good example might be chapter 13, where Babylon and Neo-Babylon’s judgment are merged.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:3-27**

<sup>3</sup>And it will be in the day when the LORD gives you rest from your pain and turmoil and harsh service in which you have been enslaved, <sup>4</sup>that you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon, and say,

**"How the oppressor has ceased,  
And how fury has ceased!**

<sup>5</sup>The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked,  
The scepter of rulers

<sup>6</sup>Which used to strike the peoples in fury with unceasing strokes,  
Which subdued the nations in anger with unrestrained persecution.

<sup>7</sup>The whole earth is at rest *and* is quiet;  
They break forth into shouts of joy.

<sup>8</sup>Even the cypress trees rejoice over you, *and* the cedars of Lebanon, *saying*,  
'Since you were laid low, no *tree* cutter comes up against us.'

<sup>9</sup>Sheol from beneath is excited over you to meet you when you come;  
It arouses for you the spirits of the dead, all the leaders of the earth;  
It raises all the kings of the nations from their thrones.

<sup>10</sup>They will all respond and say to you,  
'Even you have been made weak as we,  
You have become like *us*.

<sup>11</sup>Your pomp *and* the music of your harps  
Have been brought down to Sheol;  
Maggots are spread out *as your bed* beneath you  
And worms are your covering.'

<sup>12</sup>How you have fallen from heaven,  
O star of the morning, son of the dawn!  
You have been cut down to the earth,  
You who have weakened the nations!

<sup>13</sup>But you said in your heart,  
'I will ascend to heaven;  
I will raise my throne above the stars of God,  
And I will sit on the mount of assembly  
In the recesses of the north.

<sup>14</sup>I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;  
I will make myself like the Most High.'

<sup>15</sup>Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol,  
To the recesses of the pit.

<sup>16</sup>Those who see you will gaze at you,  
They will ponder over you, *saying*,  
'Is this the man who made the earth tremble,  
Who shook kingdoms,

<sup>17</sup>Who made the world like a wilderness  
And overthrew its cities,  
Who did not allow his prisoners to *go home*?'

<sup>18</sup>All the kings of the nations lie in glory,  
Each in his own tomb.

<sup>19</sup>But you have been cast out of your tomb  
Like a rejected branch,  
Clothed with the slain who are pierced with a sword,  
Who go down to the stones of the pit  
Like a trampled corpse.

<sup>20</sup>You will not be united with them in burial,  
Because you have ruined your country,  
You have slain your people.  
May the offspring of evildoers not be mentioned forever.

<sup>21</sup>Prepare for his sons a place of slaughter  
Because of the iniquity of their fathers.  
They must not arise and take possession of the earth  
And fill the face of the world with cities."

<sup>22</sup>I will rise up against them," declares the LORD of hosts, "and will cut off from Babylon name and survivors, offspring and posterity," declares the LORD. <sup>23</sup>"I will also make it a possession for the hedgehog and swamps of water, and I will sweep it with the broom of destruction," declares the LORD of hosts. <sup>24</sup>The LORD of hosts has sworn saying, "Surely, just as I have intended so it has

happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand, <sup>25</sup>to break Assyria in My land, and I will trample him on My mountains. Then his yoke will be removed from them and his burden removed from their shoulder. <sup>26</sup>This is the plan devised against the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out against all the nations. <sup>27</sup>For the LORD of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate it? And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back?"

**14:4 “taunt”** This is the Hebrew Wisdom Literature term *mashal* (BDB 605), which is usually translated “proverb.” However, the poetic structure of vv. 3-21 is in the meter of a funeral dirge (i.e., chapter 47 and Lamentations).

▣ **“against the king of Babylon”** The identity of this title is uncertain. Please read “Contextual Insights,” C, second paragraph of chapter 13. Notice how in 14:24, without any “oracle” formula, Assyria is addressed directly. After the fall of the city of Babylon to Assyria in 689 B.C., the Assyrian kings took the added throne title of “king of Babylon.”

▣

NASB “fury has ceased”

NKJV “the golden city ceased”

NRSV “his insolence has ceased”

NJB “how did the arrogance end”

LXX “the taskmaster has ceased”

The MT has the word מַדְהֵבָה, but this is used only here in the OT. If the ד (d) is changed to ר (r), like the scroll of Isaiah in the Dead Sea Scrolls, then מַרְהֵבָה (BDB 923) becomes “arrogant” or “insolent.” The UBS Hebrew Text Project gives this reading a “C” (i.e., considerable doubt) rating.

The NKJV follows a possible Aramaic root that refers to gold. No other major translation has followed its lead.

**14:5 “The LORD has”** YHWH is the controller behind human history (cf. v. 22-23,24). He may be unseen to those who lack faith, but He is directing history for the coming of Messiah (first coming) and the consummation of the age of righteousness (second coming). See Special Topic at 1:3.

▣ The staff (BDB 641) and scepter (BDB 986) were symbols of kingly power (cf. v. 6). They are used of YHWH’s use of Assyria in 10:5.

**14:7 “The whole earth is at rest and is quiet”** The “rest” (BDB 628, KB 679, *Qal* PERFECT) refers to a time of peace from invasion. This same VERB is used in v. 3 (*Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) to refer to the rest/peace of the covenant people. Here it refers to the whole ANE (i.e., “the whole earth”).

The fall of the Mesopotamian powers causes rest, quiet, and joy throughout the ANE. The oppressor is defeated (cf. v. 8).

▣ **“They break forth into shouts of joy”** Isaiah speaks often of the joy of deliverance (cf. 44:23; 49:13; 52:9; 54:1).

Here, it has an element of an eschatological joy (i.e., “the whole earth”). YHWH’s will for mankind was rest, peace, abundance, and joy (cf. Genesis 1-2)!

**14:8 “no tree cutter comes up against us”** This can mean one of three things.

1. Babylon exported many trees for her own building projects (literal)
2. the enemy will not cut lumber to build siege equipment (literal)
3. the land will prosper in peace (symbolic)

**14:9 “Sheol”** Sheol is personified as preparing a welcoming gathering for the fallen kings. It (BDB 982) refers to the holding place of the dead. In the OT life after death is described as being a conscious existence, but with no joy; people being a mere shadow of their former selves with enforced equality in silence (cf. vv. 10-11, Job 3:17-19; 10:21-22; 21:33-26). See Special Topic: Where Are the Dead? At 5:14.



**NASB** “spirits of the dead”  
**NKJV** “the dead”  
**NRSV** “the shades”  
**TEV, NJB** “ghosts”  
**LXX** “mighty ones”  
**REB** “the ancient dead”

The term (BDB 952 I, cf. 26:19) is used in poetry for

1. dead kings, TEV, NJB
2. dead warriors, LXX
3. dead ancestors, REB
4. the dead in general, NASB, NKJV

In historical texts it refers to the *Rephaim*, an ethnic group associated with the giants.

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: TERMS USED FOR TALL/POWERFUL WARRIORS OR PEOPLE GROUPS**

These large/tall/powerful people are called by several names.

1. *Nephilim* (BDB 658) – Gen. 6:4; Num. 13:33
2. *Rephaim* (either BDB 952 or BDB 952 II) – Gen. 14:5; Deut. 2:11,20; 3:11,13; Josh. 12:4; 13:12; II Sam. 21:16,18,20,22; I Chr. 20:4,6,8
3. *Zamzummin* (BDB 273), *zuzim* (BDB 265) – Gen. 14:5; Deut. 2:20
4. *Emim* (BDB 34) – Gen. 14:5; Deut. 2:10-11
5. *Anakim* (sons of *Anak*, BDB 778 I) – Num. 13:33; Deut. 1:28; 2:10-11,21; 9:2; Josh. 11:21-22; 14:12,15



**NASB, NRSV** “leaders of the earth”  
**NKJV** “chief one of the earth”  
**TEV** “those who were powerful”  
**NJB** “rulers of the world”

This is literally “rams” (BDB 800, cf. Ezek. 34:17). It referred to the leader of a flock and then metaphorically of human societies.

**14:11** The first two lines denote the lavish and extravagant lifestyle of the eastern kings. They lay on pillows and slept on soft beds.

The last two lines describe the new bed of the kings in Sheol/grave (i.e., worms). Even the monarchs who saw themselves as gods, will one day be in a bed of worms! Mortality is a leveler of all mankind (cf. 5:14). What a contrast!

▣ **“worm”** Here it is used literally as an idiom for death and metaphorical of fear of death and transitoriness of all human life in 41:14.



**14:12 “How you have fallen from heaven”** The VERB (BDB 656, KB 709, *Qal* PERFECT) denotes a settled condition. The question is, “Is this literal or figurative?” The VERB is used for a violent death (BDB 657, v. 2a). Isaiah uses it in 3:8; 8:15 for the destruction of a city. But the added phrase, “from heaven,” is what causes commentators to assert an angelic being, as well as the similar words of Jesus in Luke 10:18.



<b>NASB</b>	<b>“O star of the morning”</b>
<b>NKJV, Vulgate</b>	<b>“O Lucifer”</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>“O Day Star”</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>“bright morning star”</b>
<b>NJB, LXX</b>	<b>“Day star”</b>
<b>REB</b>	<b>“Bright morning star”</b>

The Hebrew NOMINATIVE MASCULINE term is הילל (BDB 237, KB 245). This form is found only here in the OT. The VERBAL root, הלל can mean

1. “shine,” possibly referring to the new moon
2. “be boastful” or “to praise,” from which we get the Hallel psalms (i.e., praise psalms)

The KB mentions several options as to the origin of this root.

1. from a Ugaritic root, hill
2. from an Arabic root, the crescent of the new moon
3. from a Hebrew root, uncertain, but probably refers to Venus the morning star (“son of the dawn”)
4. from the Latin, Lucifer referring to Venus (i.e., lit. “light-bearer”)

The whole point of the title is that this heavenly light is quickly eclipsed by the morning light. Its splendor is brief! There is a new, brighter, and better light coming!

▣ **“you”** The next two lines of v. 12 obviously refer to an earthly king of Assyria or Babylon (cf. vv. 16-17). The imagery of the poem (vv. 4-21) is taken from Canaanite mythology (esp. vv. 13-14), which is known from Ras Shamra Tablets dating from the fifteenth century found at the city of Ugarit.

The terms “star of the morning” (*Helal*) and “dawn” (*Shabar*) are both the names of deities in Canaanite mythology, as is a mountain of the gods in the north (Mount Zaphon, cf. Ps. 48:2). Also the title for deity, “Most High,” is common in Ugaritic poems and refers to *Ba’al Shamim* (“Lord of heaven”). In Canaanite mytho-poetry *Helal*, a lesser god, tries to usurp power, but is defeated. This is behind Isaiah’s imagery of an arrogant eastern potentate.

This description of a proud, arrogant Near Eastern king is extended from vv. 8-11. Only v. 12, taken literally following the Vulgate, and a lack of knowledge of Ugaritic literature can use this context as referring to a rebellious angelic leader. See Contextual Insights, B.

**14:13-14** These two verses show the arrogance and pride of the ANE kings.

1. “I will ascend to. . .,” BDB 748, KB 828, *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. “I will raise my throne. . .,” BDB 926, KB 1202, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT
3. “I will sit on. . .,” BDB 442, KB 444, *Qal* IMPERFECT
4. “I will ascend above...,” same VERB as #1
5. “I will make myself like. . .,” BDB 197, KB 225, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT

Arrogance and pride are the essence of the fallen human spirit. YHWH uniquely judges this human self-deification!

**14:13 “stars of God”** The title for Deity is *El*, לַא (BDB 42), which was a common designation of deity throughout the ANE. This, too, could reflect the Canaanite mythology from Ugarit.

The stars were viewed as angels/gods who controlled human destiny (i.e., Babylonian astral worship from Ziggurats). This person wanted total control over the earth.

▣ **“I will sit on the mount of assembly**

**In the recesses of the north”** This is a symbol of God’s abode (cf. Ps. 48:2; Ezek. 28:14). The surprising thing is its location “in the recesses of the north.” This mountain of the gods in the far north was part of Canaanite mythology, similar to the Greek Mount Olympus.

**14:14 “Most High”** This title *Elyon*, עליון (BDB 751 II), is used by Balaam in Num. 24:16 and is parallel to *Shaddai* (i.e., Almighty, BDB 994). It is used by Moses in his Song before his death in Deut. 32:8, as well as David in II Sam. 22:14 and in several Psalms.

It is also used in the Ras Shamra Tablets for the Canaanite High god.

**14:15** Instead of going to the mountain in the far (BDB 438) north, he will go down to the depths (BDB 438), *Sheol*.

The term *Sheol* (BDB 982, see Special Topic at 5:14) is parallel to “the pit” (BDB 92, cf. Ezek. 31:16), which is another name for the grave (cf. Pro. 28:17). The same term is used in v. 19 and is parallel to tomb/sepulcher (cf. v. 18).

**14:16-19** This is the fourth strophe; it refers to the astonishment of the on-lookers in *Sheol* at the body of the dead King of Babylon. It is similar to vv. 9-11.

**14:17** This verse denotes the aggressive deportation practices of both Assyria and Babylon. This population control mechanism is reversed by Cyrus II (Medo-Persia) in 538 B.C.

**14:19 “a rejected branch”** This same term (BDB 666) is used in 6:13 of “the holy seed in the stump” and in 11:1 of the stem/shoot from Jesse, both of which refer to the Messiah, the true King. The kings of ANE are a “rejected branch”!

▣ **“Like a trampled corpse”** This speaks of the humiliation of an improper burial (possible reference to Sargon II). Not only did the king miss the royal funeral, he missed burial altogether!

The term “trampled” (BDB 100, KB 115, *Hophal* PARTICIPLE) is also used in v. 25 (*Qal* IMPERFECT). It was a metaphor of YHWH’s judgment (cf. 63:6, *Qal* IMPERFECT and 63:18, *Polel* PERFECT). The Psalms use it regularly for the covenant people’s victory over enemies through YHWH’s power and presence (cf. Ps. 44:5; 60:12; 108:13). A disobedient covenant people trample God’s land (cf. Jer. 12:10; *Polel* PERFECT).

**14:20** Not only will the arrogant king be denied a proper burial, he will not be succeeded by a family member. He and his family will be cut off. His own country will not remember him!

**14:21** The king’s descendants will be killed because of their father’s sins. This reflects Exod. 20:5. The king and his wicked nation must not be allowed to prosper. YHWH wants the earth full, but not of unrighteousness.

**14:22-23** This forms a prose conclusion. It seems to me that v. 23 is related to 13:21-22, which is a metaphor to describe the total desolation of this nation, this king, and his city.

**14:22 “offspring and posterity”** These two terms (BDB 630 and 645) refer to descendants.

1. the first, current children
2. the second, the family tree or lineage

Loss of descendants was seen as a great shame and curse (cf. 47:9). It may even have been thought to affect one's afterlife.

**14:23 “I will sweep it with the broom of destruction”** YHWH is depicted as a wife/child cleaning the house by sweeping (BDB 370, KB 367, *Pilpel* PERFECT). All the trash is removed. What a domestic, but powerful domestic metaphor (unique to Isaiah).

**14:24-27** Most English translations make a paragraph change here. But notice there is no “oracle” marker, which implies that 13:1-14:27 is one literary unit dealing with the destruction of Assyria. See Contextual Insights, C.

**14:24** This verse asserts that God's will will be accomplished. His word is sure (cf. 46:11; 55:8-9; Job 23:13; Ps. 33:9; Acts 4:28).

▣ **“The LORD of hosts has sworn”** By the power and authority of Himself, YHWH states His plans and purposes (cf. 14:24; 45:23; 62:8; Deut. 1:8,35; 2:14; 4:31; 6:10,18,23; Jer. 51:14; Amos 4:2; 8:7).

**14:25 “to break Assyria in My hand”** This may refer to the plague which devastated 185,000 troops of Sennacherib in one night before the gates of Jerusalem in Hezekiah's day (cf. II Kgs. 18:13-19:37, esp. 19:35-37; II Chronicles 32).

▣ **“his yoke will be removed from them”** This is a recurrent theme (cf. 9:4; 10:37). Yoke, like “staff” or “rod,” was a symbol of foreign oppression.

**14:26-27** This Assyrian king had a plan for world domination (v. 26), but YHWH had another plan (cf. 8:10), a plan for world redemption (v. 27)! Assyria, Babylon and Persia are tools in YHWH's plan and no one can withstand His hand (i.e., power).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:28-32**

<sup>28</sup>**In the year that King Ahaz died this oracle came:**

<sup>29</sup>**“Do not rejoice, O Philistia, all of you,  
Because the rod that struck you is broken;  
For from the serpent's root a viper will come out,  
And its fruit will be a flying serpent.**

<sup>30</sup>**Those who are most helpless will eat,  
And the needy will lie down in security;  
I will destroy your root with famine,  
And it will kill off your survivors.**

<sup>31</sup>**Wail, O gate; cry, O city;  
Melt away, O Philistia, all of you;  
For smoke comes from the north,  
And there is no straggler in his ranks.**

<sup>32</sup>**How then will one answer the messengers of the nation?  
That the LORD has founded Zion,  
And the afflicted of His people will seek refuge in it.”**

**14:28** Notice there is an “oracle” mentioned in 14:28-32 which deals with YHWH’s judgment on Philistia (i.e., the Philistines), but this is not linked to the Assyrian-oriented strophe of vv. 24-27.

▣ **“In the year that King Ahaz died”** In my OT chart, “Kings of the divided Monarchy” (Appendix Four, #3), three scholars give their proposed dates for Ahaz.

1. John Bright, 735 - 715 B.C.
2. E. J. Young, 736 - 728 B.C.
3. R. K Harrison, 732/732 - 716/715 B.C.

These dates (reign and co-reign, not necessarily death) could fit four aggressive Assyrian kings.

1. Tiglath-Pileser III, 745 – 727 B.C.
2. Shalmaneser V, 727 – 722 B.C.
3. Sargon II, 722 – 705 B.C.
4. Sennacherib, 705 – 681 B.C. (185,000 soldiers killed before the walls of Jerusalem in 701 B.C., cf. Isaiah 36-39; II Kings 18-19).

Number 3, Sargon II, died in battle away from home and did participate in a military campaign against Philistia.

**14:29** Philistia is commanded not to rejoice (BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense) because the evil empire has been defeated. Their short-term deliverance will not last!

▣ The last two lines of v. 29 are very ambiguous and uncertain. They seem to mean that things will go from bad to worse.

The phrase “flying serpent” is the NOUN “serpent” (BDB 977 I, cf. 30:6; Num. 21:6) plus the PARTICIPLE “flying” (BDB 733, KB 800, *Polel* PARTICIPLE), which denotes rapid movement (i.e., striking, sliding, darting).

**14:30** The first two lines refer to God’s care for

1. His covenant people (cf. v. 32) or
2. the needy of Philistine society

**14:31 “Wail, O gate; cry, O city”** These two IMPERATIVES

1. wail, BDB 410, KB 413, *Hiphil*
2. cry, BDB 277, Kb 277, *Qal*

describe the overthrow of the five cities of the Philistines, each with its own king (city states).

▣ **“Melt away, O Philistia, all of you”** The VERB (BDB 556, KB 555, *Niphal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE) describes the paralyzing fear which grips a population (cf. Exod. 15:15; Josh. 2:9,24; I Sam. 14:16).

Note this phrase refers to the destruction of the entire society (cf. Jeremiah 47 and Amos 1:6-8).

**14:31 “there is no straggler in his ranks”** This describes a new Mesopotamian invader. One is gone (cf. v. 29), but another one, a worse one (cf. v. 29c,d), is coming!

▣ **“For smoke comes from the north”** The empires of the Fertile Crescent are to the east of Canaan, but because of the desert in between their armies, had to follow the Euphrates to its headwaters and then move south along the coastal plain. Therefore, “north” became an idiom of invasion, evil, and destruction.

1. here it refers to Assyria
2. in Jer. 4:6; 6:1,22; 10:22; 13:20; 15:12; 46:20,24; Ezek. 26:7 it refers to Neo-Babylon.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Do chapters 13-14 refer to Babylon or Assyria?
2. Are chapters 13 and 14 talking about a particular historical king or is the title used as a symbol of godless human government?
3. Is chapter 14 a reference to Satan?
4. Does this chapter mention demons or animals in 13:21-22; 14:23?
5. Sum up the theological truth in one sentence.
6. How is this prophecy used in the NT?



# ISAIAH 15

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Judgment on Moab	Proclamation Against Moab	Against Moab (15:1-16:14)	God Will Destroy Moab	On Moab
15:1-9 (1-9)	15:1-4 (1-4)	15:1-9 (1-9)	15:1-9	15:1 (1)
				15:2a-d (2a-d)
				15:2e-3 (2e-3)
				15:4-5c (4-5c)
	15:5-9 (5-9)			15:5d-f (5d-f)
				15:6 (6)
				15:7 (7)
				15:8 (8)
				15:9 (9)

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

### Locations Mentioned in Chapters 15-16

Isaiah was very familiar with the geographical area of the Trans-Jordan (east of Jordan).

#### A. Cities

1. Ar, v. 1
2. Kir, v. 1 (Kir-hareseth, 16:7,11)
3. Dibon, v. 2
4. Nebo, v. 2
5. Medeba, v. 2
6. Heshbon, v. 4; 16:9
7. Elealeh, v. 4; 16:9
8. Jahaz, v. 4
9. Zoar, v. 5
10. Eglath-shelishiyah, v. 5 (lit. “the Third Eglath,” cf. Jer. 48:34)
11. Luhith, v. 5
12. Horonaim, v. 5
13. Eglaim, v. 8
14. Beer-elim, v. 8
15. Dimon (DSS, “Dibon”), v. 9
16. Selan, 16:1
17. Kir-hareseth, 16:7,11
18. Sibmah, 16:8,9
19. Jazer, 16:8,9
20. Admah (REB 15:9)?

#### B. Water Courses

1. water of Nimrim, v. 6
2. brook of Arabim (possibly a “wadi of poplars”), v. 7
3. waters of Dimon, v. 9
4. fords of Arnon, 16:2

- C. The listing of these numerous cities and water courses are to emphasize a total destruction. There is a movement of refugees southward or to Judah (cf. 16:1-4).

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:1-9

#### <sup>1</sup>The oracle concerning Moab.

**Surely in a night Ar of Moab is devastated *and* ruined;**

**Surely in a night Kir of Moab is devastated *and* ruined.**

<sup>2</sup>**They have gone up to the temple and to Dibon, *even* to the high places to weep.**

**Moab wails over Nebo and Medeba;**

**Everyone's head is bald and every beard is cut off.**

<sup>3</sup>**In their streets they have girded themselves with sackcloth;**

**On their housetops and in their squares**



Everyone is wailing, dissolved in tears.

<sup>4</sup>Heshbon and Elealeh also cry out,  
Their voice is heard all the way to Jahaz;  
Therefore the armed men of Moab cry aloud;  
His soul trembles within him.

<sup>5</sup>My heart cries out for Moab;  
His fugitives are as far as Zoar *and* Eglath-sheleshiah,  
For they go up the ascent of Luhith weeping;  
Surely on the road to Horonaim they raise a cry of distress over *their* ruin.

<sup>6</sup>For the waters of Nimrim are desolate.  
Surely the grass is withered, the tender grass died out,  
There is no green thing.

<sup>7</sup>Therefore the abundance *which* they have acquired and stored up  
They carry off over the brook of Arabim.

<sup>8</sup>For the cry of distress has gone around the territory of Moab,  
Its wail *goes* as far as Eglaim and its wailing even to Beer-elim.

<sup>9</sup>For the waters of Dimon are full of blood;  
Surely I will bring added *woes* upon Dimon,  
A lion upon the fugitives of Moab and upon the remnant of the land.

**15:1** Notice how Isaiah's contextual marker of a new message or vision "oracle" (BDB 672 III) appears in v. 1. See note at 13:1 (cf. 14:28; 17:1; 19:1; 21:1,11,13; 22:1; 23:1; 30:6). This term denotes a divine revelation.

▣ **"Moab"** This is one of Israel's relatives from Lot and one of his two daughters after their flight from Sodom (cf. Genesis 19). Moab, Ammon, and Edom (i.e., the trans-Jordan nations) are first mentioned as receiving domination by Judah in 11:14.

Chapters 15-16 form a literary unit dealing from Moab's judgment (cf. Jeremiah 48; Ezek. 25:8-11; Amos 2:1-3; Zeph. 2:8-11). Moab is mentioned often in Numbers because Israel had to travel through their land to get to Canaan. Moses was buried there (cf. Deuteronomy 34).

▣ **"Surely in a night"** This phrase is repeated twice and emphasizes the suddenness and completeness of the coming judgment of Moabite cities.

The two VERBS "devastated" (BDB 994, KB 1418) and "ruined" (lit. "cut off," BDB 198, KB 225) are both PERFECTS, also denoting a complete destruction. Isaiah used the VERB "ruined" to describe himself in 6:5.

The Assyrian armies invaded Canaan/Palestine several times.

1. Sargon II in 715 B.C.
2. Sargon II in 711 B.C.
3. Sennacherib in 701 B.C.

▣ **"Ar"** The term (BDB 786 I) can refer to a city (it is the general name for city in the Moabite language) or a region (i.e., Deut. 2:9,29).

Since Kir (BDB 885 II) also means "wall" (cf. LXX, i.e., walled city) in Hebrew, it is possible that Ar and Kir refer to the capital of Moab in parallel poetic lines.

**15:2 “Dibon. . .Nebo. . .Medeba”** There are also cities of Moab listed in Numbers in relation to the Wilderness Wandering Period as Israel finally approached Canaan from the eastern side of the Jordan Rift Valley.

**15:2-3 wails. . .bald. . .beard cut off. . .mourning. . .sackcloth. . .wailing”** These all refer to mourning rites of the ANE (cf. 22:12; Ezra 9:3; Job 1:20; Jer. 7:29; 16:6; 41:5; 47:5; 48:37; Ezek. 7:18; 27:31; Micah 1:16). The population tries to turn to their gods (cf. v. 2); they try to repent and seek help, but there is no help from lifeless idols!

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: GRIEVING RITES**

The Israelites expressed sorrow for the death of a loved one and for personal repentance, as well as corporate crimes, in several ways.

1. tear outer robe, Gen. 37:29,34; 44:13; Jdgs. 11:35; II Sam. 1:11; 3:31; I Kgs. 21:27; Job 1:20
2. put on sackcloth, Gen. 37:34; II Sam. 3:31; I Kgs. 21:27; Jer. 48:37
3. take off shoes, II Sam. 15:30; Isa. 20:3
4. put hands on head, II Sam. 13:9; Jer. 2:37
5. put dust on head, Josh. 7:6; I Sam. 4:12; Neh. 9:1
6. sit on the ground, Lam. 2:10; Ezek. 26:16 (lie on the ground, II Sam. 12:16); Isa. 47:1
7. beat the breast, I Sam. 25:1; II Sam. 11:26; Nah. 2:7
8. cut the body, Deut. 14:1; Jer. 16:6; 48:37
9. fast, II Sam. 1:16,22; I Kgs. 21:27
10. chant a lament, II Sam. 1:17; 3:31; II Chr. 35:25
11. baldness (hair pulled out or shaved), Jer. 48:37
12. cut beards short, Jer. 48:37
13. cover head or face, II Sam. 15:30; 19:4

**15:4 “Heshbon. . .Elealeh. . .Jahaz”** These are also cities on the eastern side of Jordan, close to and often identified with Moab (or Ammon, i.e., Mesha Stone, 9<sup>th</sup> century B.C.).

▣ **“cry out”** This is the VERB (BDB 277, KB 277, *Qal* IMPERFECT) that was used in its *Qal* IMPERATIVE form in 14:31 (Philistia). Here it denotes Moab and in v. 5 it denotes YHWH or Isaiah. Note its use in Jer. 48:20,31.



NASB	“the armed men”
NKJV, Peshitta	“the armed soldiers”
NRSV, LXX,	
JB	“the lions”
NJB	“warriors”
REB	“stoutest warriors”

The difference between soldiers and lions in Hebrew is vocalization, not a consonantal change.

▣ **“His soul trembles within him”** This VERB (BDB 438, KB 440, *Qal* PERFECT) appears only here. There are several Hebrew words translated “tremble.” They denote fear and lack of action in the face of God’s judgment. They characterize “holy war.” This one may have been chosen for poetic reasons to sound like the VERB “cry out.”

**15:5-9** The Jewish Study Bible sees these verses as referring to Moabites fleeing to Edom (p. 815). This is possible because the exact location of these cities mentioned is uncertain, though all are east or southeast of the Jordan River.

**15:5 “My heart cries out for Moab”** The “my” in context must refer to YHWH Himself (cf. v. 9). Although it could be the prophet himself, cf. 16:9,11. YHWH hears the cries of Moab’s people and is moved. They still receive judgment, but not from a thoughtless, uncaring God! They are even offered help/refuge in 16:1-4. What an amazing text!

The Septuagint changes the referent to “the heart of the region of Moab cries within her” (cf. NJB).



**NASB, NRSV,  
TEV, NJB,  
REB**

**“Eglath-shelishiyah”**

**NKJV, LXX,**

**Peshitta “like a three-year-old heifer”**

This could be a city or a phrase (cf. Jer. 48:34).

▣ **“His fugitives”** The MT has “her bars” (BDB 138, בריחה from ברייה), but most translations change the vocalization to “his fugitives” from מבררה (BDB 138).

**15:6** In the OT God controls the weather (cf. Deuteronomy 27-29). He brings abundance for covenant obedience, but withholds agricultural production in the face of evil, wickedness, and rebellion. Moab faces both invasion (cf. v. 9a) and lack of food.

**15:7** Moab was located on a major trade route from Egypt to Syria. She taxed all the caravans and became wealthy.

**15:9 “a lion”** This could be

1. literal, God uses wild animals to judge (i.e., I Kgs. 13:24-28; II Kgs. 17:25)

2. a symbol of the Assyrian army (cf. 5:29; Jer. 50:17)

3. figurative of invasion from Judah (cf. 11:14, the lion [ruler] of Judah).

The JPSOA significantly changes the translation of this verse (esp. lines 2-4) to make it positive (cf. v. 5, “my”).

“For I pour added (water) on Dimon

I drench it - for Moab’s refugees - with soil (footnote, ‘tears’) for its remnant”

The LXX of v. 9, lines 2-4, are also very different, but decidedly negative.

“For I will bring Arabs upon Remnon,

and I will remove the offspring of Moab and Ariel

and the remnant of Adama.”



# ISAIAH 16

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prophecy of Moab's Devastation	Moab Destroyed	Against Moab (15:1-16:14)	Moab's Hopeless Situation	The Moabite's Petition
16:1-5 (1-5)	16:1-2 (1-2) 16:3-5 (3-5)	16:1-4b (1-4b) 16:4c-5 (4c-5)	16:1-2 16:3-4b 16:4c-5	16:1-2 (1-2) 16:3-5 (3-5)
16:6-12 (6-12)	16:6-7 (6-7) 16:8-9 (8-9) 16:10-11 (10-11) 16:12 (12)	16:6-7 (6-7) 16:8-11 (8-11) 16:12	16:6 16:7-12	16:6 (6) Moab's Lament 16:7-12 (7-12)
16:13-14	16:13-14	16:13-14	16:13-14	16:13-14

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:1-5

<sup>1</sup>Send the *tribute* lamb to the ruler of the land,  
From Sela by way of the wilderness to the mountain of the daughter of Zion.  
<sup>2</sup>Then, like fleeing birds or scattered nestlings,  
The daughters of Moab will be at the fords of the Arnon.  
<sup>3</sup>Give *us* advice, make a decision;  
Cast your shadow like night at high noon;  
Hide the outcasts, do not betray the fugitive.  
<sup>4</sup>Let the outcasts of Moab stay with you;  
Be a hiding place to them from the destroyer."  
For the extortioner has come to an end, destruction has ceased,  
Oppressors have completely *disappeared* from the land.  
<sup>5</sup>A throne will even be established in lovingkindness,  
And a judge will sit on it in faithfulness in the tent of David;  
Moreover, he will seek justice  
And be prompt in righteousness.

**16:1** To whom and from whom and why are the contextual questions.

1. the fleeing Moabites send a sacrificial gift to the Davidic ruler in Jerusalem to secure his aid, TEV, NRSV
2. a reference to Messiah, cf. v. 5; Peshitta, Vulgate
3. a message of continuing judgment and destruction even to the survivors of Moab, cf. v. 12

▣ **“Send”** The VERB (BDB 1018, KB 1511) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. It denotes a desperate, frantic action.

▣ **“a *tribute* lamb”** The MT has only “lambs” (BDB 503 III, PLURAL, and mentions “as tribute”). Only NASB adds this ADJECTIVE to its translation. As for the PLURAL vs. SINGULAR:

1. PLURAL, NRSV, REB, JB
2. SINGULAR, MT, NJB, NASB, NKJV, TEV

Moab was known for its sheep (cf. II Kgs. 3:4).

The ancient versions have very different translations.

1. LXX, “I will send as it were creeping animals on the land!”
2. Peshitta, “I will send the son of the ruler of the land.”
3. JPSOA, “Dispatch a messenger to the ruler of the land.”

▣ **“From Sela”** The basic meaning of the term (BDB 700) is “crag,” “cliff” (cf. Jer. 51:25), but it came to designate a city in Edom, Sela, or Petra (BDB 701 II, cf. II Kgs. 14:7; Isa. 42:11). However, Sela does not fit the context exactly so maybe another rock feature close to the border with Judea. It possibly simply denotes a southern route.

Where is not as important as from whom, to whom, and why.

▣ **“to the mountain of the daughter of Zion”** This is a figurative way of referring to YHWH’s temple in Jerusalem. This means that the lambs were given to be sacrificed to YHWH (cf. Ezra 7:17).

**16:2** Moab is described as

1. fleeing/fluttering birds, BDB 622 I, KB 672, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE
2. scattered nestlings, BDB 1018, KB 1511, *Pual* PARTICIPLE

She is further identified as “the daughters of Moab,” but this, like v. 16, refers to all the inhabitants of the land that remained alive.

▣ **“at the fords of the Arnon”** The Arnon River (wadi El-Mujib) flows into the middle of the Dead Sea on the eastern side. It was the geographical boundary between Ammon on the north and Moab on the south (extending to the Zered Brook [possible wadi El-Hesa]).

It is surprising that these fords (low water crossings) are not close to Judah’s borders, but across the Dead Sea. Possibly a Judean military force had marched through Ammon to these fords. It is also possible that the phrase denotes a southern exodus from a northern invader.

**16:3-4** These verses give (1) the message (IMPERATIVES as requests) which accompanied the lambs or (2) Isaiah’s admonition for the Judeans to accept the Moabites. I think option #1 is best.

1. “give *no* advice,” BDB 97, KB 112, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, written MASCULINE PLURAL, but to be read as FEMININE SINGULAR to agree with “advice” (BDB 420), which is FEMININE
2. “make a decision,” BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. “cast your shadow,” BDB 1011, KB 1483, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (cf. 25:4; 32:2; Ps. 91:1)
4. “hide the outcasts,” BDB 711, KB 771, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
5. “do not betray the fugitive,” BDB 162, KB 191, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
6. “let the outcasts of Moab stay with you,” BDB 157, KB 184, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
7. “be a hiding place to them,” BDB 217, KB 241, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

Although Moab was a traditional enemy, there were close connections to the Davidic house (i.e., Ruth; I Sam. 22:3-5).

**16:3 “Cast your shadow like night at high noon”** This is metaphorical language for protection. It may be a specific reference to the *Shekinah* cloud of glory that followed the Israelites through this very land during the Wilderness Wandering Period. It was a cloud cover (shade and cool) in the daytime and pillar of fire at night. It symbolized YHWH’s personal presence, provision, and protection.

**16:4** There is a series of time conditions related to Moab’s invasion after which the governmental authority of Judea will be extended to the whole area (cf. v. 5).

Here are the conditions.

1. the extortioner (BDB 568) has come to an end (BDB 67, KB 79, *Qal* PERFECT)
2. destruction (BDB 994, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) has ceased (BDB 477 I, KB 476, *Qal* PERFECT)
3. oppressors (BDB 942, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) have completely disappeared from the land (BDB 1070, KB 1752, *Qal* PERFECT)

**16:5** This verse describes the coming government from Judea (cf. 9:6-7; 11:3-5).

1. a throne will be established (PERFECT) in lovingkindness (BDB 338, see Special Topic following)
2. a judge will sit (PERFECT) on it in faithfulness (BDB 54) in the tent of David
3. he will seek justice (BDB 1048, cf. 11:3,4)
4. he will be prompt in righteousness (“righteousness,” BDB 841, cf. 11:4,5, see Special Topic at 1:4; “prompt,” BDB 555, usually means skilled in something, therefore, able to do it rapidly. Here it denotes a Davidic ruler who quickly acts in righteousness)

This verse is why the Peshitta and Vulgate view this context as Messianic.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: LOVINGKINDNESS (*HESED*)**

This term has a wide semantic field. The BDB characterizes it this way (338-339).

- A. Used in connection to human beings
  - 1. kindness to fellow men (e.g., I Sam. 20:14; II Chr. 24:22)
  - 2. kindness toward the poor and needy (e.g., Micah 6:8)
  - 3. affection (cf. Jer. 2:2; Hos. 6:4)
  - 4. appearance (cf. Isa. 40:6)
- B. Used in connection to God
  - 1. covenant loyalty and love
    - a. “in redemption from enemies and troubles” (e.g., Jer. 31:3; Ezra 27:28; 9:9)
    - b. “in preservation of life from death” (e.g., Job 10:12; Ps. 86:13)
    - c. “in quickening of spiritual life” (e.g., Ps. 119:41,76,88,124,149,150)
    - d. “in redemption from sin” (cf. Ps. 25:7; 51:3)
    - e. “in keeping the covenants” (e.g., II Chr. 6:14; Neh. 1:5; 9:32)
  - 2. describes a divine attribute (e.g., Exod. 34:6; Micah 7:20)
  - 3. kindness of God
    - a. “abundant” (e.g., Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8)
    - b. “great in extent” (e.g., Exod. 20:6; Deut. 5:10; 7:9)
    - c. “everlasting” (e.g., I Chr. 16:34,41; II Chr. 5:13; 7:3,6; 20:21; Ezra 3:11)
  - 4. deeds of kindness (e.g., II Chr. 6:42; Ps. 89:2; Isa. 55:3; 63:7; Lam. 3:22)

## **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:6-12**

- <sup>6</sup>We have heard of the pride of Moab, an excessive pride;  
Even of his arrogance, pride, and fury;  
His idle boasts are false.**
- <sup>7</sup>Therefore Moab will wail; everyone of Moab will wail.  
You will moan for the raisin cakes of Kir-hareseth  
As those who are utterly stricken.**
- <sup>8</sup>For the fields of Heshbon have withered, the vines of Sibmah *as well*;  
The lords of the nations have trampled down its choice clusters  
Which reached as far as Jazer *and* wandered to the deserts;  
Its tendrils spread themselves out *and* passed over the sea.**
- <sup>9</sup>Therefore I will weep bitterly for Jazer, for the vine of Sibmah;  
I will drench you with my tears, O Heshbon and Elealeh;  
For the shouting over your summer fruits and your harvest has fallen away.**
- <sup>10</sup>Gladness and joy are taken away from the fruitful field;  
In the vineyards also there will be no cries of joy or jubilant shouting,  
No treader treads out wine in the presses,  
For I have made the shouting to cease.**
- <sup>11</sup>Therefore my heart intones like a harp for Moab  
And my inward feelings for Kir-hareseth.**



**<sup>12</sup>So it will come about when Moab presents himself,  
 When he wearies himself upon *his* high place  
 And comes to his sanctuary to pray,  
 That he will not prevail.**

**16:6** This begins a new strophe. Verses 1-5 are what YHWH hoped would happen, but v. 6 describes why it could not (compare Jer. 48:29).

1. the pride of Moab
2. excessive pride
3. arrogance
4. pride
5. fury (BDB 720, “insolence”)
6. false, idle boasts (BDB 95 III, empty, imaginary pretensions, cf. Job 11:3; Jer. 48:30)

The Hebrew term “pride” (BDB 144) is repeated in different ways four times. Moab, like her idols, claims much, talks much, but cannot do anything!

**16:7-10 “Therefore”** Here are the consequences.

1. Moab shall wail because of her Ba’al worship (i.e., “raisin cakes”), vv. 7,12 (it is possible this is another idiom for agricultural failure)
2. fields wither and no harvest, vv. 8-10 (cf. 15:6)

It is also possible that “raisin cakes” in this context refers to a luxurious lifestyle.

**16:10 “wine”** See Special Topic at 1:22.

▣ **“I have made the shouting to cease”** This refers to YHWH-sent invaders who disrupted the harvest and its annual festivals.

The concept of the removal of “joy” is recurrent in this verse.

1. gladness taken away, BDB 62, KB 74, *Niphal* PERFECT
2. joy taken away (assuming same VERB as #1)
3. no cries (or songs) of joy, BDB 943, KB 1247, *Pual* IMPERFECT
4. no jubilant shouting, BDB 929, KB 1206, *Pola* IMPERFECT
5. shouting to cease, BDB 991, KB 1407, *Hiphil* PERFECT

**16:11** The question is who is speaking.

1. God (מַעֲרָה, BDB 588, i.e., 63:15; Jer. 31:20)
2. the prophet
3. Moab personified

Because of v. 12, Moab (#3) cannot be right. Because of v. 13 it could be #2, the prophet Isaiah, but because of 15:5,9, as well as the Messianic implications of v. 5, I think it is God who grieves over the “what-could-have-been.” God loves humans made in His image, made for fellowship, yet they turn to false gods, false hopes!

▣

**NASB, REB** “Kir-hareseth”  
**NKJV, NRSV,**  
**TEV, NJB** “Kir Heres”

The MT is reflected in NKJV, but it is a shortened form of NASB (cf. v. 7; the city was simply referred to as “Kir” in 15:1).

**16:12** This verse can be understood in two ways.

1. Moab brings offerings (v. 1) to Jerusalem (v. 5), but her pride refuses to fully embrace YHWH (v. 6). YHWH cares for them (15:5; 16:11).
2. Moab seeks help from her gods (15:2; 16:12), but they are unable to respond.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:13-14**

**<sup>13</sup>This is the word which the LORD spoke earlier concerning Moab. <sup>14</sup>But now the LORD speaks, saying, "Within three years, as a hired man would count them, the glory of Moab will be degraded along with all *his* great population, and *his* remnant will be very small *and* impotent."**

**16:14** This describes the imminent (3 years) fate of prideful Moab!

Instead of abundant people, wealth, influence, and crops, Moab will be "very small and impotent"! The reversals in history are shocking and point fallen humanity to the promise and desire for stability and peace found only in Israel's God!

# ISAIAH 17

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prophecy About Damascus	Proclamation Against Syria and Israel	Against the Syro-Ephraimite Alliance	God Will Punish Syria and Israel	Against Damascus and Israel
17:1-3 (1-3)	17:1-3 (1-3)	17:1-3 (1-3)	17:1-3	17:1-3 (1-3)
17:4-11 (4-11)	17:4-8 (4-8)	17:4-6 (4-6)	17:4-6	17:4-6 (4-6)
		17:7-8	17:7-8	17:7-8
	17:9 (9)	17:9	17:9	17:9-11 (9-11)
	17:10-11 (10-11)	17:10-11 (10-11)	17:10-11	
			Enemy Nations are Defeated	
17:12-14 (12-14)	17:12-14 (12-14)	17:12-14 (12-14)	17:12-14	17:12-14 (12-14)

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 17:1-3

#### <sup>1</sup>The oracle concerning Damascus.

"Behold, Damascus is about to be removed from being a city  
And will become a fallen ruin.

#### <sup>2</sup>The cities of Aroer are forsaken;

They will be for flocks to lie down in,  
And there will be no one to frighten *them*.

#### <sup>3</sup>The fortified city will disappear from Ephraim,

And sovereignty from Damascus  
And the remnant of Aram;  
They will be like the glory of the sons of Israel,"  
Declares the LORD of hosts.

**17:1 "Damascus"** This was the capital of Aram/Syria. The invasion and destruction of Syria have been alluded to earlier in 7:16; 8:4; 10:9. It was an ancient city (cf. Gen. 14:15; 15:2) and an important city located on the northern and northeastern trade routes.

▣ Notice the synonymous parallelism of lines 2 and 3. Tiglath-pileser III partially destroyed Damascus in 732 B.C. It was rebuilt as a regional Assyrian capital. Remember all prophecy is hyperbolic (see D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic*).

**17:2 "The cities of Aroer"** This phrase is confusing.

1. This is the name of a city, not a region.
2. There are several cities that go by this name (BDB 792, which may refer to a "tree" or a "mountain crest," AB, vol. 1, p. 399). Three of the four possible sites are south of Syrian territory.
3. The LXX leaves out the place name (as does REB).
4. The Peshitta spells it Adoer.

It seems that Syria and Israel are linked together in this chapter. They had formed a political/military alliance against Assyria and tried to make Judah join. This co-alliance caused the Syro-Ephraimite war where these two northern nations invaded Judah (cf. 7:16; 8:4; 10:9).

Most of the references are to the Northern Ten Tribes called Israel/Jacob (v. 4); Samaria or Ephraim (v. 3). Syria was under Israelite control during the United Monarchy period.

Aroer is probably a reference to the fortress located on the Arnon River.

▣ Lines 2 and 3 describe the total destruction and depopulation of the site.

**17:3** The walled fortified cities of Syria and Ephraim will disappear (BDB 991, KB 1407, *Niphal PERFECT*). The JPSOA has a footnote that supports a textual emendation from "Ephraim" (BDB 68) **מֵאֶרְמוֹת** to **אֶרְמוֹת** "Aram" (BDB 78), which would be a true parallelism. But if the first strophe is about the Syro-Ephraimite War, then the parallelism is already there. I think v. 3 has an AB, BA poetic pattern (chiasm), as it is in the MT.

▣ **“the remnant of Syria”** This phrase could refer to

1. the capital as the only place of Syrian power that remains (and it will fall, v. 6)
2. when the capital falls even the refugees will not survive

▣ Although the last two lines of v. 3 appear to be positive, they are not. Ephraim is destroyed in 3a, now Syria shares her fate (sarcastically, “glory,” cf. v. 4). “Glory” could refer to the capital of Israel, “Samaria,” which fell after an extended siege to Assyria under Sargon II in 722 B.C.

▣ **“Declares the LORD of hosts”** YHWH is in control of history, especially those events that affect His covenant people.

For the title “LORD of hosts” see Special Topic: Names for Deity at 1:1.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 17:4-11**

- <sup>4</sup>Now in that day the glory of Jacob will fade,  
And the fatness of his flesh will become lean.**
- <sup>5</sup>It will be even like the reaper gathering the standing grain,  
As his arm harvests the ears,  
Or it will be like one gleaning ears of grain  
In the valley of Rephaim.**
- <sup>6</sup>Yet gleanings will be left in it like the shaking of an olive tree,  
Two *or* three olives on the topmost bough,  
Four *or* five on the branches of a fruitful tree,  
Declares the LORD, the God of Israel.**
- <sup>7</sup>In that day man will have regard for his Maker  
And his eyes will look to the Holy One of Israel.**
- <sup>8</sup>He will not have regard for the altars, the work of his hands,  
Nor will he look to that which his fingers have made,  
Even the Asherim and incense stands.**
- <sup>9</sup>In that day their strong cities will be like forsaken places in the forest,  
Or like branches which they abandoned before the sons of Israel;  
And the land will be a desolation.**
- <sup>10</sup>For you have forgotten the God of your salvation  
And have not remembered the rock of your refuge.  
Therefore you plant delightful plants  
And set them with vine slips of a strange *god*.**
- <sup>11</sup>In the day that you plant *it* you carefully fence *it* in,  
And in the morning you bring your seed to blossom;  
*But* the harvest will be a heap  
In a day of sickness and incurable pain.**

**17:4 “in that day”** It is uncertain how the text which follows should be divided into poetic strophes. This phrase could denote the start of a new strophe (cf. v. 4, v. 7, v. 9, v. 11). It is difficult to know the difference between poetry and elevated prose (note paragraph divisions and poetic lines of different translations at the beginning of the chapter).



**NASB** “fade”  
**NKJV** “wane”  
**NRSV** “brought low”  
**TEV** “come to an end”  
**NJB** “diminish”

This VERB (BDB 195, KB 223, *Niphal* IMPERFECT) originally referred to low hanging fruit or limbs, but the *Niphal* stem denoted that which was brought low or laid low (cf. Jdgs. 6:6). The *Qal* stem is used in 19:6 and 38:14.

This is the first of several negative statements describing Israel.

1. glory. . .will fade, v. 4
2. fatness of his flesh will become lean, v. 4
3. Israel will be cut down, v. 5
4. only a few olives left at the very top, v. 6

**17:5 “the valley of Raphaim”** This refers to a fertile valley southwest of Jerusalem which is mentioned several times in the OT (cf. II Sam. 5:18,22; 23:13; I Chr. 11:15; 14:9; and here). It must have served as the origin of Isaiah’s imagery of expected fruitfulness thwarted (cf. v. 4). Why he used a site in Judah, not Israel, is uncertain.

**17:6** The initial harvest of olive trees was by shaking or striking the tree (cf. 24:13; Deut. 24:20). There were always a few olives left that would not fall. These were usually left for the poor (i.e., gleaners). Isaiah uses them as a symbol for a remnant of survivors.

**“Two or three. . .Four or five”** This is an example of Hebrew idiom for an indefinite amount.

**17:7-8** These verses form a contrast. Verse 7 denotes repentance, verse 8 what they turn from (i.e., idolatry). The question is to whom are these two verses directed.

1. Israel
2. Israel and Syria
3. Israel, Syria, and Assyria
4. all ANE cultures (i.e., “men,” **האדם**).

Is this meant to be parallel to chapters 7, 9, and 11? Also notice the promised victory of God’s people in vv. 12-14 (esp. 14b)!

**17:7** The parallelism of the verse links “Maker” (i.e., the Creator of heaven and earth or the creator of Israel, cf. 51:13) with “the Holy One of Israel” (a title used almost exclusively by Isaiah). This is an allusion to monotheism!

**17:8** Instead of God being the “maker” they have made their own gods (i.e., *Ba’als* and *Asherim*, line 3; 2:8,20; 30:22; 31:7).

## SPECIAL TOPIC: FERTILITY WORSHIP OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

- I. Reasons For
  - A. Ancient humans began as a hunter-gatherers, but as nomadic life became settled, the need for crops and herds developed.
  - B. Ancient Near Eastern inhabitants were vulnerable to the forces of nature. As civilizations developed around the major bodies of fresh water they became dependant on the regular order of the seasons.
  - C. The forces of nature became gods who needed to be supplicated and controlled.
- II. Where and Why
  - A. Fertility religions developed in
    1. Egypt (Nile)
    2. Mesopotamia (Tigris and Euphrates)
    3. Canaan (Jordan)
  - B. There is a basic commonality among the fertility cults of the Ancient Near East.
  - C. The changing and unpredictable seasons and weather conditions caused the development of myths using human/divine analogies as the basis of life in the spiritual realm and on earth.
- III. Who and How
  - A. Who (the gods and goddesses)
    1. Egypt
      - a. Isis (female)
      - b. Osiris (male)
    2. Mesopotamia
      - a. Ishtar/Inanna (female)
      - b. Tammuz/Dumuzi (male)
    3. Canaan
      - a. Ba'al (male)
      - b. Asherah, Astarte, Anath (female)
  - B. Each of these pairs were mythologized in similar ways
    1. one dies
    2. the other restores
    3. the pattern of dying and rising gods mimic the annual cycles of nature
  - C. Imitation magic saw human sexual unions (i.e., marriage of the gods) as a way of insuring fertility of crops, herds, and people
- IV. The Israelites
  - A. YHWH's people were warned (i.e., Leviticus and Deuteronomy) to avoid the fertility cults (especially of Canaan).
  - B. These cults were very popular because of the superstition of human beings and the added incentive of sexual activity.
  - C. Idolatry involves the blessing of life to be sought in cultic or ritual ways instead of a personal faith and trust in YHWH.
- IV. Suggested Reading
  - A. W. F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*
  - B. J. H. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*

- C. James G. Frazer
  - 1. *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*
  - 2. *Folklore in the Old Testament*
  - 3. *The Worship of Nature*
- D. C. H. Gordon, *Before the Bible*
- E. S. N. Kramer, *Mythologies of the Ancient World*

▣ **“incense stands”** The term (BDB 329 calls it a “sun-pillar,” but KB 329 calls it a transportable “incense-altar”) is always used in a negative sense in the context of idol worship (cf. Lev. 26:30; II Chr. 14:5; 34:4,7; Isa. 17:8; 27:9; Ezek. 6:4,6).

**17:9** This seems to begin a new thought unit. It describes the coming judgment in hyperbolic agricultural metaphors (MT)

- 1. like the forsaken places of the forest
- 2. like branches which they abandoned
- 3. the land will be a desolation

This verse is translated very differently by the Septuagint and its translation is followed by JB, NRSV, and REB (and the JPSOA seems to acknowledge its validity in its footnote). The phrase denotes (1) a rapid exodus where useless things are abandoned or (2) people groups conquered by the Israelites in the Conquest (i.e., the Amorites and Hivites).

**17:10** This verse is uniquely addressed to Israel and the reason for their judgment by their covenant Deity.

- 1. forgotten the God of your salvation (i.e., Ps. 78:11,42)
- 2. not remembered the rock of your refuge (i.e., Ps. 18:1-3; 78:3-5)
- 3. planted delightful plants in honor of a strange god (cf. 1:29-30; 65:3; 66:17, i.e., sacred gardens or trees. It may refer to Adonis/Tammuz, a vegetation god to whom flowers were planted early in the spring, cf. AB, vol. 6, p. 318)

▣ **“the God of your salvation”** This is a recurrent description of Israel’s God (cf. 12:2; 17:10; 33:2; 45:17; 61:16; 62:11; Ps. 65:51; 68:19; 85:4). Salvation denotes deliverance from any force or pressure that denies or cancels YHWH’s covenant desire for His people. Only Israel’s sin can thwart His desires for them and yet, He remains “the God of your salvation” (cf. Micah 7:7; Hab. 3:13,18).

**17:11** This refers to the sacred gardens #3 in v. 10 above.

- 1. they plant it carefully
- 2. they fence it
- 3. they fertilize it

It will grow and reproduce amazingly fast, but will result in

- 1. harvest a heap
- 2. sickliness
- 3. incurable pain (cf. Job 34:6; Jer. 15:18; 17:9; 30:12,15; Micah 1:9)



**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 17:12-14**

- <sup>12</sup>Alas, the uproar of many peoples  
Who roar like the roaring of the seas,  
And the rumbling of nations  
Who rush on like the rumbling of mighty waters!
- <sup>13</sup>The nations rumble on like the rumbling of many waters,  
But He will rebuke them and they will flee far away,  
And be chased like chaff in the mountains before the wind,  
Or like whirling dust before a gale.
- <sup>14</sup>At evening time, behold, *there is* terror!  
Before morning they are no more.  
Such *will be* the portion of those who plunder us  
And the lot of those who pillage us.

**17:12-14** This is the final strophe of chapter 17. It is characterized by parallelism and the repeated use of two roots.

1. BDB 242, KB 250, “murmur,” “growl,” “roar,” or “be boisterous”
  - a. NOUN, v. 12
  - b. *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, v. 12
  - c. *Qal* IMPERFECT VERB, v. 12
2. BDB 980, KB 1367, “roar,” “uproar,” “din,” or “crash”
  - a. NOUN (BDB 981), v. 12
  - b. NOUN (BDB 981), v. 12
  - c. *Niphal* IMPERFECT VERB, v. 12
  - d. NOUN (BDB 981), v. 13
  - e. *Niphal* IMPERFECT VERB, v. 13
3. parallel imagery, v. 13
  - a. like chaff, v. 13
  - b. like dust, v. 13

YHWH’s roar is louder than the tumult of the nations and they will retreat as a result! He overcomes the chaotic waters again as in creation (cf. Psalm 29).

4. contrast
  - a. at evening, behold *there is* terror
  - b. before morning they are no more
5. synonyms, v. 14
  - a. plunder, BDB 1042, KB 1367, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE
  - b. pillage, BDB 102, KB 117, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE

**17:14 “Before morning they are no more”** This phrase has no VERBAL, which would denote emphasis. This line gives a restorative context to vv. 12-14. This strophe is parallel to the thoughts of Psalm 2. YHWH sends the nations (i.e., to punish His people for their covenant disobedience and lack of faithfulness), but He judges the very same nations. His people are safe in Him! This reversal is similar to 10:33-34.

Often in Isaiah God’s deliverance is connected to the coming of light (cf. 8:22-9:2; 17:14; 29:18; 30:26; 33:2; 42:16; 49:9-10; 58:8,10; 60:1-3,19-20).

▣ **“the portion”** This term (BDB 324) denotes God’s will in the imagery of a divine lot cast. It does not mean an arbitrary destiny or fate, but events are in the hand of God (cf. Jer. 13:25).

# ISAIAH 18

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Message to Ethiopia	Proclamation Against Ethiopia	Concerning Ethiopia	God Will Punish Ethiopia	Against Cush
18:1-7 (1-7)	18:1-2 (1-2)	18:1-2 (1-2)	18:1-2	18:1-6 (1-6)
	18:3 (3)	18:3-6 (3-6)	18:3-6	
	18:4-6 (4-6)			
	18:7	18:7	18:7	18:7

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:1-7**

<sup>1</sup>Alas, oh land of whirring wings

Which lies beyond the rivers of Cush,

<sup>2</sup>Which sends envoys by the sea,

Even in papyrus vessels on the surface of the waters.

Go, swift messengers, to a nation tall and smooth,

To a people feared far and wide,

A powerful and oppressive nation

Whose land the rivers divide.

<sup>3</sup>All you inhabitants of the world and dwellers on earth,  
 As soon as a standard is raised on the mountains, you will see *it*,  
 And as soon as the trumpet is blown, you will hear *it*.

<sup>4</sup>For thus the LORD has told me,  
 "I will look from My dwelling place quietly  
 Like dazzling heat in the sunshine,  
 Like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest."

<sup>5</sup>For before the harvest, as soon as the bud blossoms  
 And the flower becomes a ripening grape,  
 Then He will cut off the sprigs with pruning knives  
 And remove *and* cut away the spreading branches.

<sup>6</sup>They will be left together for mountain birds of prey,  
 And for the beasts of the earth;  
 And the birds of prey will spend the summer *feeding* on them,  
 And all the beasts of the earth will spend harvest time on them.

<sup>7</sup>At that time a gift of homage will be brought to the LORD of hosts  
 From a people tall and smooth,  
 Even from a people feared far and wide,  
 A powerful and oppressive nation,  
 Whose land the rivers divide —  
 To the place of the name of the LORD of hosts, *even* Mount Zion.

18:1

NASB "Alas"  
 NKJV, Peshitta "woe"  
 NRSV, JPSOA "Ah"

This INTERJECTION (BDB 222) is used often in the prophets (cf. 1:4,24; 5:8,11,18,20,21,22; 10:1,5; 17:12; 18:1; 28:1; 29:1,15; 30:1; 31:1; 33:1; 45:9; 55:1). Mostly it expresses a negative reaction to the coming pain of divine judgment. However, in some contexts it denotes sympathy or pity, as in 18:1; 55:1; Jer. 47:6.

▣

NASB, NRSV "land of whirring wings"  
 NKJV "the land shadowed with buzzing wings"  
 TEV "a land where the sound of wings is heard"  
 NJB "Land of the whirring locust"  
 LXX "wings of a land of ships"  
 Peshitta "the land of shadowing wings"  
 REB "a land of sailing ships" (from Arabic and Aramaic cognates, Targums, and LXX)  
 JPSOA "land of the deep shadow of wings"

This root (צלצל, BDB 852) has several possible meanings.

1. 852 I, whirring, buzzing as of the wings of insects
2. 852 II, spear whizzing in flight (cf. Job 40:31)
3. same CONSONANTS, but different VOWELS, whirring locust (cf. Deut. 28:42)
4. PLURAL, musical percussion instrument (cf. I Sam. 6:5; I Chr. 13:8; Ps. 150:5)

5. related VERB (צָלַל, BDB 852), tingle (cf. I Sam. 3:11; II Kgs. 21:12; Jer. 19:3) or quiver (cf. Hab. 3:16)
6. 853 II, sink (cf. Exod. 15:10)
7. 853 III, grow dark (cf. Neh. 13:19; Ezek. 31:3)
8. related NOUN, צֶלַל, shadow (cf. Isa. 4:6; 16:3; 25:4,5; 30:2,3; 32:2; 34:15; 38:8; 49:2; 51:16 (this is how JPSOA translates the phrase))



**NASB, MT,**  
**NJB, REB** “Cush”  
**NKJV, LXX,**  
**Peshitta** “Ethiopia”  
**NRSV footnote** “Nubia”

This refers to the land area south of the first cataract of the Nile. It was known in Genesis as “Cush” (BDB 468, cf. Gen. 2:13; 10:6,7,8). In the Greek period it was called “Ethiopia.” Today it would include the Sudan and parts of modern Ethiopia (TEV footnote, p. 625).

In this context (i.e., chapter 19), it may refer to the 25<sup>th</sup> Dynasty of Nubian rulers of Egypt (i.e., Pianchia, Shabaka).

However, notice that the people addressed are “beyond the rivers of Cush.” Maybe Egypt herself is looking for mercenaries!

**18:2 “papyrus vessels”** At first one would think this must refer to sailing vessels on the Nile, but these same kinds of boats also were used on the Tigris and Euphrates (cf. James M. Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, p. 2560)

▣ **“Go”** This is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. To whom is this addressed?

1. envoys from Cush
2. envoys from Egypt
3. envoys from mercenary groups south of Cush
4. envoys from Assyria
5. all human armies opposing YHWH and His covenant people

Isaiah regularly switches from a historical setting or event to an eschatological setting. The events and crises of his day foreshadow the events of the climatic conclusion of history. This fluidity is difficult to lock down into one historical referent (time, place, people). Cosmic consequences and purposes are at work behind existential events.

▣ This verse characterizes the nation.

1. seafaring people (i.e., reed boats of the Nile, BDB 479 CONSTRUCT BDB 167)
2. tall people (BDB 604, KB 645, *Pual* PARTICIPLE, lit. “to extend”)
3. smooth people, BDB 598, KB 634, *Pual* PARTICIPLE (used of bald heads, but also polished swords and people’s skin: [1] no blemishes, REB, TEV, “smooth-skinned’ [2] consistent color, “bronzed”, NJB; or [3] clean shaven, no facial hair)
4. feared far and wide
5. a powerful nation (Hebrew uncertain, but possibly an idiom for “strange language”)
6. an oppressive nation (Hebrew uncertain)
7. land divided by rivers (Hebrew uncertain, this VERB, BDB 102, KB 107, *Qal* PERFECT, occurs only in this chapter, twice. The translation “divide” is based on an Aramaic root. REB has “scourged,” referring to an annual flood, however, it could refer to the Tigris and Euphrates)

Numbers 2-6 are repeated in v. 7. This description fits the people south of the first cataract of the Nile, a tall, dark, warlike people group.

However, this context could be understood as Egypt seeking military alliances against Assyria. The term translated “tall” is never translated this way anywhere else. The universal ring of v. 3 could turn this poem into a message from YHWH that there is no one who can save a nation from His judgment. Egypt herself, nor any other notorious warlike people, can help Judah (cf. chapter 7), only YHWH.

Contextually the question

1. is chapter 18 an independent poem?
2. is chapter 18 related to chapter 17?
3. is chapter 18 related to chapter 19?



**NASB** “a powerful and oppressive nation”

**NKJV** “a nation powerful and treading down”

**NRSV** “a nation mighty and conquering”

**TEV** “a strong and powerful nation”

**JPSOA** “a nation of gibber and chatter”

The LXX and Peshitta translate this text as addressing a defeated nation, but this is not followed by modern translations.

There are two descriptive NOUNS used of these people.

1. The term “mighty” (BDB 876) is doubled. This could intensify the term (i.e., sound of their marching armies, IVP Bible Background Commentary, p. 608) or, like JPSOA, change it into a description of their language.
2. The second term (BDB 101) is literally “to tread down” (NKJV) in the metaphorical sense of conquer.

**18:3 “All you inhabitants of the world and dwellers on earth”** Isaiah has addressed this larger group several times (cf. 2:2-4; 9:7; 11:10,11-12; 12:4-6; 17:7-8; 26:9). What happens to YHWH’s covenant people affects all nations. The term can refer to worldwide redemption or judgment (cf. 13:11; 24:4; 34:1). In a sense, the use of this term “world” (BDB 385) shows YHWH’s universal significance, power, and presence, as does the literary unit of judgment on the surrounding nations. YHWH’s acts affect all the earth. He is the Lord of creation!

Who sends the message of v. 3 and to whom is it addressed?

1. Cush to Assyria
2. Anti-Assyrian coalition to Cush (NRSV footnote)
3. Anti-Assyrian message of possible cooperation to Syria and Israel (REB footnote)
4. Cush responding to a message for help from Judah (Jewish Study Bible footnote)
5. JB footnote says that this whole passage refers to Egypt because at this period the Pharaohs were Nubian. So it would be a literary unit with chapter 19, not 17!
6. Assyria to the world
7. YHWH to all human enemies who oppose His purpose and people (cf. Psalm 2)

Thus we see again the ambiguous, yet powerful, imagery of Hebrew poetry.

▣ These were means of communicating in battle (i.e., raised standard and trumpet). These symbols could be for

1. judgment (cf. vv. 5-6)
2. salvation (cf. v. 7)

How wonderfully this little poem depicts the chaos of earth vs. the tranquility of heaven, as well as what looked like a judgment becomes an invitation (i.e., 2:2-4; 11:10; 49:6; 51:4-8).

**18:4 “For thus the LORD has told me”** This is another specific reference to Isaiah’s claim of inspiration. His message was not his own, but YHWH’s! This is the issue of biblical authority! Has God spoken? Can we understand it? Can we trust it? These are foundational questions that must be answered by everyone and anyone who comes in contact with the Bible. See the sermons “The Trustworthiness of the Old Testament” and “The Trustworthiness of the New Testament” online at [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org) in “Biblical Interpretation Seminar,” Lesson Two.

▣ Lines 2-4 describe God’s message to Cush or to Assyria. He speaks securely (two COHORTATIVES) from (1) Mt. Moriah, the temple where He dwells between the wings of the Cherubim over the Ark of the Covenant or (2) a reference to heaven (cf. I Kgs. 8:39,43,49). His presence is radiant!

In the book of Isaiah Jerusalem will never be taken. This verse may reflect that theology. The world may be at war (v. 3), but Judah is secure in YHWH’s security (i.e., 7:4; 8:8). Judah need not form an alliance with Syria/Israel or Egypt. Assyria will be totally defeated.

YHWH’s security, tranquility, and peace in heaven are contrasted with the chaos on earth. This is very similar to the literary structure of the NT book of Revelation, where chaos on earth is described in chapters 2-3, 4, but the heavenly throne room is quiet and peaceful in chapters 5-6! History is not a flux, but a means to a teleological climax designed and orchestrated by God!

**18:5** YHWH’s message of judgment is given in agricultural metaphors, which are so common in Isaiah. A lost harvest would devastate those who depended on annual food crops.

This is a metaphor of rapid judgment (cf. 17:14).

**18:6** The death of the human population will become a banquet for the birds of prey and wild beasts.

**18:7** A time is coming when the remnant of these people (or possibly the whole Gentile world) will send another message, but this time not a threat (cf. v. 3), but an offering to YHWH in Jerusalem (cf. v. 7, line 6). The gift would be a cultural/religious symbol acknowledging YHWH’s lordship and reign. The enemies of v. 1-2 are now worshipers! This is the fulfillment of Gen. 3:15 (see Special Topic: Bob’s Evangelical Biases at 1:3). The redemptive purpose is wider than Abraham’s physical seed. It encompasses his spiritual seed (cf. Rom. 2:28-29)!

▣

**NASB, NKJV,**

**NRSV, REB,**

**LXX**

**“from”**

**NJB**

**“on behalf of”**

The MT has the NOUN “people” (BDB 766 I), but no PREPOSITION. Possibly the people themselves are the offering.

The DSS and Septuagint and Vulgate have the PREPOSITION “from.”





# ISAIAH 19

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Message to Egypt	Proclamation Against Egypt	Against Egypt	God Will Punish Egypt	Against Egypt
19:1-4 (1-4)	19:1 (1)  19:2-4 (2-4)	19:1-4 (1-4)	19:1-4	19:1-4 (1-4)
19:5-10 (5-10)	19:5-10 (5-10)	19:5-10 (5-10)	19:5-10	19:5-15 (5-15)
19:11-15 (11-15)	19:11-15 (11-15)	19:11-15 (11-15)	19:11-15	
		Conversion of Egypt and Assyria	Egypt Will Worship the LORD	The Conversion of Egypt
19:16-17	19:16-17  Egypt, Assyria and Israel Blessed	19:16-17	19:16-17	19:16-23
19:18	19:18	19:18	19:18	
19:19-22	19:19-22	19:19-22	19:19-22	
19:23	19:23	19:23	19:23-25	
19:24-25	19:24-25	19:24-25		19:24-25

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 19:1-4

<sup>1</sup>The oracle concerning Egypt.

Behold, the LORD is riding on a swift cloud and is about to come to Egypt;  
The idols of Egypt will tremble at His presence,  
And the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them.

<sup>2</sup>So I will incite Egyptians against Egyptians;  
And they will each fight against his brother and each against his neighbor,  
City against city *and* kingdom against kingdom.

<sup>3</sup>Then the spirit of the Egyptians will be demoralized within them;  
And I will confound their strategy,  
So that they will resort to idols and ghosts of the dead  
And to mediums and spiritists.

<sup>4</sup>Moreover, I will deliver the Egyptians into the hand of a cruel master,  
And a mighty king will rule over them," declares the Lord GOD of hosts.

**19:1 “the LORD is riding on a swift cloud”** This is metaphorical language describing YHWH as

1. controller of nature
2. director of nature’s power
3. swift in His coming

See Ps. 18:10; 104:3. The phrase has Messianic connections in Dan. 7:13 and Matt. 26:64; Mark 14:62.

As with many OT phrases that describe YHWH we find that similar ones are used of pagan deities or rulers of the ANE. Riding on clouds is used of *Ba’al* in Ugaritic poems. As God’s people encountered the hyperbolic statements/claims of the surrounding nations, she attributed them to her God, the only God, the one in whom they may truly find their fulfillment. This is true of phrases such as “King of kings and LORD of lords” and so many other popular titles of YHWH.

▣ **“and is about to come to Egypt”** YHWH’s presence again is both a judgment (vv. 1-15) and a salvation (vv. 16-23). It is this double meaning that runs through much of Hebrew prophecy. The literary technique known as “reversal” dominates this genre. It is like antithetical parallelism taken to a larger piece of writing (as is paradox).

Egypt will be judged to be cleansed and prepared to worship YHWH. He will come to her in deliverance as He has to Judah. YHWH’s heart is directed at humans made in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27), not just a select group of humans (i.e., Israel). He uses Abraham’s seed to accomplish a larger purpose (cf. Gen. 3:15)!

▣ **“The idols of Egypt”** Egypt had many gods (Exod. 12:12; Num. 33:4). Her idolatry and spiritism are delineated in v. 3.

1. idols (BDB 47)
2. ghosts of the dead (BDB 31, found only here)
3. mediums (BDB 15, “necromancers,” cf. Deut. 18:11)
4. spiritists (BDB 396, “wizards,” “familiar spirits,” cf. Deut. 18:11)

See note at 8:19.

The plagues of the Exodus purposefully depreciated many of the Egyptian gods for the purposes of producing faith in both Israelites and Egyptians (i.e., “mixed multitude,” cf. Exod. 12:38).

In this text the people claimed to have the power or spiritual connection (i.e., familiar spirit) to communicate with the dead (cf. Lev. 19:31; 20:6,27; Deut. 18:11; I Sam. 28:8; II Kgs. 21:6; II Chr. 33:6; Isa. 8:19; 19:3). They were seeking information about and control of the future, but apart from YHWH. This is caused by

1. the fallen nature of humanity
2. self-deceived priests/prophets
3. demon activity
4. search for spiritual power over our lives and the lives of others

▣ The last two lines of v. 1 are parallel.

1. the idols of Egypt will tremble, BDB 631, KB 681, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 6:4; 7:2 (twice); 19:1; 24:20 (twice); 29:9; 37:22
2. the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them, BDB 587, KB 606, *Niphal* IMPERFECT, cf. 13:7; Josh. 2:11; 5:1; 7:5 (i.e., “holy war” terminology)

**19:2** One wonders if this relates to

1. the military advance of the Nubian rulers against the native Egyptians of the Delta region
2. the conflicts between the different cities of Egypt, each with their special gods

This internal conflict between the same people and their armies is another example of “holy war” (i.e., Jdgs. 7:22; I Sam. 14:20; II Chr. 20:23).

▣ “**I will . . .**” Isaiah is speaking directly for YHWH (vv. 2,3,4). YHWH causes

1. civil war, v. 2
2. demoralization, v. 3a
3. confused counsel/strategy, v. 3b
4. reliance on false gods, v. 3,c,d
5. the coming of a cruel master, a mighty king, v. 4

▣

**NASB, REB** “**I will incite**”

**NKJV** “**I will set**”

**NRSV, TEV,  
NJB, LXX,**

**Peshitta** “**I will stir up**”

This VERB (BDB 696 I or BDB 1127) is used twice in the *Pilpel* stem (Isa. 9:11 and here). In context it seems to mean

1. stir up
2. provoke
3. incite (Ethiopian root)

The Arabic root means “to stink” (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 233).

**19:3 “confound”** This Hebrew root (BDB 118 I) normally means “to swallow.” Many scholars assume a second meaning for the same root, “confound” or “confuse” (BDB 118 III, cf. 3:12; 9:15; 28:7).

**19:4** In context (cf. 20:4) this could refer to (1) Assyria (cf. chap. 20) or (2) Nubian invaders (cf. chap. 18). The same terminology is used for Babylon in Jer. 46:26; Ezek. 29:19. YHWH directs world empires for His purposes.

You must decide if this is typical ANE royal hyperbole, so common in the ancient world, or reality (i.e., a biblical world view). Inspired authors take the terminology of the ANE and apply it to YHWH. Its validity is a faith issue! Is the Bible a unique, inspired, self-revelation of the one true God? This is

the issue! See my sermons on “The Trustworthiness of the OT” and the Trustworthiness of the NT” online at [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org) in the “Biblical Interpretation Seminar” section (revised Video Seminar 2009, Lesson 3).

▣ **“I will deliver”** This VERB (BDB 698, KB 755, *Piel* PERFECT) means “hand over to” (cf. Targums, LXX, Peshitta). The *Piel* appears only here. The VERB does appear in the *Niphal* in Gen. 8:2 and Ps. 63:12, where it means “be stopped.” The *Piel* connotation comes from an old Aramaic root. Therefore, there may be two separate Hebrew roots.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 19:5-10**

- <sup>5</sup>The waters from the sea will dry up,  
And the river will be parched and dry.**
- <sup>6</sup>The canals will emit a stench,  
The streams of Egypt will thin out and dry up;  
The reeds and rushes will rot away.**
- <sup>7</sup>The bulrushes by the Nile, by the edge of the Nile  
And all the sown fields by the Nile  
Will become dry, be driven away, and be no more.**
- <sup>8</sup>And the fishermen will lament,  
And all those who cast a line into the Nile will mourn,  
And those who spread nets on the waters will pine away.**
- <sup>9</sup>Moreover, the manufacturers of linen made from combed flax  
And the weavers of white cloth will be utterly dejected.**
- <sup>10</sup>And the pillars of *Egypt* will be crushed;  
All the hired laborers will be grieved in soul.**

**19:5-10** This strophe describes YHWH’s judgment on Egypt.

1. their abundant water from the Nile dries up.
2. with its loss the river vegetation dies.
3. with its loss irrigated crops die.
4. with its loss the fishing industry will lament and languish.
5. with the loss the clothing industry stops.
6. Egyptian society comes to a crushing, grinding stop.
7. all hired laborers will grieve.

There are three related VERBS which denote the loss of water.

1. “dry up,” BDB 677, KB 732, *Niphal* PERFECT, v. 5; 41:17; Jer. 18:14
2. “be parched,” BDB 351, KB 349, *Qal* IMPERFECT, vv. 5,6; 11:15; 37:25; 44:27; 50:2; 51:10
3. “be dry,” BDB 386, KB 384, *Qal* PERFECT, vv. 5,7; 15:6; 27:11; 40:7,8,24; 42:15 (twice); 44:27

God’s ability to control water (the only physical material that God does not audibly create in Genesis 1) is recurrent in the OT.

1. separated water above and water below, Gen. 1:7
2. gathered the waters so dry land could appear, Gen. 1:9-10
3. sent the flood, Gen. 7:4,7
4. dried up the flood, Gen. 8:2-3
5. provided a well of water for Hagar, Gen. 21:19
6. split and restored the Sea of Reeds, Exod. 14:16,27

7. purified the water at Marah, Exod. 15:22-25
8. provided water that came from rocks in the wilderness, Num. 20:8,11
9. promised agricultural abundance if covenant was obeyed, Deuteronomy 27-28
10. split the Jordan River, Josh. 3:14-17; 4:23-24
11. dried up the Nile and its tributaries, Isa. 19:5
12. will dry up the Euphrates, Rev. 16:12
13. water flows from the new temple (Ezek. 47:1) from Jerusalem (Zech. 14:8) and the new heavenly city, Rev. 22:1

For desert people these were truly mighty miracles and proof of God's power because water was a symbol of life itself. Remember, the Nile was viewed as one of the main deities of Egypt (as was *Re*, the sun god, cf. v. 18).

**19:6 “will emit a stench”** This VERB (BDB 276 II, KB 276, *Hiphil* PERFECT) occurs only here. It seems to reflect an Arabic root. The abundant dead vegetation begins to rot!

**19:9**

NASB, NJB	“white cloth”
NKJV	“fine fabric”
NRSV, REB	“grow pale”
LXX	“linen”
JPSOA	“chagrined”

The MT has חורר, “white cloth” (for Aramaic parallel see Dan. 7:9), but the parallelism fits better with חורר, “grow pale” (cf. Isa. 29:22 and DSS of this text). There is obviously an intended play on “white” (חורר, BDB 301).

**19:10**

NASB	“the pillars”
NKJV, JPSOA	“its foundations”
NRSV, TEV, NJB	“its weavers”

The MT (BDB 1011, only here) has “foundation” or “stay” (of society), which would refer to the upper class leaders. “Weavers” comes from those who are looking for a balanced parallelism to “hired laborers” (DSS, Targums from Aramaic root, “weavers”) in the second line. The question is, “Is the parallelism synonymous (weavers) or antithetical (upper class and lower class)?” The Hebrew text remains ambiguous (cf. LXX and Peshitta).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 19:11-15**

<sup>11</sup>The princes of Zoan are mere fools;  
 The advice of Pharaoh's wisest advisers has become stupid.  
 How can you *men* say to Pharaoh,  
 "I am a son of the wise, a son of ancient kings"?

<sup>12</sup>Well then, where are your wise men?  
 Please let them tell you,  
 And let them understand what the LORD of hosts  
 Has purposed against Egypt.

<sup>13</sup>The princes of Zoan have acted foolishly,  
 The princes of Memphis are deluded;  
 Those who are the cornerstone of her tribes

**Have led Egypt astray.**

**<sup>14</sup>The LORD has mixed within her a spirit of distortion;**

**They have led Egypt astray in all that it does,**

**As a drunken man staggers in his vomit.**

**<sup>15</sup>There will be no work for Egypt**

**Which *its* head or tail, *its* palm branch or bulrush, may do.**

**19:11-15** This strophe is an elaboration of v. 3.

1. v. 11, “the princes of Zoan” (Tanis, capital of the Delta region) are mere fools (BDB 17, used of Judah in Jer. 4:22)
2. v. 11, “the advice of Pharaoh’s wisest advisers has become stupid” (lit. “brutish,” BDB 129 II, KB 146, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE, cf. Jer. 10:14,21; 51:17)
3. v. 13, “the princes of Zoan have acted foolishly” (BDB 383, KB 381, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE, cf. Jer. 5:4; 50:36)
4. v. 13, “the princes of Memphis (Noph, another Egyptian capital) are deluded” (BDB 674, KB 728, *Niphal* PERFECT; *Hiphil* PERFECT used in Gen. 3:13)
5. v. 13, “have led Egypt astray” (BDB 1073, KB 1766, *Hiphil* PERFECT, cf. v. 14; 3:12; 9:16; Jer. 23:13,32; Hos. 4:12; Micah 3:5)
6. v. 14, “led astray. . .staggers” (same VERB as #5, here denoting drunkenness)

**19:11** Line 4 is idiomatic for a group of wise men, similar to which Daniel was a part in Babylon. The word “son” functions as “member of a group.”

**19:12** YHWH asks a sarcastic rhetorical question. It is furthered by two IMPERFECTS (BDB 616, KB 615, and BDB 393, KB 390) used in a JUSSIVE sense (i.e., “let them. . .”).

They claimed to be wise (v. 11d; I Kgs. 4:30; Acts 7:22). They claimed to have plans (v. 3b), but their wisdom and plans are negated in YHWH’s purposes (v. 12a).

**19:13** “*Those who are the cornerstone of her tribes*” Here “cornerstone” (BDB 819) denotes leaders (cf. Jdgs. 20:2; I Sam. 14:38).

**19:14**

**NASB, LXX** “mixed”

**NKJV, Peshitta** “mingled”

**NRSV, JB** “poured”

**REB, NJB** “infused”

The MT has the VERB “mixed” (יָצַק, BDB 587, KB 605, *Qal* PERFECT), which denotes a strong drink (cf. 5:22). However, because of Isa. 29:10 it is possible the VERB should be יָצַק (“poured out,” BDB 650, KB 703, *Qal* PERFECT), which is found in the DSS. In either case the point is drunkenness as a metaphor for confusion and instability.

**19:15** The second line has two idioms which denote all levels of society (cf. 9:14-15).

1. head – tail
2. palm – bulrush

There will be a God-sent (cf. v. 14a) total inability! Those who claimed to be wise (cf. vv. 11d, 12a, 13c) have proven to be unwise because they trusted in (1) false gods; (2) false religionists; and (3) poor plans (cf. v. 3)! All of Egypt’s leadership (cf. vv. 11-12), civil and religious, are out of a job, as are all her laborers (cf. vv. 8-10).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 19:16-17**

**<sup>16</sup>In that day the Egyptians will become like women, and they will tremble and be in dread because of the waving of the hand of the LORD of hosts, which He is going to wave over them. <sup>17</sup>The land of Judah will become a terror to Egypt; everyone to whom it is mentioned will be in dread of it, because of the purpose of the LORD of hosts which He is purposing against them.**

**19:16-17** This describes what YHWH's actions (i.e., "the waving of the hand of the LORD of hosts") will do, His purpose (v. 17b, BDB 420).

1. Egyptians will become like women, v. 16
2. they will tremble, v. 16 (BDB 353, KB 350, *Qal* PERFECT)
3. they will be in dread, v. 16 (BDB 808, KB 922, *Qal* PERFECT)
4. Judah will become a terror to Egypt, v. 17 (VERB, *Qal* perfect, NOUN, "terror," BDB 291, but found only here)
5. they will be in dread, v. 17 (BDB 808, KB 922, *Qal* IMPERFECT, see #3)

**19:16 "the LORD of hosts"** As the phrase "in that day" links these last five strophes (cf. vv. 16, 18, 19, 23, 24), so does this recurrent title for YHWH (cf. vv. 16, 17, 18, 20, 25 and LORD alone in vv. 19, 20, 21, 22). The covenant God is very active in these wonderfully redemptive strophes for the nations!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 19:18**

**<sup>18</sup>In that day five cities in the land of Egypt will be speaking the language of Canaan and swearing *allegiance* to the LORD of hosts; one will be called the City of Destruction.**

**19:18** This is a separate paragraph. It denotes a conversion from idol worship to the worship of YHWH. The "language of Canaan" would denote Hebrew (BDB 488 I). This may be an allusion to Isa. 6:5 or even Gen. 11:1.

The phrase "swearing *allegiance*" (BDB 989, KB 1396, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE) denotes a new relationship with Judah's God (cf. vv. 19-22, 23, 24-25). This has always been the purpose of divine judgment!

▣ **"In that day"** Notice the recurrent phrase, "in that day," vv. 16, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24. This points toward specific future days.

1. one of judgment and dread, vv. 16-17
2. one of conversion (vv. 18, 19-22) and worldwide worship (vv. 23, 24-25)

Again, a current crisis (cf. v. 20) in the ANE reflects an eschatological event. Judgment has a redemptive purpose (cf. v. 22). Evil, rebellion, and ignorance will not be the last word! YHWH has an eternal redemptive plan and purpose for the whole world (cf. v. 24b).

▣ **"five cities"** The reason for this specific number is uncertain. It denotes a conversion, but not a complete (i.e., half of ten, see Special Topic: Symbols and Numbers in Scripture at 11:12) conversion. The question remains, "To whom does it refer?"

1. cities of Jewish settlers
2. cities of Egyptian deities

Because of vv. 19-22, 23, 24-25 I choose option #2. This context is not addressing Jews, but Egyptians.



**NASB, NKJV “the City of Destruction”**

**NRSV, TEV,**

**NJB “the City of the Sun”**

The MT’s “destruction” (BDB 249) appears only here. The VERB of the same root (BDB 248) means “to throw down,” “break,” or “tear down.” It may be a play on the Egyptian city who worshiped the “Sun” god (On, Heliopolis).

1. החרס, city of the Sun (BDB 357, cf. DSS, Targums, Vulgate)
2. החרס, city of destruction

The implication is that the temples to *Re* (Sun god) have been torn down.

The Hebrew word “sun” has the same consonants as “ban” (i.e. devoted to destruction). There may be a double wordplay.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 19:19-22**

**<sup>19</sup>In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD near its border. <sup>20</sup>It will become a sign and a witness to the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt; for they will cry to the LORD because of oppressors, and He will send them a Savior and a Champion, and He will deliver them. <sup>21</sup>Thus the LORD will make Himself known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the LORD in that day. They will even worship with sacrifice and offering, and will make a vow to the LORD and perform it. <sup>22</sup>The LORD will strike Egypt, striking but healing; so they will return to the LORD, and He will respond to them and will heal them.**

**19:19**

**NASB, NKJV,**

**Peshitta “in the midst of the land of Egypt”**

**NRSV, NJB “in the center of the land of Egypt”**

**REB “in the heart of Egypt”**

**LXX “at its border”**

The use of this term (BDB 1063) in Josh. 3:17; 4:3,9,10,18 should be understood as “brink,” not “middle.” This is the origin of “by its border” in the LXX.

When does this event occur?

1. the small Jewish temple built by Jewish mercenaries on an island in the Nile (Elephantine, modern Aswan, at the first cataract of the Nile), sometime before 525 B.C.
2. the Jewish temple (modeled after the temple in Jerusalem) built at Leontopolis by Onias IV, an outcast Jewish high priest from Jerusalem, about 160 B.C. (cf. Josephus, *Antiq.* 12.9.7; 13.3.3)
3. an eschatological event

**19:19-20** What a wonderful, but surprising event that a physical presence of YHWH will be established in Egypt.

**19:20** This process is comparable to how YHWH dealt with Israel in the book of Judges. The cruel judgment of invasion and occupation (cf. v. 4) brings repentance and faith in God and His ability and willingness to act in deliverance. Egypt has come to that spiritual moment and YHWH responds.

What a great witness this context is about the character of Israel’s God. He is willing to forgive and fully accept His covenant people’s enemies. He is truly the God of the nations, the Savior of the world (cf. John 3:16; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4).



▣ **“a Savior and a Champion”** In context this refers to one who will defeat the cruel master and mighty king of v. 4, but ultimately it has Messianic implications. In Isaiah this “Savior” is YHWH Himself and no other (cf. 43:3,11; 45:15,21), but from the NT we know it was the Messiah acting as YHWH’s representative (i.e., Isa. 28:16; Rom. 9:30-33; 10:9-13; I Pet. 2:6-10).

1. a Savior, BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE
2. a defender, BDB 936, KB 1224, *Qal* PARTICIPLE
3. a deliverer, BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* PERFECT

**19:21 “the LORD will make Himself known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the LORD”** This is a play on the Hebrew word “know” (BDB 393, KB 390), which denotes both knowledge of and personal relationship with.

**SPECIAL TOPIC: KNOW (using mostly Deuteronomy as a paradigm)**

The Hebrew word “know” (BDB 393) has several senses (semantic fields) in the *Qal*.

1. to understand good and evil – Gen. 3:22; Deut. 1:39; Isa. 7:14-15; Jonah 4:11
2. to know by understanding – Deut. 9:2,3,6; 18:21
3. to know by experience – Deut. 3:19; 4:35; 8:2,3,5; 11:2; 20:20; 31:13; Josh. 23:14
4. to consider – Deut. 4:39; 11:2; 29:16
5. to know personally
  - a. a person – Gen. 29:5; Exod. 1:8; Deut. 22:2; 33:9
  - b. a god – Deut. 11:28; 13:2,6,13; 28:64; 29:26; 32:17
  - c. YHWH – Deut. 4:35,39; 7:9; 29:6; Isa. 1:3; 56:10-11
  - d. sexual – Gen. 4:1,17,25; 24:16; 38:26
6. a learned skill or knowledge – Isa. 29:11,12; Amos 5:16
7. be wise – Deut. 29:4; Pro. 1:2; 4:1; Isa. 29:24
8. God’s knowledge
  - a. of Moses – Deut. 34:10
  - b. of Israel – Deut. 31:21,27,29

▣ **“worship”** Notice the elements of worship (BDB 712, KB 773, *Qal* PERFECT) mentioned.

1. sacrifice, BDB 257
2. offering, BDB 585
3. vow, BDB 623, KB 674, *Qal* PERFECT

They will not only do the rituals of worship, but will live out (BDB 1022, KB 1532, *Piel* PERFECT, lit. “perform”) those rituals (i.e., vows).

**19:22** YHWH’s actions toward Egypt mimic His actions toward the covenant people.

1. He strikes them (twice, BDB 619, KB 669)
2. they cry out to Him, v. 20
3. He heals them (twice, BDB 950, KB 1272)
4. they return to Him (BDB 996, KB 1427, this is the Hebrew term for repentance)
5. He responds to them (BDB 801 I, KB 905, *Niphal* PERFECT, see IMPERFECT in Gen. 25:21; II Chr. 33:13; Ezra 8:23. YHWH hears and responds to repentance supplication).

Be sure to note that judgment (i.e., striking) was for the purpose of establishing (or for Israel, restoring) a relationship with YHWH.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 19:23**

**<sup>23</sup>In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrians will come into Egypt and the Egyptians into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians.**

**19:23** There will be a free-flowing movement between nations for the purpose of worshiping YHWH. The nations have come!

It is interesting how many times Isaiah uses the imagery of a highway.

1. a highway for the exiled Jews to return, 11:16; 57:14
2. a highway for Gentile worshipers to come, 19:23
3. a highway of holiness, 26:7; 35:8; 43:13; 49:11; 51:10
4. a Messianic highway, 40:3; 42:16

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 19:24-25**

**<sup>24</sup>In that day Israel will be the third *party* with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, <sup>25</sup>whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, "Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance."**

**19:25** These are covenant phrases now used for the hated Egyptians and Assyrians.

Compare this with 45:14-17. What a contrast. It is so hard to hold these together (i.e., the nations loved, the nations judged). I choose v. 22! I choose v. 20!

# ISAIAH 20

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Prophecy About Egypt and Ethiopia 20:1-6	The Sign Against Egypt and Ethiopia 20:1-6	Against Egypt 20:1-6	The Sign of the Naked Prophet 20:1-6	Relating to the Capture of Ashdod 20:1-6

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 20:1-6**

**<sup>1</sup>In the year that the commander came to Ashdod, when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him and he fought against Ashdod and captured it, <sup>2</sup>at that time the LORD spoke through Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, "Go and loosen the sackcloth from your hips and take your shoes off your feet." And he did so, going naked and barefoot. <sup>3</sup>And the LORD said, "Even as My servant Isaiah has gone naked and barefoot three years as a sign and token against Egypt and Cush, <sup>4</sup>so the king of Assyria will lead away the captives of Egypt and the exiles of Cush, young and old, naked and barefoot with buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt. <sup>5</sup>Then they will be dismayed and ashamed because of Cush their hope and Egypt their boast. <sup>6</sup>So the inhabitants of this coastland will say in that day, 'Behold, such is our hope, where we fled for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria; and we, how shall we escape?'"**

**20:1** This verse gives modern readers the exact historical setting of YHWH's judgment of the Philistines by the description of the fall of Ashdod (one of the five main city-states of Philistia—Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gaza, Gath, Ekron). The fall of one denoted the fall of all (see earlier oracle in 14:28-32).

They were destroyed twice (1) by Sargon II (named specifically in the OT only here, he reigned from 722-705 B.C.), King of Assyria. In 713 B.C. the King of Ashdod, Azuri, revolted and in 711 B.C. Sargon II's army came and stopped the rebellion and (2) by Sennacherib in 705-701 B.C.

However, this chapter does not form a new oracle about the destruction of Philistia (or "coast lands," cf. v. 6), but a continuation of the judgment on Cush/Egypt, started in chapter 18. The humiliation of Ashdod was a foreshadowing of the shameful, humiliating exile of Egyptians by Assyrian armies on several different historical occasions. Segments of the Egyptian army were captured in battle and exiled.

▣ **"the commander"** The term (BDB 1077) denotes a field general (cf. II Kgs. 18:17 and also note Isa. 36:2, where the name of the general in II Kings 18 appears, but not his title).

**20:2** Isaiah is told to dress (or better, undress) a certain way to denote current cultural mourning rites (see Special Topic at 15:2-3), but also to denote shame, at Assyria's defeat and exile of several nations.

1. Ashdod (Philistia)
2. Egypt
3. Cush or synonym of Egypt of the 25 Dynasties who were Nubian.

What happened to Ashdod would in three years (cf. v. 3) happen to Egypt.



NASB, NRSV,

**Peshitta** "loosen the sackcloth"

NKJV "remove the sackcloth"

TEV, LXX "take off. . .the sackcloth"

REB "strip"

The common VERB (BDB 834, KB 986, *Piel* PERFECT) basically means "to open." So the question is, "Does it mean 'loosen' (mourning) or 'take off' (shame)?"

1. "remove," NIV, Ps. 30:11; NASB has "loose," but means "remove" in Isa. 52:2; Jer. 40:4
2. "loosen," Isa. 5:27

Normally wearing "sackcloth" (BDB 974) would denote mourning, as would being barefoot (cf. Micah 1:8), but it is possible that Isaiah removed the symbol of his prophetic office ("hairy robe," BDB 12 CONSTRUCT, BDB 972, cf. Matt. 3:4). If this is correct then the text is not talking about nudity (but "naked," BDB 736 in vv. 2,3,4 may, cf. Gen. 2:25). However, most uses of the term "naked" mean partially clothed (cf. 47:1-3; I Sam. 19:24; II Sam. 6:14,20; Amos 2:16; Micah 1:8; John 19:23; 21:7).

**20:3 "as a sign"** The NOUN "sign" (BDB 16), is used

1. as a marker of time, Gen. 1:14
2. as a marker of person, Gen. 4:15
3. as a marker of covenant, Gen. 9:12,13,17; 17:11
4. as a marker of a faith promise, Exod. 3:12
5. as a miracle to affirm God's representative (i.e., Moses), Exod. 4:8 (twice),9,17,28,30; 7:3; 8:23, etc.
6. tribal standard, Num. 2:2; Ps. 74:4
7. as a warning, Num. 16:38; 17:10

It is used often in Isaiah.

1. special birth, 7:14
2. Isaiah's children, 8:18
3. altar and pillar in Egypt, 19:20
4. Isaiah's dress, 20:3
5. harvest, 37:30

6. sparing Jerusalem from Assyria, 38:7
7. Hezekiah's healing, 38:22
8. false signs, 44:25
9. agricultural blessings, 55:13
10. missionaries to the nations, 66:19



**NASB** "a token"  
**NKJV, Peshitta** "a wonder"  
**NRSV, REB,**  
**NJB, LXX** "portent"

The term "wonder," "sign," "portent" (BDB 68) is synonymous with "sign," "mark" (BDB 16). It is used often in Exodus and Deuteronomy, but only twice in Isaiah (i.e., 8:18 and 20:3).

BDB has two main usages.

1. a special demonstration of God's power
2. a token of future events or symbolic acts denoting future events (cf. Zech. 3:8).

**20:4** This verse describes exile.

1. young and old taken (idiom for the entire population)
2. naked (BDB 736, idiom for shame, still had a tight-fitting undergarment)
3. barefoot (BDB 405, idiom for mourning)
4. buttocks uncovered (BDB 1059, only here and II Sam. 10:4, idiom of shame)
5. shame/nakedness (BDB 788, see Assyrian wall pictures)

This verse makes it very clear that Isaiah shocked his culture by going partially nude/naked for three years to illustrate a theological truth/prophesy. Nakedness was part of the cursing of Deuteronomy (cf. 28:48), which reflected exile.

**20:5** Because of Cush/Egypt's trust in themselves (i.e., army, wisdom, wealth, religion) they will be

1. dismayed, BDB 369, KB 365, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 7:8; 8:9 (thrice); 9:4; 20:5; 30:31; 31:4,9; 37:27; 51:6,7
2. ashamed, BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 1:29; 19:9; 20:5; 23:4,23; 26:11; 29:22; 30:5; 37:27; 41:11; 44:9,11 (twice); 45:16,17,24; 49:23; 50:7; 54:4; 65:13; 66:5

Obviously these two terms are a major part of Isaiah's message, both negatively and positively!

**20:6** This verse links Ashdod (v. 1) with all the inhabitants of the coastal plain of Palestine. Apparently the Egyptians had promised military aid if Assyria invaded, but they could/did not (cf. 30:7; 31:3). There was no one to deliver (cf. 10:3).

Surely, this chapter bolstered Isaiah's message to Hezekiah not to make an alliance with Egypt (cf. 30:1-5; 31:1-3).



# ISAIAH 21

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God Commands That Babylon Be Taken	The Fall of Babylon Proclaimed	Against Babylon	A Vision of the Fall of Babylon	The Fall of Babylon
21:1-10 (1-5)	21:1-2 (1b-2)	21:1-10	21:1-2a	21:1-5 (1-5)
			21:2b	
	21:3-5 (3-5)		21:3-4	
			21:5	
(6-7)	21:6-9 (6-9)		21:6-7	21:6-10 (6-10)
(8-10)			21:8	
			21:9	
	21:10 (10)		21:10	
Oracles About Edom and Arabia	Proclamation Against Edom	Concerning Edom	A Message About Edom	On Edom
21:11-12 (11-12)	21:11-12 (11-12)	21:11-12 (11b-12)	21:11	21:11
			21:12	21:12
	Proclamation Against Arabia	Concerning Arabia	A Message About Arabia	Against the Arabs
21:13-15 (13-15)	21:13-15 (13-15)	21:13-15 (13-15)	21:13-15	21:13a
				21:13b-15 (13b-15)
21:16-17	21:16-17	21:16-17	21:16-17	21:16-17

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph

3. Third paragraph

4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This chapter lists several nations addressed by YHWH through His prophet, all introduced by the literary marker, “the oracle about.”
- B. I have mentioned earlier that I think the oracle addressed to the “king of Babylon” really deals with Assyria (i.e., 13:1-14:27). This chapter (i.e., vv. 1-10) is about Babylon.  
This is not Neo-Babylon of Nabonidus and Nebuchadnezzar, but the Chaldean people close to the mouth of the Tigris and Euphrates. Their capital would be the city of Babylon and their king Merodach-baladan, who rebelled in 720 B.C., but was defeated by Sargon II and escaped into the marshes and fled to Elam in 710 B.C. (*IVP Bible Background Commentary*, p. 611). The city of Babylon was destroyed by Assyria in 703 B.C. and the King of Assyria took the title “King of Babylon.”
- C. This chapter also addresses
1. Edom, vv. 11-12
  2. Arabia, vv. 12-17

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:1-10

<sup>1</sup>The oracle concerning the wilderness of the sea.

As windstorms in the Negev sweep on,  
It comes from the wilderness, from a terrifying land.

<sup>2</sup>A harsh vision has been shown to me;  
The treacherous one still deals treacherously, *and* the destroyer still destroys.  
Go up, Elam, lay siege, Media;  
I have made an end of all the groaning she has caused.

<sup>3</sup>For this reason my loins are full of anguish;  
Pains have seized me like the pains of a woman in labor.  
I am so bewildered I cannot hear, so terrified I cannot see.

<sup>4</sup>My mind reels, horror overwhelms me;  
The twilight I longed for has been turned for me into trembling.

<sup>5</sup>They set the table, they spread out the cloth, they eat, they drink;  
"Rise up, captains, oil the shields,"

<sup>6</sup>For thus the Lord says to me,  
"Go, station the lookout, let him report what he sees.

<sup>7</sup>When he sees riders, horsemen in pairs,  
A train of donkeys, a train of camels,  
Let him pay close attention, very close attention."



<sup>8</sup>Then the lookout called,  
 "O Lord, I stand continually by day on the watchtower,  
 And I am stationed every night at my guard post.  
<sup>9</sup>Now behold, here comes a troop of riders, horsemen in pairs."  
 And one said, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon;  
 And all the images of her gods are shattered on the ground."  
<sup>10</sup>O my threshed *people*, and my afflicted of the threshing floor!  
 What I have heard from the LORD of hosts,  
 The God of Israel, I make known to you.

**21:1 “the wilderness of the sea”** This may be an attempt to translate (1) the Assyrian name for Babylon (*Mat + Amil*, cf. JB footnote) or (2) the Akkadian title “Land of the Sea” (*Mat tam-tim*), but it was now destroyed, so “land” changed to “wilderness.” The Peshitta translates it as “the desert of the sea,” probably referring to the marshy area near the mouths of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. TEV just has “Babylon.” The term “wilderness” (BDB 184) denotes large pieces of uninhabited land.

**21:1-2a** Isaiah tries to express his deep emotion when he receives this oracle.

1. like a windstorm in the Negev, v. 1
2. from a wilderness, v. 1
3. from a terrifying (BDB 431, KB 432, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE) land, v. 1
4. harsh (BDB 904) vision, v. 2a

**21:2b** This describes the invader of Babylon (i.e., Assyria, cf. v. 9).

1. the treacherous one still deals treacherously, play on BDB 93, KB 108, two *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLES, 24:16; 33:1; Jer. 3:20; 5:11 (it is possible that the NIV translation “traitor,” REB, “traitor,” or NRSV, “betrayal” historically fits Merodach-baladan, the king of Babylon, better)
2. the destroyer still destroys, play on BDB 994, KB 1418, two *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLES, 16:4; 33:1; Jer. 6:26

**21:2c** God commands two northern Mesopotamian powers to attack Babylon.

1. “Go up” (BDB 748, KB 828, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) Elam (BDB 743). This is surprising since initially Elam helped Babylon to hold off Assyrian domination.
2. “Lay siege” (BDB 848, KB 1015, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) Media (BDB 552). This was another ethnic group in the northern Euphrates area.

It is possible that these are war cries of those in the anti-Assyrian coalition (i.e., Elam, Media, so says the Jewish commentator Ibn Ezra). This would make more sense if Babylon of Isaiah’s day is being addressed.

**21:2d** The NASB has “I have made an end of all the groaning she has caused.” The MT has “all the sighing I bring to an end” (BDB 991, KB 1407, *Hiphil* PERFECT). The phrase, “she has caused,” NASB, is not in the MT. If it is to be assumed, it must be stated that this line of poetry fits Neo-Babylon better. This later empire had a much larger area of influence (i.e., Nebuchadnezzar, cf. Daniel 4).

Again, some (including me) see this last line as a statement from the Babylonian king (Merodach-baladan) or his deities (Marduk) directed to a “to-be-defeated” Assyria/Nineveh. There are so many speakers in this chapter it is hard to know the intended speaker (the prophet, YHWH, Babylonian king, several watchmen, unknown voices).

**21:3-4** The prophet describes the effect the message had on him personally. Daniel also experienced physical distress at YHWH's revelations (cf. Dan. 7:15,28; 8:27; 10:16-17).

1. loins are full of anguish
2. pains have seized me like the pains of a woman in labor, cf. 13:8; 26:17
3. I am so bewildered I cannot hear, cf. 19:14 (i.e., an idiom of drunkenness)
4. so terrified I cannot see
5. my mind reels
6. horror overwhelms me
7. the twilight I longed for has been turned for me into trembling ("twilight" possibly Babylon's defeat meant a stronger, more expansionistic Assyria)

All of these VERBS are PERFECTS, which denote a complete situation. Why was he so distressed? There is no one to stop Assyria now! She is coming!

**21:4** This verse expands on v. 2a ("a harsh vision"). It describes Isaiah's reaction to this oracle.

1. my mind reels, BDB 1073, KB 1766, *Qal* PERFECT
2. horror overwhelms me, BDB 129, KB 147, *Piel* PERFECT
3. the twilight I long for has been turned for me into trembling, BDB 962, KB 1321, *Qal* PERFECT

The question is, "Why was Isaiah so upset at the fall of Babylon?" Possibly because of

1. the terrible violence involved
2. Babylon kept Assyria in balance. Now Assyria was free to expand region-wide (see Exposition Bible Commentary, vol. 6, p. 134).

**21:5** This verse has a series of four *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTES (functioning as IMPERATIVES) and then two *Qal* IMPERATIVES.

1. set the table
2. spread the rugs (see note following)
3. eat
4. drink

This would denote a lavish meal. Some commentators see this as referring to Daniel 5. If so, then this chapter refers to Neo-Babylon of a later period (i.e., Nebuchadnezzar).

In the midst of the party a messenger arrives and calls them to military preparations ("captains," BDB 978).

1. rise up, BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. oil the shields, BDB 602, KB 643, *Qal* IMPERATIVE. The ancient warriors covered their shields with leather so that flaming arrows would penetrate the soft leather and be extinguished, cf. I Sam. 1:21.



**NASB, NJB** "spread out the cloth"  
**NKJV, Peshitta** "set a watchman in the tower"  
**NRSV, TEV,**  
**REB** "spread the rugs"  
**JB** "cover it with cloth"

This phrase is made up of a NOUN and a very similar VERBAL root.

1. NOUN, צפית (BDB 860 II) found only here, some scholars see it as "carpet," others as "watchman" (BDB 859, מצפה)
2. VERBAL, צפה (BDB 860 II, INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE), meaning "lay out" or "lay over"

Since people of the ANE ate sitting on the floor with pillows, this could refer to this type of sitting/eating arrangement (i.e., "arrange the pillows," cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 832).

**21:6** Notice the prophet is relaying YHWH's words.

1. go, BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. station the sentry, BDB 763, KB 840, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (“sentry,” lit. “one who watches,” BDB 859, KB 1044, *Piel* PARTICIPLE)
3. let him report, BDB 616, KB 665, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

**21:7** He is instructed to watch for a very specific kind of military formation.

1. riders on horses in pairs
2. a train of donkeys
3. a train of camels

The term “riders” (BDB 935) could be understood as chariots pulled by two horses (NKJV, Peshitta). For #2 and #3, this could also designate riders (cf. NRSV, LXX).

At the sight of this type of military equipment and formation, he is to report immediately (double use of “attention,” BDB 904). Assyria is coming!

**21:8** This is a way of announcing a loud military-type (i.e., like a lion) report by the watchman on the wall. He has so far seen nothing.

The MT is difficult and the Hebrew manuscripts from DSS make the watchman call out like a lion, which is the best option for understanding a cryptic Hebrew text.

However, it is possible to see “lion,” אַרְיָה (BDB 71) as a copyist's error for “saw,” רָאָה (BDB 906), thereby resulting in the translation, “then the one who sees the sentry” (i.e., watchman) cries out.

**21:9** Suddenly the military formation and equipment come into view! Its presence in Palestine shows the previous fall of the city of Babylon. This fall is expressed by doubling the VERB (BDB 656, KB 709, *Qal* PERFECTS), which is so common in Isaiah. The city of Babylon fell several times to different Assyrian kings.

Her demise is complete as illustrated by the shattering (BDB 990, KB 1402, *Piel* PERFECT) of her idols (cf. chapters 46-47). With Babylon defeated and Elam and Media inactive, Assyria can resume her expansionistic intentions!

**21:10** The prophet tells the oppressed covenant people that their God (i.e., “LORD of hosts,” “God of Israel”) has acted, but how?

1. The fall of Babylon was not a victory for them, but a sure promise that Assyria will come.
2. The question remains which Babylon is the prophet referring to?
  - a. Babylon of Merodach-baladan of Isaiah's day
  - b. Neo-Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar of Ezekiel and Jeremiah's day

The issue is not one of the reality of the predictive prophecy, but of historical setting!

Just a note about an alternate way of interpreting this verse. It is possible that the ones who are addressed are the Babylonians who Assyria will destroy. YHWH has earlier heard the fall of Moab (cf. 15:5; 16:11) and the prayers of the oppressed Egyptians (cf. 19:20).

▣ **“my afflicted of the threshing floor”** This is a Hebrew idiom “son of my threshing floor.” The Hebrew term “son” has many semantic usages in Isaiah.

1. son of fatness, 5:1
2. son of dawn, 14:12
3. son of the wise, 19:11
4. son of man, 56:2
5. son of a foreign land, 56:6

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:11-12**

**<sup>11</sup>The oracle concerning Edom.  
One keeps calling to me from Seir,  
"Watchman, how far gone is the night?  
Watchman, how far gone is the night?"  
<sup>12</sup>The watchman says,  
"Morning comes but also night.  
If you would inquire, inquire;  
Come back again."**

**21:11** A new message starts (i.e., use of the literary marker, "oracle"). The MT has "dumah" (BDB 189). It is a play on the Hebrew term for "silence" (BDB 189). Edom will be silenced. The LXX has "Idumea." Edom was part of the anti-Assyrian coalition, as was Philistia. All were crushed in 711 B.C. by Sargon II's army.

▣ **"Seir"** This (BDB 973) can refer to the land of Edom (cf. Gen. 32:3; 36:30; Num. 24:18; Deut. 2:4,8, 12,22,29; Jdgs. 5:4).

**21:11c-12** This is a very cryptic strophe with several IMPERATIVES. A watchman on the wall, as in vv. 6 and 8, is addressed by an unknown voice which asks about the time of the night (twice). The answer is also strange.

1. morning comes
2. but also night
3. ask again
4. ask again

It possibly means, "when will all this take place?"

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:13-15**

**<sup>13</sup>The oracle about Arabia.  
In the thickets of Arabia you must spend the night,  
O caravans of Dedanites.  
<sup>14</sup>Bring water for the thirsty,  
O inhabitants of the land of Tema,  
Meet the fugitive with bread.  
<sup>15</sup>For they have fled from the swords,  
From the drawn sword, and from the bent bow  
And from the press of battle.**

**21:13** A new message (use of the literary transition marker, "oracle") is addressed to Arabia. It is unsure who the antagonist is.

1. Assyria (invasion)
2. Kedar (civil war)

It is interesting that "Dumah" (v. 11) and Seir (v. 11) are also place names in, or close to, Arabia.

▣ **“the thickets”** Isaiah uses “forestry” imagery often. This term (BDB 420) can mean

1. forest
2. thicket

Since Arabia is desert, the second fits best. It would refer to ravines with thick brushy vegetation, where animals hide. Now fugitives, refugees, and caravan traders (i.e., Dedanites were a Bedouin people associated with Sheba) hide there to escape military invasion (cf. v. 15). They could not use the usual roads or resting places.

**21:14** The Arabians are commanded (BDB 87, KB 102, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) to bring water and food for them.

▣ **“Tema”** This was a major northern city, home to the worship of the moon goddess. See Special Topic: Moon Worship at 3:18.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:16-17**

**<sup>16</sup>For thus the Lord said to me, "In a year, as a hired man would count it, all the splendor of Kedar will terminate; <sup>17</sup>and the remainder of the number of bowmen, the mighty men of the sons of Kedar, will be few; for the LORD God of Israel has spoken."**

**21:16** **“In a year, as a hired man would count it”** This same idiom of precise timing is found earlier in Isa. 16:14.

▣ **“Kedar”** This is another large city of Arabia. It, and by implication all of Arabia’s army, will be defeated. Sargon II attacked this area in 715 B.C.

Again the theological phrase “for the LORD God of Israel has spoken.” It was not the power of ancient armies that directed ANE events, but the God of Israel! This is a claim to monotheism.



# ISAIAH 22

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Valley of Vision	Proclamation Against Jerusalem	Warning to Jerusalem of Approaching Destruction	A Message About Jerusalem	Against Rejoicing in Jerusalem
22:1-11 (1-11)	22:1-7 (1b-4)	22:1a	22:1a	22:1-4 (1-4)
		22:1b-4 (1b-4)	22:1b-2a	
			22:2b-5	
	(5-7)	22:5-8 (5-8a)		22:5-11 (5-11)
			22:6-8a	
	22:8-11 (8-11)	22:8b-11	22:8b-11	
22:12-14 (12-14)	22:12-14 (12)	22:12-14 (12-14)	22:12-13	22:12-14 (12-14)
	(13)			
	(14)		22:14	
	The Judgment on Shebna		A Warning to Shebna	Against Shebna
22:15-25 (15-23)	22:15-19 (15b-19)	22:15-19	22:15-19	22:15-23 (15-23)
	22:20-25 (20-23)	22:20-25	22:20-23	
			2:24-25	22:24-25

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:1-11

<sup>1</sup>The oracle concerning the valley of vision.

What is the matter with you now, that you have all gone up to the housetops?

<sup>2</sup>You who were full of noise,

You boisterous town, you exultant city;

Your slain were not slain with the sword,

Nor did they die in battle.

<sup>3</sup>All your rulers have fled together,

*And* have been captured without the bow;

All of you who were found were taken captive together,

Though they had fled far away.

<sup>4</sup>Therefore I say, "Turn your eyes away from me,

Let me weep bitterly,

Do not try to comfort me concerning the destruction of the daughter of my people."

<sup>5</sup>For the Lord GOD of hosts has a day of panic, subjugation and confusion

In the valley of vision,

A breaking down of walls

And a crying to the mountain.

<sup>6</sup>Elam took up the quiver

With the chariots, infantry *and* horsemen;

And Kir uncovered the shield.

<sup>7</sup>Then your choicest valleys were full of chariots,

And the horsemen took up fixed positions at the gate.

<sup>8</sup>And He removed the defense of Judah.

In that day you depended on the weapons of the house of the forest,

<sup>9</sup>And you saw that the breaches

In the *wall* of the city of David were many;

And you collected the waters of the lower pool.

<sup>10</sup>Then you counted the houses of Jerusalem

And tore down houses to fortify the wall.

<sup>11</sup>And you made a reservoir between the two walls

For the waters of the old pool.

But you did not depend on Him who made it,

Nor did you take into consideration Him who planned it long ago.

**22:1 "oracle"** This is a textual marker of a new message from YHWH directed at a national/ethnic group. Surprisingly in the midst of YHWH's judgment on the surrounding nations He addresses Judah, possibly because of her sin, she is just another *goim* (nations).

It is surely possible that these messages are related to specific historical invasions. In differing years, different armies and nations were affected. But Hebrew poetry is so vague that a specific historical situation is difficult to ascertain. Possibly there has been a later editing of Isaiah's messages



based on certain word plays or key words, not historical events (i.e., the poems are out of chronological order).

Remember the main point of the whole oracle and the main truth of each strophe is the way to approach the prophet's (i.e., YHWH') meaning, not great attention to all the details and rare words.

▣ **“the valley of vision”** Because of the use of this phrase in v. 5b, it must refer to the “day of panic” sent by the LORD of hosts (note Joel 3:14).

Surprisingly the JB changes “vision” to “Hinnom” (cf. Jer. 7:31-34). The LXX has “valley of Zion.”

**22:1b-2b** These are a description of a time of rejoicing in Jerusalem.

1. up to the housetops
2. you who were full of noise
3. you boisterous town
4. you exultant city

The JB (footnote) assumes it relates to Hezekiah's initial victories over Assyria in 705 B.C. or 713 B.C. (Jewish Study Bible).

**22:2c-3d** Apparently some of the city (i.e., leaders and soldiers) fled before the invaders.

1. they were captured, but not in battle
2. their leaders fled too, but were also captured
3. all of them who fled were taken into exile

Because of these lines of poetry many believe this chapter refers to the siege of Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C., when Zedekiah fled the city and was captured (cf. II Kgs. 25:4-6), but I think it refers to Assyria's invasion of one of the following:

1. Tiglath-pileser III (Isaiah 7-12)
2. Shalmaneser V (cf. II Kings 17)
3. Sargon II (fall of Samaria in 722 B.C., cf. 28:1-6)
4. Sennacherib (705 and 701 B.C., Isaiah 36-39; II Kings 18-19)

This chapter seems to relate specifically to Hezekiah's reign (715-687 B.C.). But as often happens in Isaiah, these invasions are presented as mingled. Isaiah was primarily concerned with theology; history was a servant to present these truths about God, mankind, sin, and salvation.

**22:4** The prophet speaks of himself, as he did in 21:3-4

1. turn your eyes away from me, BDB 1043, KB 1609, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. let me weep bitterly, BDB 600, KB 638, *Piel* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
3. do not try to comfort me, BDB 21, KB 23, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (“to comfort,” BDB 636, KB 688, *Piel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT)

The prophet wanted to be left alone so as to work through his grief privately.

▣ **“the daughter of my people”** This is an idiomatic phrase for a people or ethnic group (cf. 1:8; 10:30, 32; 16:1; 23:10-12; 37:22; 47:1,5; 52:5; 62:11). Here it refers to the covenant people of Judah (i.e., “daughter of Zion”).

**22:5** This verse describes YHWH's “day of panic.” It is just the opposite of vv. 1-2.

1. panic, BDB 223, cf. Deut. 28:20
2. subjugation, BDB 101, used only thrice, cf. 18:2,7
3. confusion, BDB 100, used only twice, cf. Micah 7:4

4. breaking down of walls, קרר, BDB 903 II, KB 1148, *Pilpel* PARTICIPLE (only here; some scholars think the root is an Arabic or Ugaritic root meaning, “shout,” “crackle,” or “make noise” (KB 1128 I, קר))
5. crying to the mountain (no VERBAL)

▣ **“to the mountain”** The NOUN (BDB 249) is SINGULAR and may refer to the temple mount (i.e., cry out to YHWH).

**22:6-7** These verses describe the military aspects of the invasion. Elam and Kir (possibly Media, cf. 21:2; II Kgs. 16:9) were northern areas of Mesopotamia. They became mercenaries in the Assyrian army to keep from being invaded.

**22:6**

NASB            “infantry”  
 NKJV            “men”  
 REB              “Aram”

The MT has “men” (אדם, BDB 9, see 31:8, where “adam” is also used in a military sense), but for parallelism some change it to “Aram,” ארם. This ד vs. ר is a common confusion in Hebrew.

**22:8 “He removed the defense of Judah”** “Defense” in this verse means “covering” (BDB 697). They did not trust in Him (cf. v. 11c,d) so He removed His protective presence (i.e., a cloud, cf. 4:5; Ps. 105:39). This has been the problem through all of Israel’s history. God’s people do not trust and obey Him and there are consequences! The cursings and blessings of Deuteronomy 27-29 show them clearly.

“The defense” may have literally referred to the fortress Azekah (Jewish Study Bible, footnote, p. 825).

▣ **“In that day”** This is a common idiom in the Prophets for the day of God’s visitation (i.e., 19:16,18, 19,21,23,24).

▣

NASB            “you depended on”  
 NKJV, NRSV “you looked to”  
 NJB              “you turned your gaze to”

The VERB (BDB 613, KB 661, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) denotes that they trusted in their weaponry, not YHWH.

▣ **“of the house of the forest”** This was the name of the armory in Jerusalem (cf. I Kgs. 7:2; 10:17).

**22:9** The historical setting appears to be the time of Hezekiah. He built (II Kgs. 20:20) pools for the collection of water during sieges (cf. v. 11; 7:2; Neh. 3:16). Apparently Hezekiah did a lot of physical preparation to the defenses of Jerusalem just before Sennacherib came in 701 B.C., but they are not what saved the city of Jerusalem; it was YHWH and His greater purpose (v. 11).

**22:10** This verse seems to describe the walls of Jerusalem as double walls (which has no archaeological confirmation). Many people moving into the city for refuge had built temporary houses in the space between the two walls. But these houses had to be removed (see IVP, Bible Background Commentary, p. 614).

Another possible way to understand the text was that some houses were destroyed to fill up the space between walls. This made it more difficult for siege machines to knock a hole in the city’s wall.

This same area may have been filled with water at certain low places (cf. v. 11). This served as

1. a barrier to those who breached the outer wall
2. a surplus water supply for the city which was full of refugees

**22:11 “But you did not depend on Him who made it”** This is the theological key to the context. The same VERB of v. 8b is repeated (here a *Hiphil* PERFECT, lit. “look”). They were trusting in their own fortifications and provisions for war, not in their covenant God!

▣ **“Nor did you take into consideration Him”** The VERB (BDB 906, KB 1157) is a *Qal* PERFECT. God’s people had forsaken the promises of preservation that He made to them. Isaiah emphasizes these promises and asserts regularly that Jerusalem will not fall.

The reason God will not let her fall is His overarching purpose (i.e., “plan,” lit. “formed,” BDB 427, KB 428, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, cf. 37:26; 46:11; Jer. 18:11) for His people.

1. inform the world about YHWH
2. model a godly society
3. be the channel for the coming Messiah

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:12-14**

<sup>12</sup>Therefore in that day the Lord GOD of hosts called *you* to weeping, to wailing,  
To shaving the head and to wearing sackcloth.

<sup>13</sup>Instead, there is gaiety and gladness,  
Killing of cattle and slaughtering of sheep,  
Eating of meat and drinking of wine:  
"Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we may die."

<sup>14</sup>But the LORD of hosts revealed Himself to me,  
"Surely this iniquity shall not be forgiven you  
Until you die," says the Lord GOD of hosts.

**22:12-14** This is another strophe which starts with “in that day.”

Verse 12 lists the mourning rites (see Special Topic at 15:2-3) that would characterize Jerusalem.

1. weeping, BDB 113 (no VERB)
2. wailing, BDB 704 (no VERB)
3. shaving the head, BDB 901 (no VERB, the baldness could be by shaving or plucking, cf. Ezra 9:3; Job 1:20; Jer. 7:29; 16:6; 41:5; 48:37; Mic. 1:16)
4. wearing sackcloth, BDB 291, KB 291, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT

Verse 13 describes what Jerusalem was doing instead. They should have been seeking YHWH in repentance and prayer, but no, they were caught up in

1. gaiety, BDB 965
2. gladness, BDB 970
3. sacrificing as normal, two *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTES (BDB 246, BDB 133)
4. eating fellowship sacrifices, BDB 37, *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE
5. drinking, BDB 1059 I, *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE

**22:13d** Their attitude toward life is expressed in this line of poetry. It is similar to Belshazzar’s party in Daniel 5.

This attitude reflects their lack of understanding about the plans (BDB 427, KB 428, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, cf. 11d) of YHWH for Jerusalem and His people (cf. 5:11-12). Instead of a sense of

corporate purpose and hope, they sought immediate individual gratification! This is surely a word the church needs also!!!

**22:14** Judah's lack of faith will result in their deaths. Judgment has come to Judah. Jerusalem itself will be spared, but Judah will be devastated.

Judah has missed the time of YHWH's visitation (for deliverance), so now they will experience His visitation for destruction!

▣ **"Surely this iniquity shall not be forgiven you"** What sin? I think the sin of lack of trust and reliance on God mentioned in v. 11c,d.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:15-25**

**<sup>15</sup>Thus says the Lord GOD of hosts,**

**"Come, go to this steward,**

**To Shebna, who is in charge of the *royal* household,**

**<sup>16</sup>What right do you have here,**

**And whom do you have here,**

**That you have hewn a tomb for yourself here,**

**You who hew a tomb on the height,**

**You who carve a resting place for yourself in the rock?**

**<sup>17</sup>Behold, the LORD is about to hurl you headlong, O man.**

**And He is about to grasp you firmly**

**<sup>18</sup>And roll you tightly like a ball,**

***To be cast* into a vast country;**

**There you will die**

**And there your splendid chariots will be,**

**You shame of your master's house.'**

**<sup>19</sup>I will depose you from your office,**

**And I will pull you down from your station.**

**<sup>20</sup>Then it will come about in that day,**

**That I will summon My servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah,**

**<sup>21</sup>And I will clothe him with your tunic**

**And tie your sash securely about him.**

**I will entrust him with your authority,**

**And he will become a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.**

**<sup>22</sup>Then I will set the key of the house of David on his shoulder,**

**When he opens no one will shut,**

**When he shuts no one will open.**

**<sup>23</sup>I will drive him *like* a peg in a firm place,**

**And he will become a throne of glory to his father's house.**

**<sup>24</sup>So they will hang on him all the glory of his father's house, offspring and issue, all the least of vessels, from bowls to all the jars. <sup>25</sup>In that day," declares the LORD of hosts, "the peg driven in a firm place will give way; it will even break off and fall, and the load hanging on it will be cut off, for the LORD has spoken."**

**22:15-19** This describes YHWH's judgment on Shebna, King Hezekiah's steward. The exact reason for Shebna's replacement with Eliakim (cf. vv. 20-25) is uncertain, but it must have been serious and in context, may be a "self-reliant spirit."

Shebna is probably "Shebna" of II Kgs. 18:18, who was Eliakim's scribe.

**22:16** This is a series of questions challenging Shebna's right to serve.

**22:17-19** Sin has consequences. Leaders are especially responsible. YHWH is described as the personal agent of judgment.

1. to hurl you, v. 17, BDB 376, KB 373, *Pipel* PARTICIPLE; and related NOUN (BDB 376), "hurl you violently"
2. to grasp you firmly, v. 17, *Qal* PERFECT and *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE of BDB 742 II, KB 814 II
3. "roll you tightly like a ball to be cast," v. 18, *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and *Qal* IMPERFECT VERB, as well as the NOUN, of the same root (BDB 857, KB 1039)
4. die an outcast in a foreign land, v. 18c,d
5. "I will depose you," v. 19, BDB 213, KB 239, *Qal* PERFECT
6. "I will pull you down," v. 19, BDB 248, KB 256, *Qal* IMPERFECT

There is an interesting lexical theory connected to #2. NIDOTTE, vol. 3, pp. 380-381, suggests that the root means "delouse," as a metaphor for complete destruction (cf. Jer. 43:12).

**22:19-25** These verses describe what YHWH will do to Shebna's successor, Eliakim (cf. II Kgs. 18:18, 26,37; 19:2; Isa. 22:20; 36:3,11,22; 37:3).

1. YHWH will summon him, lit. "call," BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal* PERFECT
2. YHWH will clothe him with a tunic, v. 21, BDB 527, KB 519, *Hiphil* PERFECT
3. YHWH will tie a sash securely about him, v. 21, VERB from #2 implied
4. YHWH will entrust him with your authority, v. 21, BDB 304, KB 302, *Piel* IMPERFECT
5. YHWH will set the key of the house of David on his shoulders, v. 22, BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* PERFECT
6. YHWH will drive him like a peg into a firm place, v. 23, BDB 1075, KB 1787, *Qal* PERFECT

**22:21-23** These verses describe what he will do.

1. he will become a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem
2. he opens and no one will shut, he shuts and no will open, v. 22
3. he will become a throne of glory to his father's house, v. 23 (cf. v. 24)

In some sense these verses see Eliakim as a type or foreshadowing of the Messiah. This same foreshadowing is seen in Zechariah with Zerubbabel and Joshua (cf. chapters 3-4).

**22:23 "firm"** See Special Topic following, especially II., A., 1., b., (2).

## SPECIAL TOPIC: BELIEVE, TRUST, FAITH, AND FAITHFULNESS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT (אָמֵן)

### I. Opening Statement

It needs to be stated that the use of this theological concept, so crucial to the NT, is not as clearly defined in the OT. It is surely there, but demonstrated in key selected passages and persons.

The OT blends

1. the individual and the community
2. the personal encounter and covenant obedience

Faith is both personal encounter and daily lifestyle! It is easier to describe in a person than in a lexical form (i.e., word study). This personal aspect is best illustrated in

1. Abraham and his seed
2. David and Israel

These men met/encountered God and their lives were permanently changed (not perfect lives, but continuing faith). Testing revealed weaknesses and strengths of their faith encounter with God, but the intimate, trusting relationship continued through time! It was tested and refined, but it continued as evidenced by their devotion and lifestyle.

## II. Main root used

### A. אמן (BDB 52)

#### 1. VERB

- a. *Qal* stem – to support, to nourish (i.e., II Kgs. 10:1,5; Esther 2:7, the non-theological usage)
- b. *Niphal* stem – to make sure or firm, to establish, to confirm, to be faithful or trustworthy
  - (1) of men, Isa. 8:2; 53:1; Jer. 40:14
  - (2) of things, Isa. 22:23
  - (3) of God, Deut. 7:9,12; Isa. 49:7; Jer. 42:5
- c. *Hiphil* stem – to stand firm, to believe, to trust
  - (1) Abraham believed God, Gen. 15:6
  - (2) the Israelites in Egypt believed, Exod. 4:31; 14:31 (negated in Deut. 1:32)
  - (3) Israelites believed YHWH spoke through Moses, Exod. 19:9; Ps. 106:12,24
  - (4) Ahaz did not trust in God, Isa 7:9
  - (5) whoever believes in it/him, Isa. 28:16
  - (6) believe truths about God, Isa. 43:10-12

#### 2. NOUN (MASCULINE) – faithfulness (i.e., Deut. 32:20; Isa. 25:1; 26:2)

#### 3. ADVERB – truly, verily, I agree, may it be so (cf. Deut. 27:15-26; I Kgs. 1:36; I Chr. 16:36; Isa. 65:16; Jer. 11:5; 28:6). This is the liturgical use of “amen” in the OT and NT.

### B. אמת (BDB 54) FEMININE NOUN, firmness, faithfulness, truth

1. of men, Isa. 10:20; 42:3; 48:1
2. of God, Exod. 34:6; Ps. 117:2; Isa. 38:18,19; 61:8
3. of truth, Deut. 32:4; I Kgs. 22:16; Ps. 33:4; 98:3; 100:5; 119:30; Jer. 9:4; Zech. 8:16

### C. אמונה (BDB 53), firmness, steadfastness, fidelity

1. of hands, Exod. 17:12
2. of times, Isa. 33:6
3. of humans, Jer. 5:3; 7:28; 9:2
4. of God, Ps. 40:11; 88:12; 89:2,3,6,9; 119:138

## III. Paul's use of this OT concept

A. Paul bases his new understanding of YHWH and the OT on his personal encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus (cf. Acts 9; 22; 26).

B. He found OT support for his new understanding in two key OT passages which use the root אמן.

1. Gen. 15:6 – Abram’s personal encounter initiated by God (Genesis 12) resulted in an obedient life of faith (Genesis 12-22). Paul alludes to this in Romans 4 and Galatians 3.
2. Isa. 28:16 – those who believe in it (i.e., God’s tested and firmly placed cornerstone) will never be
  - a. Rom. 9:33, “put to shame” or “be disappointed”
  - b. Rom. 10:11, same as above
3. Hab. 2:4 – those who know the faithful God should live faithful lives (cf. Jer. 7:28). Paul uses this text in Rom. 1:17 and Gal. 3:11 (also note Heb. 10:38).

#### IV. Peter’s use of the OT concept

##### A. Peter combines

1. Isa. 8:14 – I Pet. 2:8 (stumbling block)
2. Isa. 28:16 – I Pet. 2:6 (cornerstone)
3. Ps. 111:22 – I Pet 2:7 (rejected stone)

##### B. He turns the unique language that describes Israel, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession” from

- a. Deut. 10:15; Isa. 43:21
- b. Isa. 61:6; 66:21
- c. Exod. 19:6; Deut. 7:6

and now uses it for the church’s faith in Christ

#### V. John’s use of the concept

##### A. Its NT usage

The term “believed” is from the Greek term (*pisteuō*), which can also be translated “believe,” “faith,” or “trust.” For example, the NOUN does not occur in the Gospel of John, but the VERB is used often. In John 2:23-25 there is uncertainty as to the genuineness of the crowd’s commitment to Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. Other examples of this superficial use of the term “believe” are in John 8:31-59 and Acts 8:13, 18-24. True biblical faith is more than an initial response. It must be followed by a process of discipleship (cf. Matt. 13:20-22,31-32).

##### B. Its use with PREPOSITIONS

1. *eis* means “into.” This unique construction emphasizes believers putting their trust/faith in Jesus
  - a. into His name (John 1:12; 2:23; 3:18; I John 5:13)
  - b. into Him (John 2:11; 3:15,18; 4:39; 6:40; 7:5,31,39,48; 8:30; 9:36; 10:42; 11:45, 48; 17:37,42; Matt. 18:6; Acts 10:43; Phil. 1:29; I Pet. 1:8)
  - c. into Me (John 6:35; 7:38; 11:25,26; 12:44,46; 14:1,12; 16:9; 17:20)
  - d. into the Son (John 3:36; 9:35; I John 5:10)
  - e. into Jesus (John 12:11; Acts 19:4; Gal. 2:16)
  - f. into Light (John 12:36)
  - g. into God (John 14:1)
2. *en* means “in” as in John 3:15; Mark 1:15; Acts 5:14
3. *epi* means “in” or “upon,” as in Matt. 27:42; Acts 9:42; 11:17; 16:31; 22:19; Rom. 4:5, 24; 9:33; 10:11; I Tim. 1:16; I Pet. 2:6
4. the DATIVE CASE with no PREPOSITION as in Gal. 3:6; Acts 18:8; 27:25; I John 3:23; 5:10
5. *hoti*, which means “believe that,” gives content as to what to believe

- a.. Jesus is the Holy One of God (John 6:69)
- b. Jesus is the I Am (John 8:24)
- c. Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in Him (John 10:38)
- d. Jesus is the Messiah (John 11:27; 20:31)
- e. Jesus is the Son of God (John 11:27; 20:31)
- f. Jesus was sent by the Father (John 11:42; 17:8,21)
- g. Jesus is one with the Father (John 14:10-11)
- h. Jesus came from the Father (John 16:27,30)
- i. Jesus identified Himself in the covenant name of the Father, “I Am” (John 8:24; 13:19)
- j. We will live with Him (Rom. 6:8)
- k. Jesus died and rose again (I Thess. 4:14)

## VI. Conclusion

Biblical faith is the human response to a Divine word/promise. God always initiates (i.e., John 6:44,65), but part of this Divine communication is the need for humans to respond.

- 1. trust
- 2. covenant obedience

Biblical faith is

- 1. a personal relationship (initial faith)
- 2. an affirmation of biblical truth (faith in God’s revelation)
- 3. an appropriate obedient response to it (daily faith)

Biblical faith is not a ticket to heaven or an insurance policy. It is a personal relationship. This is the purpose of creation and humans being made in the image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) of God. The issue is “intimacy.” God desires fellowship, not a certain theological standing! But fellowship with a holy God demands that the children demonstrate the “family” characteristic (i.e., holiness, cf. Lev. 19:2; Matt. 5:48; I Pet. 1:15-16). The Fall (cf. Genesis 3) affected our ability to respond appropriately. Therefore, God acted on our behalf (cf. Ezek. 36:27-38), giving us a “new heart” and “new spirit,” which enables us through faith and repentance to fellowship with Him and obey Him!

All three are crucial. All three must be maintained. The goal is to know God (both Hebrew and Greek senses) and to reflect His character in our lives. The goal of faith is not heaven someday, but Christlikeness every day!

Human faithfulness is the result (NT), not the basis (OT) for a relationship with God: human’s faith in His faithfulness; human’s trust in His trustworthiness. The heart of the NT view of salvation is that humans must respond initially and continually to the initiating grace and mercy of God, demonstrated in Christ. He has loved, He has sent, He has provided; we must respond in faith and faithfulness (cf. Eph. 2:8-9 and 10)!

The faithful God wants a faithful people to reveal Himself to a faithless world and bring them to personal faith in Him.

**22:25** Even Eliakim (i.e., the peg driven in a firm place), with all of YHWH’s help, cannot stop the judgment that is coming.

- 1. peg will break off (BDB 559 I, KB 561, *Qal* IMPERFECT)



2. load will be cut down (BDB 154, KB 180, *Niphal* PERFECT)

3. load will fall (BDB 656, KB 709, *Qal* PERFECT)

4. load will be cut off (BDB 503, KB 500, *Niphal* PERFECT)

Judgment is coming, YHWH said (BDB 180, KB 210, *Piel* PERFECT).

**22:25 “the peg”** It (BDB 450) may refer to

1. Shebna

2. Eliakim

3. Judah

4. Jerusalem

5. Messiah

In context #1 or #2 is best, but the others address YHWH’s future plans (cf. v. 11).





## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This condemnation of Phoenicia is paralleled in Ezekiel 26-28; Amos 1:9-10. Tyre (capital of Phoenicia) was a powerful and wealthy maritime nation, which caused them to be prideful and self-reliant.
- B. Because it was such a widespread empire several nations and geographical areas mourned for the loss of trade.
1. ship of Tarshish (i.e., western Mediterranean area), vv. 1,6
  2. coastlands, vv. 2,6
  3. merchants of Sidon (i.e., second largest Phoenician city), v. 2
  4. Egypt, vv. 3,5
  5. Canaan, v. 11
  6. Cyprus, vv. 12,13
- C. Notice the number of IMPERATIVES directed at Tyre/Phoenicia.
1. wail, v. 1, BDB 410, KB 413, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. 13:6; 14:31; 15:2,3; 16:7 (twice); 65:14
  2. be silent (lit. “be still”), v. 1, BDB 198, KB 226, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
  3. be ashamed, v. 4, BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. 1:29; 19:9; 20:5; 24:23; 26:11; 29:22; 30:5; 37:27; 41:11; 42:17; 44:9,11; 45:16,17,24; 49:23; 50:7; 54:4; 65:13; 66:5; Micah 3:7; 7:16
  4. pass over, v. 6, BDB 716, KB 778, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. 23:2
  5. wail, v. 6, same as #1
  6. overflow (lit. “pass over”), v. 10, same as #4
  7. arise, v. 12, BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
  8. pass over, v. 12, same as #4,6
  9. wail, v. 14, same as #1,5
  10. take your harp, v. 16, BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
  11. walk about the city, v. 16, BDB 685, KB 738, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
  12. pluck the strings (lit. “play skillfully”), v. 16, BDB 405, KB 408, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. I Sam. 16:17; Ps. 33:3; Ezek. 33:32
  13. sing many songs, v. 16, BDB 915, KB 1176, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
- D. As always in trying to interpret the poems of Isaiah the historical setting would be very helpful in understanding the details and allusions, but these poems could fit several different invasions. The book of Isaiah is a collection of messages from throughout his life combined at some future date. They are structured in non-chronological ways based on
1. related words
  2. related geographical areas
  3. word plays
  4. themes
  5. and more
- Moderns do not know how, when, or by whom the OT books were finally compiled/edited.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:1-7

<sup>1</sup>The oracle concerning Tyre.

Wail, O ships of Tarshish,  
For Tyre is destroyed, without house *or* harbor;  
It is reported to them from the land of Cyprus.

<sup>2</sup>Be silent, you inhabitants of the coastland,  
You merchants of Sidon;  
Your messengers crossed the sea

<sup>3</sup>And *were* on many waters.  
The grain of the Nile, the harvest of the River was her revenue;  
And she was the market of nations.

<sup>4</sup>Be ashamed, O Sidon;  
For the sea speaks, the stronghold of the sea, saying,  
"I have neither travailed nor given birth,  
I have neither brought up young men *nor* reared virgins."

<sup>5</sup>When the report *reaches* Egypt,  
They will be in anguish at the report of Tyre.

<sup>6</sup>Pass over to Tarshish;  
Wail, O inhabitants of the coastland.

<sup>7</sup>Is this your jubilant *city*,  
Whose origin is from antiquity,  
Whose feet used to carry her to colonize distant places?

**23:1 “Wail, O ships of Tarshish”** “Wail” (לל, BDB 410, KB 413, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) denotes loud shrieking. It is used often in Isaiah (cf. 13:6; 14:31; 15:2,3; 16:7 [twice]; 23:1,6,14; 52:5; 65:14 and a related term [ייללה] in 15:8 [twice]). See Special Topic: Grieving Rites at 15:2-3.

Note this same phrase appears in v. 14. Often a repeated phrase marks a literary unit, but here that does not fit well.

The ships of Tarshish were large commercial grain carriers, usually from Egypt. They became an idiom (as did “Phoenicia” and “Canaanite”) for merchants.

▣ **“Tarshish”** This place name (BDB 1077) could refer to

1. a city in southern Spain on the Atlantic side, which was a Phoenician colony (i.e., Tartessus, v. 7)
2. the island of Sardinia (cf. Gen. 10:4)
3. a city on the north African coast (Carthage was a colony of Phoenicia)
4. a metaphor for a far distant port
5. a type of large sea-going commercial ship
6. a rival maritime nation (cf. I Kgs. 10:22)

▣ **“without house *or* harbor”** The city of Tyre had two divisions.

1. most of the houses and shops were located on the mainland coast (cf. Josh. 19:29; II Sam. 24:7)

- the palace, temple, and fortress were on an island (originally two small islands) just off the coast (cf. Ezek. 27:32)

This made it almost invulnerable until Alexander the Great in 332 B.C. destroyed the coastal part and used the debris to build a causeway to the island fortress (cf. Ezek. 26:3-5).

The ships from Tarshish had no where to offload their cargo, nor receive different cargo to take home.

There is a textual issue connected to “harbor.” It is literally “come in” (NJB, “no way of getting in,” BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT), which may denote a harbor or haven.

It is parallel to v. 14, so NRSV translates the line as “for your fortress is destroyed.”

▣ **“Cyprus”** The MT has “Kittim” (BDB 508), possibly taken from the name of a Roman city on the island of Cyprus called “Citium,” which was originally a Phoenician colony (cf. v. 7).

Some identify the inhabitants with one of the sons of Javan, Elishah (cf. Gen. 10:4; Ezek. 27:7).

**23:2 “Be silent”** This *Qal* IMPERATIVE is parallel to “wail” in v. 1 (BDB 198 I). There is speculation based on a Ugaritic root that it reflects a separate root (BDB 199 II) “lament” (“wail,” TEV; “lament,” REB).

▣ **“Sidon”** This was a coastal city (cf. Gen. 10:19) of Phoenicia about twenty-five miles north of Tyre. It was originally the main city (cf. Josh. 13:4,6). The name seems to have come from the eldest son of Canaan, son of Ham (cf. Gen. 10:15). Tyre and Sidon are often linked together in the NT in reference to the nation of Phoenicia (cf. Matt. 11:21,22; 15:21; Acts 12:20).

▣

**NASB, NRSV,**

**NJB “Your messengers crossed the sea”**

**NKJV “Whom those who cross the sea have filled”**

**TEV “You sent agents”**

**JB “whose goods traveled over the sea”**

The NASB follows the Isaiah scroll from the DSS. The MT has “passed over the sea (BDB 569, KB 583, *Piel* PERFECT) they replenish you.” The term “your messengers,” in its inflected form, is very similar in Hebrew to the verb “fill.”

- VERB, מלאך (“fill,” BDB 569, NKJV)
- NOUN, מלאכך (“messenger,” BDB 521, NASB)

**23:3**

**NASB, JB “the grain of the Nile”**

**NKJV, NRSV,**

**REB “the grain of Shihor”**

**NJB “the grain of the Canal”**

**Peshitta “the harvest of the river”**

The MT has “grain of Shihor, harvest of the Nile.” Shihor (BDB 1009) means “the pond of Horus” (KB 1477). It referred to

- an eastern branch of the Nile (BDB 1009)
- a canal of black (BDB 1007 I) water
- a lake in the eastern delta region

It is spelled differently in

1. Josh. 13:13; I Chr. 13:5, שיחור
2. Jer. 2:18, שחור
3. Isa. 23:3, שחר

but all refer to the same area in Egypt.

▣ “she was the market of nations” See Ezek. 27:3-23.

**23:4 “Be ashamed”** The VERB (BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) is used of God’s judgment on idols (cf. Jer. 50:2). Here it denotes the shame of a defeated nation (cf. 1:29; 19:9; 37:27; 41:11). These nations can experience forgiveness and restoration if they will turn to YHWH (cf. 49:23); this is also true of His own people (cf. 29:23; 45:17; 54:4).

▣ Sidon is personified. The NRSV footnote says “Ruined Sidon is baren like the sea without sailors (i.e., young men).”

**23:7** This describes Tyre (cf. v. 5)

1. jubilant *city* (i.e., prideful and self-satisfied, cf. 22:2; 24:8; 32:13)
2. very old city (i.e., pride in their antiquity)
3. colonizing nation (pride in their international influence)

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:8-11**

**<sup>8</sup>Who has planned this against Tyre, the bestower of crowns,**

**Whose merchants were princes, whose traders were the honored of the earth?**

**<sup>9</sup>The LORD of hosts has planned it, to defile the pride of all beauty,**

**To despise all the honored of the earth.**

**<sup>10</sup>Overflow your land like the Nile, O daughter of Tarshish,**

**There is no more restraint.**

**<sup>11</sup>He has stretched His hand out over the sea,**

**He has made the kingdoms tremble;**

**The LORD has given a command concerning Canaan to demolish its strongholds.**

**23:8-12** This strophe is united by the use of the VERB “planned” (lit. “advised” or “purposed,” BDB 419, KB 421, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. vv. 8,9; 14:24, 26, 27; 19:12,17). There is an intentionality behind history—YHWH! The kingdoms of this world make their plans (v. 8), but the God of creation also makes His (v. 9).

**23:8**

**NASB, NRSV** “the bestower of crowns”

**NKJV, Peshitta** “the crowning *city*”

**TEV** “the imperial city”

**NJB** “who used to hand out crowns”

**REB** “the city with crowns in its gifts”

The VERB (BDB 742, KB 815, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE) means “to crown.” It could refer to

1. crown bestower (NASB, NRSV, NJB, REB)
2. crown wearer (TEV, NRSV, Peshitta)

**23:10** The rival maritime empire of Tarshish is invited to expand and overflow because of the destruction of Phoenicia.

An alternate understanding of the phrase is in the Septuagint, “Till your land; for no more ships come out of Carthage.” This is followed by the REB, “Take to the tillage of your fields, you people of Tarshish; for your market is lost.” Your trading days are over, just settle down and farm your own land.

**23:11** “He has stretched His hand out over the sea” See note at 14:26.

▣ “He has made the nations tremble” The VERB (BDB 919, KB 1182, *Hiphil* PERFECT) is used of YHWH “shaking” several things.

1. mountains, 5:25
2. heavens, 13:13
3. Sheol, 14:9
4. sea, 23:11
5. YHWH Himself, 28:21
6. those who feel secure, 32:10,11
7. nations, 64:2

and once of Judah as she opposes YHWH in 37:29.

▣ “Canaan” This could refer to Tyre as the only good fortress/harbor on the Canaanite coast or Canaan as a way of referring to the merchant kingdom of Phoenicia.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:12**

<sup>12</sup>He has said, "You shall exult no more, O crushed virgin daughter of Sidon.  
Arise, pass over to Cyprus; even there you will find no rest."

**23:12** In this chapter Phoenicia (NIV) is called by the name of its old capital, “Sidon,” and its new current capital, “Tyre.”

▣ “Arise, pass over to Cyprus; even there you will find no rest” Some see this as referring specifically to the king of Sidon, “Lulli,” fleeing from the Assyrian army to Cyprus in 701 B.C., where he was killed (JB footnote, p. 1177). This is surely possible, but not certain. Hebrew poetry is ambiguous.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:13-18**

<sup>13</sup>Behold, the land of the Chaldeans—this is the people *which* was not; Assyria appointed it for desert creatures—they erected their siege towers, they stripped its palaces, they made it a ruin.

<sup>14</sup>Wail, O ships of Tarshish,

For your stronghold is destroyed.

<sup>15</sup>Now in that day Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years like the days of one king. At the end of seventy years it will happen to Tyre as *in* the song of the harlot:

<sup>16</sup>Take *your* harp, walk about the city,

O forgotten harlot;

Pluck the strings skillfully, sing many songs,

That you may be remembered.

<sup>17</sup>It will come about at the end of seventy years that the LORD will visit Tyre. Then she will go back to her harlot's wages and will play the harlot with all the kingdoms on the face of the earth.



**<sup>18</sup>Her gain and her harlot's wages will be set apart to the LORD; it will not be stored up or hoarded, but her gain will become sufficient food and choice attire for those who dwell in the presence of the LORD.**

**23:13 “the land of the Chaldeans”** This seems to refer to the destruction of Babylon (not Neo-Babylon) by Assyria (cf. chapters 13-14). There are two “Babylons” mentioned in the Prophets.

1. small semi-autonomous region close to the mouth of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers that rebelled against Assyria and was invaded and their capital “Babylon” destroyed by Sargon II (722-705 B.C.), who took the Babylonian throne name “King of Babylon.” Then it would refer to the Babylonian kings
  - a. Merodach-baladan, reigned 721-710 and again 703-702 B.C. (He sent messengers to Hezekiah in 712 B.C., cf. II Kgs. 20:12-21; Isaiah 39)
  - b. Shamash-shum-ukim, son of Esarhaddon, 681-669 B.C. and rival brother to Ashurbanipal [669-633 B.C.] who was made king of Assyria
2. a new (i.e., “new”) Babylon appeared on the scene in 626 B.C. with the rise of Nabopolassar (626-605 B.C.), the father of Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 B.C.). Nabopolassar was instrumental in the fall of Asshur (one Assyrian capital) in 614 B.C. and Nineveh (the main Assyrian capital) in 612 B.C. (see of “Brief Historical Survey of the Powers of Mesopotamia” in Appendix Three).

▣ **“it”** Does this refer to the Chaldean capital Babylon or Sidon/Tyre? In context it refers to Babylon destroyed by Sargon II in 710 or Sennacherib in 689 B.C. Tyre would look like Babylon. Assyria, Neo-Babylon, and Alexander the Great are coming!!!

▣ **“for desert creatures”** This term (BDB 850 II) denotes wild desert animals of some kind. It has the added connotation of being inhabited by the demonic (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 79, and NEB, REB translations).

**23:15 “for seventy years”** The time designation appears here and in v. 17. It seems to allude to a complete time (from 7 x 10, see Special Topic: Symbolic Numbers in Scripture at 11:12). Notice some of its usages in Scripture.

1. revenge, Gen. 4:24
2. age of Terah when Abram was born, Gen. 11:26
3. seventy in Jacob’s family moved to Egypt, Exod. 1:5
4. seventy elders during the Wilderness Wandering Period, Exod. 24:1,9; Num. 11:16,24,25 (also Ezek. 8:11)
5. number of Abimelech’s brothers who were killed, Jdgs. 9:56
6. expected life span, Ps. 90:10 (double is a special blessing from God, Job 42:16)
7. the plague of YHWH killed 70,000, II Sam. 24:15; I Chr. 21:14
8. Ahab’s seventy sons, I Kgs. 10:1,6,7
9. seventy year judgment
  - a. Judah in Babylon, Jer. 25:11; Dan. 9:2; Zech. 7:5
  - b. Tyre, Isa. 23:15
10. Jesus sent out seventy, Luke 10:1,17
11. forgiveness 70 times 7, Matt. 18:22

▣ **“like the days of one king”** This phrase designates the expected reign of a monarch. Seventy years was the time span for a normal life, but here it refers to a very long reign, which probably shows the symbolic nature of the round number.

**23:17-18** The riches of Phoenicia will flow to God's restored people (note also 18:7 and 45:14, which denote similar actions). Phoenicia will not respond to the witness of Israel, but will remain pagan (i.e., *Ba'al* worship).

# ISAIAH 24

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Judgment on the Earth	Impending Judgment on the Earth	The "Isaiah" Apocalypse (24-27)  Universal Judgment	The LORD Will Punish the Earth	Yahweh's Judgment
24:1-6	24:1-13 (1-3)  (4-6)	24:1-23 (1-3)  (4-13)	24:1-3  24:4-13	24:1-6 (1-6)  Song About the Ruined City
24:7-23 (7-23)	(7-13)  24:14-20 (14-16)  (17-18) (19-20)  24:21-23 (21-23)	(14-16)  (17-20)	24:14-16a  24:16b-20  24:21-23	24:7-16 (7-16)  The Last Battle  24:16-23 (16-23)

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## BACKGROUND STUDY

- A. Isaiah 24-27 form a literary unit related to the end-time (i.e., world judgment). This particular genre in Isaiah (it set the literary stage for the development of apocalyptic genre) is a pattern of end-time blessings and judgments interwoven, much like Deuteronomy 27-28. Isaiah 24 speaks of God's universal judgment on the earth, while chapter 25 speaks of the entire earth being blessed by a restored Zion (cf. Isa. 2:2-24).
- B. Isaiah 13-23 shows God's judgment on the surrounding nations that affected the people of God. Isaiah 24-27 is an obvious conclusion to this literary unit. This same concluding genre can be seen in chapters 24 and 35.
- C. See Special Topic following.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE**

(This special topic is taken from my commentary on Revelation.)

Revelation is a uniquely Jewish literary genre, apocalyptic. It was often used in tension-filled times to express the conviction that God was in control of history and would bring deliverance to His people. This type of literature is characterized by

1. a strong sense of the universal sovereignty of God (monotheism and determinism)
2. a struggle between good and evil, this age and the age to come (dualism)
3. use of secret code words (usually from the OT or intertestamental Jewish apocalyptic literature)
4. use of colors, numbers, animals, sometimes animals/humans
5. use of angelic mediation by means of visions and dreams, but usually through angelic mediation
6. primarily focuses on the end-time (new age)
7. use of a fixed set of symbols, not reality, to communicate the end-time message
8. Some examples of this type of genre are
  - a. Old Testament
    - (1) Isaiah 24-27, 56-66
    - (2) Ezekiel 37-48
    - (3) Daniel 7-12
    - (4) Joel 2:28-3:21
    - (5) Zechariah 1-6, 12-14
  - b. New Testament
    - (1) Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, and I Corinthians 15 (in some ways)
    - (2) II Thessalonians 2 (in most ways)
    - (3) Revelation (chapters 4-22)
  - c. non-canonical (taken from D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*, pp. 37-38)
    - (1) I Enoch, II Enoch (the Secrets of Enoch)
    - (2) The Book of Jubilees

- (3) The Sibylline Oracles III, IV, V
  - (4) The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs
  - (5) The Psalms of Solomon
  - (6) The Assumption of Moses
  - (7) The Martyrdom of Isaiah
  - (8) The Apocalypse of Moses (Life of Adam and Eve)
  - (9) The Apocalypse of Abraham
  - (10) The Testament of Abraham
  - (11) II Esdras (IV Esdras)
  - (12) Baruch II, III
9. There is a sense of duality in this genre. It sees reality as a series of dualisms, contrasts, or tensions (so common in John's writings) between:
- a. heaven – earth
  - b. evil age (evil men and evil angels) – new age of righteousness (godly men and godly angels)
  - c. current existence – future existence

All of these are moving toward a consummation brought about by God. This is not the world God intended it to be, but He is continuing to play, work, and project His will for a restoration of the intimate fellowship begun in the Garden of Eden. The Christ event is the watershed of God's plan, but the two comings have brought about the current dualisms.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:1-6

<sup>1</sup>Behold, the LORD lays the earth waste, devastates it, distorts its surface and scatters its inhabitants. <sup>2</sup>And the people will be like the priest, the servant like his master, the maid like her mistress, the buyer like the seller, the lender like the borrower, the creditor like the debtor. <sup>3</sup>The earth will be completely laid waste and completely despoiled, for the LORD has spoken this word. <sup>4</sup>The earth mourns *and* withers, the world fades *and* withers, the exalted of the people of the earth fade away. <sup>5</sup>The earth is also polluted by its inhabitants, for they transgressed laws, violated statutes, broke the everlasting covenant. <sup>6</sup>Therefore, a curse devours the earth, and those who live in it are held guilty. Therefore, the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left.

**24:1 “the LORD lays the earth waste”** Verses 1 and 3 use a series of strong VERBS to describe YHWH's judgment on the earth (not “land” here because of parallel to “world” [BDB 385, cf. 14:16-17; 34:1; Jer. 10:12; 51:15], see Special Topic following).

1. lays. . .waste, v. 1, BDB 132, KB 150, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, cf. v. 3; Nah. 2:2
2. devastates, v. 1, BDB 118, KB 135, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, cf. Nah. 2:10
3. distorts (lit. “twists,” cf. NRSV), BDB 730, KB 796, *Piel* PERFECT
4. scatters, v. 1, BDB 806, KB 918, *Hiphil* PERFECT
5. completely laid waste, v. 3, BDB 132, KB 150, *Niphal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and IMPERFECT VERB of the same root denote intensity

6. completely despoiled, v. 3, BDB 102, KB 117, *Niphal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and IMPERFECT VERB of the same root denotes intensity. YHWH takes back His gifts, given in creation (cf. vv. 5-6). This is a reversal of the purpose of original creation, but a faithful remnant will survive (cf. v. 6)!

Verses 1 and 3 are very similar to God's judgment of the earth (ארץ, BDB 75) in Noah's day (cf. Genesis 6-9; also note the attempts to avoid God's judgment in 2:10,19,21). Worldwide emptying is exactly the opposite of creation's purpose!

### SPECIAL TOPIC: LAND, COUNTRY, EARTH (ארץ)

Like all Hebrew roots, context is crucial in determining their intended meaning. The limited number of Hebrew roots (i.e., an ancient Semitic language) causes each of them to function with different meanings and connotations. This root (BDB 75, KB 90) can mean

1. the whole planet (although the ancients did not realize its size and shape. Usually it is used of the "known world")
  - a. Genesis 1-2; 6-9; 10:32; 11:1,4,8,9; 14:19; 18:18,25; 22:18, etc.
  - b. Exodus 9:29; 19:5
  - c. Psalm 8:1,9; 24:1; 47:2,7; Jer. 25:26,29,30
  - d. Proverbs 8:31
  - e. Isaiah 2:19,21; 6:3; 11:4,9,12; 12:5
2. earth in contrast to heaven
  - a. Genesis 1:2
  - b. Exodus 20:4
  - c. Deuteronomy 5:8; 30:19
  - d. Isaiah 1:7; 37:16
3. metaphor for the human inhabitants of the planet
  - a. Genesis 6:11; 11:1
  - b. I Kings 2:2; 10:24
  - c. Job 37:12
  - d. Psalm 33:8; 66:4
4. country or territory
  - a. Genesis 10:10,11; 11:28,31
  - b. esp. Israel (a gift from YHWH, He owns it)
5. soil, cf. Joshua 7:21
6. underworld (KB 91)
  - a. Exodus 15:12
  - b. Psalm 22:30; 71:20; Jer. 17:13; Jonah 2:7
7. new world
  - a. Isaiah 9:1-9; 65:17; 66:22
  - b. see NT, Rom. 8:19-22; Gal. 6:15; II Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1,5

Remember, context, context, context is crucial. Often cognate roots can help, but not always.

▣ **“distorts its surface”** This could either be a metaphor of God's judgment on the earth in physical terms (lit. “twist,” BDB 730, KB 796, *Piel* PERFECT) or it may be a metaphor of God emptying earth's inhabitants as someone would clean dirty kitchen pans

☐ **“and scatters its inhabitants”** This is very similar to the terminology used in Genesis 10 for the tower of Babel. Here it denotes exile.

**24:2** This shows that all social distinctions are removed. Everyone is judged (cf. v. 4).

**24:3 “for the LORD has spoken this word”** This shows the certainty of this event because God has said it (BDB 180, KB 210, *Piel* PERFECT, cf. 24:3; 25:8; 40:8; 55:10-11). Also note the intended contrast; the spoken word of creation is now the spoken word of judgment.

**24:4** Note the description of the earth.

1. mourns – (1) BDB 5 I, KB 6, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Jer. 23:10; for the personification of the earth, also note v. 7, or (2) BDB 5 II means “dry up,” which fits the parallelism of vv. 4 and 7 better (cf. NRSV, REB)
2. withers – BDB 615, KB 663, *Qal* PERFECT (twice)
3. fades – BDB 51, KB 63, *Pulal* PERFECT, cf. 16:8; 33:9
4. polluted – BDB 337, KB 335, *Qal* PERFECT

Notice the number of PERFECT VERBS in vv. 4 and 5 that denote a settled action, a complete action!

All of these VERBS have a sound similarity.

The God of creation is acting as sovereign in His creation. It was made to be a stage for Him and mankind to interact, but His creatures have polluted and defiled it by their action. It was created for abundance, but now lies judged and unproductive.

☐ **“the world”** This Hebrew term (BDB 385) is often used in conjunction with “earth” (BDB 75, cf. Job 37:12; Ps. 96:13; 98:9; Jer. 10:12; Lam. 4:12, see Special Topic at v. 1). Isaiah uses this word more than any other prophet (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 4, p. 273, cf. 13:11; 24:4; 34:1).

☐ **“the exalted of the people of the earth fade away”** The RSV translation (with a change of vowels only) implies that this phrase relates to the judgment of heaven and earth (i.e., all creation), not to the elite (i.e., “height”) people of the earth only.

**24:5 “The earth is also polluted by its inhabitants”** Nature suffers because of mankind’s sin (cf. 24:20; Gen. 3:17-19; Num. 35:33; Jer. 3:1-2,9; Rom. 8:18-25).

1. they transgressed laws, BDB 716, KB 778, *Qal* PERFECT
2. they violated statutes, BDB 322, KB 321, *Qal* PERFECT
3. they broke the everlasting covenant, BDB 830, KB 974, *Hiphil* PERFECT

This does not refer to the Mosaic Law, but either (1) to the natural revelation found in Ps. 19:1-6 and Rom. 1:19, 20; 2:14-15 or (2) to Noah’s day (cf. Gen. 6:5-7,11-12, possibly specifically to 9:4-6). The same phrase “everlasting covenant” appears in Gen. 9:16. This everlasting covenant would relate to the taking of human life (cf. 26:21). Murder has consequences! Life belongs to God. He wants mankind to be fruitful and fill the earth, not kill each other!

**24:6 “a curse devours the earth”** This sounds very similar to the curse of Gen. 3:17-19. Theologically this functions like Rom. 1:18-3:20; all have sinned (i.e., broken a covenant, cf. v. 5) and need God’s salvation!

☐

NASB, NKJV,

JB

“are burned”

NRSV

“dwindled”

REB

“dwindle”

**Peshitta** "shall be destroyed"

**LXX** "shall be poor"

**DSS** "grow pale" (from BDB 301 I, cf. Isa. 29:22)

The MT has "burned" (BDB 359 I, KB 357 or 351 I, *Qal* PERFECT). Scholars have suggested another possible Arab root, "to reduce" (KB 351 II), which matches the next phrase.

This is a good example of the difficulty in ambiguous Hebrew poetry. Context often is an interpreter's only safe guide and even then, other roots and cognates are possible. The MT is not the earliest Hebrew text.

▣ **"and few men are left"** This is basically the OT idea of a faithful remnant that God will spare a few of the people of the earth. This sounds very similar to Jesus' words in Matt. 7:14. See Special Topic: The Remnant, Three Senses at 1:9.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:7-22**

**<sup>7</sup>The new wine mourns,**

**The vine decays,**

**All the merry-hearted sigh.**

**<sup>8</sup>The gaiety of tambourines ceases,**

**The noise of revelers stops,**

**The gaiety of the harp ceases.**

**<sup>9</sup>They do not drink wine with song;**

**Strong drink is bitter to those who drink it.**

**<sup>10</sup>The city of chaos is broken down;**

**Every house is shut up so that none may enter.**

**<sup>11</sup>There is an outcry in the streets concerning the wine;**

**All joy turns to gloom.**

**The gaiety of the earth is banished.**

**<sup>12</sup>Desolation is left in the city**

**And the gate is battered to ruins.**

**<sup>13</sup>For thus it will be in the midst of the earth among the peoples,**

**As the shaking of an olive tree,**

**As the gleanings when the grape harvest is over.**

**<sup>14</sup>They raise their voices, they shout for joy;**

**They cry out from the west concerning the majesty of the LORD.**

**<sup>15</sup>Therefore glorify the LORD in the east,**

**The name of the LORD, the God of Israel,**

**In the coastlands of the sea.**

**<sup>16</sup>From the ends of the earth we hear songs, "Glory to the Righteous One,"**

**But I say, "Woe to me! Woe to me! Alas for me!"**

**The treacherous deal treacherously,**

**And the treacherous deal very treacherously."**

**<sup>17</sup>Terror and pit and snare**

**Confront you, O inhabitant of the earth.**

**<sup>18</sup>Then it will be that he who flees the report of disaster will fall into the pit,**

**And he who climbs out of the pit will be caught in the snare;**



**For the windows above are opened, and the foundations of the earth shake.**

**<sup>19</sup>The earth is broken asunder,**

**The earth is split through,**

**The earth is shaken violently.**

**<sup>20</sup>The earth reels to and fro like a drunkard**

**And it totters like a shack,**

**For its transgression is heavy upon it,**

**And it will fall, never to rise again.**

**<sup>21</sup>So it will happen in that day,**

**That the LORD will punish the host of heaven on high,**

**And the kings of the earth on earth.**

**<sup>22</sup>They will be gathered together**

**Like prisoners in the dungeon,**

**And will be confined in prison;**

**And after many days they will be punished.**

**<sup>23</sup>Then the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed,**

**For the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem,**

**And His glory will be before His elders.**

**24:7-14** This is a series of metaphors about the normal social activities of an agricultural community which is brought to an end because of the judgment of God.

**24:9 “wine. . .strong drink”** See Special Topic at 1:22.

**24:10 “The city of chaos is broken down”** There is a play throughout this literary unit on “a city.” It is not specifically identified and, therefore, seems to be a symbol of all human society functioning apart from God (similar to the city of Genesis 11). It is metaphorically similar to the use of (1) “the world” in I John and (2) the “whore of Babylon” in Revelation 18 as standing for all fallen human society. This city can be seen in Isa. 25:2,3,12. An allusion to God’s city is found in Isa. 26:1-6 (cf. Heb. 11:10,16).

Literally, the term “chaos” (BDB 1062) means “emptiness,” “vanity,” “formlessness,” “confusion,” or “unreality” used to describe the earth in Genesis 1:2 (“formless”). It is used often in Isaiah (cf. 24:10; 29:21; 34:11; 40:17,23; 41:29; 44:9; 45:18,19; 49:4; 59:4), but only one other time in all the Prophets (i.e., Jer. 4:23). God started over with His creation with Noah (Genesis 6-9), now He will do it again!

See Chart of the “Two” Cities at Introduction to chapter 26, D.

**24:12 “the gate is battered to ruins”** The VERB (BDB 510, KB 507, *Hophal* IMPERFECT) denotes that “the unidentified city” is defenseless, her gates are in ruins! Who can stand before YHWH?

**24:13 “For thus it will be in the midst of the earth among the peoples”** This could be interpreted in two ways: (1) it could refer to all of the people of the earth (cf. v. 1 and Isa. 11:10 ) or (2) it could refer to the scattered Jews of the Exile (cf. 11:11 and 24:8). It is difficult to make a decision on this point, but it seems to me that because of vv. 14,16 and 25:6,7, we are talking about the universalism (i.e., option #1) so characteristic of Isaiah. This universalism is very specific in its invitation to both Egypt and Assyria to be a part of God’s Kingdom in Isa. 19:18-25.

▣ **“As the shaking of an olive tree,**

**As the gleanings when the grape harvest is over”** This was an agricultural metaphor of harvesting. It denotes the fact that there will be very few people left (cf. v. 6; Mic. 7:1). Verses 14-16 are a praise unit referring to those who trust YHWH. It is characteristic of this literary unit and this particular kind of genre in Isaiah to promise blessings right in the midst of judgment.

**24:14-15 “west. . .east”** The term “west” (BDB 410) is literally “sea” and refers to the Mediterranean Ocean. The term “east” (BDB 22) is literally “light” which refers to the rising of the sun. Again, these two terms may refer to Egypt to the west and Assyria to the east (cf. 19:23-25).

**24:15** The Jewish Study Bible asserts that some group (Judeans or Gentiles who have trusted YHWH, vv. 15,16a; 25:3) begins to thank God in praise (v. 14) that the judgment is over, but they suddenly realize it is not (cf. vv. 16b-23).

Recognizing the majesty and glory of YHWH is obviously the first sign of a new relationship with Him (cf. 12:5; 26:10). A few humans (Jew and Gentile), the faithful remnant (cf. v. 6; see Special Topic at 1:9) will be found faithful even amidst judgment (cf. Hab. 2:4).

▣ **“in the coastlands of the sea”** In the LXX this is “the islands,” which is usually a reference within Isaiah to Gentiles (cf. 41:5; 42:4,10).

**24:16a** This is another reference to the universal aspect of the inclusion of Gentile believers (cf. 2:2-4).

▣ **“the Righteous One”** The NASB and NRSV translations take this phrase to denote Israel’s God. The Peshitta, KJV, and ASV have “the righteous,” which is another reference to the believing remnant which will be saved out of Israel and the peoples of the earth. The REB has “the righteous nation,” apparently the ideal Israel.

**24:16b** There is an obvious break here which is not clearly marked by the traditional verse divisions. From the obvious praise section of vv. 14-16a, v. 16b begins a funeral dirge relating to the coming judgment of God (note “woe” [twice, lit. “I pine or waste away”] and “woe,” the INTERJECTION, BDB 17). Its exact relation to the context is somewhat uncertain. It may be a personal comment of Isaiah himself that his own day did not fit, vv. 14-16a. There have been many different English translations of this phrase.

The AB Commentary (p. 353) notes that this phrase is omitted by the Septuagint and the author (Blenkinsop) assumes the Aramaic root for “secret,” which follows rabbinical tradition and the Peshitta and Vulgate versions.

**24:16c,d** This is a very powerful word play. There are several uses of one word (BDB 93, KB 108), which has a powerful, repetitious emphasis on the faithless, deceitful people. Note

1. the treacherous, BDB 93, KB 108, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE
2. deal treacherously, BDB 93, KB 108, *Qal* PERFECT
3. NOUN, BDB 93 I (cf. Jer. 12:1)
4. repeat of #1
5. repeat of #2

**24:17 “Terror and pit and snare”** This is a sound play on similar words. All of these words (BDB 808, 809, 809) are used of trapping animals (cf. Jer. 48:33, 34).

<b>24:18</b>	
<b>NASB</b>	<b>“the report of disaster”</b>
<b>NKJV, Peshitta</b>	<b>“the noise of fear”</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>“the sound of the terror”</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>“the cry of fear”</b>
<b>LXX</b>	<b>“the fear”</b>
<b>REB</b>	<b>“the rattle of the scare”</b>

The MT has “at the sound of the terror” (BDB 876 CONSTRUCT BDB 808). This is an allusion to (1) the sound of battle (cf. Isa. 29:6; Jer. 4:19,21; Ezek. 1:24), (2) the voice of God (cf. 30:30-31), or (3) a covenant concept (cf. Jer. 3:13,25; 7:23; 11:4,7; 26:13; 38:20).

▣ **“fall into a pit. . . caught in a snare”** These are allusions to humans being trapped like animals (cf. 8:15; 28:13). Humans will try to flee God’s judgment only to find disaster (cf. 2:10,19-22).

**24:18c “the windows above are opened”** This is another allusion to the flood account of Genesis (cf. 7:11; 8:2). The opening of the windows of heaven can be for blessing (i.e., water for agriculture and flocks, cf. II Kgs. 7:2,19; Mal. 3:10) or judgment (i.e., sending of too much water, cf. Gen. 7:11; 8:2; Isa. 24:18, or no water).

**24:19** Note the parallelism from the INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and matching VERB.

1. broken asunder, BDB 949, KB 1270, *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and *Hithpoel* PERFECT
2. split through, BDB 830, KB 975, *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and *Hithpoel* PERFECT
3. shaken violently, BDB 556, KB 555, *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and *Hithpoel* PERFECT

This same intensified form (i.e., INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and VERB from the same root) continues in v. 20, BDB 631, KB 681, *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and *Qal* IMPERFECT.

The earth, created for God and humanity to meet and fellowship, created for abundance and life, has become ruin and will be destroyed

1. by water, Genesis 6-9
2. by the spoken word, Isa. 24:3
3. by apocalyptic imagery, Jer. 4:23-28
4. by fire, II Pet. 3:10-11

**24:20** Drunkenness (i.e., staggering, BDB 631, KB 681, INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and IMPERFECT VERB of the same root) is often used as a symbol for judgment in the OT (cf. Isa. 19:14; 28:7,8; 29:9).

▣ **“And it totters like a shack”** This is another cultural allusion to a small booth (BDB 434) which was built in the field during harvest time for someone to live so he could protect the harvest (cf. 1:8). Verses 19-20 describe the sin-laden physical creation (cf. Rom. 8:18-22).

▣ **“never to rise again”** This is a hyperbolic statement to show the intensity of God’s judgment on a morally polluted earth. But from other texts, we know He will have mercy on it and restore it! For the use of hyperbolic language in both prophecy and apocalyptic literature see D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic*.

**24:21 “in that day”** See note at 2:11. This eschatological theme marker is repeated in 25:9; 26:1,2,12.

▣ **“the host of heaven”** Many times in the OT this refers to the Babylonian astral deities (cf. 40:26; 45:12). However, in this context it refers to the OT concept of the angels of the nations (cf. Deut. 32:8 in the LXX and Daniel 10). God will judge both the human beings who rebel against Him and also the

angels who have aided in either the human rebellion or satanic temptation (see G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*, p. 179).

**24:22** Both the prideful and arrogant kings of the earth (cf. 10:12; 13:11) and the national rebellious angels will be judged and imprisoned. This is very similar to II Pet. 2:4; Jude, v. 6; and Rev. 20:1-3. This seems to be an allusion to Sheol (OT) or Tartarus (NT). See Special Topic at 5:14.

Some scholars have asserted that “after many days” refers to the millennium of Rev. 20:1-6. This is typical of millennial scholars who desperately seek some biblical evidence for the timeframe mentioned in Revelation 20. See my written commentary on Revelation 20 on the internet at [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org).

▣ **“prisoners”** This form (BDB 64) is found only here and it is missing in the DSS, the LXX, and the Aramaic Targums.

**24:23 “the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed”** This is apocalyptic language speaking of the cataclysmic events within nature as the Creator approaches. The presence of the Lord Himself will become the light for mankind (cf. Isa. 30:26; 60:19, 20; Rev. 21:23; 22:5).

▣ **“the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem”** Here again is the universal aspect of all the world flowing unto Jerusalem to know the one true God (cf. Isa. 2:2-4; 24:23; 25:6-7; 27:6, 13). This imagery is universalized to YHWH’s reign over all the earth in Dan. 2:35,44-45!

▣ **“His glory will be before His elders”** The elders (BDB 278) were leaders in Moses’ day (i.e., Exod. 3:16,18; 4:29; 12:21, etc.). The term denoted older men of the different tribes. It came to stand for all civil leadership. In Isaiah the elders are irresponsible (cf. 3:2-3; 9:14-16), but here in the eschaton they will behold YHWH’s glory (presumably in worship and adoration, i.e., redeemed elders). Robert Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament* (p. 245) says they are representatives of all God’s people.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why are chapters 24-27 called apocalyptic?
2. From what OT passage does Isaiah draw his imagery?
3. How is the faithful city of 1:26 related to the city of chaos in 24:10?
4. Who speaks in vv. 14-16a and who in v. 16b?
5. Who are the “hosts of heaven” (lit. “the host of the height in the height”)?

# ISAIAH 25

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Song of Praise For God's Favor	Praise to God	Psalm of Thanksgiving	A Hymn of Praise	A Hymn of Thanksgiving
25:1-5 (1-5)	25:1-5 (1-5)	25:1-5 (1-5)	25:1-5 (1-5)	25:1-5 (1-5)
		Third Eschatological Section	God Prepares A Banquet	The Divine Banquet
25:6-12 (6-12)	25:6-8 (6-8)	25:6-10a (6-10a)	25:6-8	25:6-12 (6-8)
	25:9-12 (9)		25:9	(9-12)
		Oracle of Doom	God Will Punish Moab	
	(10-12)	25:10b-12 (10b-12)	25:10-12	

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. What a marvelous chapter about YHWH's universal love!
  1. the redemptive plan of God, v. 1d
  2. the loving character of God, v. 4
- B. This chapter is the OT origin of many of
  1. Jesus' statements (i.e., John 5:28-29)
  2. Paul's statements
    - a. in chapter in I Corinthians 15 of the resurrection, v. 54

- b. the purpose of the veil in II Cor. 3:15-16 and Eph. 4:18
  - 3. John's use of OT imagery in the Revelation
    - a. tears wiped away, Rev. 7:12; 21:4
    - b. world city destroyed (i.e., Babylon, Rev. 14:8; 16:19; 18:2)
    - c. Messianic banquet, Rev. 19:9
  - 4. Luke's predetermined redemptive plan in Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; also note Luke 22:22 (see Isa. 2:2-4; 9:6-7; 11:1-10)
- C. This is one of several brief glimpses of the resurrection in the OT
- 1. Isaiah 26:19
  - 2. Job 14:14; 19:25-27
  - 3. Ezekiel 37:12-14
  - 4. Daniel 12:2

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:1-5

**<sup>1</sup>O LORD, You are my God;**

**I will exalt You, I will give thanks to Your name;  
For You have worked wonders,  
Plans formed long ago, with perfect faithfulness.**

**<sup>2</sup>For You have made a city into a heap,  
A fortified city into a ruin;  
A palace of strangers is a city no more,  
It will never be rebuilt.**

**<sup>3</sup>Therefore a strong people will glorify You;  
Cities of ruthless nations will revere You.**

**<sup>4</sup>For You have been a defense for the helpless,  
A defense for the needy in his distress,  
A refuge from the storm, a shade from the heat;  
For the breath of the ruthless  
Is like a *rain* storm *against* a wall.**

**<sup>5</sup>Like heat in drought, You subdue the uproar of aliens;  
*Like* heat by the shadow of a cloud, the song of the ruthless is silenced.**

**25:1 “O LORD, You are my God”** This section of Isaiah is very personal (cf. 61:10). Isaiah knows YHWH (he is an ideal representative of the covenant spirit) and appeals to Him as friend, Savior, and Sovereign!

Note how Isaiah addresses YHWH.

- 1. I will exalt you, v. 1, BDB 926, KB 1202, *Polel* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
- 2. I will give thanks to Your name, v. 1, BDB 392, KB 389, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense

Notice how he characterizes God.

- 1. You are my God, v. 1
- 2. You have worked wonders, v. 1
- 3. Your plans were formed long ago with perfect faithfulness, v. 1

4. You have made a city into a heap, v. 2
5. a strong people will glorify You, v. 4
6. You have been a defense for the helpless, v. 4
7. You did subdue the uproar of aliens, v. 5

This is a psalm of praise, not unlike Psalm 145. This is the theological opposite of the universal judgment of chapter 24.



**NASB, NKJV,**  
**NRSV** “wonderful things”  
**TEV** “amazing things”  
**NJB** “marvels”

**SPECIAL TOPIC: WONDERFUL THINGS (פלא)**

This word (BDB 810) denotes actions that humans cannot accomplish themselves or can even explain, acts which cause wonder and awe (cf. Gen. 18:14; Jer. 32:17,24; Zech. 8:6).

The VERB

1. the Exodus, Exod. 3:20; 34:10; Mic. 7:15
2. plagues, Deut. 28:59
3. crossing of Jordan, Josh. 3:5
4. past events of God, Jdgs. 6:13; I Chr. 16:9,12,24; Neh. 9:17
5. birth of Samson, Jdgs. 13:19
6. David’s love for Jonathan, II Sam. 1:26
7. used often in Job, 5:9; 9:10; 10:16; 37:5,14; 42:3
8. thirty-two times in the Psalms
9. YHWH’s counsel, Isa. 28:29
10. YHWH’s acts, Isa. 29:24 (twice); Joel 2:26

The NOUN

1. the Exodus, Exod. 15:11; Ps. 77:11,14; 78:12
2. in relation to the dead, Ps. 88:10,12
3. heaven praises YHWH’s acts, Ps. 89:5
4. YHWH’s laws, Ps. 119:129
5. YHWH’s Messiah, Isa. 9:5
6. YHWH’s acts, Isa. 25:1; 29:14
7. end-time actions, Dan. 12:6

God acts in powerful, redemptive ways to reveal Himself to His highest creation (mankind). He wants them to know Him and trust Him. His acts are revelation, the recording of those acts is inspiration, and the understanding of those acts is illumination. YHWH wants the world to know Him!

▣ **“Plans formed long ago, with perfect faithfulness”** God is in complete control of history. This is a recurrent theme in the OT (i.e., Isa. 14:24,26-27; 23:8,9; 46:10-11). History is not cyclical, but teleological. There is no VERB in the MT text (“formed” is assumed).

The two Hebrew words translated “perfect faithfulness” are from the same root.

1. the first one (אִמּוּנָה, BDB 53) means “firmness,” “steadfastness,” or “fidelity.” It is a FEMININE NOUN (cf. Ps. 88:12; 89:1,3,5,8; Hosea 2:20).

- the second (אָמֵן, BDB 53) means “trusting,” or “faithfulness.” It is a MASCULINE NOUN (cf. 26:2; Deut. 32:20).

Together they (the amen family of words) imply the complete and total faithfulness of God to His plans, promises, and purposes (i.e., Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; Isa. 2:2-4; 19:23-25, see Special Topic at 1:3).

**25:2 “a city into a heap”** Here again is a city which symbolizes the rebellion of man (cf. 24:10). It stands for every capital of every human society which has tried to make its own way and meet its own needs without God. See note at 24:10 and chart at chapter 26, Introduction D.

The term “heap” (BDB 164) is used of the pile of rubble after a city is destroyed (cf. 37:26; II Kgs. 19:25; Jer. 9:11; 51:37). Fortified cities were their strongest defense, but now they are piles of stones!

☐ **“A palace of strangers”** JPSOA emendates this to “the citadel of arrogant men” (footnote), which is followed by JB, *The Bible: An American Translation*, by Smith and Goodspeed, and *A Translation of the Old Testament Scriptures From the Original Hebrew* by Spurrell. The LXX has “a city of ungodly (or impious) men.”

This involves a change from

- MT, אֲרָם, BDB 266 I, KB 267, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, “stranger”
- אֲדָם, BDB 267, “insolent,” “prideful”

This is the confusion of the Hebrew “R” and “D,” which look so similar.

**25:3 “a strong people will glorify Thee”** This possibly refers to differing groups of Gentiles.

- 18:2,7 (Cush)
- 19:19-25 (Egypt and Assyria)
- 24:14-15 (nations of the east and west [coastlands])

The term “strong people” (BDB 766 & 738) is parallel to “ruthless nations” (BDB 156 & 792, vv. 4d,e and 5). The demonstration of YHWH’s power (i.e., “wonderful things,” BDB 810, v. 1) convinces them that He is the LORD of the universe.

☐ **“Cities of ruthless nations will revere You”** Here again is a play on the word “city,” but the allusion seems to be that even these rebellious cities (i.e., 24:10; 25:2,3,12; 26:1-6) are going to one day praise and serve God. The surprising but recurrent universalism of Isaiah (i.e., 2:2-4; 19:23-25; 24:14-16a; 43:21) appears again (praise God!).

**25:4** This is an obvious allusion to God caring for the socially and religiously ostracized (i.e., 4:5-6; 32:2). God loves the poor (cf. 29:19). Notice how YHWH acts toward the poor, helpless, and socially ostracized.

- a defense for the helpless
- a defense for the needy in distress
- a refuge from the storm, cf. 4:6; 32:2
- a shade from the heat

This is so different from “the ruthless” (BDB 792, cf. 29:5,20). This is how society was meant to be (i.e., Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5).

Also notice that these needy and poor people must seek/trust in YHWH and His promised help. God works with fallen humans in a covenant relationship. He always takes the initiative and sets the conditions, but humans must respond (cf. Ps. 50:15; 91:15; 107:6,13) to His offer in repentance, faith, obedience, and perseverance. Both the OT and NT have benefits and responsibilities! See Special Topic at 1:3.





NASB	“Is like a <i>rain</i> storm <i>against</i> a wall”
NKJV, Peshitta	“ <i>is</i> as a storm <i>against</i> the wall”
NRSV	“like a winter rainstorm”
TEV, NJB	“like a winter storm”
REB	“like an ice storm”

The MT has “rain-storm” (BDB 281, cf. 4:6; 28:2; 30:30; 32:2) and “wall” (קיר, BDB 885, cf. 22:5; 38:2; 59:10). A similar word “cold” (קור, NRSV, TEV, NJB, REB, NIDOTTE, vol. 3, pp. 994, 995, קר is from קרר, BDB 903). The UBS Hebrew Text Project gives “wall” an A rating (very high probability).

25:5 “the song of the ruthless” JPSOA changes the Hebrew text from “song” to “rainstorm” (cf. v. 4).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:6-12**

- <sup>6</sup>The LORD of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain;  
A banquet of aged wine, choice pieces with marrow,  
And refined, aged wine.**
- <sup>7</sup>And on this mountain He will swallow up the covering which is over all peoples,  
Even the veil which is stretched over all nations.**
- <sup>8</sup>He will swallow up death for all time,  
And the Lord GOD will wipe tears away from all faces,  
And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth;  
For the LORD has spoken.**
- <sup>9</sup>And it will be said in that day,  
"Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us.  
This is the LORD for whom we have waited;  
Let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation."**
- <sup>10</sup>For the hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain,  
And Moab will be trodden down in his place  
As straw is trodden down in the water of a manure pile.**
- <sup>11</sup>And he will spread out his hands in the middle of it  
As a swimmer spreads out *his hands* to swim,  
But *the Lord* will lay low his pride together with the trickery of his hands.**
- <sup>12</sup>The unassailable fortifications of your walls He will bring down,  
Lay low, *and* cast to the ground, even to the dust.**

25:6 “The LORD of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain” Here Mount Zion is the scene of the end-time activity of God (cf. 2:2-4; Exod. 24:11; I Sam. 9:13; Matt. 8:11; Luke 14:15; 22:16; Rev. 19:9). This Messianic banquet is for all peoples (cf. 27:13; 66:20). God will provide the best food (cf. Isa. 55)!

▣ “on this mountain” This refers to a renewed Mt. Zion (i.e., Jerusalem) or Mt. Moriah (i.e., the temple) in Judah (cf. 24:23). Jerusalem, in these eschatological contexts, could refer

1. literally to a city in Judah
2. symbolically to a new earth (cf. Rev. 21:1-2)

▣ **“wine”** Notice the different kinds.

1. aged wine, BDB 1038 II, this refers to wine left to settle
2. refined wine, BDB 279, KB 279, *Pual* PARTICIPLE, this refers to strained or filtered wine after it has settled for a long time, which made it a premiere quality

See Special Topic: Alcohol and Alcoholism at 1:22.

**25:7 “And on this mountain He will swallow up the covering which is over all peoples,**

**Even the veil which is stretched over all nations”** This is extremely significant. Notice again that God is going to remove something (lit. “faces” [BDB 815], “covering” [BDB 532, KB 523, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE], “which covers” [BDB 532, KB 523, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE]; the parallel phrase is literally “the veil” [BDB 697], “that is spread” [BDB 651 II, KB 703, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE], or “weaved” [BDB 651 II, NASB marginal note, NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 253]) from the Gentiles (“over all people” parallel with “over all nations,” these are inclusive, universal phrases) that they might come to Him. There have been several theories about this “covering.”

1. death itself (cf. v. 8, repeats the VERB of v. 7)
2. a sign of mourning for the dead (cf. II Sam. 15:30)
3. a sign of shame (cf. II Sam. 19:5; Jer. 14:3)
4. spiritual blindness (cf. II Cor. 3:15-16; Eph. 4:18)
5. the Hebrew root טל (BDB 532) occurs only here. It is related to טל (BDB 532), which means “secret” (cf. Ruth 3:7; I Sam. 18:22; 24:4 and often refers to idolatry, cf. Exod. 7:22; 8:3,14).

The “covering” may refer to false religions that have blinded the eyes of fallen humanity (cf. Rom. 1:21-32).

**25:8 “He will swallow up death for all time”** What a marvelous statement! The original status of Eden is restored (cf. 65:19-20). Sinful, rebellious humans can be redeemed permanently! Resurrection is specifically mentioned in 26:19 (cf. Job 14:14; 19:25-27; Ezek. 37:12-14; Dan. 12:2; I Corinthians 15).

Death reigned from Adam to Christ (cf. Rom. 5:12-21), but with Jesus’ resurrection, death has been defeated (cf. Hosea 13:14 quoted in I Cor. 15:55-57).

In the OT the soul that sins will die (cf. Ezek. 18:4,20; Rom. 6:23). The Mosaic covenant was a performance-based covenant (cf. Lev. 18:5; Gal. 3:12), but because of the Fall (cf. Genesis 3) and human weakness it became a death sentence, a curse (cf. Gal. 3:13; 4:5). Jesus, the Messiah, will deliver us from the death sentence (cf. Col. 2:14).

▣ **“the Lord GOD will wipe tears away from all faces”** Notice it is the covenant God of Israel (lit. *Adon* YHWH) who does the wiping (BDB 562, KB 567, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 43:25; 44:22; Ps. 51:1,9). Also note it is “all faces” (BDB 481 and BDB 815)!

This theme of sorrow, remorse (judgment), and joy (salvation) restored is recurrent in Isaiah (cf. 30:19; 35:10; 51:11; 65:19; also note its usage in the NT, Rev. 7:17; 21:4).

▣ **“He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth”** This has two possible meanings.

1. it relates to the new covenant in Ezek. 36:22-38 which repairs the image of Israel among the nations
2. it relates “His people” to all people (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; Rom. 9:6; and 11:26; also note Gal. 6:16; I Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6). Reproach is the result of sin. Its removal is an act of forgiveness and restoration. This is a divine plan of universal redemption (v. 1)!

▣ **“For the LORD has spoken”** Here again is the certainty of events because God has said it (cf. 24:3; 30:23; 40:8; 55:10-11).

**25:9 “in that day”** This refers to the day of God’s visitation. To some it will be a day of judgment; to some it will be a day of salvation (cf. 12:1-4; 26:1; 27:1-2). See note at 2:11.

▣ **“this is our God”** This could refer to (1) the God of Israel (i.e., Abrahamic Covenant, Genesis 12,15,17) or (2) the God of creation who promised deliverance to all humans made in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26,27) in Gen. 3:15.

▣ **“we have waited”** This VERB (BDB 875, KB 1082, *Piel* PERFECT) appears twice (cf. 8:17; 26:8; 33:2; 40:31; 49:23; 51:5; 60:9). It has the connotation of “longing for,” “trusting in,” “waiting eagerly for”! It is used most often in the Psalms and Isaiah.

▣ **“that He might save us”** Usually in the OT this VERB (BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) means “to deliver” (i.e., physical deliverance, Gen. 12:12; Exod. 1:17-22; 14:30; James 5:20), but in this context its meaning is more in line with the NT usage of “saved” (i.e., Matt. 1:1; 18:11; I Cor. 1:21; 9:22; I Tim. 1:15; II Tim. 1:9). These people (Jew and Gentile) will be saved from sin and death. See Special Topic at 33:2.

▣ **“Let us rejoice and be glad”** These are both COHORTATIVES.

1. BDB 162, KB 189, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
2. BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* COHORTATIVE

His salvation brings the restoration of joy and gladness to His creation (cf. 35:1-2,10; 65:18; 66:10).

**25:10-11** There is a series of doubled words for emphasis.

1. trodden down, v. 10, BDB 190, KB 218
  - a. *Niphal* PERFECT
  - b. *Niphal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT
2. spread out his hands, v. 11, BDB 831, KB 975
  - a. *Piel* PERFECT
  - b. *Piel* IMPERFECT
3. to swim, v. 11, BDB 965, KB 1314
  - a. *Qal* PARTICIPLE
  - b. *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT

Moab will try to swim in the cesspool (v. 10, this is the only occurrence of the term [יָמַד, BDB 199]). The LXX and Peshitta do not follow this reading, but have “as they tread the floor with wagons.” The JPSOA emendates it to a place name “Madmenah,” close to Jerusalem, cf. 10:31.

**25:10-12** This seems to return to the theme of judgment on the surrounding nations and in particular on Moab (JPSOA suggests emendation to “Assyria”). Moab has been previously judged in Isaiah 15-16. Here, Moab (the only specific nation mentioned in chapters 24-27) seems to be a symbol of all rebellious human beings, prideful of their own situation. Moab, located physically on a high plateau and very wealthy because of her commerce trade, is symbolic of all of human achievement apart from God. This seems to be the background of (1) “the city of chaos” in Isa. 24:10 or (2) “the unassailable city” mentioned in Isa. 26:5.

**25:11 “But the LORD will lay low his pride”** The VERB (BDB 1050, KB 1631, *Hiphil* PERFECT, cf. v. 10) is also used twice in 26:5 to refer to YHWH bringing down “the city” (cf. 24:10; 25:2-3). It is a recurrent VERB in Isaiah connected to YHWH judging the proud and arrogant (cf. 2:9,11,12,17; 5:15 [twice]; 10:33; 13:11; 25:11; 29:4; 40:4; note II Sam. 22:28; Job 40:11; Ps. 18:27; Pro. 29:33).

Moab’s excessive pride was mentioned earlier in 16:6 and her ruin in 16:14.



**NASB, NKJV** “the trickery of his hands”  
**NRSV** “the struggle of their hands”  
**TEV** “their hands will sink helplessly”  
**NJB** “what his hands may attempt”  
**JB** “he stretches out his hands”  
**Peshitta** “the spoils of their hands”

The JPSOA suggests an emendation “along with the emblems of their power,” which may link to “the unassailable fortifications,” cf. v. 12.

The problem is the term “trickery,” אַרְבוֹת (BDB 70), which is found only here in the OT, but a close form, מֵאַרְב (BDB 70) means “ambush” or אַרְב (BDB 70) means “lie in wait” or “ambush,” but this does not fit the context.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the difference between “that day” in 25:9 and 24:23?
2. Why is Moab singled out in 25:10-12?

# ISAIAH 26

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Song of Trust in God's Protection	A Song of Salvation	Song of Victory	God Will Give His People Victory	A Hymn of Thanksgiving
26:1-6 (1-6)	26:1-11 (1b-6)	26:1-6 (1-6)	26:1-19 (1-6)	26:1-6 (1-6)
		Apocalyptic Psalm		A Psalm
26:7-10 (7-10)	(7-9)  (10-11)	26:7-15 (7-15)	(7-18)	26:7-19 (7-11)
26:11-19 (11-19)				
	26:12-19 (12-15)			(12-15)
	(16-18)  (19)	26:16-19 (16-19)	(19)	(16-19)
	Take Refuge From the Coming Judgment	Fourth Eschatological Section (26:20-27:1)	Judgment and Restoration	The LORD'S Judgment
26:20-21 (20-21)	26:20-27:1 (20-21)	26:20-21 (20-21)	26:20-21	26:20-27:1 (20-21)

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. It must be remembered that Isaiah 26 and 27 form part of a literary unit which began in chapter 24.
- B. Chapters 24-27 are a literary unit positioned at the conclusion of a series of judgment oracles against the surrounding nations found in Isaiah 13-23. Judgment is not the last word! The God of grace and mercy has an eternal, inclusive, redemptive plan!
- C. This entire section is a play on two cities.
  - 1. the cities formed by the fallen human children of Cain, who try to meet their needs completely in their own resources (i.e., Genesis 10-11).
  - 2. the city of Zion, where God dwells (i.e., above the wings of the two Cherubim located over the Ark of the covenant in the holiest inner shrine of the temple in Jerusalem) and where His people (Jew and Gentile) come to Him and worship Him (cf. 2:2-4; 19:18-25; Heb. 11:10; 12:22; 13:14; Rev. 21:1-2).
- D. Cities represent people groups/nations.

### Human Cities

1:7,8, burned Judean cities  
1:21, the faithful city has become a harlot  
6:11, Judean cities devastated  
14:17,21, all cities devastated  
14:31 cities of Philistia  
17:1-3,9, cities of Syria ruined  
19:2, cities of Egypt destroy each other  
  
22:2,9, the exultant city, Jerusalem falls  
23, Tyre destroyed  
24:1-25:5, universal destruction of cities  
25:10-12, Moab and her palace, fortified cities trampled  
26:5, the unassailable city, probably Moab  
27:10, fortified cities fall  
29:1, "Ariel" (Jerusalem)  
33:2,19, the jubilant city (Jerusalem)  
  
48:2, the holy city, but in name only

### God's City

1:26, the city of righteousness, a faithful city  
  
19:18-22, Egyptian cities worship God  
19:23-25, all Egypt and Assyria included in God's people  
  
25:6-9, banquet on God's mountain (i.e., Jerusalem)  
26:1, a strong city, Jerusalem, restored  
  
45:13, My city (cf. 44:23)  
  
52:1-6, the holy city  
60:14, the city of the LORD  
62:12, a city not forsaken  
66:6, a voice of uproar from the city, a voice from the temple

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:1-6

<sup>1</sup>In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah:

"We have a strong city;

He sets up walls and ramparts for security.

<sup>2</sup>Open the gates, that the righteous nation may enter,

The one that remains faithful.

<sup>3</sup>The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace,

Because he trusts in You.

<sup>4</sup>Trust in the LORD forever,

For in GOD the LORD, *we* have an everlasting Rock.

<sup>5</sup>For He has brought low those who dwell on high, the unassailable city;

He lays it low, He lays it low to the ground, He casts it to the dust.

<sup>6</sup>The foot will trample it,

The feet of the afflicted, the steps of the helpless."

**26:1 "In that day"** This refers to God visiting His creation. It can be for blessing or for judgment. See full note at 2:11.

▣ **"song"** There are several songs in this literary unit (i.e., chapters 24-27).

1. judgment, 23:15-18
2. judgment, 24:7-11  
worship, 24:14-16
3. thanksgiving and praise, 25:1,3,6,9
4. rejoicing, 26:1,19
5. rejoicing, 27:2

The type of music/praise reflects the coming of YHWH in judgment or blessing (cf. Deuteronomy 27-28).

▣ **"We have a strong city"** The city referred to in vv. 1-6, with the possible exception of v. 5, is God's city, restored Jerusalem, which is symbolic of God's restoration of all His earth. See D in Background above.

▣ **"He sets up walls and ramparts for security"** These ramparts were earthen works which did not allow siege machines to reach the walls of the city. The PRONOUN refers to YHWH.

The term "security" is literally "salvation" (BDB 446), see Special Topic at 33:2.

**26:2 "Open the gates, that the righteous nation may enter"** This refers to access to the holy city and the temple (cf. 60:11,18; 62:10).

The word "nation" (BDB 156) is usually used in a derogatory way referring to Gentiles, but here it has a positive connotation referring to the faithful of Judah. Remember, context, context, context!

▣ **"The one that remains faithful"** Verses 2-4 seem to be a play on the Hebrew word "faithful" or "trustworthy." See Special Topic at 22:23. The verse emphasizes the continuance of faith by

1. the *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE of "keeps" (BDB 1036, KB 1581)
2. the PLURAL of "faith" (BDB 53)

Again, it is uncertain if this is an individual being referred to or a national entity (cf. NRSV, JB, REB). It is somewhat similar to the problem in 24:13 (cf. Isa. 30:15). This idea of remaining faithful can be related to the concept of waiting on the Lord (cf. 25:9; 26:8). In the midst of judgment God's true people still trust Him.

**26:3 “The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace”** Notice the covenantal aspect.

1. The believer's mind is stayed on YHWH (BDB 701, KB 759, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, but used in an ACTIVE sense, cf. I Chr. 29:18).
2. YHWH keeps him/her (BDB 665 I, KB 718, *Qal* IMPERFECT, the covenant relationship has two participants, see Special Topic at 1:3).
3. “Perfect peace” is a doubling of *shalom* (BDB 1022, cf. DSS). This doubling of words is very common in this section of Isaiah.

▣ **“he trusts in You”** The word “trust” (BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE) means “trust” in YHWH (cf. 12:2; 26:4; 36:15; 37:10; 50:10). Notice that the next verse has the same word as an IMPERATIVE. This is such an important theological concept of the need for a personal relationship with God, not just obedience. Both are crucial!

**26:4 “Trust in the LORD forever”** For the VERB (BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* IMPERATIVE), see Special Topic at 22:23.

The name for Deity in the first line of v. 4 is YHWH; in the second line a CONTRACTION Yah and YHWH, see Special Topic at 1:1.

The term “forever” (BDB 723 I), first the PLURAL form and then the SINGULAR form (CONSTRUCT, cf. 65:18; Ps. 83:18; 92:8). This construction, along with “everlasting” (BDB 761), used of YHWH, implies a personal relationship beyond this life (cf. vv. 14,19; Ps. 23:6).

▣ **“we have an everlasting rock”** The word “rock” is a metaphor for God's unchanging character (cf. Psa. 18:1, 2; Isa. 17:10; 30:29; 44:8).

**26:5 “the unassailable city”** This may refer to the pride of Moab (cf. 25:10-12), particularly v. 12. Human pride and arrogance always result in Divine judgment.

**26:6** Here YHWH acts on behalf of His people. The concept of “trampling” links this with 25:10, which is God's judgment on Moab that seems, in this context, to be a symbol of all human, sinful, rebellious society (similar to the use of Babylon in Revelation).

Notice the different words that relate to the foot.

1. VERB, “tramples” (BDB 942, KB 1245, *Qal* IMPERFECT)
2. NOUN, “foot” (BDB 919, SINGULAR)
3. NOUN, “foot” (BDB 919, PLURAL)
4. NOUN, “steps” (BDB 821)

This chapter has several doubled words, which is characteristic of the larger context.

1. peace, v. 3
2. YHWH, v. 4
3. foot, v. 6

Remember all the doubled VERBALS in chapters 24-27.

1. “writhes,” BDB 615, KB 663, *Qal* PERFECT, 24:4
2. “ceases,” BDB 991, KB 1407, *Qal* PERFECT, 24:8
3. “drink,” BDB 1059, KB 1667, *Qal* IMPERFECT and PARTICIPLE, 24:9
4. “treacherously,” BDB93, KB 108, *Qal* PARTICIPLE and PERFECT (twice), 24:16
5. “be trodden,” BDB 190, KB 218, *Niphal* PERFECT and INFINITIVE, 25:10



6. “spread out,” BDB 831, KB 975, *Piel* PERFECT and IMPERFECT, 25:11
7. “swim,” BDB 965, KB 1314, *Qal* PARTICIPLE and INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, 25:11
8. “trust,” BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE and *Qal* IMPERATIVE, 25:3,4
9. “brought low,” BDB 1050, KB 1631, *Niphal* IMPERFECT (twice), 26:5
10. “see,” BDB 302, KB 301, *Qal* IMPERFECT (twice), 26:11
11. “increase,” BDB 414, KB 418, *Qal* PERFECT (twice), 26:15
12. “let him make,” BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (twice), 27:5
13. “strike,” BDB 645, KB 697, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE and PERFECT, 27:7

▣ **“The feet of the afflicted, the steps of the helpless”** It is YHWH who tramples, but He often uses delegates (i.e., Assyria, Babylon). Here the weak and poor who have been abused will be His delegates (cf. 3:14-15).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:7-10**

<sup>7</sup>The way of the righteous is smooth;  
**O Upright One, make the path of the righteous level.**  
<sup>8</sup>Indeed, *while following* the way of Your judgments, O LORD,  
 We have waited for You eagerly;  
 Your name, even Your memory, is the desire of *our* souls.  
<sup>9</sup>At night my soul longs for You,  
 Indeed, my spirit within me seeks You diligently;  
 For when the earth experiences Your judgments  
 The inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.  
<sup>10</sup>Though the wicked is shown favor,  
 He does not learn righteousness;  
 He deals unjustly in the land of uprightness,  
 And does not perceive the majesty of the LORD.

**26:7 “The way. . .smooth. . .level”** This is a play on the concept of preparing a road for a royal visit. It came to be used metaphorically for the spiritual preparation for the visitation of God. This is the concept that John the Baptist used to describe his own ministry (cf. 40:3,4; 42:16; 45:13; Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4-6; John 1:25).

A level, smooth path would bring to mind a straight path which would denote lifestyle godliness and covenant obedience. A faithful believer is characterized by

1. a heart for God (personal relationship, cf. v. 9)
2. a life for God (obedience, cf. v. 8)

These must go together! They cannot be separate (cf. Luke 6:46).



NASB, NJB           **“O Upright One”**  
 NKJV               **“O Most Upright”**  
 NRSV, JPSOA       **“O Just One”**

This is the only place in the Bible that this title is used for God. Some see it as being related to the concept of the “Righteous One” (cf. 24:16), while other translations make this a title for God, while others say it relates to His righteous followers’ (LXX, Peshitta, JB, REB) smooth travel as they return to Him in a restored Jerusalem (cf. 42:16).

**26:8 “the way”** Notice how this word (lit. path, BDB 73) relates to “the way” of v. 7.

1. v. 7, literal path
2. v. 8, lifestyle

▣ **“We have waited for You eagerly”** The VERB (BDB 875, KB 1082, *Piel* PERFECT) is translated by the NASB by adding the English ADVERB “eagerly.” Other English translations do not have it. This reflects a patient trusting/waiting in God in the midst of difficult circumstances (cf. 8:17; 25:9; 33:2).

▣ **“Your judgments”**

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: TERMS FOR GOD’S REVELATION (USING DEUTERONOMY AND PSALMS)**

- I. “Statutes,” BDB 349, “an enactment, decree, or ordinance”
  - A. Masculine, חק – Deut. 4:1,5,6,8,14,40,45; 5:1; 6:1,24,25; 7:11; 11:32; 16:12; 17:19; 26:17; 27:10; Ps. 2:7; 50:16; 81:4; 99:7; 105:10,45; 148:6
  - B. Feminine, חקה – Deut. 6:2; 8:11; 10:13; 11:1; 28:15,45; 30:10,16; Ps. 89:31; 119:5,8,12,16,23,26,33,48,54,64,68,71,80,83,112,124,135,145,155,171
- II. “Law” BDB 435, “instruction”
  - Deut. 1:5; 4:44; 17:11,18,19; 27:3,8,26; 28:58,61; 29:21,29; 30:10; 31:9; Ps. 1:2; 19:7; 78:10; 94:12; 105:45; 119:1,18,29,34,44,51,53,55,61,70,72,77,85,92,97,109,113, 126,136,142,150,153,163,165,174
- III. “Testimonies” BDB 730, “divine laws”
  - A. PLURAL, עדות – Deut. 4:45; 6:17,20; Ps. 25:10; 78:56; 93:5; 99:7; 119:22,24,46,59,79,95,119,125,138,146,152,167,168
  - B. עדות or עדת – Ps. 19:7; 78:5; 81:5; 119:2,14,31,36,88,99,111,129,144,157
- IV. “Precepts” BDB 824, “a charge”
  - Ps. 19:8; 103:18; 111:7; 119:4,15,27,40,45,56,63,69,78,87,93,94,100,104,110,128,134,141,159,168,173
- V. “Commandments” BDB 846
  - Deut. 4:2,40; 5:29; 6:1,2,17,25; 8:1,2,11; 10:13; 11:13; 15:5; 26:13,17; 30:11,16; Ps. 19:8; 119:6,10,19,21,32, 35,47,48,60,66,73, 86,96,98,115, 127,131,143,151,166,176
- VI. “Judgments/ordinances” BDB 1048, “rulings” or “justice”
  - Deut. 1:17; 4:1,5,8,14,45; 7:12; 16:18; 30:16; 33:10,21; Ps. 10:5; 18:22; 19:19; 48:11; 89:30; 97:8; 105:5,7; 119:7,13,20,30,39,43,52,62,75,84,102,106,120,137, 149,156,160,164; 147:19; 149:9
- VII. “His ways” BDB 202, YHWH’s guidelines for His people’s lifestyle
  - Deut. 8:6; 10:12; 11:22,28; 19:9; 26:17; 28:9; 30:16; 32:4; Ps. 119:3,5,37,59

VIII. "His words"

- A. BDB 202 – Deut. 4:10,12,36; 9:10; 10:4; Ps. 119:9,16,17,25,28,42,43, 49,57,65, 74, 81,89,101,105,107,114,130,139,147,160,161,169
- B. BAB 57
1. "word" – Deut. 17:19; 18:19; 33:9; Ps. 119:11,67,103,162,170,172
  2. "promise" – Ps. 119:38,41,50,58,76,82,116,133,140,148,154
  3. "command" – Ps. 119:158

▣ **"Your name, even Your memory, is the desire of our souls"** This is the personal longing of a worshiper for his God (cf. v. 9; 25:9). "Your name" represented God's character (i.e., Exod. 3:15; Ps. 135:13). "Your memory" represented His great acts of redemption proclaimed in praise.

**26:9** The first two lines of v. 9 sound like the Psalms. The worshiper deeply desires YHWH, not facts about Him, but He, Himself.

1. longs, BDB 16, KB 20, *Piel* PERFECT
2. seeks, BDB 1007, KB 1465, *Piel* IMPERFECT, Ps. 63:1; 78:34; Hos. 5:15

This is such powerful, personal language. It reminds me of Ps. 42:1-2. We were made to know Him. We cannot find peace apart from Him! Our spirits, made in His image and likeness, long for Him!

▣ The second two lines and v. 10 speak of the wicked who misunderstand God's patience and take advantage of His kindness (cf. Rom. 2:4-5). God's law (i.e., judgment) was meant to help the nations know Him (cf. v. 11), but Israel's disobedience clouded the revelation. Even Israelites themselves took advantage of their family traditions (i.e., the promises to Abraham).

The faithful inhabitants of the world learn righteousness (v. 9d), but the wicked do not (v. 10b).

▣ **"judgments"** See Special Topic: Judge, Judgment, Justice in Isaiah at 3:1.

**26:10 "though the wicked is shown favor"** This verse describes YHWH's revelatory intent (i.e., reach the wicked so as to convert them) and actions.

1. He shows them favor (i.e., gracious), BDB 335, KB 334, *Hophal* IMPERFECT
2. they are allowed to live "in the land of uprightness"
3. He clearly signals (i.e., lifts His hand) them, v. 11

What is the wicked's response to YHWH's revelation of Himself?

1. does not learn righteousness, v. 10
2. does not deal justly, v. 10
3. does not perceive the majesty of the LORD, v. 10
4. does not see His zeal for His people, v. 11

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:11-19**

**<sup>11</sup>O LORD, Your hand is lifted up *yet* they do not see it.**

**They see *Your* zeal for the people and are put to shame;**

**Indeed, fire will devour *Your* enemies.**

**<sup>12</sup>LORD, You will establish peace for us,**

**Since You have also performed for us all our works.**

**<sup>13</sup>O LORD our God, other masters besides You have ruled us;**

***But* through You alone we confess Your name.**

<sup>14</sup>The dead will not live, the departed spirits will not rise;

Therefore You have punished and destroyed them,  
And You have wiped out all remembrance of them.

<sup>15</sup>You have increased the nation, O LORD,

You have increased the nation, You are glorified;  
You have extended all the borders of the land.

<sup>16</sup>O LORD, they sought You in distress;

They could only whisper a prayer,  
Your chastening was upon them.

<sup>17</sup>As the pregnant woman approaches *the time* to give birth,

She writhes *and* cries out in her labor pains,  
Thus were we before You, O LORD.

<sup>18</sup>We were pregnant, we writhed in *labor*,

We gave birth, as it seems, *only* to wind.  
We could not accomplish deliverance for the earth,  
Nor were inhabitants of the world born.

<sup>19</sup>Your dead will live;

Their corpses will rise.  
You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy,  
For your dew is as the dew of the dawn,  
And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits.

**26:11 “Your hand is lifted up”** This is an idiom for YHWH’s actions, both past and present. They are clear, but the enemies of His people do not see and understand Him (cf. v. 10; 5:12,25; 8:11; 9:12; 10:4,10; 11:15; 13:2; 14:26-27; 23:11; 25:10; 28:2, etc.).

▣ **“fire will devour Your enemies”** This could be an IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense (i.e., “let fire devour Your enemies”).

**26:12** This is a strong affirmation of the sovereignty of YHWH. He acts on Israel’s behalf (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38) for His greater redemptive purposes!

**26:13 “other masters”** It is possible that this refers to the false gods of 2:8; 27:9, but it could be an allusion to the national enemies (Syria, Assyria, Babylon) who Israel faced.

▣ **“other masters than You have ruled us”** This VERB (BDB 127, KB 142, *Qal* PERFECT) can mean

1. possess as a wife or concubine, Gen. 20:3; Exod. 21:3,22; Deut. 22:22; 24:4
2. rule over, 16:8

This verse may refer to idolatry, particularly fertility worship. YHWH is their only true “master,” “husband” (cf. Hos. 2:14-20).

▣

NASB “we confess Your name”

NKJV “we make mention of Your name”

NRSV “we acknowledge your name”

**NJB, REB** “we invoke your name”

**LXX** “we name your name”

The VERB (BDB 269, KB 269, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) means “remember.” KB says it means “to profess in praise” (i.e., hymns). This, therefore, denotes a worship setting where the character and acts of Israel’s God are extolled (positively, i.e., Ps. 45:18; 71:14-16; and negatively, do not mention other gods in praise, Exod. 23:13).

Notice that it is YHWH (i.e., “through You”) that His people are able to worship.

1. national deliverance (cf. v. 15, the temple)
2. personal deliverance (cf. v. 16, desire to go there)

**26:14 “The dead will not live, the departed spirits will not rise”** This seems to be linked to v. 13, “the other masters,” which refers to foreign kings who will not trouble Israel again. This verse is not meant to teach theology about the afterlife, specifically the annihilation of the wicked. There are too many other passages in the Bible which teach a general resurrection (cf. Dan. 12:2; Matt. 25:46; John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15). This verse is saying that those kings, now judged and dead, will never again come back to life personally or symbolically, in another time, to hurt the people of God.



**NASB** “departed spirits”

**NRSV, JPSOA** “shades”

**TEV, JB** “ghosts”

**NJB** “shadows”

The Hebrew term (BDB 952 I) seems to be linked to the sunken ones, the powerless dead (cf. Job 26:5; Pro. 2:18; Isa. 14:9; in 26:19); the word is used for the righteous who are to be raised).

The same root (BDB 952 II) was one of the terms used for the giants. See Special Topic at 14:9. It is possible the Rephaim became a standardized metaphor for great warriors and symbolically for kings of powerful nations.

**26:15** This was the covenant purpose of God towards Abraham’s descendants. This is the same imagery often extended into the eschaton, whereby all nations come and worship YHWH in Jerusalem.

**26:16 “They could only whisper a prayer”** God’s faithful were suffering under God’s judgment on His people collectively. They sought God in low and guarded prayers amidst God’s heavy hand.

There may be a theological word play.

1. whisper a prayer (BDB 538 #3)
2. whisper as part of Israel’s idolatry (BDB 538 #1,2, cf. 3:3,20)

Remember, context, context, context determines meaning!

**26:17 “As the pregnant woman”** Often in the Bible, birth is used as a metaphor for the sudden coming of the pain of God’s judgment. Some interpret vv. 17-18 as the Messianic birth (i.e., metaphor of the birth pains of the New Age, cf. Mark 13:8), but in context it seems to refer to judgment.

**26:18 “We gave birth, as it were, *only* to wind.**

**We could not accomplish deliverance for the earth,**

**Nor were inhabitants of the world born”** This verse is a reference to the missionary mandate of Israel to be a royal priesthood (cf. Exod. 19:4-6). She was meant to be a light to the nations (cf. Isa. 42:6; 56:6; 49:6). However, because she never kept the law of God, the peoples of the earth only saw YHWH in judgment. This was not God’s intent (cf. v. 15); therefore, God’s purpose (cf. 25:1) for Israel and the world was thwarted.

The term “wind” (BDB 924) has several connotations in Isaiah.

1. breath, 11:4; 25:4; 27:8; 30:28; 33:11; 40:9; 59:19
2. wind, 7:2; 11:15; 17:13; 26:18; 32:2; 41:16,29; 57:13; 64:6
3. spirit
  - a. God's Spirit, 11:2 (4 times); 30:1; 32:15; 34:16; 40:13; 42:1; 44:3; 48:16; 59:21; 61:1; 63:10, 11,14
  - b. human spirit, 4:4; 19:3,14; 26:9; 28:6; 29:10,24; 31:3; 37:7; 38:16; 42:5; 54:6; 57:15 (twice), 16; 61:3; 65:14; 66:2

However in Wisdom Literature the term denotes meaninglessness or emptiness (i.e., Eccl. 1:14,17; 2:11,17,26; 4:4,6,16; 5:16; 6:9). I think Isaiah's usage in 26:18 and 41:29 best fits this second connotation. Abraham's seed could not bring the nations to YHWH because of

1. their personal, individual fallenness
2. the nations' fallenness

but YHWH can (cf. v. 12)!

The term "born" (BDB 656, KB 709, *Qal* IMPERFECT) in v. 18d literally means "to drop" or "to fall," but is used metaphorically of giving birth. The Arabic root means to give birth; it is primarily used of animals (cf. NIV).

### 26:19 "Your dead will live;

**Their corpses will rise**" Verse 19 is contrasted with v. 14. That is why v. 14 cannot be the source of theology. Verse 19 has much theological affinity to 25:8. The question we looked at in 26:3 deals with whether this refers to a national entity or to an individual. The term "their" in v. 19b is literally "my" in Hebrew. Here again is this play on the individual versus the national. This resurrection of national Israel has much in common with Ezekiel 37.

There are two IMPERATIVES in the verse which describe what the dead ("you who lie in the dust") should do.

1. awake, BDB 884, KB 1098, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
2. shout, BDB 943, KB 1247, *Piel* IMPERATIVE

Resurrection is a concept that was apparently common in the ANE.

1. Job (Edom in 2000 B.C. period), 14:13-15; 19:25-27
2. Egypt mummification (starting 3000± B.C., perfected in the Twenty First Dynasty)
3. but not in Mesopotamia

If humans were created for fellowship with God but sin caused death, then a reversal for the faithful seems logical. The rabbis (i.e., Pharisees) believed in a resurrection (cf. Acts 23:6; Heb. 6:1-2). Jesus believed in a resurrection (cf. Matt. 22:23-33; Luke 14:14; John 11:24-25). The concept of heaven is a fellowship issue. Gehenna is the permanent isolation of those who refuse faith and fellowship! The imagery of the Bible for the future is a restored Eden (cf. Revelation 21-22).



NASB	"the dew of the dawn"
NKJV	"the dew of herbs"
NRSV, NJB	"a radiant dew"
TEV	"as the sparkling dew"
REB	"a dew of sparkling light"
Peshitta	"a dew of light"
JPSOA	"the dew or fresh growth"

This is literally "for a dew of light." The word "light" (BDB 21) has two connotations.

1. light of life vs. darkness of death (PLURAL, BDB 21 I, possibly Esther 8:16)
2. herb (BDB 21 II, Gen. 1:11,12)

There are only two rainy seasons in Palestine. Between these times crops were sustained and grew by means of dew. Therefore, both "dew" and "light" are symbols of life and growth!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:20-21**

<sup>20</sup>***Come, my people, enter into your rooms***

**And close your doors behind you;**

**Hide for a little while**

**Until indignation runs *its* course.**

<sup>21</sup>**For behold, the LORD is about to come out from His place**

**To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity;**

**And the earth will reveal her bloodshed**

**And will no longer cover her slain.**

**26:20** God's people have sinned. There are consequences. Judgment is coming upon them, but it will pass.

There are four IMPERATIVES in this verse that address the faithful and how they should act during the period of divine judgment.

1. come, BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. enter, BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. close, BDB 688, KB 742, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. hide, BDB 285, KB 285, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

They are all MASCULINE SINGULAR, but refer collectively to the faithful.

This is an allusion to the Passover experience of Exodus 12.

1. close door
2. VERB, "pass over" (BDB 716) is not the same VERB used in Exodus 12 (BDB 820), but the same idea

The faithful are saved from God's judgment.

**26:21 "the LORD is about to come out from His place"** This phrase is used only here and Micah 1:3.

It seems to refer to

1. heaven (i.e., God's throne)
2. the temple (i.e., God's footstool)

▣ **"the earth"** Chapters 24-27 speak of a worldwide judgment!





# ISAIAH 27

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Deliverance of Israel	Take Refuge From the Coming Judgment (26:20-27:1)	Fourth Eschatological Section (26:20-27:1)	Judgment and Restoration (26:20-27:13)	The LORD'S Judgment (26:20-27:1)
			26:20-27:1	
27:1 (1)	(27:1)	27:1		27:1
	The Restoration of Israel	Fourth Apocalyptic Poem of Deliverance		Yahweh's Vineyard
27:2-11 (2-11)	27:2-11 (2-5)	27:2-11 (2-5)	27:2-5	27:2-5 (2-3) (4) (5)
	(6)	(6)	27:6	Pardon and Punishment 27:6-11 (6-11)
	(7-11)	(7-11)	27:7-9	
		Concluding Oracle of Doom and Triumph	27:10-11	The Israelites Return
27:12-13	27:12-13 (12) (13)	27:12-13	27:12	27:12-13 (12-13)
			27:13	

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This is the concluding chapter of the literary unit which began in chapter 24.
- B. The last two lines are a fitting highly metaphorical conclusion of end-time judgment, starting with Abraham's seed (cf. Jer. 25:29; Amos 3:2; I Pet. 4:17), but extending to all humans.
- C. The last verse, like v. 5, extends hope to the Gentile nations (cf. 2:2-4; 19:18-23; 25:2-3).
- D. This is a wonderful poetic chapter, but its beauty causes ambiguity and confusion. Remember, seek the meaning of strophes, not the details of poetic word plays or mythological allusions.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:1

**<sup>1</sup>In that day the LORD will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent,  
With His fierce and great and mighty sword,  
Even Leviathan the twisted serpent;  
And He will kill the dragon who *lives* in the sea.**

**27:1 “In that day”** See note at 2:11.

▣ **“Leviathan the fleeing serpent”** Leviathan (BDB 531) seems to be a Ugaritic mythological sea animal (i.e., Job 41:19-21) mentioned in Job 3:8; Ps. 104:26; Amos 9:3. However, sometimes it is used as a symbol for an evil nation (cf. Ps. 74:13-14, possibly Egypt). It resembles a river snaking through their land. Sometimes this term is linked specifically to “Rahab,” which is a way of referring to Egypt (cf. Ps. 87:4; 89:9-10; and Isa. 30:7). It seems to me that, in context, we are talking about a river symbolizing a national enemy, either Egypt or Assyria (cf. v. 12). The reason this term can be used symbolically so easily is that it was previously used in some of the mythological literature of Canaan (cf. Ps. 74:12-17; see G. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, pp. 239-240).

There is a parallelism between

1. the fleeing serpent (BDB 638 I) or sea monster (NASB footnote)
2. the twisted sea monster
3. the dragon who lives in the sea

This same allusion is found in (1) Ugaritic poems and (2) Isa. 51:9, using “Rahab,” who is also identified by the term “dragon” (BDB 1072).

The only apparent connection between this verse and the context is vv. 11-12.

1. YHWH as creator, v. 11
2. rivers of the Euphrates and the brook of Egypt in v. 12
3. the end of time is like the beginning of time (i.e., Genesis 1-2; Revelation 21-22)

Apparently Isaiah is a compilation of his writings over many years and compiled on the basis of word plays or themes, not history.

▣ **“dragon”** This term (BDB 1072) means

1. serpent, Exod. 7:9,10; Deut. 32:33; Ps. 91:13
2. dragon, Neh. 2:13; Jer. 51:34

3. sea/river monster, Gen. 1:21; Job 7:12; Ps. 74:13; 148:7. It is parallel to Leviathan (cf. Psalm 74:13-14). It is used as a metaphor for Egypt in Isa. 27:1; 51:9,10; Ezek. 29:3; 32:2.

The two great river systems of the Ancient Near East were the cradles of civilization (i.e., the Nile and the Tigris/Euphrates).

Tanin (BDB 1072) is parallel with

1. Leviathan, Ps. 74:13-14; Isa. 27:1
2. Rahab, Isa. 51:9
3. Bashan, Ps. 68:22; Amos 9:3 (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 87)

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:2-6**

<sup>2</sup>**In that day,**  
**"A vineyard of wine, sing of it!**  
<sup>3</sup>**I, the LORD, am its keeper;**  
**I water it every moment.**  
**So that no one will damage it,**  
**I guard it night and day.**  
<sup>4</sup>**I have no wrath.**  
**Should someone give Me briars *and* thorns in battle,**  
**Then I would step on them, I would burn them completely.**  
<sup>5</sup>**Or let him rely on My protection,**  
**Let him make peace with Me,**  
**Let him make peace with Me."**  
<sup>6</sup>**In the days to come Jacob will take root,**  
**Israel will blossom and sprout,**  
**And they will fill the whole world with fruit.**

**27:2**

**NASB** "A vineyard of wine"  
**NKJV** "a vineyard of red wine"  
**NRSV, TEV** "a pleasant vineyard"  
**NJB, REB** "the splendid vineyard"  
**LXX** "a fair vineyard"  
**JPSOA** "a Vineyard of Delight"

The Hebrew word for "pleasant" is חמד (BDB 326), which is in the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, but the MT and the DSS have the ך not the ך. The Hebrew word for "wine" is חמר (BDB 330). The vowel points are the same for both words. The UBS Hebrew Text Project gives "pleasant" a "C" rating (considerable doubt).

The vineyard was a symbol of Israel (cf. 5:1-7; Peshitta), but here, because of the universal nature of chapters 24-27, it may be the whole earth (cf. 26:21; JPSOA footnote).

▣ **"sing"** This is a *Piel* IMPERATIVE (BDB 777, KB 854). There are several "songs" mentioned in this literary unit. See note at 26:1b.

**27:3** YHWH had a special relationship, a covenant relationship with the descendants of Abraham. They were uniquely His people. However, v. 6 shows He had a universal plan for all the world (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5).

**27:4-5** There are several COHORTATIVES and JUSSIVES in these verses.

1. I would step on them, BDB 832, KB 979, *Qal* COHORTATIVE (VERB found only here in the OT)
2. I would burn them, BDB 428, KB 429, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
3. let him rely on My protection, BDB 304, KB 302, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE
4. let him make peace with Me, BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, twice

Verse 3 describes YHWH's care and protection for Abraham's descendants; verse 4 describes His willingness to protect and destroy her enemies; verse 5 is a call to trust in His care and protection; v. 6 is the result of the blessings which will one day fill the earth (the original intention of God in Genesis 1).

**27:4**

NASB	“wrath”
NKJV	“fury”
TEV, JB	“angry”
NJB, LXX	“wall”
REB	“wine”
Peshitta	“hedge”

Notice how many options.

1. חמה (BDB 404), “wrath,” very common in Isaiah
2. חומה (BDB 327), “wall,” used several times in this literary unit, cf. 2:15; 22:10,11; 25:12; 26:1
3. חמר (BDB 330), “wine,” rare, only in 27:2 and Deut. 32:14

The UBS Hebrew Text Project gives “wrath” a “B” rating (some doubt).

**27:5 “Or let him rely on My protection”** This shows that human (even for God's enemies, cf. v. 4) response is part of God's plan (cf. Isa. 1:16-17,18-20). There is a paradox in the Bible between the sovereignty of God in history and God's will that humans respond to Him by faith. See Special Topic at 1:3. Verse 5 is God's offering of forgiveness and salvation to those Gentiles who trust in Him (cf. 2:2-4; 42:6; 45:22; 49:6).

▣ **“Let him make peace with Me”** This phrase is doubled, which is characteristic of this section of Isaiah. See note at 26:6.

Peace is such a crucial aspect of a faith relationship with God (cf. 26:12; 32:17; 52:7; 54:10; 55:12; 57:2,19; 60:17; 66:12; Phil. 4:7,9) and His Messiah (cf. 9:6,7; 53:5; Rom. 5:1; John 14:27; 16:33; 26:19,21,26). It also involves peace between nations (cf. 2:4; 39:8), but there is no peace for the wicked (cf. 48:22; 57:1; 59:18).

Here the term denotes a peace treaty, initiated by YHWH, but must be accepted and lived out by the faithful.

**27:6 “Israel will blossom and sprout;**

**And they will fill the whole world with fruit”** Here again is the imagery of Mount Zion being raised to the highest of all mountains and all the other topological barriers eliminated so that all the world can flow to Jerusalem to worship God (cf. 2:2-4; 24:23; 25:6,7; 27:13). This faithfulness is the exact opposite of 26:18. Maybe part of the fruit is “raised ones” of 26:19.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:7-11**

**<sup>7</sup>Like the striking of Him who has struck them, has He struck them?**

**Or like the slaughter of His slain, have they been slain?**

<sup>8</sup>You contended with them by banishing them, by driving them away.  
With His fierce wind He has expelled *them* on the day of the east wind.

<sup>9</sup>Therefore through this Jacob's iniquity will be forgiven;  
And this will be the full price of the pardoning of his sin:  
When he makes all the altar stones like pulverized chalk stones;  
*When* Asherim and incense altars will not stand.

<sup>10</sup>For the fortified city is isolated,  
A homestead forlorn and forsaken like the desert;  
There the calf will graze,  
And there it will lie down and feed on its branches.

<sup>11</sup>When its limbs are dry, they are broken off;  
Women come *and* make a fire with them,  
For they are not a people of discernment,  
Therefore their Maker will not have compassion on them.  
And their Creator will not be gracious to them.

27:7 This is a very difficult verse. It states that God's judgment is going to fall on those nations that He had used to judge His own people. (cf. 47:6).

Repetition of words and phrases is characteristic of this literary unit (see 26:6). Here the NOUN, מכה (BDB 646, FEMININE, often used of YHWW bringing judgment on His own people, cf. Lev. 26:21; Deut. 28:61; Jer. 30:12), "to wound," or "to slaughter," is followed by the repeating of a related VERB, נכה (BDB 645, KB 697, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE and *Hiphil* PERFECT). Those who YHWH used to punish will be punished even more severely than they punished God's people (NET Bible).

27:8 "them" The "them" of v. 8 refers to Israel being divorced (i.e., "context," BDB 936, KB 1224, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Hos. 2:2) by God because she broke the covenant (cf. 50:1). Therefore, God brought foreign rulers to judge His people (i.e., Assyria, Isa. 10:5, and Babylon, Isaiah 14). However, God will judge them also (cf. v. 7; 47:6; 49:25; Ps. 35:11).



NASB "by banishing them"

NKJV "in measure"

NRSV "by expulsion"

NJB "by expelling"

LXX "dismiss"

Peshitta "in measure by which he has measured"

The MT has בַּסְּאֵה סְאֵה (found only here), which can be understood as

1. סְאֵה סְאֵה, "in measure by measure" (BDB 684, KB 738, *Pilpel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, Targums and Vulgate)
2. בַּסְּאֵה סְאֵה, by driving her out (see next paragraph)

The UBS Hebrew Text Project gives #1 a "B" rating (some doubt), possibly because doubling of words and phrases is so common in this literary unit.

The next Hebrew word is בְּשַׁלְּחָהּ (BDB 1018, KB 1511, *Piel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT), which means "send away by exile." Several of the translations above simply leave out the first VERBAL and translate the second VERBAL.

▣ **“by driving them away”** The Hebrew VERB (BDB 212, KB 237, *Qal* PERFECT) denotes a cleansing by removing impurities (from the refining of silver, cf. Pro. 25:4).

▣ **“east wind”** Often this refers to the powers of Mesopotamia (i.e., 46:11; Ezek. 17:10; Hos. 13:15 that invade Palestine, but that cannot be the meaning here because of v. 7. So it must be a metaphor of divine judgment (cf. Exod. 10:13; Ps. 48:7; Jer. 18:17). Sometimes the east wind is a divine act of blessing (cf. Exod. 14:21; 15:10; Num. 11:31; see NIDOTTE, vol. 3, pp. 871-873).

**27:9** Here again many have asserted that this shows that Israel/Judah was forgiven because of the judgment that they experienced from the hand of God. But wait, they must also destroy all remnants of their fertility worship (lines 3, 4). However, this must be brought in line with the concept of “the Suffering Servant” found in Isa. 52:13-53:12. Again, it is not an either/or situation, but two different ways of looking at the actions of God in human history. The Messiah is the means of salvation, but people must respond to Him in faith and faithfulness.

▣ **“altar stones. . .Asherim”** These were the symbols of the male and female fertility deities of Canaan which were so devastating to the worship of YHWH. They will be destroyed! See Special Topic at 17:8.

▣ **“chalk stones”** This word (BDB 162) appears only here in the OT. It denotes a soft stone that can easily be pulverized.

The same word is found in Dan. 5:5, but in Aramaic, and refers to the plaster on the walls of the banquet room in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar’s grandson, Belshazzar.

**27:10 “For the fortified city is isolated”** This is a play on the term “city.” See note at 24:10 and chart at chapter 26, Introduction, D.

**27:11** The imagery of a deserted pasture representing the exiled, sinful people of God continues from v. 10 in v. 11, lines 1-2.

These disobedient covenant people are characterized:

1. they are not a people of discernment, cf. Hos. 4:14
2. their Maker (cf. 43:1,7; 44:2,21,24; Deut. 32:18) will not have compassion on them
3. their Creator will not be gracious to them

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:12-13**

**<sup>12</sup>In that day the LORD will start *His* threshing from the flowing stream of the Euphrates to the brook of Egypt, and you will be gathered up one by one, O sons of Israel. <sup>13</sup>It will come about also in that day that a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were perishing in the land of Assyria and who were scattered in the land of Egypt will come and worship the LORD in the holy mountain at Jerusalem.**

**27:12-13** This seems to form a concluding literary statement. Verse 12 is talking about God’s dealing with (i.e., “thresh,” BDB 286, KB 285, *Qal* IMPERFECT which denotes an eschatological harvest with its separation of the faithful and unfaithful, cf. Matt. 13:36-43; 24:31; 25:32) His people, using national imagery. It refers to the limits of the Promised Land found so often in the OT (cf. Gen. 15:18; I Kgs. 8:64; Ezek. 47:15-19). Verse 13 is international in scope; it deals with those Gentile nations beyond the people of God who are also invited to respond to God by faith (i.e., 2:2-4; 19:18-25).

These last two verses reflect Deut. 30:1-10 in eschatological imagery ( note Hos. 11:8-11).

**27:12 “from the flowing stream”** This word (BDB 987) has two meanings.

1. flowing stream, BDB 987 I, cf. Ps. 69:2,15
2. gathering grain, BDB 987 II, cf. 17:5; Gen. 41:5,6,7,22,23,24,26,27; Ruth 2:2; Job 24:24

This chapter uses both senses. Number 1 fits the allusion in v. 1, but number 2 fits the immediate VERB (thresh) and the metaphor for judgment (i.e., harvesting).

▣ **“the brook of Egypt”** This refers to the wadi El’arish, which is the southern boundary of the Promised Land.

**27:13 “in that day a great trumpet will be blown”** This is a recurrent eschatological theme using a worship or military metaphor of a blown trumpet (two kinds).

1. worship, Exod. 19:16,19; Lev. 25:9; Num. 10:2,8,10; I Chr. 15:24
2. military, Num. 10:9; Joshua 6; Jdgs. 3:27; 6:34; 7; I Sam. 13:3; II Sam. 2:28
3. eschatological, here and possibly Zech. 9:14; Matt. 24:31; I Cor. 15:52; I Thess. 4:16

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: HORNS USED BY ISRAEL**

There are four words in Hebrew association with horns/trumpets.

1. “the ram’s horn” (BDB 901) – turned into an instrument of sound, cf. Josh. 6:5. This same word is used for the ram caught by his horns which Abraham substituted for Isaac in Gen. 22:13.
2. “trumpet” (BDB 1051) – from Assyrian term for wild sheep (ibex). This is the horn that was used in Exod 19:16,19 at Mt. Sinai/Horeb; #1 and #2 are parallel in Josh. 6:5. It was used to communicate times to worship and time to fight (i.e., Jericho was both, cf. 6:4).
3. “ram’s horn” (BDB 385) – from Phoenician word for ram (cf. 6:4,6,8,13). It also stands for the Year of Jubilee (cf. Lev. 25:13,28,40,50,52,54; 27:17,18,23,24).

(All of these first three seem interchangeable with no distinction intended. The Mishnah [RH 3.2] allowed any animal horn—sheep, goat, or antelope, but not from a cow.)

4. “trumpets” (BDB 348) – possibly from the VERB “stretch out,” implying a straight bone (not curved as the animal horns). These were made of silver (after the shape and form of Egypt). These are used
  - a. with worship rites (cf. Num. 10:2,8,10)
  - b. for military purposes (cf. Num. 10:9; 31:6; Hosea 5:8; Ezra 3:10; Neh. 12:35,41)
  - c. for royal purposes (cf. II Kgs. 11:14)

One of these metal horns is depicted on the Arch of Titus in Rome; also Josephus describes them in *Antiq.* 3.12.6.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Who or what is Leviathan in Isaiah 27:1?
2. How is Isaiah 27:5 related to Isaiah 1:16-17?
3. Why is Isaiah 27:6 so significant in light of God's plan for Jerusalem?
4. How are Isaiah 27:12 and 13 characteristic of this entire literary unit? (i.e. a play between the national and the international and the corporate and the individual)



# ISAIAH 28

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		Oracles Concerning Judah and Ephraim (28:1-35:10)		
Ephraim's Captivity	Woe to Ephraim and Jerusalem	Against Religious Leaders	A Warning to the Northern Kingdom	Against Samaria
28:1-8 (1-8)	28:1-4 (1-4)	28:1-13 (1-4)	28:1-4	28:1-4 (1-4)
	28:5-8 (5-6)	(5-8)	Isaiah and the Drunken Prophets of Judah	Against False Prophets
	(7-8)		28:7-8	28:7-13 (7-13)
28:9-13 (9-13)	28:9-10 (9-10)	(9-10)	28:9-10	
	28:11-13 (11-13)	(11-13)	28:11-13	
Judah Is Warned		Against Civil Leaders	A Cornerstone for Zion	Against Evil Counselors
28:14-22 (14-15)	28:14-15 (14-15)	28:14-22 (14-22)	28:14-17a	28:14-17a (14-17a)
	A Cornerstone in Zion			
(16-22)	28:16-22 (16b-19)		28:17b-21	28:17b-22 (17b-22)
	(20-22)		28:22	
	Listen to the Teaching of God	Parable of the Farmers	God's Wisdom	A Parable
28:23-29 (23-29)	28:23-29 (23-26)	28:23-29 (23-26)	28:23-29	28:23-29 (23-29)
	(27-29)	(27-29)		

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Isaiah 28:7-33:24 forms a unit (six “woe” pronouncements) that deals with Judah’s alliance with Egypt against Assyria in the reign of King Hezekiah of Judah (for the dates of his reign see chart of “The Kings of the Divided Monarchy” in Appendix Four, #3.) I use the dates of these three scholars: John Bright, 715-687; E. J. Young, 727-699; R. K. Harrison, 716/15-687/86). The historical background is apparently the time surrounding (i.e., 705-701 B.C.) the invasion of the Assyrian monarch Sennacherib in 701 B.C.
- B. Isaiah 28:1-6 deals with the fall of Israel to Assyria. Israel’s capital, Samaria, fell in 722 B.C. to Sargon II after a three-year siege.
- C. Sargon II died in 705 B.C. (see chart of “A Brief Historical Survey of the Powers of Mesopotamia” in Appendix Three). Many of the vassal nations took this opportunity to rebel against Assyria. Sennacherib, the next Assyrian monarch, invaded Judah in 701 B.C. We know from Assyrian documents that he captured forty-six walled villages in Judah and put down the revolt.
- D. Brief Outline of this Chapter
  1. woe to drunkards of Ephraim, vv. 1-6
  2. woe to drunk priests and prophets of Judah, vv. 7-13
  3. woe to the civic leadership of Judah, vv. 14-22
  4. a parable from agriculture, vv. 23-29

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:1-8

<sup>1</sup>Woe to the proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim,

And to the fading flower of its glorious beauty,

Which is at the head of the fertile valley

Of those who are overcome with wine!

<sup>2</sup>Behold, the Lord has a strong and mighty *agent*;

As a storm of hail, a tempest of destruction,

Like a storm of mighty overflowing waters,

He has cast *it* down to the earth with *His* hand.

<sup>3</sup>The proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim is trodden under foot.

<sup>4</sup>And the fading flower of its glorious beauty,

Which is at the head of the fertile valley,

**Will be like the first-ripe fig prior to summer,**

**Which one sees,**

**And as soon as it is in his hand,**

**He swallows it.**

**<sup>5</sup>In that day the LORD of hosts will become a beautiful crown**

**And a glorious diadem to the remnant of His people;**

**<sup>6</sup>A spirit of justice for him who sits in judgment,**

**A strength to those who repel the onslaught at the gate.**

**<sup>7</sup>And these also reel with wine and stagger from strong drink:**

**The priest and the prophet reel with strong drink,**

**They are confused by wine, they stagger from strong drink;**

**They reel while having visions, They totter *when rendering* judgment.**

**<sup>8</sup>For all the tables are full of filthy vomit, without a *single clean* place.**

**28:1 “Woe”** This term (BDB 222) characterizes this entire section (six “woes,” cf. 28:1; 29:1,15; 30:1; 31:1; 33:1, similar to the six woes of 5:8-22). The term “woe” reflects the poetic meter of a funeral dirge.

▣ **“the drunkards of Ephraim”** Verses 1-4 are the prophet’s words of judgment to the religious and political leadership of the Northern Ten Tribes. There is a series of references to their abuse of alcohol (cf. vv. 1 (twice), 3,7; Hos. 7:5). Alcohol abuse is often used as a metaphor of poor judgments which result in divine judgment. See Special Topic at 1:22.

Since the division of the united monarchy (under David and Solomon) in the time of Rehoboam (i.e., 922 B.C.), the northern group was known by their names.

1. Israel (collective title)
2. Ephraim (the largest tribe)
3. Samaria (the capital city)

▣

<b>NASB</b>	<b>“which is at the head of the fertile valley”</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>“which <i>is</i> at the head of the verdant valleys”</b>
<b>NRSV, JPSOA</b>	<b>“which is on the head of those bloated with rich food”</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>“sited at the head of the lush valley”</b>
<b>Peshitta</b>	<b>“at the entrance of the fertile valley”</b>
<b>REB</b>	<b>“on the heads of those who drip with perfumes”</b>

This ambiguous phrase might refer to

1. Samaria located on a high hill
2. the heads of the drunkards

The REB follows the DSS manuscript of Isaiah.

**28:2 “the Lord has a strong and mighty agent”** This refers to the Assyrian empire sent by YHWH (cf. Isa. 8:7; 10:5-6) to punish Israel. The destruction of the Northern Ten Tribes was consummated in the fall of the capital city Samaria after a three year siege by Sargon II in 722 B.C.(cf. II Kgs. 17:6; 18:9-12). All her people were exiled to Media. The vast majority never returned.

Notice how the LORD’S agent is characterized.

1. strong
2. mighty
3. a storm of hail (cf. 30:30)

4. a tempest of destruction
5. a storm of mighty overflowing waters (cf. 8:7-8)
6. “He has cast *it* down to earth with *His* hand” (i.e., YHWH sent it)

**28:4** This is an agricultural metaphor related to the greatly prized first ripe figs (cf. Hos. 9:10; Mic. 7:1). These fruits were eaten quickly and gone. So too, the fertile land of the Northern Ten Tribes is captured and occupied by foreigners.

**28:5** “**In that day**” See note at 2:11. The day of YHWH’s visitation.

▣ “**a beautiful crown**” This is obviously in contrast to “the proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim” in v. 1. In 28:1 it refers to Samaria, here possibly a restored Jerusalem where the Messiah reigns (cf. vv. 16-17).

▣ “**diadem**” This is a rare NOUN (BDB 862) which is parallel to “crown” (BDB 742), used of the royal line in Samaria (cf. v. 1) and of Judah (62:3).

God’s appointed leaders, even of the Davidic family, failed. He Himself will be their king, as it should be (cf. I Sam. 8:7; 10:19).

▣ “**the remnant of His people**” See Special Topic at 1:9. This verse is still in the strophe referring to Israel. This may refer to those (few) of the northern tribes who will one day return to Jerusalem.

**28:6** This verse describes God’s new appointed Davidic leader (cf. 9:1-7; 11:1-5,10).

1. a spirit of justice (esp. 11:2)
2. a rallying of the defenders of the city (i.e., Jerusalem)

**28:7** I agree with JPSOA, TEV, and NJB that a paragraph break should occur between v. 6 and v. 7. Verses 7 and 8 describe the current drunken leadership of Judah (cf. v. 14; Jer. 13:12-14, seven of the VERBS are *Qal* PERFECTS, which denotes a settled state), similar to vv. 1-4, which describe the drunken leadership of Israel.

▣	
NASB, NRSV,	
<b>NJB</b>	“ <b>confused by wine</b> ”
NKJV, ASV,	
<b>LXX</b>	“ <b>shallowed up by wine</b> ”
TEV	“ <b>in confusion</b> ”
JB	“ <b>muddled with wine</b> ”
REB	“ <b>befuddled with wine</b> ”

The VERB in BDB 118 (*Niphal* PERFECT) means “shallow down” or “shallow up” (cf. 25:8; Gen. 41:7,24; Exod. 7:12; 15:12; Num. 16:30,32,34; 26:10; Deut. 11:6; Jer. 51:34).

However, NIDOTTE, vol. 1, pp. 666-668 and KB 135-136 list three possible roots.

1. KB 135 I, swallow, engulf
2. KB 136 II, announce, communicate
3. KB 136 III, *Niphal* confuse; *Piel* in 3:12; *Pual* in 9:16

**28:8** “**tables**” This term (BDB 1020) can refer to

1. the king’s table, cf. 21:5
2. governor’s table, cf. Neh. 5:17

3. private parties
4. sacrifices, cf. Exod. 25:33; Lev. 24:6; Num. 3:31; 4:7 (in tabernacle)

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:9-22**

<sup>9</sup>"To whom would He teach knowledge,  
And to whom would He interpret the message?  
Those *just* weaned from milk?  
Those *just* taken from the breast?

<sup>10</sup>For *He* says,  
'Order on order, order on order,  
Line on line, line on line,  
A little here, a little there.'"

<sup>11</sup>Indeed, He will speak to this people  
Through stammering lips and a foreign tongue,

<sup>12</sup>He who said to them, "Here is rest, give rest to the weary,"  
And, "Here is repose," but they would not listen.

<sup>13</sup>So the word of the LORD to them will be,  
"Order on order, order on order,  
Line on line, line on line,  
A little here, a little there,"  
That they may go and stumble backward, be broken, snared and taken captive.

<sup>14</sup>Therefore, hear the word of the LORD, O scoffers,  
Who rule this people who are in Jerusalem,

<sup>15</sup>Because you have said, "We have made a covenant with death,  
And with Sheol we have made a pact.  
The overwhelming scourge will not reach us when it passes by,  
For we have made falsehood our refuge and we have concealed ourselves with deception."

<sup>16</sup>Therefore thus says the Lord GOD,  
"Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone,  
A costly cornerstone *for* the foundation, firmly placed.  
He who believes *in it* will not be disturbed.

<sup>17</sup>I will make justice the measuring line  
And righteousness the level;  
Then hail will sweep away the refuge of lies  
And the waters will overflow the secret place.

<sup>18</sup>Your covenant with death will be canceled,  
And your pact with Sheol will not stand;  
When the overwhelming scourge passes through,  
Then you become its trampling *place*.

<sup>19</sup>As often as it passes through, it will seize you;  
For morning after morning it will pass through, *anytime* during the day or night,  
And it will be sheer terror to understand what it means."

<sup>20</sup>The bed is too short on which to stretch out,

**And the blanket is too small to wrap oneself in.**

**<sup>21</sup>For the LORD will rise up as *at* Mount Perazim,  
He will be stirred up as in the valley of Gibeon,  
To do His task, His unusual task,  
And to work His work, His extraordinary work.**

**<sup>22</sup>And now do not carry on as scoffers,  
Or your fetters will be made stronger;  
For I have heard from the Lord GOD of hosts  
Of decisive destruction on all the earth.**

**28:9-10** Isaiah's words (or YHWH's words through him) were attacked by (1) the religious leadership or (2) those he addressed in vv. 7-8 (cf. Jer. 26:9-15; Amos 7:12; Mic. 2:6-11).

**28:10,13** This is a very cryptic reference. It involved the repetition of צו (BDB 846, in Hos. 5:11 it means "command") and קו (BDB 876 II, in v. 17 it means "a measuring line"). The religious drunkards were accusing Isaiah's messages of being childish and difficult to understand (KB 1081 I #2). Verse 11 is God's reaction to their reaction to Isaiah's message.

**28:11-13** This is Isaiah's response to the religious elite and arrogant of his day in Jerusalem.

**28:11 "Through stammering lips and a foreign tongue"** This is God's response to their rejection of His prophet. In essence He says, "If you are having a hard time understanding his basic ABC's, wait until you hear the Assyrian language" (cf. v. 13; 33:19; Jer. 5:15). Paul quotes this verse in I Cor. 14:21 in his discussion of "speaking in tongues."

See my commentary on I Corinthians online at [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org).

**28:12 "Here is rest, give rest to the weary"** YHWH wanted His people to have "rest" (BDB 629) and peace (cf. 11:10; 30:15; 32:17,18). The VERB (BDB 628, KB 679) is a *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE. This refers to Isaiah's messages of hope and restoration, if only they would turn to YHWH, but they would not (v. 12b)!

Jesus gave a similar call to them in Matt. 11:28-29.

**28:13** YHWH's only message to them was Isaiah's message, which they rejected to their ruin.

1. stumble backward, BDB 505, KB 502, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 3:8; 59:14
2. be broken, BDB 990, KB 1402, *Niphal* PERFECT, cf. 8:15
3. be snared, BDB 430, KB 432, *Niphal* PERFECT, cf. 8:15
4. be taken captive, BDB 539, KB 530, *Niphal* PERFECT, cf. 8:15; 24:18

**28:14 "hear"** This VERB (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) was both a call to obedience and an introduction to judgment. They would not listen (cf. 28:12,14,22,23 [twice]; 29:18; 30:9,19,21,30; 32:3,9; 33:13,15,19; 34:1 [twice],11,13,16). What a recurrent theme—God tries to instruct, but they refuse to listen!

"Hear the word of the LORD" is the literary marker of a "judgment oracle."

▣ **"O scoffers"** This is a CONSTRUCT ("men," BDB 35 and "scorning" BDB 539). They are mentioned often in Proverbs (i.e., 1:22; 29:8). How surprising that this refers to the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem who should have known better and trusted more! Crisis reveals true leadership or lack of it.

**28:15 “We have made a covenant with death”** Isaiah sarcastically characterizes the thoughts of the leaders of Jerusalem. This refers to a treaty (i.e., “covenant,” BDB 136, see Special Topic at 1:19 and the rare term, “pact,” BDB 302, cf. v. 18) that Judah made with the Egyptians (cf. 30:1-7). It is a theological play on God’s word through Moses of providing His people with a choice of life or death in Deut. 30:15-20 (see notes from Deuteronomy online at [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org)). In this instance, the choice involved choosing protection from an earthly military source or trusting in God. They chose death.

▣ **“Sheol”** This refers to the holding place of the dead and is synonymous with the Greek term “Hades.” See Special Topic at 5:14.



NASB “overwhelming scourge”

NKJV, NRSV “overflowing scourge”

NJB “scourging flood”

JB “destructive whip”

LXX “the rushing storm”

REB “raging flood”

The first term is a PARTICIPLE (BDB 1009, KB 1474, *Qal* ACTIVE). It is the second term that presents options (NIDOTTE, vol. 4, pp. 64-65)

1.  $\eta\tau\psi$ , BDB 1009, “overflow,” cf. 8:8; 10:22 (i.e., an invading army)
2.  $\tau\psi$ , BDB 1002, “scourge,” “whip,” cf. I Kgs. 12:11,14

▣ **“passes by”** This VERB (BDB 716, KB 778) is either a *Qal* IMPERFECT (*qere*) or a *Qal* PERFECT (*kethiv*, cf. 26:20). The VERB means “to pass over,” “to pass through,” or “to pass by.” It is used thirty-four times in Isaiah in this literary unit (i.e., chapters 28-35, cf. 28:15,18,19 [twice]; 29:5; 31:9; 33:8,21; 34:10; 35:8).

▣ **“For we have made falsehood our refuge and we have concealed ourselves with deception”**

What a tragedy for God’s people: a self induced state of trusting in the arm of flesh!

1. falsehood, BDB 469, cf. v. 17 (common in Psalms and Proverbs)
2. deception, BDB 1005, cf. 9:15; 32:7; 44:20; 57:4; 59:3,13 (common in Psalms and Proverbs, used often in Jeremiah)

The VERB form of “refuge” (BDB 340) denotes placing confidence and trust in something or someone. It is often used of taking refuge in YHWH.

1. YHWH as the rock, Deut. 32:37; Ps. 18:2
2. YHWH as a mother bird, Ruth 2:12; Ps. 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 91:4
3. YHWH as shield, II Sam. 22:3,31; Ps. 18:30; 144:2; Pro. 30:5
4. in Him, Ps. 2:12; 5:11; 7:1; 11:1; 16:1; 25:20; 31:1,19; 34:8,22; 37:40; 57:1; 64:10; 71:1; 118:8,9; 141:8; Isa. 57:13; Nah. 1:7
5. YHWH’s right hand, Ps. 7:7
6. Zion, Isa. 14:32
7. YHWH’s name, Zeph. 3:12

**28:16** This verse is a shocking change of mode, a theological reversal of hope amidst judgment. YHWH’s redemptive universal plan reveals itself again. Messiah will come! It is only one verse, but what a verse!

This is a series of Messianic titles using “construction” metaphors.

1. The term “stone” (BDB 6) is often used of God; however, the term “cornerstone” (BDB 819) has a unique connection with the Messiah (cf. Ps. 118:22; Matt. 21:42, 44; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; Rom. 9:33; 10:11; Eph. 2:20; I Pet. 2:6-8).
2. The term “tested” (BDB 103) is an Egyptian loan word for a fine grain stone suitable for carving. This seems to mean that God is going to inscribe the cornerstone with the phrase found in 16d. The key to this thought is the term “believes” (cf. Isa. 30:15 for a similar emphasis on “trust”).
3. The term “foundation” (BDB 414) is found only here and II Chr. 8:16, where it refers to Solomon’s laying the foundation of the temple. Notice that this foundation is “firmly placed” (NASB margin, “well-laid”). The Hebrew has another doubling of a word. This is where the description “firmly” or “well-laid” comes from.

See Special Topics: Cornerstone at 8:14-15 and Special Topic: Believe, Trust, Faith, and Faithfulness in the OT at 22:33.

**28:17 “justice”** See Special Topic: Judge, Judgment, Justice at 3:1.

▣ **“measuring-line. . .level”** These were ways of measuring the straightness (cf. II Kgs. 21:13) of the horizontal (BDB 876 II) and vertical (BDB 1054).

▣ **“righteousness”** See Special Topic: Righteousness at 1:4.

▣ Lines c and d are again plays on water (cf. 27:12). The “refuge of lies” and “the secret *place*” may refer to the practice of idolatry in the temple itself (cf. Ezekiel 8 and Deut. 27:15). YHWH does not act or speak in a secret, dark place, but openly in the light (cf. 45:19; 48:16).

#### **28:18**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>“canceled”</b>
<b>NKJV, NRSV,</b>	
<b>JB</b>	<b>“annulled”</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>“abolished”</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>“broken”</b>
<b>LXX, Peshitta,</b>	
<b>REB</b>	<b>“will not stand”</b>

This Hebrew VERB (BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERFECT) means “to arise,” “to stand,” or “to stand up.” It is metaphorical for that which will not happen (cf. 7:7; 8:10; 28:18; Pro. 15:22). God’s will and plan supercede human plans (cf. 14:24-27; 40:8; 46:10; Ps. 35:10-11; Pro. 19:21; Jer. 44:28)!

**28:19** This verse relates to “the overwhelming scourge” of v. 18. It (the invader, cf. II Kgs. 24:2) will come again and again and bring terror and confusion. They will not be able to understand why (in contrast to 50:4).

**28:20** This proverb reflects the inadequacy of human plans.

**28:21 “Mount Perazim. . .the valley of Gibeon”** These both refer to God’s aid to David in his battle against the Philistines; however, in the current situation God is not on Judah’s side, but on Assyria’s (cf. II Sam. 5:17-21; I Chr. 14:13-17).



▣ **“To do His task, His unusual task,**

**And to do His work, His extraordinary work”** Many people refer this unusual task to God’s judgment of His own people; however, I think, because of the context, the unusual task is God’s judgment, but through the use of the godless Assyrian Empire (cf. Habakkuk, NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 775).

**28:22**

**NASB** “of decisive destruction”

**NKJV** “a destruction determined”

**NRSV** “a decree of destruction”

**TEV** “decision to destroy”

**NJB** “irrevocably decided”

**REB** “destruction decreed”

The VERB (BDB 358, KB 356, *Qal* PERFECT) in the *Qal* stem denotes “to cut,” “decree,” or “to determine.”

1. human life span, Job 14:5
2. future events, Isa. 10:22-23; Dan. 9:26-27

History is not undirected; it is teleological. It has a divine plan and purpose (i.e., the redemption of fallen humanity, cf. Gen. 3:15). Notice the statements of

1. Luke 22:22
2. Acts 2:23
3. Acts 3:18
4. Acts 4:28
5. Acts 13:29

▣ **“on all the earth”** The universal judgment seen in chapters 24-27 is repeated, but thank God, there will also be a universal redemption (i.e., v. 16)!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:23-29**

<sup>23</sup>**Give ear and hear my voice,**

**Listen and hear my words.**

<sup>24</sup>**Does the farmer plow continually to plant seed?**

**Does he *continually* turn and harrow the ground?**

<sup>25</sup>**Does he not level its surface**

**And sow dill and scatter cummin**

**And plant wheat in rows,**

**Barley in its place and rye within its area?**

<sup>26</sup>**For his God instructs and teaches him properly.**

<sup>27</sup>**For dill is not threshed with a threshing sledge,**

**Nor is the cartwheel driven over cummin;**

**But dill is beaten out with a rod, and cummin with a club.**

<sup>28</sup>***Grain* for bread is crushed,**

**Indeed, he does not continue to thresh it forever.**

**Because the wheel of *his* cart and his horses *eventually* damage it,**

**He does not thresh it longer.**

<sup>29</sup>**This also comes from the LORD of hosts,**

***Who* has made *His* counsel wonderful and *His* wisdom great.**

**28:23-29** This is a parable using agricultural metaphors on how to sow and reap certain crops. This speaks of the fact that God knows what He is doing. He is working with His people in appropriate purposeful ways. He has an eternal redemptive plan that is working itself out in human history!

**28:23** This verse has a series of IMPERATIVES from God (cf. v. 29) through His prophet to His people.

1. give ear, BDB 24, KB 27, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
2. hear my voice, BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. vv. 12,14,22
3. listen, BDB 904, KB 1151, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
4. hear my words, same as #2

But they would not; they could not (cf. 6:9-10)!

**28:28** “**he does not continue to thresh it forever**” This is the INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and IMPERFECT VERB of the same root (BDB 190, KB 218) used for intensity. YHWH administers just the right amount of judgment, not too much, not too little!

**29:29** Hope, help, and happiness come in hearing and honoring God’s Word!

# ISAIAH 29

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Jerusalem Is Warned	Woe To Jerusalem	Judah's Eventual Restoration	The Fate of Jerusalem	On Jerusalem
29:1-4 (1-4)	29:1-4 (1-4)	29:1-8 (1-4)	29:1-4	29:1-12 (1-4)
29:5-8 (5-8)	29:5-8 (5-8)	(5-8)	29:5-8	(5-8)
	The Blindness of Disobedience	Spiritual Insensibility	Disregarded Warnings	
29:9-12 (9-10)	29:9-10 (9-10)	29:9-10 (9-10)	29:9-12	(9-10)
	29:11-12	29:11-12		Prophecy
29:13-14 (13-14)	29:13-14 (13-14)	29:13-21 (13-14)	29:13-14	29:13-14 (13-14)
			Hope for the Future	The Triumph of Light
29:15-16 (15-16)	29:15-16 (15-16)	(15-16)	29:15-16	29:15-24 (15-24)
Blessing After Discipline	Future Recovery of Wisdom			
29:17-21 (17-21)	29:17-21 (17-21)	(17-21)	29:17	
			29:18-21	
29:22-24 (22-24)	29:22-24 (22b-24)	29:22-24 (22b-24)	29:22-24	

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The Jewish Study Bible (pp. 839-840) outlines the chapter as three separate and independent poems.
1. vv. 1-8 (starts with “woe”)
  2. vv. 9-12
  3. vv. 15-24 (starts with “woe”)
- B. YHWH’s surprising reversal of His people’s problems is a recurrent theme.
1. 3:25-5:6
  2. 8:6-8
  3. 8:22-9:1
- C. The historical setting of this chapter seems to be Sennacherib’s invasion of Judah in 701 B.C. Jerusalem is spared (Isaiah’s theology), but Judah is devastated.
1. Isaiah 36-39
  2. II Kings 18-19
  3. II Chronicles 32

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 29:1-4

<sup>1</sup>Woe, O Ariel, Ariel the city *where* David *once* camped!

Add year to year, observe *your* feasts on schedule.

<sup>2</sup>I will bring distress to Ariel,

And she will be *a city of* lamenting and mourning;

And she will be like an Ariel to me.

<sup>3</sup>I will camp against you encircling *you*,

And I will set siegeworks against you,

And I will raise up battle towers against you.

<sup>4</sup>Then you will be brought low;

From the earth you will speak,

And from the dust *where* you are prostrate

Your words *will come*.

Your voice will also be like that of a spirit from the ground,

And your speech will whisper from the dust.

**29:1 “Woe”** See note at 5:8.

▣ **“Ariel”** (v. 1,2,7) This term can mean

1. heros, cf. II Sam. 23:20; I Chr. 11:22 (BDB72 I, #3)
2. “lion of God” (BDB 72 I #1)
3. “hearth of God” (BDB 72 II)

Because it is used in the sense of altar-hearth in v. 2, which follows Ezek. 43:15-16, I believe this refers to the hearth of God, which can be seen clearly in 31:9. Because of v. 7, it is obvious that this is an

illusion to Jerusalem. The first strophe (i.e., 29:1-4) deals with the capital of Judah, Jerusalem, as 28:1-4 dealt with the capital of the Northern Ten Tribes, Samaria.

▣ **“Add year to year, observe *your* feasts on schedule”** This second line of v. 1 reinforces the view that vv. 1-4 refer to Jerusalem, the place of Israel’s feasts (cf. Exodus 23; Deuteronomy 16).

1. add, BDB 414, KB 418, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. observe, BDB 668, KB 722, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

**29:2-3** These verses describe what YHWH will do to His own chosen city (i.e., Jerusalem, the place where He caused His name to dwell, cf. Deut. 12:5,11,21; 14:23,24; 16:2,6,11; 26:2).

1. I will bring distress, BDB 847, KB 1014, *Hiphil* PERFECT, cf. v. 7; 51:13 (twice); Deut. 28:53; 55:57
2. she will be like
  - a. lamenting, BDB 58, cf. 21:2; 35:10; 51:11
  - b. mourning, BDB 58 doubling so characteristic of Isaiah, also note Lam. 2:5
  - c. a burned-out hearth, BDB 72, cf. vv. 1,2,7
3. I will camp against you, BDB 333, KB 332, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Luke 19:43,44
4. I will set up siege works, BDB 848 II; KB 1015, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 21:2
5. I will raise up battle towers, BDB 877, KB 1086, *Hiphil* PERFECT, cf. 23:13

**29:4** This verse has a series of metaphors for death.

1. you shall be brought low, BDB 1050, KB 1631, *Qal* PERFECT
2. from the earth you shall speak, BDB 180, KB 210, *Piel* IMPERFECT
3. from the dust where you are prostrate, BDB 1005, KB 1458, *Niphal* IMPERFECT
4. your voice shall be like that of a spirit from the ground, BDB 224, KB 283, *Qal* PERFECT
5. your speech shall whisper from the dust, BDB 861, KB 1050, *Pilpel* IMPERFECT

This context is not dealing with necromancy, as Deut. 18:9-12,14 is, but metaphorical language to describe Jerusalem, on the brink of total destruction, crying out to her God in a weak voice while lying on the ground just before death.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 29:5-8**

**<sup>5</sup>But the multitude of your enemies will become like fine dust,  
And the multitude of the ruthless ones like the chaff which blows away;  
And it will happen instantly, suddenly.**

**<sup>6</sup>From the LORD of hosts you will be punished with thunder and earthquake and loud noise,  
With whirlwind and tempest and the flame of a consuming fire.**

**<sup>7</sup>And the multitude of all the nations who wage war against Ariel,  
Even all who wage war against her and her stronghold, and who distress her,  
Will be like a dream, a vision of the night.**

**<sup>8</sup>It will be as when a hungry man dreams—  
And behold, he is eating;  
But when he awakens, his hunger is not satisfied,  
Or as when a thirsty man dreams—  
And behold, he is drinking,  
But when he awakens, behold, he is faint  
And his thirst is not quenched.**

**Thus the multitude of all the nations will be  
Who wage war against Mount Zion.**

**29:5-6** What a radical reversal these two verses are in the context. God has promised to judge Jerusalem and now promises to save Jerusalem from the enemy siege of Isaiah 36-37. In v. 6, there is a use of a storm metaphor to describe God. This is a recurrent theme throughout the Prophets. An even stronger use of this metaphor can be found in 30:27-33.

Notice what YHWH (i.e., LORD of hosts, v. 6) will do to the invaders.

1. shall become like fine dust
2. shall become like chaff which blows away
3. shall happen instantly, suddenly (both BDB 837, פתע, cf. 30:13 and פתאם, cf. 47:11; 48:3)
4. will be punished (lit. “visited with,” BDB 823, KB 955, *Niphal* IMPERFECT) with thunder (BDB 947)
5. will be punished with earthquakes (BDB 950)
6. will be punished with loud noise (BDB 876, this is used in 40:3 as a prophetic message which may parallel I Thess. 4:16)
7. will be punished with whirlwind (BDB 693)
8. will be punished with tempest (BDB 704)
9. will be punished with the flame of consuming fire (BDB 529 CONSTRUCT BDB 77; VERBAL, BDB 37, KB 46, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE)

These describe the coming/visitation of YHWH for judgment (cf. 28:2). These types of violent metaphors were the beginning source of apocalyptic language.

**29:5**

**NASB, NJB,**

**REB**

**“enemies”**

**NKJV, NRSV**

**“foes”**

**NASB, NRSV (footnote)**

**“strangers”**

**TEV**

**“foreigners”**

**Peshitta**

**“oppressors”**

The MT has “of your strangers” (אֲרֵיךְ, BDB 266, KB 267, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE), but there is a possibility of an “R” (ר) - “D” (ד) confusion. The Hebrew of “of your enemies” (אֲדֵיךְ) is from the Targums.

**29:7-8** This is the use of the metaphor of a nightmare (lit. “dream,” BDB 321; “a vision of the night,” BDB 302 CONSTRUCT 538) to describe the results of God’s action both in Judah and to Assyria. In v. 7, Assyria’s siege will be like a nightmare that passes Judah, but in v. 8 the nightmare will occur to the army of Assyria (cf. II Kgs. 19:35-37; II Chronicles 32; Isaiah 36-37).

**29:7**

**NASB, NRSV**

**“her stronghold”**

**NKJV**

**“her fortress”**

**NJB**

**“besieging”**

**REB**

**“siege-works”**

The difference between these two options is the “R” and “D” confusion.

1. stronghold, BDB 845 II, ומצודתה
2. siege, BDB 849, ומצרתה

The UBS Hebrew Text Project gives #1 a “C” rating (considerable doubt).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 29:9-12**

**<sup>9</sup>Be delayed and wait,  
Blind yourselves and be blind;  
They become drunk, but not with wine,  
They stagger, but not with strong drink.**

**<sup>10</sup>For the LORD has poured over you a spirit of deep sleep,  
He has shut your eyes, the prophets;  
And He has covered your heads, the seers.**

**<sup>11</sup>The entire vision will be to you like the words of a sealed book, which when they give it to the one who is literate, saying, "Please read this," he will say, "I cannot, for it is sealed." <sup>12</sup>Then the book will be given to the one who is illiterate, saying, "Please read this." And he will say, "I cannot read."**

**29:9 “Be delayed and wait,**

**Blind yourselves and be blind”** The first two poetic lines of this verse have four IMPERATIVES.

1. be delayed, BDB 554, KB 552, *Hithpalpel* IMPERATIVE, MASCULINE PLURAL
2. wait, BDB 1069, KB 1744, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, MASCULINE PLURAL; lit. “be astounded,”  
cf. Hab. 1:5  
NASB “wait”  
NKJV “wonder”  
NRSV “be in a stupor”  
NJB “stunned”  
LXX, Peshitta “be amazed”
3. blind yourselves, BDB 1044 I, KB 1612, *Hithpalpel* IMPERATIVE, MASCULINE PLURAL
4. be blind, BDB 1044, KB 1612, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, MASCULINE PLURAL, cf. 6:9-10; Micah 3:6-7

It is possible that #3 and #4 are from the Hebrew root “to delight in” (BDB 1044 II), if so then the phrase is sarcasm.

Notice the balance between human freedom, v. 9 and divine sovereignty, v. 10. Both are true! See Special Topic at 1:3.

▣ **“They became drunk”** This is another use of the term drunkenness (BDB 1016, KB 1500, *Qal* PERFECT) to describe the apostasy of the political and religious leaders of God’s people (cf. 28:1-4,7-8).

**29:10-12** Notice YHWH’s activities in removing His message from His people (cf. 6:9-10; Mic. 3:6-7).

1. the LORD has poured on you (BDB 650, KB 703, *Qal* PERFECT) a spirit of deep sleep (BDB 924 CONSTRUCT BDB 922)
2. He has shut (BDB 783, KB 868, *Piel* IMPERFECT) the eyes of your prophets
3. He has covered (BDB 491, KB 487, *Piel* PERFECT, TEV “blindfolded”) both the civic and religious leadership’s eyes (cf. vv. 11-12; 6:9-10; 8:16)

Verse 10 is quoted by Paul in his discussion of Israel’s failure to believe/trust in Jesus as Israel’s Messiah in Rom. 11:8.

**29:11 “sealed”** This VERBAL (BDB 367, KB 364, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE) is also used by Isaiah in 8:16, where it refers to a revelatory scroll written by the prophet at God’s direction. The “sealing” referred to a way of

1. indicating ownership
2. assuring security

This was accomplished by

1. blob of wax (or clay) on the rolled up edge with a signet ring of the sender impressed in it
2. two blobs of wax (or clay) with a string between them and both impressed with the sender's ring or symbol

As Isaiah was told to seal up the message in 8:16, so too, Daniel in Dan. 12:4. However, in 29:11 it is simply a metaphor for the ceasing of God's revelation.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 29:13-14**

**<sup>13</sup>Then the Lord said,  
"Because this people draw near with their words  
And honor Me with their lip service,  
But they remove their hearts far from Me,  
And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned *by rote*,  
<sup>14</sup>Therefore behold, I will once again deal marvelously with this people, wondrously marvelous;  
And the wisdom of their wise men will perish,  
And the discernment of their discerning men will be concealed."**

**29:13 "draw near with their words"** This term (BDB 620, KB 670, *Niphal* PERFECT) speaks of public acts of worship in the temple. It was originally used of priests (i.e., Exod. 19:22).

▣ **"their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote"** This is a significant theological truth which shows that ritual and liturgy, without personal relationship, accompanied by lifestyle, love, and morality, are an abomination to God (cf. 1:10-15; 58:1-5; Jeremiah 7; Amos 5:21-24; Micah 6:6-8; Matt. 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23; Col. 2:16-23; II Tim. 3:5). The ritual was not wrong, it was the person's attitude that attempted to manipulate God.

The above line of poetry is parallel to the next, "honor Me with their lip service" (cf. Jer. 12:2). They say one thing, but live another (cf. Matt. 15:8-9; Mark 7:6-7, where "words" and "lip" are described as "neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men," illustrated in Mark 7:3,5,9,13).

**29:14 "I will once again deal marvelously. . .wondrously marvelous"** In English these phrases sound good, but they are the *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT; the *Hiphil* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE; and the NOUN all of the same root (BDB 810), which denotes

1. extraordinary plagues in Exod. 3:20; Deut. 28:59
2. extraordinary counsel in 9:6; 28:29
3. wonderful acts in Exod. 34:10; I Chr. 16:9,12,24; Isa. 25:1

Context must determine if it is positive or negative. Here it is negative of YHWH's judgment on His own people. This judgment will be that their wise counselors and religious leaders will fail to do their job (cf. vv. 9-12).

Paul quotes this verse in I Cor. 1:19 in his discussion of the foolishness of human wisdom, especially as it deals with understanding why the Messiah had to suffer and die (i.e., the gospel).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 29:15-16**

**<sup>15</sup>Woe to those who deeply hide their plans from the LORD,  
And whose deeds are *done* in a dark place,  
And they say, "Who sees us?" or "Who knows us?"  
<sup>16</sup>You turn *things* around!**



**Shall the potter be considered as equal with the clay,  
That what is made would say to its maker, "He did not make me";  
Or what is formed say to him who formed it, "He has no understanding"?**

**29:15 “hide their plans from the LORD”** This refers to Judah’s leadership’s plan for a political alliance with Egypt (cf. 28:7-22; 30:1-5; 31:1-3) to protect them from Assyria. They are trusting in Egypt, not YHWH!

▣ **“Who sees us?” or “Who knows us”** This is basically a denial of God’s personal presence. Verse 16 expresses the logic and foolishness of these statements.

**29:16 “the potter”** God as potter is a common biblical metaphor (cf. Isa. 45:9; 64:8; Jer. 18:4ff; Job 10:9). It possibly developed from the initial creation of humanity in Gen. 2:7. Paul alludes to this text in Rom. 9:20. Romans 9 is the affirmation of the complete and total sovereignty of God!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 29:17-21**

<sup>17</sup>**Is it not yet just a little while  
Before Lebanon will be turned into a fertile field,  
And the fertile field will be considered as a forest?**

<sup>18</sup>**On that day the deaf will hear words of a book,  
And out of *their* gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see.**

<sup>19</sup>**The afflicted also will increase their gladness in the LORD,  
And the needy of mankind will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.**

<sup>20</sup>**For the ruthless will come to an end and the scorner will be finished,  
Indeed all who are intent on doing evil will be cut off;**

<sup>21</sup>**Who cause a person to be indicted by a word,  
And ensnare him who adjudicates at the gate,  
And defraud the one in the right with meaningless arguments.**

**29:17-21** This describes the new Messianic day that is coming.

1. it is coming soon, v. 17a (cf. 10:24-25)
2. Lebanon will become very fertile, v. 17b,c, cf. 32:15; 35:1-2 (the NASB Study Bible, p. 996, links this to Isa. 10:34 and asserts that Lebanon might be a way of referring to Assyria). Sennacherib bragged of his exploitation of Lebanon’s forest (cf. 37:24; II Kgs. 19:23).
3. the deaf shall hear, v. 18a, cf. 32:3; 35:5
4. the blind shall see, v. 18b, cf. 32:3; 35:5
5. the afflicted shall be glad in the LORD, v. 19a, cf. 11:4; 61:1
6. the needy shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel, v. 19b, cf. 3:14-15; 11:4; 14:30,32
7. the ruthless will come to an end, v. 20a
8. the scorner will be finished, v. 20b, cf. 28:14
9. those intent on doing evil will be cut off, v. 20b
10. justice will be restored at the gate, v. 21, cf. 32:7

This is parallel theologically to the wonderful description of YHWH’s character in 25:4.

Be sure to note that #3 and #4 are primarily metaphorical for receiving and understanding YHWH’s revelation (cf. Deut. 29:4; Isa. 5:12,13; 6:9; 30:9).

**29:19 “Holy”** See Special Topic at 6:3.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 29:22-24**

**<sup>22</sup>Therefore thus says the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob:**

**"Jacob shall not now be ashamed, nor shall his face now turn pale;**

**<sup>23</sup>But when he sees his children, the work of My hands, in his midst,**

**They will sanctify My name;**

**Indeed, they will sanctify the Holy One of Jacob**

**And will stand in awe of the God of Israel.**

**<sup>24</sup>Those who err in mind will know the truth,**

**And those who criticize will accept instruction.**

**29:22-24** As vv. 5-8 break into the context of judgment on Jerusalem with a word of hope, so too, vv. 22-24. This rapid contrast between judgment oracles and promise oracles is characteristic of the Prophets. Judgment is always for the purpose of restoration!

Yes, God will judge His people when they sin and break His covenant, but He has a greater purpose for them (i.e., an eternal redemptive plan for all humanity).

Notice the different phrases and titles that denote the covenant Deity.

1. the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, v. 22
2. his children, the work of My hands, v. 23
3. My name. . .the Holy One of Jacob, v. 23
4. the God of Israel, v. 23, cf. 1:4

**29:22** The chosen family of Abraham developed into the tribes of Jacob's sons. YHWH promises a day when, by His power and covenant presence, they

1. shall not be ashamed, BDB 101, KB 116, *Qal* IMPERFECT, used often in the Psalms, Isaiah, and Jeremiah
2. nor shall his face grow pale, BDB 301, KB 299, *Qal* IMPERFECT, the VERB is found only here

Both of these VERBS refer to Hebrew idioms of despair and guilt over disobedient behavior. The sinner feels the displeasure of God!

▣ **“who redeemed Abraham”** This VERB (BDB 804, KB 911, *Qal* PERFECT, see Special Topic following) is here used of Abraham. This could mean

1. redeemed from a polytheistic family (cf. Genesis 11)
2. uniquely chosen as God's covenant partner (i.e., Genesis 12, 15, 17)
3. a specific act of deliverance
  - a. from Pharaoh (cf. Gen. 12:10-20)
  - b. from Abimelech (cf. Genesis 20)

YHWH is called “the Redeemer of Israel” (cf. 41:14; 43:14; 48:17; 49:7,26; 54:5,8). That concept of YHWH as the special redeemer of a chosen family may be the theological thrust of vv. 22-23.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: RANSOM/REDEEM

### I. OLD TESTAMENT

- A. There are primarily two Hebrew legal terms which convey this concept.
1. *Gaal* (BDB 145, I), which basically means “to free by means of a price paid.” A form of the term *go’el* adds to the concept a personal intermediary, usually a family member (i.e., kinsman redeemer). This cultural aspect of the right to buy back objects, animals, land (cf. Leviticus 25,27), or relatives (cf. Ruth 4:15; Isa. 29:22) is transferred theologically to YHWH’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt (cf. Exod. 6:6; 15:13; Ps. 74:2; 77:15; Jer. 31:11). He becomes “the redeemer” (cf. Job 19:25; Ps. 19:14; 78:35; Pro. 23:1; Isa. 41:14; 43:14; 44:6,24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7,26; 54:5,8; 59:20; 60:16; 63:16; Jer. 50:34).
  2. *Padah* (BDB 804), which basically means “to deliver” or “to rescue”
    - a. the redemption of the firstborn (Exod. 13:13,14 and Num. 18:15-17)
    - b. physical redemption is contrasted with spiritual redemption (Ps. 49:7,8,15)
    - c. YHWH will redeem Israel from their sin and rebellion (Ps. 130:7-8)
- B. The theological concept involves several related items.
1. There is a need, a bondage, a forfeiting, an imprisonment.
    - a. physical
    - b. social
    - c. spiritual (cf. Ps. 130:8)
  2. A price must be paid for freedom, release, and restoration.
    - a. of the nation of Israel (cf. Deut. 7:8)
    - b. of the individual (cf. Job 19:25-27; 33:28)
  3. Someone must act as intermediary and benefactor. In *gaal* this one is usually a family member or near kin (i.e., *go’el*, BDB 145).
  4. YHWH often describes Himself in familial terms.
    - a. father
    - b. husband
    - c. near kin

Redemption was secured through YHWH’s personal agency; a price was paid, and redemption was achieved!

### II. NEW TESTAMENT

- A. There are several terms used to convey the theological concept.
1. *Agorazō* (cf. I Cor. 6:20; 7:23; II Pet. 2:1; Rev. 5:9; 14:34). This is a commercial term which reflects a price paid for something. We are blood-bought people who do not control our own lives. We belong to Christ.
  2. *Exagorazō* (cf. Gal. 3:13; 4:5; Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5). This is also a commercial term. It reflects Jesus’ substitutionary death on our behalf. Jesus bore the “curse” of a performance-based law (i.e., Mosaic Law), which sinful humans could not accomplish. He bore the curse (cf. Deut. 21:23) for us all! In Jesus, God’s justice and love merge into full forgiveness, acceptance, and access!
  3. *Luō*, “to set free”
    - a. *Lutron*, “a price paid” (cf. Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45). These are powerful words from Jesus’ own mouth concerning the purpose of His coming, to be the Savior of the world by paying a sin-debt He did not owe (cf. John 1:29).

- b. *Lutroō*, “to release”
  - (1) to redeem Israel (Luke 24:21)
  - (2) to give Himself to redeem and purify a people (Titus 2:14)
  - (3) to be a sinless substitute (I Pet. 1:18-19)
- c. *Lutrōsis*, “redemption,” “deliverance,” or “liberation”
  - (1) Zacharias’ prophecy about Jesus, Luke 1:68
  - (2) Anna’s praise to God for Jesus, Luke 2:38
  - (3) Jesus’ better, once-offered sacrifice, Heb. 9:12
- 4. *Apolytrōsis*
  - a. redemption at the Second Coming (cf. Acts 3:19-21)
    - (1) Luke 21:28
    - (2) Romans 8:23
    - (3) Ephesians 1:14; 4:30
    - (4) Hebrews 9:15
  - b. redemption in Christ’s death
    - (1) Romans 3:24
    - (2) I Corinthians 1:30
    - (3) Ephesians 1:7
    - (4) Colossians 1:14
- 5. *Antilytron* (cf. I Tim. 2:6). This is a crucial text (as is Titus 2:14) which links release to Jesus’ substitutionary death on the cross. He is the one and only acceptable sacrifice, the one who dies for “all” (cf. John 1:29; 3:16-17; 4:42; I Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; II Pet. 3:9; I John 2:2; 4:14).
- B. The theological concept in the NT.
  - 1. Mankind is enslaved to sin (cf. John 8:34; Rom. 3:10-18; 6:23).
  - 2. Mankind’s bondage to sin has been revealed by the OT Mosaic Law (cf. Galatians 3) and Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matthew 5-7). Human performance has become a death sentence (cf. Col. 2:14).
  - 3. Jesus, the sinless lamb of God, has come and died in our place (cf. John 1:29; II Cor. 5:21). We have been purchased from sin so that we might serve God (cf. Romans 6).
  - 4. By implication both YHWH and Jesus are “near kin” who act on our behalf. This continues the familial metaphors (i.e., father, husband, son, brother, near kin).
  - 5. Redemption was not a price paid to Satan (i.e., Medieval theology), but the reconciliation of God’s word and God’s justice with God’s love and full provision in Christ. At the cross peace was restored, human rebellion was forgiven, the image of God in mankind is now fully functional again in intimate fellowship!
  - 6. There is still a future aspect of redemption (cf. Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:14; 4:30), which involves our resurrection bodies and personal intimacy with the Triune God.

**29:24** This verse is the opposite of vv. 9-12,14. Revelation and understanding shall return to God’s people through His called leadership, both civil and religious! This is a lifting of the blindness and deafness of 6:9-10!!



**NASB** “mind”

**NKJV, NRSV,**

**LXX, Peshitta** “spirit”

The Hebrew word is *ruah* (BDB 924), used in the sense of mental activity (cf. Exod. 28:3; Deut. 34:9; II Chr. 28:12; Job 20:3; Ezek. 20:32). Remember, context, context, context determines word meaning!



# ISAIAH 30

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Judah Warned Against Egyptian Alliance	Futile Confidence in Egypt	Concerning the Embassy Sent to Egypt	A Useless Treaty with Egypt	Against the Embassy to Egypt
30:1-5 (1-5)	30:1-5 (1-5)	30:1-7 (1-5)	30:1-5	30:1-5 (1-5)
				Another Prophecy Against An Embassy
30:6-17 (6-11)	30:6-7 (6-7)	(6-7)	30:6-7	30:6-7
	A Rebellious People	Judah's Connivance with Egypt	The Disobedient People	Testament
	30:8-11 (8-11)	30:8-17 (8-14)	30:8-11	30:8-17 (8-11)
(12b-14)	30:12-17 (12b-14)		30:12-14	(12-14)
(15b-17)	(15b-17)	(15-17)	30:15-18	(15-17)
God is Gracious and Just	God Will Be Gracious	Hope for the Afflicted		God Will Forgive
30:18 (18)	30:18-22 (18)	30:18 (18)	God Will Bless His People	30:18 (18)
30:19-22	(19-22)	30:19-22	30:19-26	30:19-26 (19-26)
30:23-33 (27-33)	30:23-26 (23-26)	30:23-26		
	Judgment on Assyria	Oracle Against Assyria	God Will Punish Assyria	Against Assyria
	30:27-33 (27-28)	30:27-28 (27-28)	30:27-29	30:27-33 (27-33)
	(29-33)	30:29-33		
			30:30-33	

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph

2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This context refers to the many revolts against Assyria after the death of Sargon II in 705 B.C. These revolts by numerous vassal states were put down by the new King Sennacherib.
- B. The Egypt that Hezekiah sought a political/military alliance with was the Twenty-fifth Dynasty. It was led by the Cushite/Nubian king, Shabaka, who aggressively tried to rally all the small nations, from the head waters of the Euphrates to Egypt's borders, against Assyria.
- C. There are six woe oracles in this literary unit (i.e., chapters 28-33).
  1. woe to the northern and southern tribes of Israel, chapter 28
  2. woe to Jerusalem, 29:1-14
  3. woe to those who seek help in political alliances and not in YHWH, 29:15-24
  4. woe to those seeking help from Egypt, chapter 30
  5. woe to those seeking help from Egypt, chapters 31-32
  6. woe to Assyria, chapter 33

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 30:1-5

<sup>1</sup>"Woe to the rebellious children," declares the LORD,

"Who execute a plan, but not Mine,  
And make an alliance, but not of My Spirit,  
In order to add sin to sin;

<sup>2</sup>Who proceed down to Egypt  
Without consulting Me,

To take refuge in the safety of Pharaoh  
And to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt!

<sup>3</sup>Therefore the safety of Pharaoh will be your shame  
And the shelter in the shadow of Egypt, your humiliation.

<sup>4</sup>For their princes are at Zoan  
And their ambassadors arrive at Hanes.

<sup>5</sup>Everyone will be ashamed because of a people who cannot profit them,  
*Who are not for help or profit, but for shame and also for reproach."*

**30:1 "Woe"** See note at 18:1.



▣ **“rebellious children”** This title implies two truths.

1. they are “children” (i.e., descendants of Abraham, heir of the promises, cf Rom. 9:4-5)
2. they act “rebelliously” (BDB 710, KB 770, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, cf. 1:23, where it is translated “rebels,” also note 65:2. The basic meaning of the root is “stubborn” (cf. Hos. 4:16). In Ps. 78:8 this word and a synonym (BDB 598) are parallel (cf. Deut. 1:26,43; 9:7,23,24; 21:18,20; 31:27). This attitude has characterized God’s people from ancient times. It is part of the curse of the Fall!

Notice that Isaiah makes very specific what they have done to be titled “rebellious children.”

1. they have devised their own plan to protect themselves against Assyria (cf. 29:15)
2. they made a political alliance (see note below) with Egypt (cf. 20:5; 31:3; 36:9), but ignored YHWH’s Spirit (His presence, promises, and protection, cf. 28:14-22; 29:15-16)

▣

NASB, NRSV	“make an alliance”
NASB margin	“pour out a drink offering”
NKJV	“devise plans”
TEV	“sign treaties”
NJB	“make alliances”
REB	“weave schemes”
LXX	“make agreement”
Peshitta	“offer wine offerings”

This Hebrew root has several meanings.

1.  $\text{שָׁפַךְ}$ , VERB, BDB 650 I in *Qal* stem
  - a. pour out, metaphorically, Isa. 29:10
  - b. pour out, literally, Isa. 30:1; Hos. 9:4
  - c. cast metal idols, Isa. 40:19; 44:10
2.  $\text{שָׁפַךְ}$ , VERB, BDB 651 II means “weave,” Isa. 25:7, REB

Although a libation (Deut. 32:38) was not part of known alliance procedures, it may have been because of the religious nature of ancient agreements (cf. Isa. 57:6).

**30:2 “refuge. . .shelter in the shadow of”** These reflect two terms (BDB 731, KB 797 and BDB 340, KB 337, both *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTS) usually used of YHWH, but here they are used to describe Egypt.

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: SHADOW AS METAPHOR FOR PROTECTION AND CARE**

The idiom of “shadow” was common in the ANE. Note the examples in the Bible.

1. idiom of protection, Isa. 16:3; 30:2-3; Lam. 4:20
2. idiom of “shadow of the hand,” Ps. 121:5; Isa. 49:2; 51:16
3. idiom of “shadow of the roof,” Gen. 19:8
4. idiom of “shadow of God’s special cloud,” cf. Exod. 13:21-22; 14:19,20,24; Isa. 4:6; 25:4-5; 32:1-2
5. idiom of “shadow of the wing,” Ps. 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:1,4 (similar metaphors in Deut. 32:10-11; Ruth 2:12; Isa. 31:5; Matt. 23:37; Luke 13:34)
6. idiom of “shadow of a tree,” Jdgs. 9:15; Ezek. 17:23; 31:6,17; Dan. 4:12; Hosea 14:7

▣ **“Without consulting Me”** These Judeans apparently consulted the occult (cf. 8:19), but not YHWH’s prophet (lit. “without asking my mouth,” cf. Exod. 4:16; Josh. 9:14).

**30:3** There is no hope in Egypt (cf. vv. 3,5,7; 20:5-6; 36:6). Amazingly Judah left her covenant God for the protection of a previous task master! Judah will do it again in Jeremiah's day (cf. Jer. 2:13; 42:18-22)!

**30:4 "their princes"** The MT has "his," which is followed by most English translations. NASB may assert that these "princes" refer to Pharaoh's leaders (cf. 19:11), but in context it refers to Hezekiah's representatives seeking a political/military alliance with Egypt.

▣ **"Zoan. . .Hanes"** These were two cities that were recently freed by the Twenty-fifty Dynasty. They were used to show the power of the Egyptian army.

The two cities mentioned are connected to the delta region of the Nile.

1. Zoan is also known as Tanis or Avaris (cf. Num. 13:22; Ps. 78:12,43; Isa. 19:11).
2. Hanes is unknown (LXX omits), but possibly connected to Tahpanhes (cf. Jer. 2:16; 43:7,8,9; 44:1; 46:14), a nearby fortress. Some scholars relate this name to Heracleopolis Magna because it was a regional capital during the Nubian Dynasty.

**30:5**

NASB, NKJV "ashamed"

NRSV "shame"

TEV "regret"

NJB "disappointed"

All of these English translations chose the *Qere* option (i.e., marginal reading) of the Masoretic scholars (הבִּישׁ, BDB 101, KB 116, *Hiphil* PERFECT, the NOUN [BDB 102] is used later in this verse). The MT text (*Kethib*) has "cause to stink" (הבִּאִישׁ, BDB 92, KB 107, *Hiphil* PERFECT; the VERB is used in 50:2 and the NOUN in 34:3).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 30:6-17**

**<sup>6</sup>The oracle concerning the beasts of the Negev.**

**Through a land of distress and anguish,**

**From where *come* lioness and lion, viper and flying serpent,**

**They carry their riches on the backs of young donkeys**

**And their treasures on camels' humps,**

**To a people who cannot profit *them*;**

**<sup>7</sup>Even Egypt, whose help is vain and empty.**

**Therefore, I have called her**

**"Rahab who has been exterminated."**

**<sup>8</sup>Now go, write it on a tablet before them**

**And inscribe it on a scroll,**

**That it may serve in the time to come**

**As a witness forever.**

**<sup>9</sup>For this is a rebellious people, false sons,**

**Sons who refuse to listen**

**To the instruction of the LORD;**

**<sup>10</sup>Who say to the seers, "You must not see *visions*";**

**And to the prophets, "You must not prophesy to us what is right,**

**Speak to us pleasant words,**

**Prophecy illusions.**

**<sup>11</sup>Get out of the way, turn aside from the path,**

**Let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel."**

**<sup>12</sup>Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel,**

**"Since you have rejected this word**

**And have put your trust in oppression and guile, and have relied on them,**

**<sup>13</sup>Therefore this iniquity will be to you**

**Like a breach about to fall,**

**A bulge in a high wall,**

**Whose collapse comes suddenly in an instant,**

**<sup>14</sup>Whose collapse is like the smashing of a potter's jar,**

**So ruthlessly shattered**

**That a sherd will not be found among its pieces**

**To take fire from a hearth**

**Or to scoop water from a cistern."**

**<sup>15</sup>For thus the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, has said,**

**"In repentance and rest you will be saved,**

**In quietness and trust is your strength."**

**But you were not willing,**

**<sup>16</sup>And you said, "No, for we will flee on horses,"**

**Therefore you shall flee!**

**"And we will ride on swift *horses*,"**

**Therefore those who pursue you shall be swift.**

**<sup>17</sup>One thousand *will flee* at the threat of one *man*;**

**You will flee at the threat of five,**

**Until you are left as a flag on a mountain top**

**And as a signal on a hill.**

**30:6-7** This describes the Judean caravans that were sent through the dangerous Judean and Egyptian deserts (i.e., v. 6b,c), bearing gifts (v. 6d,e) in an attempt to try to form a political alliance with Egypt (i.e., Rahab, BDB 923, see note at 27:1).

The NASB Study Bible makes the comment that the caravan might have had to take the back roads to Egypt because of the Assyrian army's control of the main caravan routes (p. 997, also IVP *Bible Background Commentary*, p. 621).

The NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 87, makes the comment that this might represent a reverse Exodus. But I think in context option #one (i.e., political alliance) fits best. I listed some of the interpretive options to illustrate.

1. how ambiguous Hebrew poetry can be
2. how different allusions can be seen behind different words and phrases
3. to emphasize again the importance of finding the main point of the strophe and its relationship to the larger context and not basing one's main theological points on the details of Hebrew poetry

**30:6** Notice the “beasts” (BDB 96) of the Negev (BDB 616) listed.

1. lioness, BDB 522
2. lion, BDB 539 I
3. viper, BDB 821
4. flying serpent, BDB 977 I with the *Polel* PARTICIPLE “flying” (BDB 733, KB 800), see note at 14:29
5. donkeys, BDB 747
6. camels, BDB 168

Numbers 1-4 speak of the danger of the trip, while 5-6 speak of the beasts of burden that carried the financial incentive.

**30:7**

**NASB** “Rahab who has been exterminated”

**NKJV** “Rahab-Hem-Shebeth” (“Rahab sits idle,” footnote)

**NRSV** “Rahab who sits still”

**TEV** “So I have nicknamed Egypt, ‘The Harmless Dragon’”

**NJB** “and so I call her ‘Rahab-the-collapsed’”

The MT has “Rahab who sits still.” Rahab refers to Egypt. The UBS Hebrew Text Project gives the MT “they (are) cessation” a “B” rating (some doubt). The whole point is Egypt cannot stop or even help against the Assyrian invasion of Palestine. The serpent (Rahab, BDB 923) is toothless!

**30:8** There are two reasons for having a written record (1) God wants a written evidence of His people’s rebellion so when He brings them to court, the evidence is obvious (cf. 8:1; Hab. 2:2) and (2) to show His control of history, thereby confirming Himself and His prophet so that future generations may trust in His word.

There are several commands in this verse.

1. go, BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. write, BDB 507, KB 503, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. inscribe, BDB 349, KB 347, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. let it be a witness forever, BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* JUSSIVE

The MT has “a witness” (BDB 723 I), “forever” (BDB 761, cf. NKJV, NJB, LXX Peshitta), but the root,  $\text{נָשָׂא}$ , normally means “perpetuity” (i.e., “a segment of time,” similar to *’olam*). Often English translations do not fully reflect the possible semantic range of Hebrew terms. That is why comparing English translations is helpful.

**30:9** “For this is a rebellious people, false sons,

**Sons who refuse to listen**

**To the instruction of the LORD”** See v. 1; 1:2-3; 6:9-10; 29:9-12.

The VERBAL “to listen” (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) denotes “hearing so as to do” (i.e., Deut. 4:1; 6:4). This concept of a lifestyle response to divine revelation is the heart of OT faith (cf. Deut. 29:4). As this verse clearly shows, obedience is a recurrent problem for fallen humanity. The weakness of the OT is not its revelation, but the human covenant partners (cf. Galatians 3). Herein is the need for a “new covenant” (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38). The new one, like the first one, is designed to promote fellowship between God and mankind and to reveal God’s characteristics to a fallen world. Obedience is crucial in both (cf. Matt. 11:29; Luke 6:46).

**30:10-11** The godless Judeans not only do not want to follow YHWH, they do not want to hear from His messengers!

1. to the seers, see not
  - a. seers, BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE

- b. see not, BDB 906, KB 1157, negated *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. to the prophets, prophesy not
  - a. prophets, BDB 302
  - b. prophesy not, BDB 302, KB 301, negated *Qal* IMPERFECT
3. speak to us pleasant words, BDB 180, KB 210, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
4. prophesy illusions, BDB 302, KB 301, *Qal* IMPERATIVE. “Illusions” (BDB 1122) is found only here. They wanted any message but YHWH’s message!
5. get out of the way (lit. “turn aside from the way”), BDB 693, KB 747, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
6. turn aside from the path, BDB 639, KB 692, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
7. let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel (lit. “remove from before us”), BDB 991, KB 1407, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE

These are shocking statements. Isaiah is using diatribe to forcibly make his point. These people are YHWHists in name only!

**30:10 “seers”** This term (BDB 909) is obviously related to the common VERB “to see” (BDB 906).

### SPECIAL TOPIC: PROPHET (THE DIFFERENT HEBREW TERMS)

#### Biblical Terms

1. *ro’eh* = “seer” (BDB 906), I Sam. 9:9. This reference shows the transition to the term *nabi*, which means “prophet” and comes from the root, “to call.” *Ro’eh* is from the general Hebrew term “to see.” This person understood God’s ways and plans and was consulted to ascertain God’s will in a matter.
2. *hozeh* = “seer” (BDB 302), II Sam. 24:11; Amos 7:12. It is basically a synonym of *ro’eh*. It is from a rarer Hebrew term “to see in a vision.” The PARTICIPLE form is used most often to refer to prophets.
3. *nabi’* = “prophet” (BDB 611), cognate of Akkadian VERB *nabu* = “to call” and Arabic *naba’a* = “to announce.” This is the most common OT term to designate a prophet. It is used over 300 times. The exact etymology is uncertain, but “to call” at present seems the best option. Possibly the best understanding comes from YHWH’s description of Moses’ relationship to Pharaoh through Aaron (cf. Exod. 4:10-16; 7:1; Deut. 5:5). A prophet is someone who speaks for God to His people (cf. Amos 3:8; Jer. 1:7,17; Ezek. 3:4).
4. All three terms are used of the prophet’s office in I Chr. 29:29; Samuel – *Ro’eh*; Nathan – *Nabi’*; and Gad – *Hozeh*.
5. The phrase *ish ha – ‘elohim*, “man of God,” is also a broader designation for a speaker for God. It is used some 76 times in the OT in the sense of “prophet.”
6. The NT word “prophet” is Greek in origin. It comes from
  - a. *pro*, which means “before” or “for”
  - b. *phemi*, which means “to speak”

**30:12 “And have put your trust in”** This VERB (BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is used often in Isaiah.

1. trust in God, cf. 12:2; 26:3,4; 36:7,15; 37:10; 50:10 (in the name of the LORD)
2. trust in things
  - a. 30:12, oppression and guile
  - b. 31:1, Egyptian military
  - c. 36:6,9, Egypt

- d. 42:17, idols
  - e. 47:10, wickedness
  - f. 59:4, confusion
3. trust in persons, 36:5,6,9

▣ **“relied”** This VERB (BDB 1043, KB 1612, *Niphal* IMPERFECT) is parallel to “trust” (cf. II Chr. 13:18; 14:11; 16:7,8). It is found only in the *Niphal* stem and is used several times in Isaiah (cf. 10:20 [twice]; 31:1; 50:10). It literally means “to lean on” or “support oneself” (cf. Gen. 18:4).

**30:13-14** These are two metaphors used for the destruction to come: (1) the imminent collapse of a wall and (2) the complete shattering of a clay pot.

**30:15** Notice the names for Judah’s God.

- 1. Adon YHWH (Lord God)
- 2. the Holy One of Israel, cf. vv. 11,12

These are covenant titles! (See Special Topic at 1:1.) These should have been covenant people!

▣ **“In repentance and rest you will be saved”** Verses 15-17 describe two reactions to God’s promises. Verse 15 describes true faith (cf. Ps. 118:6-9), while vv. 16-17 describe false faith.

Salvation (BDB 446, KB 448, *Niphal* IMPERFECT) is described with two NOUNS.

- 1. repentance (lit. “turning back”), BDB 1000, KB 1435; this is a rare term found only here. Some scholars suggest a connection with Micah 2:8, but this is not certain. The basic root, **נָשׁוּב**, means “to turn back” and fits the context.
- 2. rest, BDB 629 I, KB 692 II, means “calm,” “patience,” “peace”
  - a. Job 17:16; Eccl. 6:5, rest in death
  - b. Pro. 29:9, no rest for the fool
  - c. Isa. 30:15, possibly rest from war, based on the parallel with Micah 2:8, #1 above

The evangelical in me wants to turn these key words, “saved,” “repentance,” and “rest,” into a gospel message, but this is not the NT! This is a strophe about Judea seeking a military alliance with Egypt. She has turned away from her God and is not resting in Him (cf. 15d).

▣ **“In quietness and trust is your strength”** This line is parallel to the above line, so there are four terms used in YHWH’s address to them.

- 1. repentance, see above
- 2. rest, see above
- 3. quietness, BDB 1052, KB 1641, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE, cf. 7:4; 32:17

Remember this is a theological parallel to Isaiah’s call for Ahaz to “take care, and be calm, have no fear and do not be fainthearted” in 7:4. Now YHWH is addressing Hezekiah with the same message! Trust Me!

**30:16 “those who will pursue you will be swift”** Judah was trusting in military might which she planned on getting from Egypt (cf. 2:6-7; 31:1). However, as she trusted in the swiftness of her mercenary cavalry, God asserts the swiftness of His surrogate Assyrian army.

**30:17 “One thousand will flee at the threat of one man”** This is Holy War terminology (cf. Lev. 26:8; Deut. 32:30; Josh. 23:10). It is taken from the Exodus and Conquest of Palestine. However, the tables are now turned as God is on Assyria’s side.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 30:18**

**<sup>18</sup>Therefore the LORD longs to be gracious to you,  
And therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you.  
For the LORD is a God of justice;  
How blessed are all those who long for Him.**

**30:18 “the LORD longs to be gracious to you”** What a wonderful verse (and a shocking reversal) that reveals the character of YHWH.

1. longs to be gracious
  - a. longs (lit. “waits”), BDB 314, KB 313, *Piel* IMPERFECT
  - b. gracious, BDB 335, KB 334, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT
2. waits on high to have compassion
  - a. waits (lit. “is on high”), BDB 926, KB 1202, *Qal* IMPERFECT
  - b. compassion, BDB 933, KB 1216, *Piel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT

Humans must trust in the character of God. He wants to bless (BDB 80) all those who long (lit. “wait,” same VERB as #1 above, but here a *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, cf. 25:9; 26:8; 33:2; Ps. 33:20) for Him. This “waiting” expresses a trusting, patient world-view of YHWH’s presence, promises, and purposes (cf. 48:9-11; Hos. 11:8-11), even in times of crises and uncertainty.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 30:19-22**

**<sup>19</sup>O people in Zion, inhabitant in Jerusalem, you will weep no longer. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you. <sup>20</sup>Although the Lord has given you bread of privation and water of oppression, He, your Teacher will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes will behold your Teacher. <sup>21</sup>Your ears will hear a word behind you, “This is the way, walk in it,” whenever you turn to the right or to the left. <sup>22</sup>And you will defile your graven images overlaid with silver, and your molten images plated with gold. You will scatter them as an impure thing, and say to them, “Be gone!”**

**30:19-22** Notice what YHWH will do in the future for a repentant, faithful Judah.

1. they will weep no longer – this is emphatic. The *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and the *Qal* IMPERFECT VERB of the same root (BDB 113, KB 129). This new day is also alluded to in 25:8; 60:20; 61:1-3.
2. He will surely be gracious – this is made emphatic by using the *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and *Qal* IMPERFECT VERB of the same root (BDB 335, KB 334; see note at v. 18).
3. He hears the sound of their cry – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT.
4. He will answer – BDB 772, KB 851, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 58:9; 65:24 (i.e., the covenant is active and strong)
5. He will no longer hide Himself – BDB 489, KB 486, *Niphal* IMPERFECT. This is a rare term found only here. It literally means “to thrust into a corner” (NKJV). The NASB gets “hide” from an Arabic root, “to enclose” or “to guard.”
6. your eyes will behold your Teacher – BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE.
7. your ears will hear a word behind you – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERFECT. This is the reversal of 6:9-10 and the reinstatement of Deut. 29:4. The “word” (BDB 182) which they will hear is the rest of the verse, which are metaphors of lifestyle faith.
  - a. the way, BDB 202 (i.e., covenant living, cf. 35:8-9; 42:16; Ps. 25:8-9)
  - b. walk in it, BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (cf. Lev. 26:3; Deut. 8:6; 10:12; 11:22; 28:9; I Kgs. 6:12; 8:36,61; II Chr. 6:16,27; Neh. 10:29; Isa. 2:3; Jer. 6:16; 44:10,23; Ezek. 5:6-7; 11:20; 18:17; 20:13,16,19,21; 33:15; 37:24; Dan. 9:10; Micah 4:2)

- c. turn to the right or to the left (another idiom related to staying in the way)
- 8. you will turn from your idols
  - a. defile them, BDB 379, KB 375, *Piel* PERFECT
  - b. scatter them, BDB 279, KB 280, *Qal* IMPERFECT
  - c. say to them “Be gone,” BDB 422, KB 425, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

Isaiah is unique in its assertion that Jerusalem will never fall, but Jeremiah asserts that it will. Both assert it will be restored if and when it turns back to YHWH!

**30:20** In this verse there are several persons mentioned.

- 1. “the LORD” – Adon
- 2. “your Teacher” (twice)
- 3. “you” (i.e., Judeans, PLURAL)

The “teacher” could refer to

- 1. YHWH (PLURAL OF MAJESTY, TEV, cf. 45:15, “You are a God who hides Himself,” but different VERB)
- 2. Messiah (YHWH representative)
- 3. prophets/priests (i.e., restoration of true revelation, cf. Ps. 74:9)

The term “teacher” (מורִיךְ, BDB 435) can be understood as

- 1. SINGULAR, John J. Owens, *Analytical Key to the OT*, vol. 4, p. 90, see NASB, JPSOA, NRSV, ASV
- 2. PLURAL, Benjamin Davidson, *Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, p. 475, see NKJV, REB

The form could reflect either one (NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 538).

**30:21**

**NASB** “an impure thing”

**NKJV** “an unclean thing”

**NRSV** “like filthy rags”

**NJB** “like the polluted things”

**Peshitta** “like unclean water of a menstrous woman”

This is the term (BDB 188) which denotes the rags used during a woman’s menstrual period (cf. Lev. 15:33; 20:18). This would have been a strong cultural idiom of a ceremonially unclean thing which must be set apart (cf. 64:6).

The LXX (REB) takes the next word “be gone” (BDB 422, KB 425) as a similar term, “feces,” which would be another cultural idiom of ceremonial defilement.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 30:23-26**

<sup>23</sup>Then He will give *you* rain for the seed which you will sow in the ground, and bread *from* the yield of the ground, and it will be rich and plenteous; on that day your livestock will graze in a roomy pasture. <sup>24</sup>Also the oxen and the donkeys which work the ground will eat salted fodder, which has been winnowed with shovel and fork. <sup>25</sup>On every lofty mountain and on every high hill there will be streams running with water on the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall. <sup>26</sup>The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times *brighter*, like the light of seven days, on the day the LORD binds up the fracture of His people and heals the bruise He has inflicted.

**30:23-26** This describes the agricultural and pastoral blessing promised to Abraham’s seed if they walk in YHWH’s covenant (cf. Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-28).

- 1. rain at the proper time, vv. 23,25, cf. 35:6,7; 41:18; 43:19,20



2. good crops, v. 23
  - a. rich (BDB 206)
  - b. plenteous (BDB 1032)
3. green pastures for the livestock, v. 23, cf. 32:20
4. a special food for the working livestock, v. 24 (term BDB 330 is found only here)
5. enemies defeated, v. 25 (“on every high hill.” This same idiom was used for *Ba'al* worship in Hosea)
6. plenty of light for health and growth, v. 26, cf. 60:20-21 (seven being symbolic of the perfect amount and light being symbolic of God’s presence, i.e., His name, v. 27)

**30:26** These blessings of restoration (cf. 11:6-9; Rom. 8:18-22) are after

1. the day of great slaughter when the towers fall, v. 25
2. the day of the LORD binds up the fracture of His people, v. 26
3. the day the LORD heals the bruise He has inflicted, v. 26

▣ **“heals the bruise He has inflicted”** This phrase and others like it (i.e., Deut. 32:39; I Samuel 2:6; II Kgs. 5:7; Job 5:18; Isa. 45:7; Jer. 1:10; 24:6; 31:28; Hos. 6:1; Amos 3:6) have caused moderns to question the merciful character of God. These are all idiomatic ways of asserting monotheism (i.e., one and only one causality). Modern western people assume that there are many causalities in their experiences and their histories. The Bible asserts the sovereignty of God in all areas of reality. He is present and active!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 30:27-33**

**<sup>27</sup>Behold, the name of the LORD comes from a remote place;**

**Burning is His anger and dense is *His* smoke;**

**His lips are filled with indignation**

**And His tongue is like a consuming fire;**

**<sup>28</sup>His breath is like an overflowing torrent,**

**Which reaches to the neck,**

**To shake the nations back and forth in a sieve,**

**And to *put* in the jaws of the peoples the bridle which leads to ruin.**

**<sup>29</sup>You will have songs as in the night when you keep the festival,**

**And gladness of heart as when one marches to *the sound of* the flute,**

**To go to the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel.**

**<sup>30</sup>And the LORD will cause His voice of authority to be heard,**

**And the descending of His arm to be seen in fierce anger,**

**And *in* the flame of a consuming fire**

**In cloudburst, downpour and hailstones.**

**<sup>31</sup>For at the voice of the LORD Assyria will be terrified,**

***When* He strikes with the rod.**

**<sup>32</sup>And every blow of the rod of punishment,**

**Which the LORD will lay on him,**

**Will be with *the music of* tambourines and lyres;**

**And in battles, brandishing weapons, He will fight them.**

**<sup>33</sup>For Topheth has long been ready,**

**Indeed, it has been prepared for the king.**

**He has made it deep and large,  
A pyre of fire with plenty of wood;  
The breath of the LORD, like a torrent of brimstone, sets it afire.**

**30:27-33** This strophe reflects God’s judgment on Assyria in the idiom of a theophany as an approaching storm (cf. Exod. 19:16ff; Jdgs. 5:4-5; Ps. 18:7ff; 50:3-5; Hab. 3:3-4).

1. elements of theophany – vv. 27, 30a-c, 33e
2. elements of storm – vv. 28, 30d
3. elements of restoration – v. 29
4. elements of judgment – Assyria, vv. 31-33

**30:27**

**NASB** “dense is *His* smoke”  
**NKJV** “*His* burden is heavy”  
**NRSV** “in thick rising smoke”  
**NJB** “heavy his threat”

The MT has כבד, BDB 457, KB 451, CONSTRUCT BDB 673, “rising smoke.” The first word can mean

1. be heavy
2. weighty
3. burdensome
4. honored

The second term (שָׁמַיִם, BDB 673, KB 640) is found only here in the OT. BDB says it means “the uplifted” (cloud). KB says it means “lifting up, exaltation,” but it also lists Jdgs. 20:38-40 as a parallel where שָׁמַיִם, v. 38, denotes rising smoke from a burning city. The context of 30:27 is one of theophany and judgment, so both fit.

1. exaltation, denoting a cloud (i.e., *Shekinah*)
2. heavy smoke

**30:28 “Which reaches to the neck”** This same idiom was used of the Assyrian invasion in 8:8. Here the idiom is reversed and YHWH fights on Judah’s side against Assyria.

**30:29 “the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel”** These are idioms for the temple in Jerusalem because of parallelism. Often “the rock” refers to YHWH Himself (cf. 17:10; Deut. 32:4,18,30; I Sam. 2:2; Ps. 18:1,31,46; 28:1; 31:3; 42:9).

**30:30 “His voice”** Literally, “the majesty (BDB 217) of His voice.” God’s will is accomplished through speaking (i.e., creation, Genesis 1). His voice is effective (cf. Isa. 45:23; 55:11; Matt. 24:35). The imagery of Jesus with a two-edged sword (cf. Heb. 4:12) coming out of His mouth (cf. Isa. 49:2; Rev. 1:16; 2:12,16; 19:15) is theologically parallel, as is “the rod of His mouth” in Isa. 11:4.

▣ **“hailstones”** God used them in Josh. 10:11 as a way to defeat the Canaanites and give victory to Israel (cf. Josh. 10:14,42; 23:3,10).

**30:31**

**NASB, TEV,**  
**NJB** “will be terrified”

NKJV	“will be beaten down”
NRSV	“will be terror-stricken”
JB	“will be battered”
LXX, Peshitta	“will be defeated”

The VERB (BDB 369, KB 365, *Qal* IMPERFECT) literally means “be shattered,” denoting a complete defeat in battle which is preceded by a numbing, paralyzing fear of the upcoming defeat (cf. 7:8; 8:9 [twice]; 9:4; 20:5; 30:31; 31:4,9; 37:27; 51:6,7). YHWH is fighting on His people’s side against Assyria. The fear and panic and loss experienced by Israel and Judah is now being felt by Assyria (the rod of YHWH’s anger, cf. 10:5).

▣ **“He strikes with a rod”** In Isaiah 10:5, Assyria is called the “rod of God’s anger,” but here the roles are reversed and God is back on His people’s side. The rod now feels the rod!

**30:32** The judgment of the Lord is expressed by the idiom of a beating with a rod. It is possible that the next two lines (v. 32c,d) depict

1. strokes being given at the musical beat of rejoicing
2. that Judah’s rejoicing follows Assyria’s defeat by YHWH (cf. v. 32d).

**30:33 “Topheth”** This is the Hebrew word for “place of burning” (BDB 1075). It is often used in connection with the worship of the god *Molech*. Here the context could imply

1. a place of sacrifice to YHWH prepared by the king of His restored people
2. the funeral pyre for Assyria’s king prepared by YHWH Himself (cf. 31:9)
3. “the King” which refers to *Molech*, the Phoenician fire god (cf. Lev. 18:21)

In context #2 fits best.



# ISAIAH 31

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Help Not in Egypt But in God	The Folly of Not Trusting God	Against Egypt	God Will Protect Jerusalem	Against the Egyptian Alliance
31:1-3 (1-3)	31:1-3 (1-3)	31:1-3 (1-3)	31:1-3	31:1-3 (1-3)
	God Will Deliver Jerusalem	Against Sennacherib		Against Assyria
31:4-5 (4-5)	31:4-5 (4-5)	31:4-9 (4-5)	31:4-5	31:4-9 (4-9)
31:6-9 (8-9)	31:6-9 (8-9)	(8-9)	31:6-9	

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Chapters 31-32 are a literary unit that deals with the same historical event as 29:15-30:33. Hezekiah attempted to seek an alliance with Egypt to protect themselves from Assyrian aggression, but in 701 B.C. Sennacherib invaded Judah and destroyed forty-six walled cities, though Jerusalem itself was spared.

- B. The Anchor Bible has an interesting chart that shows the characteristic prophetic swings between judgment and hope (p. 426).

<u>Threat</u>	<u>Assurance</u>
28:14-15	28:16-17
29:1-4	29:5-8
29:15-16	29:17-21
30:1-17	30:29-33
31:1-3	31:4-5, 8-9

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:1-3

<sup>1</sup>Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help

*And rely on horses,*

*And trust in chariots because they are many*

*And in horsemen because they are very strong,*

**But they do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek the LORD!**

<sup>2</sup>Yet He also is wise and will bring disaster

*And does not retract His words,*

*But will arise against the house of evildoers*

*And against the help of the workers of iniquity.*

<sup>3</sup>Now the Egyptians are men and not God,

*And their horses are flesh and not spirit;*

*So the LORD will stretch out His hand,*

*And he who helps will stumble*

*And he who is helped will fall,*

**And all of them will come to an end together.**

**31:1 “Woe”** This is the fourth in a series of “woes” that began in 28:1; 29:1,15; 30:1; 31:1; 33:1. The term introduces the poetic meter of a funeral lament. See note at 5:8.

▣ **“who go down to Egypt for help”** The people of God were attempting to trust (BDB 105, KB 120, see Special Topic at 22:23) in political alliances instead of the power, presence, and promises of YHWH for their help (cf. chapters 28-34).

▣ **“horses. . .chariots. . .horsemen”** The Assyrians were known for their very large cavalry. Egypt was known for her very large contingent of chariots. Judah was afraid of the Assyrians and was trusting in Egypt instead of God. Humans of all ages must be careful of trusting in the current level of technology or numerical superiority instead of the God of creation and mercy.

▣ **“chariots”** Egypt exported chariots to all the surrounding countries (cf. I Kgs. 10:29), but they could be effective only on flat land, not the hill country of Judah.

▣ **“the Holy One of Israel. . .the LORD”** These two terms apply to the Covenant God (cf. 1:4). The first refers to His nature as righteous, yet the God that calls sinful humans to be His children.

The second term is the Covenant name for God, “YHWH” (cf. Exod. 3:14). See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 1:1.

▣ **“look. . .seek”** Both of these VERBS are NEGATED *Qal* PERFECTS, which denotes a settled condition.

1. look (lit. “to gaze at intently”), BDB 1043, KB 1609, cf. 17:7,8
2. seek, BDB 205, KB 233, cf. 9:13; 55:6; 58:2; 65:10

These VERBS denote an intense personal element (cf. Dan. 9:13).

**31:2 “He also is wise and will bring disaster”** The NET Bible sees this as a sarcastic comment about Judah’s advisors who are seeking help from Egypt. However, the whole verse, not just the last two lines, speaks of YHWH.

▣ **“And does not retract His words”** When God speaks, His words can be depended on (cf. Isa. 45:23; 55:11; Jer. 44:29).

▣ **“will arise”** This VERB (BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* PERFECT) is used anthropomorphically of YHWH rising from His throne to do battle on behalf of His people (cf. 14:22) or against His people (cf. Amos 7:9). See Special Topic: Anthropomorphic Language Used for God at 6:1.

▣ **“the house of evil-doers. . .the workers of iniquity”** These two phrases refer to Judah (i.e., “he who is helped,” v. 3e) and her political alliances (i.e., Egypt, “he who helps,” v. 3d).

**31:3** This is a comparison between the frailty of human beings and the eternity of God (*El*). Specifically here it may refer to Exod. 14:26-31a.

This verse also clearly contrasts God (*El*) with flesh. God is “spirit” (cf. John 4:24). He can take a human form (theophany), but He is spirit and dwells throughout his creation (cf. I Kgs. 8:27; Jer. 23:24). He chooses to fellowship with humble, repentant believers (i.e., Isa. 66:1-2).

▣ **“the LORD will stretch out His hand”** This is an anthropomorphic idiom of God’s actions. See Special Topic at 6:1.

▣ **“all of them will come to an end together”** This VERB (BDB 477, KB 476, *Qal* IMPERFECT) denotes a complete destruction and end (cf. 1:28; 16:4; 29:20). What looks powerful and long lasting is not! This is similar to the common proverb about the transitoriness of humans as grass (cf. Isa. 40:6-8; Ps. 95:5-6; 103:15; 104:14; James 1:10-11; I Pet. 1:24).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:4-5**

**<sup>4</sup>For thus says the LORD to me,**

**“As the lion or the young lion growls over his prey,**

**Against which a band of shepherds is called out,**

**And he will not be terrified at their voice nor disturbed at their noise,**

**So will the LORD of hosts come down to wage war on Mount Zion and on its hill.”**

**<sup>5</sup>Like flying birds so the LORD of hosts will protect Jerusalem.**

**He will protect and deliver it;**

**He will pass over and rescue it.**

**31:4 “the lion”** This metaphor seems to describe God as powerful and tenacious over His own special place (i.e., temple). If so, it is a reversal of the first strophe (31:1-3).

▣ **“the LORD of hosts come down”** This VERB (BDB 432, KB 434, *Qal* IMPERFECT) means “to come down,” “to go down,” “to descend.” It is used several times of YHWH leaving His abode in the heavens and coming to earth

1. to see and respond to the actions of humans, Gen. 11:5,7; 18:21
2. to reveal Himself to humans, Exod. 3:8; 19:11,18,20; Num. 11:17,25; 12:5 (two special places where His attributes are listed are Exod. 34:5,6-7; Neh. 9:13,17)
3. to characterize YHWH in several psalms, II Sam. 22:10; Ps. 18:9; 144:5
4. for judgment, Micah 1:3 (like #1)

This VERB is spacial (i.e., down), but it is metaphorical when referring to the relationship between heaven and earth (cf. Acts 1:2,9).

Judah went down to Egypt (v. 1, same VERB), YHWH comes down to defend Jerusalem even amidst their unbelief. Isaiah uniquely asserts the inviolability of Jerusalem! However, later prophets do not share his optimism of Judah’s ability to repent and trust in YHWH (cf. Jer. 26:18; Micah 3:11-12; 5:5b-6,7-8).

**31:5 “Like flying birds”** This is a reference to God as tender and loyal like a mother bird (“will protect,” BDB 170, KB 199, both *Hiphil* IMPERFECT and *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE of the same root to denote intensity). Often times in the Bible, God is described by feminine metaphors (cf. Gen. 1:2; Deut. 32:11; Isa. 40:31; Hos. 11:4; Matt. 23:37; Luke 13:24).

Notice the things YHWH will do for His people in v. 5.

1. will protect, BDB 170, KB 199 *Hiphil* IMPERFECT
2. will protect, BDB 170, KB 199, *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE
3. will deliver, BDB 664, KB 717, *Hiphil* PERFECT
4. will pass over, BDB 820, KB 947, *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE
5. will rescue, BDB 572, KB 589, *Hiphil* PERFECT

▣ **“He will pass over”** This VERB (BDB 820, KB 947, *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE, cf. Exod. 12:11-27) refers to God’s protection against human forces. There seems to be an allusion to the Passover event of the Book of Exodus where God, against all human odds, protected and delivered His people.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:6-9**

**<sup>6</sup>Return to Him from whom you have deeply defected, O sons of Israel. <sup>7</sup>For in that day every man will cast away his silver idols and his gold idols, which your sinful hands have made for you as a sin.**

**<sup>8</sup>And the Assyrian will fall by a sword not of man,  
And a sword not of man will devour him.  
So he will not escape the sword,  
And his young men will become forced laborers.**

**<sup>9</sup>“His rock will pass away because of panic,  
And his princes will be terrified at the standard,”**

**Declares the LORD, whose fire is in Zion and whose furnace is in Jerusalem.**

**31:6 “Return to Him”** The VERB is *shub* (BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERATIVE), which basically means “to turn back” or “return.” It can be used of

1. turning from God, Num. 14:43; Josh. 22:16,18,23,29; Jdgs. 2:19; 8:33; I Sam. 15:11; I Kgs. 9:6; Jer. 3:19; 8:4



2. turning to God, I Kgs. 8:33,48; II Chr. 15:4; 30:9; Ps. 51:13; 116:7; Isa. 6:10; 10:21,22; 31:6; Jer. 3:7,12,14,22; 4:1; 5:3; Hos. 3:5; 5:4; 6:1; 7:10,16; 11:5; 14:1,2; Amos 4:6,8,9,10,11 (notice esp. Jeremiah 7 and Amos 4)
3. YHWH initially telling Isaiah that Judah would not/could not repent (cf. 6:10), but not for the first time in the book He calls on them to return to Him.

Repentance is not so much an emotion as it is an attitude toward God. It is a reorientation of life from self to Him. It denotes a willingness to change and be changed. It is not the complete cessation of sin, but a daily cessation of known rebellion! It is a reversal of the self-centered results of the Fall of Genesis 3. It denotes that the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26-27), though damaged, has been restored! Fellowship with God by fallen humans is possible again.

Repentance in the OT primarily means “change of action,” while “repentance” in the NT primarily means “change of mind.” Both of these are necessary for true biblical repentance. It is also necessary to realize that repentance is both an initial act and an ongoing process. The initial act can be seen in Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21, while the ongoing process can be seen in I John 1:9; Revelation 2 and 3. Repentance is not an option (cf. Luke 13:3)! See Special Topic: Repentance in the OT at 6:10.

▣ **“deeply defected”** This speaks of Judah’s rebellion against YHWH.

1. “deeply,” BDB 770, KB 847, *Hiphil* PERFECT, this word was used in 30:33 to describe the funeral pyre of the King of Assyria. It can also describe sin, as it does here and in Hosea 5:2; 9:9. It may specifically refer to Judah’s “secret” plan to seek help from Egypt (cf. 29:15).
2. “defected,” BDB 694, here refers to apostasy, cf. Deut. 13:5; Isa. 1:5; 31:6; Jer. 28:16; 29:32

▣ **“O sons of Israel”** In the Bible the term “Israel” can refer to several things: (1) it can refer to the Patriarch Jacob and his children, (2) it can refer to the Northern Ten Tribes—also called Samaria and Ephraim, or (3) it can refer to Judah. In this context it is #3.

**31:7** Israel had become eclectic in her faith and tried to incorporate the Canaanite fertility rites (see Special Topic at 17:8) along with her worship of YHWH. This is always a disaster. YHWH will be God or He will be nothing at all.

**31:8 “the Assyrian will fall”** Assyria was the tool which God used to judge the Northern Ten Tribes (cf. Isa. 10:5), but God would deal justly with the godless nation of Assyria also (cf. 10:12; 14:15; 30:31-33; 37:7). Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, fell to Neo-Babylon in 612 B.C.

▣ **“a sword not of man will devour him”** Read chapters 36 and 37 of Isaiah, which describe the invasion and siege of Jerusalem under Sennacherib. Notice God’s miraculous deliverance (not by human sword) in 37:36.

▣ **“forced laborers”** Defeated armies who survived the battle could be

1. conscripted as mercenaries into the victorious army
2. sold as slaves
3. turned into forced laborers to serve the military

All other inhabitants were forced into slavery (cf. Lam. 1:1). Slavery was common in the ancient world for debtors or those who were defeated.

**31:9 “his rock. . .his princes”** These are in a Hebrew parallel relationship, therefore, the term “rock” refers to the king of Assyria (or one of his gods, cf. Deut. 32:31,37) and his military commanders (i.e., “princes”) terrified at YHWH’s “standard” (BDB 651, cf. Isa. 13:2; Jer. 50:12; 51:12,22) over Jerusalem.

▣ **“whose fire. . .furnace”** This refers, not to the fire of judgment (although an allusion to 30:33 is possible), nor the fire of illumination, but to God’s home fireplace, hearth (cf. “Ariel,” 29:1,2,7, which referred to Jerusalem).

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How does chapter 31 relate to our modern situation of the arms race?
2. Does superior technology and superior force assure the protection of a nation?
3. Why would YHWH be described in feminine terms?
4. Describe repentance. Is it a once-and-for-all act or ongoing experience? Is it basically an attitude or is it a change of actions?
5. Describe how Assyria was defeated by non-human means.

# ISAIAH 32

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Glorious Future	A Reign of Righteousness	The Coming Age of Justice	A King With Integrity	A Good King
32:1-8 (1-8)	32:1-8 (1-4)  (5-8)	32:1-8 (1-8)	32:1-8	32:1-5 (1-5)  Niggard and Noble
	Consequences of Complacency	Against the Complacency of Judah's Women	Judgment and Restoration	32:6-8 (6-8)  Against the Women of Jerusalem
32:9-20 (9-20)	32:9-15 (9-11)  (12-15)	32:9-14 (9-14)	32:9-14	32:9-14 (9) (10) (11) (12-13) (14)
		The Age of the Spirit Will See the Transformation of All Creation		Outpouring of the Spirit
	The Peace of God's Reign	32:15-20 (15-20)	32:15-20	32:15-20 (15-17)
	32:16-20 (16-19)  (20)			(18-20)

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Chapters 31-32 are the fifth of the six woes (28:1; 29:1,15; 30:1; 31:1; 33:1) which deal with Hezekiah's attempt to form a political military alliance with the Nubian Pharaoh of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty of Egypt.
- B. Judah trusted in Egypt, but not YHWH, for protection. Isaiah saw this as a violation of trust/faith in His covenant promises and presence.
- C. This chapter focuses on the future government of a Righteous King in Jerusalem (cf. v. 1; 9:6-7; 11:1-5; Micah 5:2-5a). This was what Hezekiah should have been. He came close in his faith, seen in 37:14-20,30.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 32:1-8

<sup>1</sup>Behold, a king will reign righteously  
And princes will rule justly.  
<sup>2</sup>Each will be like a refuge from the wind  
And a shelter from the storm,  
Like streams of water in a dry country,  
Like the shade of a huge rock in a parched land.  
<sup>3</sup>Then the eyes of those who see will not be blinded,  
And the ears of those who hear will listen.  
<sup>4</sup>The mind of the hasty will discern the truth,  
And the tongue of the stammerers will hasten to speak clearly.  
<sup>5</sup>No longer will the fool be called noble,  
Or the rogue be spoken of *as* generous.  
<sup>6</sup>For a fool speaks nonsense,  
And his heart inclines toward wickedness:  
To practice ungodliness and to speak error against the LORD,  
To keep the hungry person unsatisfied  
And to withhold drink from the thirsty.  
<sup>7</sup>As for a rogue, his weapons are evil;  
He devises wicked schemes  
To destroy *the* afflicted with slander,  
Even though *the* needy one speaks what is right.  
<sup>8</sup>But the noble man devises noble plans;  
And by noble plans he stands.

**32:1 “a king. . .princes”** Verses 1-8 reflect the reign of a godly king and his/His government (cf. 9:6-7; 11:1-5; 16:5; Micah 5:2-5a). There seems to be a purposeful ambiguity so that Hezekiah (possibly the immediate fulfillment of 7:14-15) and the coming Messiah (the ultimate fulfillment cf 7:14, cf. Matt. 1:23) are both reflected in this passage.

**32:2** This verse describes in “desert” metaphors the reign of this godly leader and his associates.

1. a refuge (BDB 285, lit. “hiding place,” this form is found only here) from the wind
2. shelter (BDB 712) from the storm (parallel to #1)
3. streams of water in a dry country
4. the shade (BDB 853) of a huge rock in a parched land

Similar metaphors are used of YHWH in 25:4. Now they describe all of God’s people or at least the leadership (i.e., “rulers will rule,” VERB, BDB 979, KB 1362, *Qal* IMPERFECT).

The VERB “each will lie” (BDB 224, KB 243 *Qal* PERFECT) could refer to “the princes” of v. 1 or to the people of the “new covenant” described in Jer. 31:31-34.

**32:3-4** This reflects the spiritual condition of the restored covenant people as contrasted with 6:9-10 (cf. Deut. 29:4).

1. they will see
2. they will hear
3. they will discern truth
4. they will speak truth (“the stammerers,” BDB 748, occurs only here)

**32:5-8 “fool. . .rogue”** These two groups will still be present in society, but they will be seen for what they are (v. 6-7). Verses 6-7 seem to describe the two wicked persons, while v. 8 describes the “true” noble person.

1. the “fool” (BDB 614) described in v. 6
  - a. speaks nonsense
  - b. inclines the heart toward wickedness
    - (1) practices ungodliness
    - (2) speaks error against the LORD
  - c. does not feed the hungry
  - d. does not give drink to the thirsty
2. the “rogue” (BDB 647, found only here, twice) described in v. 7
  - a. has evil weapons
  - b. devises wicked schemes
  - c. destroys the afflicted with slander
  - d. disregards the true testimony of the needy
3. the noble man (BDB 622), v. 8
  - a. devises noble (or “generous”) plans in contrast to those mentioned in vv. 6 and 7
  - b. his plans stand, remain

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 32:9-20**

**<sup>9</sup>Rise up, you women who are at ease,**

**And hear my voice;**

**Give ear to my word,**

**You complacent daughters.**

**<sup>10</sup>Within a year and *a few* days**

**You will be troubled, O complacent daughters;**

**For the vintage is ended,**

**And the *fruit* gathering will not come.**

**<sup>11</sup>Tremble, you *women* who are at ease;**

**Be troubled, you complacent *daughters*;**

**Strip, undress and put *sackcloth* on your waist,**

**<sup>12</sup>Beat your breasts for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine,  
<sup>13</sup>For the land of my people *in which* thorns *and* briars shall come up;  
Yea, for all the joyful houses *and for* the jubilant city.  
<sup>14</sup>Because the palace has been abandoned, the populated city forsaken.  
Hill and watch-tower have become caves forever,  
A delight for wild donkeys, a pasture for flocks;  
<sup>15</sup>Until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high,  
And the wilderness becomes a fertile field,  
And the fertile field is considered as a forest.  
<sup>16</sup>Then justice will dwell in the wilderness  
And righteousness will abide in the fertile field.  
<sup>17</sup>And the work of righteousness will be peace,  
And the service of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever.  
<sup>18</sup>Then my people will live in a peaceful habitation,  
And in secure dwellings and in undisturbed resting places;  
<sup>19</sup>And it will hail when the forest comes down,  
And the city will be utterly laid low.  
<sup>20</sup>How blessed will you be, you who sow beside all waters,  
Who let out freely the ox and the donkey.**

**32:9-12** This strophe speaks of the rich, wealthy society women of Jerusalem (cf 3:16-4:1). Notice how they are addressed.

1. rise up you women who are at ease, v. 9, BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERATIVE. The same VERB was used in the previous verse in the sense of “stand” or “remain,” but here it means “stand up” when I the Lord (or His prophet) address you.
2. hear my voice, v. 9, BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. give an ear to my word, v. 9, BDB 24, KB 27, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE (cf. 28:23). Notice how the second and third VERBS are parallel, as are the descriptive phrases “women who are at ease,” (cf. v. 11) and “you complacent daughters,” and again in vv. 10,11.
4. you will be troubled, v. 10, BDB 919, KB 1182, *Qal* IMPERFECT. This term denotes “agitation,” “shaking,” “being perturbed.” Note the “time” elements in v. 10.
  - a. within a year and a few days
  - b. time of the vintage is ended
  - c. the fruit gathering will not come
5. tremble, v. 11, BDB 353, KB 350, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. 10:29; 19:16; 41:5. This is parallel to “troubled” in v. 10 (surprisingly all the IMPERATIVES of v. 11 are MASCULINE, but addressed to women).
6. be troubled, v. 11, BDB 919, KB 1182, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, same VERB as v. 10
7. strip, v. 11, BDB 832 II, KB 980, *Qal* IMPERATIVE. This could be a sign of (1) mourning (cf. Ezek. 26:16) or (2) humiliation (cf. Hos. 2:5).
8. undress, v. 11, BDB 792, KB 889, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
9. put sackcloth on your waist, v. 11, BDB 291, KB 291, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, also a sign of mourning. See Special Topic at 15:2-3.
10. beat your breasts, v. 12, BDB 704, KB 763, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, another sign of mourning, Luke 18:13; 23:48.

All of these relate to the period of the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib in 701 B.C. Sieges were horrible experiences of deprivation and disease.

**32:9,10,11**

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV “complacent daughters”

NJB “over-confident daughters”

REB “daughters without a care”

LXX “daughters of hope”

JPSOA “confident ladies”

The Hebrew term (BDB 105, KB 120) normally means “security” or “confidence,” though some scholars see another root (BDB 105 II, KB 121) meaning “fall to the ground” (NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 649).

This term also occurs in 32:17 and is translated “confidence” or “security” (NASB margin). These wealthy, elite women were over-confident (NJB).

**32:10 “Within a year and a few days”** This is a very specific time reference (possibly connected to the harvest season) and seems to relate to the invasion of Sennacherib in 701 B.C.

**32:12 “Beat your breasts”** There are two ways to deal with this phrase.

1. relate it to the stripped and bare-breasted women of v. 11
2. change the Hebrew “breast” (rare poetic term, BDB 994, טֶשֶׁת) to “fields” (BDB 961, שָׂדֵה, cf. 56:9), as JPSOA lists in a footnote. If option #2 is followed, then “fields,” “the pleasant fields,” and “the fruitful vine” become parallel for the loss of agricultural abundance.
3. see it as an idiom for mourning whether male or female (Peshitta)

**32:13 “the joyful houses”** This same term “joyful” (BDB 965) is used in v. 14 for “a delight for wild donkeys.” Isaiah uses

1. doubling
2. word plays
3. repeated metaphors

to communicate his messages. The Hebrew text of Isaiah is far more dynamic and artistic than in translation. He was a master poet. One wonders if YHWH communicated the messages in poetry or Isaiah crafted them. Since all of YHWH’s revelations are not in artistic poetry, it seems this was Isaiah’s skill. Many of the word choices in Isaiah have far more to do with sound plays than lexical meaning. Rare words are used, as are unique meanings to common words. This is where the ambiguity for modern interpreters is exacerbated!

▣ **“the jubilant city”** See note at 24:10 and the chart at the introduction to chapter 26, D. God wanted to uniquely bless the people of the covenant to attract the attention of “the nations,” but because of Israel and Judah’s rebellion, instead of abundance and peace came thorns and briars (cf. 5:6; 7:23-25; 9:18; 10:17; 27:4; Gen. 3:18).

**32:14** This verse describes the destruction of Jerusalem (cf. 6:11; 64:10), which is unusual for Isaiah who usually sees its deliverance (cf. 1:8-9; 8:8; 29:1-8; 37:36-37). Isaiah asserts Jerusalem’s sanctity because of YHWH’s presence there (i.e., the temple), but later Jeremiah clearly adds to this theological issue by focusing on the conditional nature of YHWH’s promises to His covenant people (i.e., Deuteronomy 27-28). Isaiah trusts God’s word, but His promises must be matched by appropriate human faith and obedience. Covenant is a two-way street!

Notice how the destruction is characterized.

1. the palace has been abandoned (i.e., the Davidic seed forsaken)
2. the populated city has been forsaken (i.e., the Abrahamic seed forsaken)
3. NASB, “hill”

NJB “Ophel” (BDB 779), a section of the southeastern ridge of ancient Jerusalem (or a metaphor for the whole city, similar to “Zion”). It is mentioned in II Chr. 27:3; 33:14; Neh. 3:26-27; 11:21

4. #3 is parallel to “watch-tower”; both would denote the fortifications of Jerusalem being destroyed
5. a delight for wild donkeys
6. a pasture for flocks, both #5 and #6 denote a deserted, destroyed city, inhabited only by animals (cf. 13:21; 34:13)

There are two parallel VERBS.

1. has been abandoned, BDB 643, KB 695, *Pual* PERFECT, the *Pual* occurs only here
2. forsaken, BDB 736, KB 806, *Qal* PASSIVE (or *Pual*) PERFECT, cf. Jer. 49:25



**NASB** “caves”

**NKJV** “lair”

**NRSV** “dens”

**NJB** “the Keep”

The term (BDB 792) means “cave,” but in this context, “an animal’s den.” It is possible that Isaiah chose this term because of its sound similarity to

1. “sepulcher” (Arabic root), עָרַר (context of death and destruction)
2. “strip oneself,” עָרַר, rare VERB used in v. 11
3. “bare field,” מַעְרָה from Arabic root (NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 1034)

▣ “forever” This is the relative use of the Hebrew term *’olam*. This term has a large semantical usage and must be interpreted in context.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: FOREVER (*’OLAM*)

The etymology of the Hebrew term *’olam*, עוֹלָם (BDB 761) is uncertain (NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 345). It is used in several senses (usually determined by context). The following are only selected examples.

1. ancient things
  - a. peoples, Gen. 6:4; I Sam. 27:8; Jer. 5:15; 28:8
  - b. places, Isa. 58:12; 61:4
  - c. God, Ps. 93:2; Pro. 8:23; Isa. 63:16
  - d. things, Gen. 49:26; Job 22:15; Ps. 24:7,9; Isa. 46:9
  - e. time, Deut. 32:7; Isa. 51:9; 63:9,11
2. future time
  - a. one’s life, Exod. 21:6; Deut. 15:17; I Sam. 1:22; 27:12
  - b. hyperbole for king, I Kgs. 1:31; Ps. 61:7; Neh. 2:3
  - c. continuous existence
    - (1) earth, Ps. 78:69; 104:5; Eccl. 1:4
    - (2) heavens, Ps. 148:6
  - d. existence of God
    - (1) Gen. 21:33
    - (2) Exod. 15:18



- (3) Deut. 32:40
- (4) Ps. 93:2
- (5) Isa. 40:28
- (6) Jer. 10:10
- (7) Dan. 12:7
- e. the covenant
  - (1) Gen. 9:12,16; 17:7,13,19
  - (2) Exod. 31:16
  - (3) Lev. 24:8
  - (4) Num. 18:19
  - (5) II Sam. 23:5
  - (6) Ps. 105:10
  - (7) Isa. 24:5; 55:3; 61:8
  - (8) Jer. 32:40; 50:5
- f. special covenant with David
  - (1) II Sam. 7:13,16,25,29; 22:51; 23:5
  - (2) I Kgs. 2:33,45; 9:5
  - (3) II Chr. 13:5
  - (4) Ps. 18:50; 89:4,28,36,37
  - (5) Isa. 9:7; 16:5; 37:35; 55:3
- g. God's Messiah
  - (1) Ps. 45:2; 72:17; 89:35-36; 110:4
  - (2) Isa. 9:6
- h. God's laws
  - (1) Exod. 29:28; 30:21
  - (2) Lev. 6:18,22; 7:34; 10:15; 24:9
  - (3) Num. 18:8,11,19
  - (4) Ps. 119:89,160
  - (5) Isa. 59:21
- i. God's promises
  - (1) II Sam. 7:13,16,25; 22:51
  - (2) I Kgs. 9:5
  - (3) Ps. 18:50
  - (4) Isa. 40:8
- j. Abraham's descendants and the Promised Land
  - (1) Gen. 13:15; 17:18; 48:4
  - (2) Exod. 32:13
  - (3) I Chr. 16:17
- k. covenantal feasts
  - (1) Exod. 12:14; 12:14,17,24
  - (2) Lev. 23:14,21,41
  - (3) Num. 10:8

- l. eternity everlasting
  - (1) I Kgs. 8:P13
  - (2) Ps. 61:7-8; 77:8; 90:2; 103:17; 145:13
  - (3) Isa. 26:4; 45:17
  - (4) Dan. 9:24
- m. what the Psalms say believers will do forever
  - (1) give thanks, Ps. 30:12; 79:13
  - (2) abide in His presence, Ps. 41:12; 61:4,7
  - (3) trust in His mercy, Ps. 52:8
  - (4) praise the LORD, Ps. 52:9
  - (5) sing praises, Ps. 61:7; 89:1
  - (6) declare His justice, Ps. 75:9
  - (7) glorify His name, Ps. 86:12; 145:2
  - (8) bless His name, Ps. 145:1
3. both backward and forward in time (“from everlasting to everlasting”)
  - a. Ps. 41:13 (praise to God)
  - b. Ps. 90:2 (God Himself)
  - c. Ps. 103:17 (the lovingkindness of the LORD)

Remember, context determines the extent of the term’s meaning. The everlasting covenants and promises are conditional (i.e., Jeremiah 7). Be careful of reading your modern view of time or your NT systematic theology into every OT usage of this very fluid word. The NT universalized OT promises.

**32:15-20** This strophe describes a new day, a righteous day for Jerusalem.

1. The Spirit is poured out from God. The exact relationship between YHWH and “the Spirit” in the OT is difficult to relate to the full personal revelation of the NT. The Spirit is often associated with creation (cf. Gen. 1:2; Job 26:13; Ps. 104:29-30; 147:14-18). With a new creation! For your information, I have included in this verse my NT Special Topic on “The Personhood of the Spirit.”

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE PERSONHOOD OF THE SPIRIT**

In the OT “the Spirit of God” (i.e., *ruach*) was a force which accomplished YHWH’s purpose, but there is no hint that it was personal (i.e., OT monotheism). However, in the NT the full personality and personhood of the Spirit is documented:

1. He can be blasphemed (cf. Matt. 12:31; Mark 3:29)
2. He teaches (cf. Luke 12:12; John 14:26)
3. He bears witness (cf. John 15:26)
4. He convicts, guides (cf. John 16:7-15)
5. He is called “who” (i.e., *hos*, cf. Eph. 1:14)
6. He can be grieved (cf. Eph. 4:30)
7. He can be quenched (cf. I Thess. 5:19)

Trinitarian texts also speak of three persons (see Special Topic: the Trinity at 2:32-33).

1. Matt. 28:19
2. II Cor. 13:14
3. I Pet. 1:2

The Spirit is linked to human activity.

1. Acts 15:28
2. Rom. 8:26
3. I Cor. 12:11
4. Eph. 4:30

At the very beginning of Acts the Spirit's role is emphasized. Pentecost was not the beginning of the work of the Spirit, but a new chapter. Jesus always had the Spirit. His baptism was not the beginning of the work of the Spirit, but a new chapter. Luke prepares the church for a new chapter of effective ministry. Jesus is still the focus, the Spirit is still the effective means and the Father's love, forgiveness, and restoration of all humans made in His image is the goal!

2. The wilderness becomes a fertile field. . . a forest, v. 15. This is the reversal of vv. 12-13. See the same metaphor of fertility in 29:17.
3. Justice. . . righteousness abide, v. 16
4. Peace, quietness, and confidence forever, v. 17. This means no invasions (cf. v. 18).
5. Verse 19 may refer to the destruction of Assyria.
6. Verse 20 is another blessing, but it is somewhat ambiguous.

### 32:15

NASB, NKJV,

NIV

**“Until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high”**

NRSV, JPSOA

**“until a spirit from on high is poured out on us”**

TEV

**“God will send us his spirit”**

NJB

**“until the spirit is poured out on us from above”**

REB

**“until a spirit from on high is lavished upon us”**

The Hebrew text has no ARTICLE, PRONOUN, or descriptive phrase (i.e., “of the LORD,” as in 11:2 or “My,” 44:3; 59:21; Joel 2:28) linked to the NOUN “spirit” (BDB 924). The question is to whom does it refer.

1. the spirit of the new age
2. the Holy Spirit
3. a spirit of repentance and trust from God

Grammar suggests #1 or #3, but context suggests #2.

This is a radical break in the context. Similar passages which speak of God's Spirit are Isa. 44:3; Ezek. 39:29; Joel 2:28-29; Zech. 12:10; Acts 2:1-21. The same VERB is used in a sacrificial sense of the Messiah in Isa. 53:12. There is a series of seven blessings that will result because of the Spirit's presence: (1) fertility, (2) justice, (3) righteousness, (4) peace, (5) quietness, (6) confidence, and (7) secure dwelling.

▣ **“from on high”** This is an idiom for “heaven,” the place of YHWH's abode (cf. Job 16:19; 31:2; Isa. 33:5).

**32:16 “justice. . . righteousness”** These are a common pair in the OT (cf. II Sam. 8:15; I Kgs. 10:9; I Chr. 18:14; II Chr. 9:8; Ps. 99:4; Isa. 9:7; 32:16; 33:5; 59:14; Jer. 4:2; 9:24; 22:3,15; 23:5; 33:15; Ezek. 18:5,19, 21,27; 33:14,16,19; 45:9; Amos 5:7,24). They denote the kind of society (cf. vv. 17-18) where all people are honored and treated fairly as covenant partners. They then characterize the unique presence of God among His people.

**32:17 “peace”** See Special Topic following.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: PEACE (*SHALOM*)

The Hebrew term (BDB 1022, KB 1532) is common in Semitic cognates.

- A. Akkadian
  - 1. to be unharmed
  - 2. stay well
  - 3. to be in good condition
- B. Ugaritic (Canaanite)
  - 1. to be unharmed
  - 2. healthy
- C. Arabic
  - 1. to be healthy
  - 2. to be in a happy situation
- D. Aramaic
  - 1. to be complete
  - 2. to come to an end/completion
  - 3. conclude a peace
  - 4. stay unharmed
- E. Hebrew connotations
  - 1. completeness
  - 2. soundness
  - 3. welfare
  - 4. peace

Today the term *shalom* is a Hebrew greeting as well as a farewell statement. It still denotes the absence of evil and the presence of good (i.e., contentment with life). It denotes a mental state of security and satisfaction.

▣ **“quietness and confidence”** These two terms (BDB 1052 and BDB 105) also occur in 30:15, which characterizes the new age of justice, righteousness, and peace (cf. vv. 1,16).

**32:19** This is a very difficult verse which seems out of place. It may refer to Assyria. The phrase “the forest” is used of Assyria in 10:18-19,33,34. The phrase “the city” is used of Assyria in 24:10; 25:2,3; 26:5.

- ▣
- NASB “it will hail”
  - NKJV “though hail”
  - NRSV “will disappear completely”
  - TEV “(but hail will fall. . .)”
  - NJB “be totally destroyed”
  - LXX “if hail descends”
  - Peshitta “hail shall come down”
  - REB “it will be cool on the slopes”
  - JPSOA “shall sink and vanish”

The ancient versions see the MT’s וברד (unknown form) as ברד, BDB 135, “hail,” cf. noun in 28:2,17.

REB sees it as coming from the same root in Arabic meaning “become cool” (BDB 135).

The NJB and JPSOA see the MT's first two words as being from the same VERBAL root, **דָּרַג**,

1. *Qal* PERFECT

2. *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT

denoting a total and complete destruction (“descent”).

**32:20** This verse is also very difficult to fit into the context. However, the consensus seems to be that in the days of God's blessings, the crops will be so abundant that the cattle could roam freely and eat without really affecting the outcome of the crop.



# ISAIAH 33

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Judgment of God	A Prayer of Deep Distress	A Prophetic Liturgy	A Prayer for Help	The Expected Deliverance
33:1-12 (1-12)	33:1-4 (1)  (2-4)  33:5-9 (5-6)  (7-9)  Impending Judgment on Zion  33:10-13 (10-13)	33:1-24 (1)  (2-6)    (7-12)	33:1   33:2-4  33:5-6    33:7-9  The LORD Warns His Enemies  33:10-13	33:1-16 (1-5)      (6)  (7-16)
33:13-16 (13-16)	33:14-16 (14-16)  The Land of the Majestic King	(13-16)	33:14-16  The Glorious Future	The Return to Jerusalem
33:17-24 (17-24)	33:17-24 (17-19)  (20-23a)   (23b-24)	(17-22)    (23a)  (23b-24)	33:17-24	33:17-24 (17-20)    (21-24)

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph

3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The paragraphing is ambiguous (because of the composite nature of these poems) in this chapter. Several different groups are addressed.
  1. Assyria, v. 1
  2. covenant people, v. 2
  3. brave men who cry in the streets, v. 7
  4. ambassadors of peace who weep, v. 7
  5. the traveler, v. 8
  6. the people, v. 12
  7. you who are far away, v. 13
  8. you who are near, v. 13
  9. sinners in Zion, v. 14
  10. he who walks righteously, v. 15
  11. He. . .His, v. 16
  12. your heart, vv. 18-20
  13. your tackle, v. 23
  14. resident. . .people, v. 24

It is difficult to identify the groups to which each of these relate.
- B. Notice how many names/titles and characterizations of Deity are mentioned in this chapter.
  1. YHWH, v. 2
  2. YHWH is exalted, vv. 5,10
  3. He shall be the stability (lit. “faithfulness”), v. 6
  4. a wealth of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge, v. 6
  5. the fear of YHWH, v. 6
  6. King in His beauty, v. 17
  7. the majestic *One*, v. 21
  8. several, “The LORD is. . .,” v. 22
- C. It is possible that the first section of Isaiah ends after this chapter because in the DSS scroll of Isaiah a double space appears after this chapter, but not after chapter 39.
- D. “Possible” outline of the poem’s order/arrangement
  1. God judges Assyria who He used to judge Judah, v. 1
  2. Judah prays for help, v. 2
  3. God responds, vv. 3-6,10-12
  4. Judah’s current state, vv. 7-9
  5. the godly spared, vv. 13-16
  6. a recapitulation of the Assyrian period, vv. 17-20
  7. the reign of the righteous king, vv. 21-24



## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:1-12

<sup>1</sup>Woe to you, O destroyer,

While you were not destroyed;

And he who is treacherous, while *others* did not deal treacherously with him.

As soon as you finish destroying, you will be destroyed;

As soon as you cease to deal treacherously, *others* will deal treacherously with you.

<sup>2</sup>O LORD, be gracious to us; we have waited for You.

Be their strength every morning,

Our salvation also in the time of distress.

<sup>3</sup>At the sound of the tumult peoples flee;

At the lifting up of Yourself nations disperse.

<sup>4</sup>Your spoil is gathered *as* the caterpillar gathers;

As locusts rushing about men rush about on it.

<sup>5</sup>The LORD is exalted, for He dwells on high;

He has filled Zion with justice and righteousness.

<sup>6</sup>And He will be the stability of your times,

A wealth of salvation, wisdom and knowledge;

The fear of the LORD is his treasure.

<sup>7</sup>Behold, their brave men cry in the streets,

The ambassadors of peace weep bitterly.

<sup>8</sup>The highways are desolate, the traveler has ceased,

He has broken the covenant, he has despised the cities,

He has no regard for man.

<sup>9</sup>The land mourns and pines away,

Lebanon is shamed and withers;

Sharon is like a desert plain,

And Bashan and Carmel lose *their foliage*.

<sup>10</sup>"Now I will arise," says the LORD,

"Now I will be exalted, now I will be lifted up.

<sup>11</sup>You have conceived chaff, you will give birth to stubble;

My breath will consume you like a fire.

<sup>12</sup>The peoples will be burned to lime,

Like cut thorns which are burned in the fire.

**33:1 "Woe"** Chapters 28-33 form a unit often called the "Unit of Doom" because of the recurrent use of the term "woe," (cf. 28:1; 29:1, 15; 30:1; 31:1; 33:1). See note on "Woe" at 5:8.

▣ **"O destroyer"** Verse 1 speaks of Assyria, as do vv. 3,4,7-9,11-12,17-19,23; even v. 21 may refer to the cities located on the Tigris and Euphrates. This chapter follows a common theme pattern of Isaiah.

1. the current rebellious state of God's people
2. God's judgment by foreign powers
3. God's judgment of these foreign powers (here Assyria)
4. the future glorious conditions of His people through the righteous king (cf. 32:1)

Both “destroyed” (BDB 994, KB 1418 twice, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, NEGATED *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE) and “treacherous” (lit. “act faithlessly,” BDB 93, KB 108 twice, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, NEGATED *Qal* PERFECT) are also used in 21:2 about the fall of old Babylon. In a theological sense Isaiah’s ambiguity is purposeful. He intentionally makes the identity of Israel/Judah’s aggressors fuzzy so that his poems can function as “multiple-fulfillment” prophecies. Enemies come and go by YHWH’s hand and purpose, but YHWH Himself and His eternal redemptive purpose, using Abraham’s seed, does not!

**33:2** The content of Judah’s prayer is listed.

1. be gracious to us, BDB 335, KB 334, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. 30:18,19
2. we have waited for You, BDB 875 I, KB 1082, *Piel* PERFECT, cf. 8:17; 25:9; 26:8; 40:31; 49:23; 51:5; 60:9
3. be our strength (lit. “arm”) every morning, BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. be our salvation in time of distress (“be” VERB assumed)

YHWH is Judah’s only hope (cf. 59:16; 63:1,5), not Assyria (alliance) and not Egypt (alliance), only YHWH. Humans tend to panic and lose trust in times of crisis and uncertainty. They try to save themselves using their resources or the resources of other humans, to no avail!

▣ **“strength”** It is literally “arm” (BDB 283). This is a biblical anthropomorphic metaphor to describe God’s presence and power on a daily basis.

▣ **“salvation”** This term (BDB 447) is used in the OT for physical deliverance (cf. 12:2 [twice], 3; 25:9; 26:1,18; 33:6).

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: SALVATION (ישועה)**

This term (BDB 447) has several connotations.

1. welfare, prosperity, Job. 30:15
2. divine salvation which encompasses both physical and spiritual aspects
  - a. Gen. 49:18
  - b. Deut. 32:15
  - c. Ps. 3:2,8; 22:1; 35:3; 62:2; 69:29; 70:5; 78:22; 80:3; 89:26; 91:16; 106:4; 140:7
  - d. Isa. 12:2; 33:2; 51:6,8; 52:7,10; 56:1; 59:11; 60:18; 62:1
3. the idea of physical and spiritual deliverance is clearly present in Jonah 2:9-10
4. often “rejoicing” is related to YHWH’s salvation, I Sam. 2:1; Isa. 25:9; 26:1; Ps. 9:14; 13:5; 35:9

Salvation involves the implementation of YHWH’s original intended fellowship and society with His human creatures. It involves individual and societal wholeness!

**33:4** In this verse “spoil”(BDB 1021) is a metaphor which denotes the destruction of YHWH’s enemies.

The VERB “gathered” (BDB 62, KB 74, *Pual* PERFECT) is also used in 32:10 to describe the judgment of Jerusalem. It is also used in 24:22 (same stem) to denote world-wide eschatological judgment. Humans “gather” for self, greed, and power, but God gathers for judgment. The NT describes the end-time gathering of

1. the redeemed, Matt. 13:48; 24:31
2. the wicked, Matt. 13:40-41

▣ **“locusts”** Locust invasions were common in the ANE. They are often compared to an invading army (cf. Deut. 28:38,42; Joel 1:4; 2:25; Amos 7:1-2). God directs armies as He directs all things! These locusts gather the ill-gotten spoils of Assyria.

There are many Semitic words for this insect which apparently denote (1) different species or (2) different stages of growth.

**33:5 “He dwells on high”** This phrase is a metaphor for heaven (cf. 32:15; Job 16:19; 31:2). The ANE viewed heaven as above. For the Israelites the smoke from their sacrifices rose to God, therefore, He must be up. There was also the theological contrast with “down” as a metaphor for death. Sheol was down, but heaven was up. In our modern era these spacial metaphors seem inaccurate, but remember they are ancient metaphors never intended to carry a literalness. The language of the OT is phenomenological, which means the language of description using the five human senses. The Bible is not anti-scientific, it is pre-scientific! Taking ancient metaphors literally is not a sign of biblical conservatism, but of missing the intended meaning of the original historical setting of inspired authors.

▣ **“justice and righteousness”** See note at 32:16.

**33:6**

**NASB, NKJV,**

**NRSV**

**“He shall be the stability of your times”**

**NJB**

**“You can count on this all your days”**

**Peshitta**

**“Faith shall be the stability of your times”**

**REB**

**“her strength will be in your unchanging stability”**

YHWH brings “stability,” lit. “faithful,” BDB 53, cf. 25:1. Judah’s hope and stability is the faithful character of her God (cf. Deut. 32:4; Ps. 36:5; 89:1-2,5,24,33,49; 88:11; 92:2; 143:1). This is the answer to the prayer of v. 2. Because of His faithful character He gives to His wayward people

1. a wealth (BDB 340) of
  - a. salvation (BDB 447)
  - b. wisdom (BDB 315 with change of final consonant from ן to ן, cf. 11:2)
  - c. knowledge (BDB 395, cf. 11:2)
2. the fear (BDB 432, in the sense of reverential awe, cf. 11:2; Pro. 1:7,29; 2:5) of YHWH is his treasure (BDB 69, in the sense of a full storehouse, cf. I Chr. 27:27-28; II Chr. 11:11)

**33:7-9** This reflects the sad state of the impending siege because negotiations have failed (cf. II Kgs. 18:13-16).

**33:7** These two poetic lines are not synonymous. Biblical scholars have been influenced by Robert Lowth, who tried to fit all Hebrew parallelism into three or four categories. Today scholars are understanding the multiplicity of poetic parallelism. Currently it is best to say that the second line “adds something” or “goes beyond” (Adele Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism: Revised and Expanded*, p. 64).

Two different groups are addressed.

1. line one – soldiers of Jerusalem
2. line two – the ambassador of peace sent to Egypt by Hezekiah (cf. v. 8)

They do similar/parallel things

- “cry,” BDB 858
- “weep,” BDB 113

Parallelism is one of the main keys in interpreting Hebrew poetry, but we must recognize it is used in many forms and at many literary levels.

**33:7 “brave men”** This is possibly related to the root *ariel*, (NJB, cf. 29:1,2,7; 31:9).

**33:8**

**NASB, NKJV,**

**Peshitta “cities”**

**NRSV, DSS “oaths”**

**NJB, RSV “witnesses”**

**REB “treaties”**

**TEV “agreements”**

The MT has “cities” (עָרִים, BDB 746), but because of the parallelism, “witnesses” (עֵדִים, BDB 729) fits better. This could be another “R” – “D” confusion. The UBS Hebrew Text Project gives “witness” a C rating (i.e., considerable doubt).

**33:9** This verse uses agricultural metaphors for the problems involved in the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem in 701 B.C. These types of agricultural metaphors are common in Isaiah (cf. 16:8; 24:4,7). YHWH controls the weather for His purposes (cf. Deuteronomy 27-28). There is no distinction between the “natural” and “supernatural” in the Bible, as in the ANE. Deity is intimately involved in His creation. Be careful of your modern, scientific worldview placing a theological grid over Scripture!

**33:10-12** These possibly relate to Assyria as in v. 1.

**33:11-12** The imagery of “chaff” and “fire” are common in Isaiah (cf. 1:7; 5:24; 9:18-19; 10:16-19; 26:11; 29:6; 30:27-28; 33:11-14; 47:14, also Joel 2:35). See Special Topic: Fire at 1:31.

Isaiah uses imagery from human reproduction.

1. here, conception, BDB 247 I, KB 255, *Qal* IMPERFECT, 8:3; 26:18; 59:4,13
2. giving birth, 9:5; 13:8; 21:3; 23:4; 26:17,18; 39:7; 51:18; 54:1; 59:4; 66:7,9

▣ **“My breath”** This is the term *ruah* (BDB 924) used as an anthropomorphic metaphor for the wind of judgment from YHWH’s nostrils (see Special Topic at 6:1). It is obviously a metaphor of YHWH’s personal participation (cf. Exodus 15:18; II Sam. 22:16; Ps. 18:15) in judgment (cf. 11:4; 30:28; 40:7).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:13-16**

**<sup>13</sup>“You who are far away, hear what I have done;  
And you who are near, acknowledge My might.”**

**<sup>14</sup>Sinners in Zion are terrified;**

**Trembling has seized the godless.**

**“Who among us can live with the consuming fire?**

**Who among us can live with continual burning?”**

**<sup>15</sup>He who walks righteously and speaks with sincerity,**

**He who rejects unjust gain**

**And shakes his hands so that they hold no bribe;**

**He who stops his ears from hearing about bloodshed**

**And shuts his eyes from looking upon evil;**

**<sup>16</sup>He will dwell on the heights,**

**His refuge will be the impregnable rock;**

**His bread will be given *him*,**

**His water will be sure.**

**33:13 “You who are far away. . .you who are near”** In context, this refers to God’s people in exile in Assyria and to God’s people still in Judah (cf. Dan. 9:7). However, seen in the wider context of the new age, it may be related to the Gentile and the Jewish people (cf. 49:1; it is idiom for all, cf. Jer. 25:26).

**33:14 “Sinners in Zion are terrified”** Again the reality of a mixture of the faithful and unfaithful within the people of God is acknowledged. Sinners

1. are terrified, BDB 808, KB 922, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. NOUN - 2:10,19,21; 24:17,18; VERB - 12:2; 19:16,17; 44:8,11; 51:13
2. trembling has seized the godless, BDB 28, KB 31, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 13:8; 21:3

The “godless” (BDB 338) are described in 32:6 as those who practice godlessness and speak error against the LORD (cf. 9:17; 10:6).

▣ **“Who among us can live with the consuming fire?”**

**Who among us can live with the continual burning”** This refers to God’s holiness as seen through the metaphor of fire connected with His righteousness and His judgment (cf. Deut. 4:24; 5:24; Isa. 30:27,30).

For “continual” (lit. “forever”) see Special Topic at 32:14.

**33:15** This reflects the character of YHWH as seen in His people.

1. walks righteously
2. speaks with sincerity
3. rejects unjust gain
4. does not take a bribe
5. does not listen to evil plans (i.e., bloodshed)
6. does not look upon evil

**33:16** The person who lives the life described in v. 15

1. will dwell on the heights
2. will take refuge in the impregnable rock
3. will have an abundance of food
4. will have a sure water supply

This describes the new age person. The ideal of Deuteronomy is actualized!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:17-24**

**<sup>17</sup>Your eyes will see the King in His beauty;**

**They will behold a far-distant land.**

**<sup>18</sup>Your heart will meditate on terror:**

**"Where is he who counts?**

**Where is he who weighs?**

**Where is he who counts the towers?"**

**<sup>19</sup>You will no longer see a fierce people,**

**A people of unintelligible speech which no one comprehends,**

**Of a stammering tongue which no one understands.**

**<sup>20</sup>Look upon Zion, the city of our appointed feasts;**

**Your eyes will see Jerusalem, an undisturbed habitation,**

**A tent which will not be folded;**

**Its stakes will never be pulled up,**

Nor any of its cords be torn apart.

<sup>21</sup>But there the majestic *One*, the LORD, will be for us

A place of rivers and wide canals

On which no boat with oars will go,

And on which no mighty ship will pass —

<sup>22</sup>For the LORD is our judge,

The LORD is our lawgiver,

The LORD is our king;

He will save us —

<sup>23</sup>Your tackle hangs slack;

It cannot hold the base of its mast firmly,

Nor spread out the sail.

Then the prey of an abundant spoil will be divided;

The lame will take the plunder.

<sup>24</sup>And no resident will say, "I am sick";

The people who dwell there will be forgiven *their* iniquity.

**33:17 “Your eyes will see”** This VERB (BDB 302, KB 301) is often used to refer to spiritual insight (cf. 26:11; 33:17,20; 48:6; Job 23:8-9; Ps. 46:8; 63:2). Humans were created to function in two realms.

1. the physical (i.e., *nephesh*, this planet)
2. the spiritual (i.e., *ruah*, fellowship with God)

The Fall of Genesis 3 has disrupted both!

▣ **“the King and his beauty”** This is a purposeful ambiguity, much like 32:1, where the context fits both Hezekiah in his day and the coming Messiah of 7:14.

**33:18-20 “Where is he who counts”** This refers to Assyrian scouts reconnoitering Jerusalem for the coming siege.

**33:19 “unintelligible speech”** This refers to the Assyrian language (cf. 28:11).

**33:20** This is Isaiah’s theology that Jerusalem will never fall (cf. Isaiah 36-37). For a full discussion of “city” see notes at 24:10 and the chart at the Introduction to chapter 26, D. This prophecy must be understood in context because in Jeremiah’s day, God gave exactly the opposite prophecy.

The imagery of “a tent” is an anachronistic allusion back to the Exodus. It may also denote “the tabernacle” built as a portable tent. The same allusion (i.e., tent) is used in 54:2 for a worldwide expansion.

**33:21** The metaphor of “rivers and sailing ships” seems to be a play on their alliances with Egypt (cf. v. 23). Instead of Egypt, YHWH (the Majestic One) will be their provider and protector (cf. v. 22).

**33:22** Jerusalem (cf. v. 20) is again the city of the Great King (YHWH Himself) as represented in His righteous surrogate (the Davidic Messiah).

**33:23** Poetry is ambiguous. This could refer to

1. the destruction of Assyria
2. the empowering of Jerusalem

3. or both

In v. 17, both “your eyes” and “they will behold” have uncertain antecedents. Verse 18 seems to refer to Assyria checking out Jerusalem for invasion and siege. Verse 19 seems to allude to the strange-sounding language of the Assyrian invaders. Yet at v. 20 the scene changes to an undisturbed Jerusalem. Therefore, vv. 21 and 22 could refer to Jerusalem, obviously v. 24 does.

Some see the “plunder” (BDB 1021) in v. 23 as related to the items that the Assyrian army abandoned before the walls of Jerusalem in 701 B.C. and not the sack of Nineveh itself, which occurred in 612 B.C.

**33:24** YHWH is characterized as the healer. This is an allusion to chapter 1 where God’s people are characterized as ill (cf. 1:5-6). Illness is a metaphor for “sin” and “rebellion” (cf. Ps. 41:4; 103:3; Isa. 53:5). The NT continues the Jewish concept of sickness relating to sin (cf. John 5:14; James 5:14-15). The term “save” in the OT denotes physical deliverance (see Special Topic at 33:2).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How are chapters 32 and 33 related to 28-31?
2. Are these two chapters Messianic or historical?
3. List the blessings of the Spirit described in 32:15-18.
4. Give the historical context of 33:7-9.





# ISAIAH 34

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
God's Wrath Against Nations	Judgment on the Nations	The Terrible End of God's Enemies	God Will Punish His Enemies	The Sentence on Edom
34:1-15 (1-15)	34:1-4 (1-4)	34:1-17 (1-4)	34:1-4	34:1-17 (1-4)
	34:5-7 (5-7)	(5-7)	34:5-8	(5-8)
	34:8-15 (8-12)	(8-17)		
	(13-15)		34:9-15	(9-11) (12-17)
34:16-17 (16a-17)	34:16-17 (16-17)		34:16-17	

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Isaiah 34 and 35 are very similar to chapters 24-27. Both of these are combinations of judgment and blessing sections which are conclusions to a much longer literary unit.
  1. Isaiah 34 speaks of universal judgment in graphic terms.
  2. Isaiah 35 speaks of universal restoration in beautiful, idealistic terms.

- B. Because there is a double space between chapter 33 and chapter 34 in the Dead Sea Scrolls copy of Isaiah, it is possible that this literary unit (chapters 34-35 and 38-39) should go with 40-66 (as far as literary setting). Chapter 35 is a discussion of the new age, the days of restoration. They describe what YHWH wanted to do with mankind before the Fall of Genesis 3 and the disobedience of Abraham's seed.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 34:1-15

<sup>1</sup>Draw near, O nations, to hear; and listen, O peoples!

Let the earth and all it contains hear, and the world and all that springs from it.

<sup>2</sup>For the LORD'S indignation is against all the nations,

And *His* wrath against all their armies;

He has utterly destroyed them,

He has given them over to slaughter.

<sup>3</sup>So their slain will be thrown out,

And their corpses will give off their stench,

And the mountains will be drenched with their blood.

<sup>4</sup>And all the host of heaven will wear away,

And the sky will be rolled up like a scroll;

All their hosts will also wither away

As a leaf withers from the vine,

Or as *one* withers from the fig tree.

<sup>5</sup>For My sword is satiated in heaven,

Behold it shall descend for judgment upon Edom

And upon the people whom I have devoted to destruction.

<sup>6</sup>The sword of the LORD is filled with blood,

It is sated with fat, with the blood of lambs and goats,

With the fat of the kidneys of rams.

For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah

And a great slaughter in the land of Edom.

<sup>7</sup>Wild oxen will also fall with them

And young bulls with strong ones;

Thus their land will be soaked with blood,

And their dust become greasy with fat.

<sup>8</sup>For the LORD has a day of vengeance,

A year of recompense for the cause of Zion.

<sup>9</sup>Its streams will be turned into pitch,

And its loose earth into brimstone,

And its land will become burning pitch.

<sup>10</sup>It will not be quenched night or day;

Its smoke will go up forever.

From generation to generation it will be desolate;

None will pass through it forever and ever.

<sup>11</sup>But pelican and hedgehog will possess it,  
 And owl and raven will dwell in it;  
 And He will stretch over it the line of desolation  
 And the plumb line of emptiness.

<sup>12</sup>Its nobles — there is no one there  
*Whom* they may proclaim king —  
 And all its princes will be nothing.

<sup>13</sup>Thorns will come up in its fortified towers,  
 Nettles and thistles in its fortified cities;  
 It will also be a haunt of jackals  
*And* an abode of ostriches.

<sup>14</sup>The desert creatures will meet with the wolves,  
 The hairy goat also will cry to its kind;  
 Yes, the night monster will settle there  
 And will find herself a resting place.

<sup>15</sup>The tree snake will make its nest and lay *eggs* there,  
 And it will hatch and gather *them* under its protection.  
 Yes, the hawks will be gathered there,  
 Every one with its kind.

**34:1** There are several commands in this verse.

1. draw near, BDB 897 I, KB 1132, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. listen, BDB 904, KB 1151, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
3. hear, BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* JUSSIVE

The Sovereign of the universe is addressing His creation and announcing its judgment.

1. “O nations,” BDB 156, cf. v. 2; 43:9
2. O peoples, BDB 522, cf. 17:12; 43:9
3. the earth, BDB 75, cf. 37:16,20; Gen. 18:18; 22:18; Micah 1:2
4. all it contains, BDB 571, cf. 6:3
5. the world, BDB 385, cf. 13:11; 24:4
6. all that springs from it, BDB 481 CONSTRUCT BDB 425

Obviously this refers to the known world of Isaiah’s day, but the language is universal.

**34:2** “For the LORD’s indignation is against all the nations. . .He has utterly destroyed them” The idea of “utterly destroyed” (BDB 355 I, KB 353, *Hiphil* PERFECT) refers to the concept of “holy war.” In Joshua this concept in relation to Jericho is translated “under the ban” (i.e., dedicated to YHWH for destruction, cf. Josh. 6:17,18 [thrice]; 7:1 [twice], 12 [twice], 13 [twice], 15).

**34:3** This verse expands the thought of v. 2, with graphic metaphors of warfare.

1. their slain thrown out, BDB 1020, KB 1527, *Hophal* IMPERFECT
2. their corpses will give off (lit. “go up”) their stench, BDB 748, KB 828, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Amos 4:10
3. the mountains will be drenched (lit. “dissolve”) with their blood, BDB 587, KB 606, *Niphal* PERFECT

This reflects a battle scene where the bodies of the dead have remained for an extended period of time. In the ANE improper burial was a horror and disgrace and might affect one’s afterlife. It represented a total defeat, physically and spiritually.

**34:4** This hyperbolic language relating to the sun and moon cycles of nature is a recurrent theme in the Bible.

1. Isaiah 13:13; 34:4; 51:6
2. Ezekiel 32:7,8
3. Joel 2:31
4. Matthew 24:29
5. II Peter 3:10
6. Revelation 6:12-14; 20:11

The phrase “host of heaven” can refer to

1. astral deities (sun, moon, stars, planets, comets, etc.) usually associated with Babylon
2. the angelic army (cf. 24:21-22; Josh. 5:14-15, based on Deut. 32:8 in the LXX and illustrated in Daniel 10)

In this context it refers to the objects of light in the sky. These objects are affected and thrown into disarray by the approach of their creator! These physical objects, often viewed as deities, are subject to YHWH!

▣ **“rolled up like a scroll”** This imagery is used by John in Rev. 6:14. The sky in the ANE was thought to be (1) tightly stretched skin over the earth like a bowl (cf. Isa. 40:22) or (2) a set up tent (cf. Ps. 104:2). The old order will be replaced by the new (cf. Rev. 21:1).



NASB, NRSV **“wither”**

NKJV, TEV **“fall”**

This VERB (BDB 615, KB 663) occurs three times in this verse.

1. *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT
3. *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE

It also occurs in the parallel literary unit of chapters 24-27 (cf. 24:4 [twice]). Agriculture also shakes at the coming of the creator! We could say heaven and earth both fall apart at the approach of the Creator/Judge because they, too, have been affected by mankind’s sin (cf. Gen. 3:17-19; Rom. 8:19-22).

**34:5 “for judgment upon Edom”** Edom is singled out for judgment in this literary unit just as Moab was singled out in Isa. 25:10-12. Here Edom (like Moab earlier) is symbolic of all the arrogant nations who rebel against God.

**34:6-7** These verses use the metaphor of sacrifice (cf. BDB 830, f, cf. Jer. 50:27; 51:40; Ezek. 39:17-20) to describe YHWH’s judgment

1. the blood of lambs and goats, v. 6
2. the fat of the kidneys of rams, v. 6
3. young bulls, v. 7

Not only are domestic animals going to be sacrificed, but also wild oxen (BDB 910).

The imagery of YHWH’s sword is also found in Deut. 32:41-42 and Ezek. 21:28-32.



NASB **“is sated with fat”**

NKJV **“made overflowing with fatness”**

NRSV, REB,  
LXX **“is gorged with fat”**

NJB **“is greasy with fat”**

This VERB (BDB 206, KB 234, *Hothpael* PERFECT) is found only here in this rare stem (cf. Deut. 24:2, same stem, but different word). It denotes a reflexive concept, “YHWH’s sword has fattened itself.” The *Pual* IMPERFECT of the same VERB is found in v. 7, “became greasy with fat.” Both speak of a huge number of sacrificial victims slain (metaphor for the dead of the enemies’ army). The fat of the lower organs was that part of the animal placed on the altar.

**34:8** We as modern interpreters must remember the essence of Hebrew poetry is

1. its abbreviated form
2. its sound plays
3. its parallelism

Westerners tend to be Greek-thinking, logical literalists! However, this is ancient eastern poetic literature. See G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*, chapter 5, “Hebrew Idiom and Hebrew Thought,” pp. 107-117. This is also true of Genesis 1-2. See John L. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis 1*.

This verse is a good example, “day,” line 1 is parallel to “year,” line 2. This is not meant to be a temporal, historical comment, but the recognition that a time of judgment and accountability to God is coming! How long it will last is not an issue.

**34:9** “pitch. . .brimstone. . .burning pitch” These (BDB 278, 172, 278/128) are allusions to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Gen. 19:24. Also, see the significant parallel of Jer. 49:17-18. Sodom and Gomorrah are in the northern area of Edom (i.e., southern end of the Dead Sea).

**34:10** This is hyperbolic language which denotes a complete destruction that lasts into the indefinite future (cf. 1:31; 13:20; 66:24).

There are two terms for “forever” used.

1. line 2, עולם (BDB 761, see Special Topic at 32:14)
2. line 4, נצח (BDB 664, cf. II Sam. 2:26; Isa. 13:20; 25:8; 28:28; 33:20; 57:16)

The phrase “its smoke shall go up forever” is used in Rev. 14:11 and 19:3. It seems probable that (1) “Moab” in 25:10-12; (2) Edom in this context; and (3) “Babylon” in Revelation all stand for “human society organized and functioning apart from God or even in rebellion against God.”

For a good discussion of the biblical uses of “forever” see D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*, pp. 98-101.

**34:11-15** There are many animals (mostly birds) mentioned in this section. All of them are unclean according to Leviticus 11. These same unclean animals are seen in the ruins of the city of Babylon (cf. 13:19-22). There are two possible interpretations for this: (1) these ruins are symbolic of fallen human efforts judged and destroyed by God so that nothing but the animals lived there or (2) these cities are now inhabited by the demonic (cf. Matt. 12:43). Modern translations such as the NEB have shown clear archaeological evidence that these animals may refer to the demonic (cf. particularly v. 14).

1. NASB “hairy goat”  
NKJV “wild goat”  
NRSV “goat-demons”  
TEV “demons”  
NJB “satyr”  
REB “he-goats”

This term (BDB 972 III) refers to

- a. idols (cf. II Chr. 11:15)
  - b. demons (cf. Lev. 17:7)
  - c. wild animals (cf. Isa. 13:21)
2. NASB, TEV “night monster”

NKJV “night creature”  
NRSV, NJB “Lilith”  
REB “nightjar”

This term (BDB 535) in later Judaism became the name for a female night tempter. The origin of the term and concept may be the three night demons of Akkadian mythology (KB 528). The Peshitta identifies it as a “screech owl.” The night with all its “nature-sounds” was terrifying to ancient people.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: THE DEMONIC (UNCLEAN SPIRIT)

- A. Ancient peoples were animists. They attributed personality to forces of nature, animals, and natural objects. Life was explained through the interaction of these spiritual entities with mankind.
- B. This personification became polytheism (many gods). Usually the demonic (*genii*) were lesser gods or demigods (good or evil) that impacted individual human lives.
  1. Mesopotamia, chaos and conflict
  2. Egypt, order and function
  3. Canaan, see W. F. Albright’s *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, Fifth Edition, pp. 67-92
- C. The OT does not dwell on or develop the subject of lesser gods, angels, or the demonic, probably because of its strict monotheism (cf. Exod. 8:10; 9:14; 15:11; Deut. 4:35,39; 6:4; 33:26; Ps. 35:10; 71:19; 86:6; Isa. 46:9; Jer. 10:6-7; Mic. 7:18). It does mention the false gods of the pagan nations (*Shedim*, cf. Deut. 32:17; Ps. 106:37) and it does name some of them.
  1. *Se'im* (satyrs or hair-demons, cf. Lev. 17:7; II Chr. 11:15)
  2. *Lilith* (female, a seducing demon, cf. Isa. 34:14)
  3. *Mavet* (Hebrew term for death used for Canaanite god of the underworld, *Mot*, cf. Isa. 28:15,18; Jer. 9:21; and possibly Deut. 28:22)
  4. *Resheph* (plague, cf. Deut. 33:29; Ps. 78:48; Hab. 3:5)
  5. *Dever* (pestilence, cf. Ps. 91:5-6; Hab. 3:5)
  6. *Az'azel* (name uncertain, but possibly a desert demon or place name, cf. Lev. 16:8,10,26) (These examples are taken from *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 5, p. 1523.)

However, there is no dualism or angelic independence from YHWH in the OT. Satan is a servant of YHWH (cf. Job 1-3; Zechariah 3), not an enemy (cf. A. B. Davidson, *A Theology of the Old Testament*, pp. 300-306).

- D. Judaism developed during the Babylonian exile (586-538 B.C.). It was theologically influenced by the Persian personified dualism of Zoroastrianism, a good high god called *Mazda* or *Ormazd* and an evil opponent called *Ahriman*. This allowed within post-exilic Judaism the personified dualism between YHWH and His angels and Satan and his angels or demons.

Judaism’s theology of personified evil is explained and well documented in Alfred Edersheim’s *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2, appendix XIII (pp. 749-863) and XVI (pp. 770-776). Judaism personified evil in three ways.

1. Satan or Sammael
2. the evil intent (*yetzer hara*) within mankind
3. the Death Angel

Edersheim characterizes these as (1) the Accuser; (2) the Tempter; and (3) the Punisher (vol. 2, p. 756). There is a marked theological difference between post-exilic Judaism and the NT presentation and explanation of evil.

- E. The NT, especially the Gospels, asserts the existence and opposition of evil spiritual beings to humanity and to YHWH (in Judaism Satan was an enemy to mankind, but not to God). They oppose God's will, rule, and kingdom.

Jesus confronted and expelled these demonic beings, also called (1) unclean spirits (cf. Luke 4:36; 6:18) or (2) evil spirits (cf. Luke 7:21; 8:2), from human beings. Jesus clearly made a distinction between illness (physical and mental) and the demonic. He demonstrated His power and spiritual insight by recognizing and exorcizing these evil spirits. They often recognized Him and attempted to address Him, but Jesus rejected their testimony, demanded their silence, and expelled them. Exorcisms are a sign of the defeat of Satan's kingdom.

There is a surprising lack of information in the NT Apostolic letters on this subject. Exorcism is never listed as a spiritual gift, nor is a methodology or procedure for it given for future generations of ministers or believers.

- F. Evil is real; evil is personal; evil is present. Neither its origin nor its purpose is revealed. The Bible asserts its reality and aggressively opposes its influence. There is no ultimate dualism in reality. God is in total control; evil is defeated and judged and will be removed from creation.
- G. God's people must resist evil (cf. James 4:7). They cannot be controlled by it (cf. I John 5:18), but they can be tempted and their witness and influence damaged (cf. Eph. 6:10-18). Evil is a revealed part of the Christian's world-view. Modern Christians have no right to redefine evil (the demythologizing of Rudolf Baltmann); depersonalize evil (the social structures of Paul Tillich), nor attempt to explain it completely in psychological terms (Sigmund Freud). Its influence is pervasive, but defeated. Believers need to walk in the victory of Christ!

**34:11** The terms translated "desolation" (BDB 1062, cf. 24:10) and "emptiness" (BDB 96) are used in Gen. 1:2 to describe the initial chaos of the planet. Edom (i.e., all rebellious nations) will be reduced to original void and chaos (i.e., 13:9-11; Jer. 4:23-26).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 34:16-17**

**<sup>16</sup>Seek from the book of the LORD, and read:**

**Not one of these will be missing;**

**None will lack its mate.**

**For His mouth has commanded,**

**And His Spirit has gathered them.**

**<sup>17</sup>He has cast the lot for them,**

**And His hand has divided it to them by line.**

**They shall possess it forever;**

**From generation to generation they will dwell in it.**

**34:16 "Seek from the book of the LORD, and read"** Except for v. 1, there are no IMPERATIVES in this chapter before this verse. YHWH's calling them to approach and to listen in v. 1 (two IMPERATIVES) is matched by the two IMPERATIVES which close the chapter (a common Semitic literary technique).

1. seek, BDB 205, KB 233, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. read, BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

The nations have abrogated the dominion given to mankind in Genesis 2, so the animals are divinely allotted the land!

There have been many opinions about this book (BDB 706). Some see it as the judgment scroll (cf. 29:11,12; 30:8). Others see it as an allusion to the two books mentioned in Dan. 7:10; 12:1 and Rev. 20:4-15, which are metaphorical for the memory of God.

1. “the book of life”
  - a. Exod. 32:32
  - b. Ps. 69:28
  - c. Isa. 4:3
  - d. Dan. 7:10; 12:1
  - e. Luke 10:20
  - f. Phil. 4:3
  - g. Heb. 12:23
  - h. Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12,15; 21:27
2. the book of deeds/remembrances
  - a. Ps. 56:8; 139:16
  - b. Isa. 65:6
  - c. Dan. 7:10
  - d. Mal. 3:16
  - e. Rev. 20:12-13

▣ **“Not one of these will be missing;  
None will lack its mate.**

**For His mouth has commanded”** Here we have two metaphors that refer to the power of God’s word. The first is a military metaphor, while the second is a domestic one. When God speaks, it can be counted on (cf. 24:3; 25:8; 55:10-11).

▣ **“His Spirit has gathered them”** See the notes and the Special Topics at 11:2; 32:15-20.  
God gathers the animals/demons listed in vv. 11-15.

**34:17** This is an allusion to the dividing of the land by lot (i.e., Urim and Thummim) in Joshua 12-19. It is an archaic way of asserting that the covenant is renewed and permanent!



# ISAIAH 35

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Zion's Happy Future	The Future Glory of Zion	Zion Restored	The Road to Holiness	The Triumph of Jerusalem
35:1-10 (1-10)	35:1-7 (1-2)  (3-4)  (5-7)  35:8-10 (8-10)	35:1-10 (1-2)  (3-4)  (5-7)  (8-10)	35:1-10 (1-2)  (3-4)  (5-7)  (8-10)	35:1-10 (1-7)     (8-10)

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This chapter is obviously the reversal of chapter 34.
- B. The question is to whom it is addressed and when.
  1. Does this refer to the agricultural splendor of the Promised Land in the eschaton (i.e., believing faithful Jews and Gentiles)?
  2. Does this refer to the return of the Assyrian captives to Palestine (i.e., Israel)?
  3. Does this refer to the return of the Babylonian exiles by Cyrus' decree (i.e., Judah)?
  4. Does this refer to the desert between Mesopotamia and Palestine being transformed into a lush highway for God's people to return to Palestine?

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 35:1-10

- <sup>1</sup>The wilderness and the desert will be glad,  
And the Arabah will rejoice and blossom;  
Like the crocus
- <sup>2</sup>It will blossom profusely  
And rejoice with rejoicing and shout of joy.  
The glory of Lebanon will be given to it,  
The majesty of Carmel and Sharon.  
They will see the glory of the LORD,  
The majesty of our God.
- <sup>3</sup>Encourage the exhausted, and strengthen the feeble.
- <sup>4</sup>Say to those with anxious heart,  
"Take courage, fear not.  
Behold, your God will come *with* vengeance;  
The recompense of God will come,  
But He will save you."
- <sup>5</sup>Then the eyes of the blind will be opened  
And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped.
- <sup>6</sup>Then the lame will leap like a deer,  
And the tongue of the mute will shout for joy.  
For waters will break forth in the wilderness  
And streams in the Arabah.
- <sup>7</sup>The scorched land will become a pool  
And the thirsty ground springs of water;  
In the haunt of jackals, its resting place,  
Grass *becomes* reeds and rushes.
- <sup>8</sup>A highway will be there, a roadway,  
And it will be called the Highway of Holiness.  
The unclean will not travel on it,  
But it *will* be for him who walks *that* way,  
And fools will not wander *on it*.
- <sup>9</sup>No lion will be there,  
Nor will any vicious beast go up on it;  
These will not be found there.  
But the redeemed will walk *there*,
- <sup>10</sup>And the ransomed of the LORD will return  
And come with joyful shouting to Zion,  
With everlasting joy upon their heads.  
They will find gladness and joy,  
And sorrow and sighing will flee away.

**35:1 “wilderness”** This word refers to the uninhabited pasture (BDB 184, cf. Joel 1:19-20).

▣ **“the desert”** This word (BDB 851) refers to the arid, sterile land (cf. 41:18; 53:2; Joel 2:20). Notice that “wilderness” is linked to “desert” and parallel with “Arabah.”

▣ **“Arabah”** This word (BDB 787) refers to the Jordan rift valley south of the Dead Sea (cf. 33:9).

▣ **“will rejoice and blossom”** The first two VERBS of v. 1 are also a parallel personification of the plants.

1. will be glad, BDB 965, KB 1314, *Qal* IMPERFECT (possibly JUSSIVE in meaning), this VERB is used eight times in chapters 61-66
2. will rejoice, BDB 162, KB 189, *Qal* JUSSIVE, cf. v. 2; 25:9; this VERB is used four times in chapters 61-66, cf. Joel 2:21,23

The third VERB “bud” (BDB 897, KB 965, *Qal* IMPERFECT) shows how the plants (i.e., personification) rejoice. Isaiah often uses personification of natural items (cf. 33:9; 44:23; 55:12, cf. NASB Study Bible, p. 1004). The conditions of the Garden of Eden (Genesis 1-2) are restored; the new age has come!

Verse 10 is repeated in 51:11. This is a sign of the new age of restoration (cf. 7:21-25; 27:6; 32:15; 41:8-19; 55:12-13).

▣

NASB, NRSV,

**Peshitta** “crocus”

NKJV, JPSOA “rose”

NJB, REB “ashodel”

JB “jonquil”

LXX “lily”

It is almost impossible to accurately identify (TEV “flowers”) the flora and fauna of the Bible. The rabbis say this (BDB 287) refers to the rose, while Luther and Calvin say it refers to the lily. Anybody’s guess is still a guess! A good resource about these issues is “Helps for Translators” series, *Fauna and Flora of the Bible*, UBS.

**35:2 “Lebanon. . .Carmel and Sharon”** These three areas were famous for their lush foliage. The phrase “blossom profusely” is the *Qal* INFINITE ABSOLUTE and *Qal* IMPERFECT VERB of the same root (BDB 827, KB 965) which denotes intensity or here, lush growth.

▣ **“They will see”** This seems to be a continuing of the personification of the plants.

**35:3-6** These verses mention several kinds of people.

1. the exhausted (lit. “weak hands”)
2. the feeble (lit. “weak knees”)
3. those with palpitating hearts (lit. “the hurried”)
4. the blind (BDB 734)
5. the deaf (BDB 361)
6. the lame (BDB 820)
7. the dumb (BDB 48)

It also describes what God will do for them in this new day of restoration.

1. for #1, “encourage” (BDB 304, KB 302, *Piel* IMPERATIVE)
2. for #2 “strengthen” (BDB 54, KB 65, *Piel* IMPERATIVE)
3. for #3
  - a. take courage, BDB 304, KB 302, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

- b. fear not, BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECT but JUSSIVE in meaning
- 4. for #4 “open the eyes,” BDB 824, KB 959, *Niphal* IMPERFECT
- 5. for #5 “open the ears,” same VERB as #4
- 6. for #6 “leap like a deer,” BDB 194, KB 222, *Piel* IMPERFECT
- 7. for #7 “tongue of dumb will shout for joy,” BDB 943, KB 1247, *Qal* IMPERFECT

This is the message that Jesus sent to John the Baptist while he was in prison (cf. Matt. 11:4-5; Luke 7:20-22). The new age is reflected in the ministry of Jesus!

**35:4** Notice what YHWH promises to do for His covenant people.

- 1. He comes with vengeance, BDB 668, cf. 34:8; 59:17; 61:2; 63:4; Deut. 32:25; Jer. 50:28;
- 2. His recompense also comes, BDB 168, cf. 59:18 (twice); 66:6, also note 65:6
- 3. He will save them, BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE, cf. 25:9; 33:22; 38:20; 45:17; 49:25; 59:1; 63:1,5,9; 64:5

**35:6 “For waters will break forth in the wilderness”** The blooming of nature goes back to vv. 1,2. The outward sign of God’s spiritual presence and blessing is nature’s wonderful display of beauty and growth (cf. v. 7).

**35:7 “In the haunt of jackals”** The Peshitta and KJV translate this word (BDB 1072) “dragons.” We have found from the Dead Sea Scrolls that animals listed in the OT often refer to the idols of the surrounding nations, therefore, this either refers to (1) a deserted place or (2) the residence of the demonic (cf. 34:11-15).

The literary reason for this poetic line is that the dry dens of the jackals are now filled with water and can support swamp grass.



- NASB “its resting place”
- NKJV “where each lay”
- NRSV “a swamp”
- REB “their lairs”

The MT has רבצה, BDB 918, “its resting place.” The NRSV changes it to לבצה, (see NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 692-693). The DSS scroll of Isaiah has “he lies down.”

▣ **“Grass becomes reeds and rushes”** The grass will grow as tall as reeds and rushes to show the luxurious growth of God’s blessing symbolized in nature.

**35:8 “the Highway of Holiness”** This is a common theme in the book of Isaiah (cf. 26:7; 40:3-4; 42:13). This same metaphor of a royal visit is used to describe the coming of the Messiah. John the Baptist claims he fulfilled the prophecy of Mal. 4:5 in preparing the way for the Lord. This is a metaphor for preparation of a physical road, but it has spiritual implications referring to repentance.

**35:9 “No lion will be there”** The fact that vicious animals will be absent or changed into tame companions is a sign of a blessing of God (cf. Isa. 11:6-9). It is also a reversal of the threat of Lev. 26:22.

▣ **“the ransomed”** This term was first used in connection with the dedication of the firstborn child to God (cf. Exod. 13:13,15). The primary idea here is of deliverance from bondage at a set price. The relationship between “redeemed” (BDB 145 I, KB 169, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE) in v. 9 and “ransomed” (BDB 804, KB 911, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE) in v. 10 is repeated in 40:13. See Special Topic at 29:22.

**35:10 “will return”** This VERB (BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERFECT) means “turn back” (i.e., repentance or change of direction). Many commentators see this (and v. 8) as a reference to the return from Babylonian exile (i.e., therefore is connected to chapters 40-66). This is surely possible because Isaiah’s poems are not always arranged in chronological order. It could express “repentance” as a lifestyle (i.e., way of highway of holiness).

▣ **“Zion”** This later came to be a designation for the entire city of Jerusalem (built on seven hills), in particular the temple, although the Temple is geographically located on Mt. Moriah, not on Mt. Zion.

▣ The returnees are characterized as

1. the ransomed of the LORD
2. coming with singing
3. coming with everlasting joy
4. having on their heads as a crown
  - a. joy
  - b. gladness
5. having no sorrow
6. having no sighing

▣ **“With everlasting joy on their heads”** The term “everlasting” is *‘olam* (BDB 761). See Special Topic at 32:14.

▣ **“And sorrow and sighing will flee away”** See Isaiah 25:8 and Revelation 21:4.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. This kind of joy and physical blessing seems to never have accompanied the return from Exile, if this is so, what does this chapter refer to?
2. Explain the significance and the difference between the two terms: “redeemed” and “ransomed”
3. Why is nature used to symbolize God’s presence and blessing?



# ISAIAH 36

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Sennacherib Invades Judah	Sennacherib Boasts Against the Lord	The Attack of Sennacherib	The Assyrians Threaten Jerusalem	Sennacherib's Invasion
36:1-3	36:1-3	36:1-3	36:1-6	36:1-10
36:4-10	36:4-10	36:4-10	36:7-10	
36:11-12	36:11-12	36:11-12	36:11 36:12	36:11-12
36:13-20	36:13-20	36:13-20	36:13-20	36:13-20
36:21-22	36:21-22	36:21-22	36:21-22	36:21-22

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### BACKGROUND STUDY (36-39)

- A. These chapters form a historical literary transition (or appendix, Jewish Study Bible, p. 853) between the life of the prophet Isaiah in chapters 1-39 (the Assyrian period) and the section of Isaiah which deals with the future, chapters 40-66 (the Babylonian period and the eschaton). A similar historical addition occurs at Jeremiah 52, where II Kings 24:18-25:30 is repeated.
- B. This section of Isaiah is paralleled in II Kings 18:13-20:19, except for 38:9-20; also note II Chronicles 32.

- C. This section seems to form a needed coherent transition from an emphasis on Assyria (chapters 36 and 37) to Babylon (chapters 38 and 39).
- D. There has been some discussion about the relationship of Hezekiah's refusal to succumb to the demands and threats of Sennacherib of Assyria and Hezekiah paying tribute to him in II Kings 18:14-16. It is in the realm of possibility that Hezekiah initially paid tribute and then later refused to do so. The exact relationship between these two passages is only conjecture.
- E. This chapter and the parallels have a more concentrated use of "trust" (BDB 105, KB 120) than any other context in the OT.
  - 1. Isaiah 36:4,5,6 (twice),7,9,15
  - 2. II Kings 18:19,20,21 (twice), 22,24,30; 19:10
  - 3. II Chronicles 32:10
 "Trust" (רָבַטַּח) and "belief" (אֱמוּנָה, see Special Topic at 22:23) are crucial in understanding the proper functioning of the personal relationship involved in covenant. It is more than obedience!

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 36:1-3

**<sup>1</sup>Now in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and seized them. <sup>2</sup>And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem to King Hezekiah with a large army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool on the highway of the fuller's field. <sup>3</sup>Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came out to him.**

**36:1 "in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah"** It seems from the dating of the reigns of these Judean kings and their relationship to secular history that there is a textual error in the word "fourteenth." Because II Kgs. 18:1 says that Hezekiah was co-regent with his father between 729 and 715 B.C. and then became king himself from 715 to 686 B.C., it is probable that this should read the "twenty-fourth year of King Hezekiah" (cf. Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, pp. 207,211; E. J. Young, *Book of Isaiah*, pp. 540-542; *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 234; J. A. Motyer, *Tyndale OT Commentaries*, vol. 18, p. 222).

In the chart in the Appendix Four, #3 of this volume there is a list of three different dates for Hezekiah's reign.

1. John Bright – 715-687 B.C.
2. E. J. Young – 727-699 B.C.
3. R. K. Harrison
  - a. co-reign – 729-716/15
  - b. reign – 716/15-687/86

These are three well-respected scholars, yet note the variety. Be careful of rigid dating of these reigns and co-reigns. Scholarship is just not in agreement at this point in time. Hopefully new information from archaeology can help clarify the date!

### ▣ "Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and seized them"

We learn from Assyrian documents that Sennacherib (reigned from 705-681 B.C.) claims to have conquered 46 walled cities. Because of the Assyrian records of Sennacherib's reign an invasion of Judah in 701 B.C. fits this passage.



**36:2 “And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh”** There are several ways of understanding this word (BDB 913).

1. a proper name (NASB, NKJV)
2. “chief steward”
3. “field commander” (Peshitta, NIV)
4. “governor” or “chief of staff” (NKJV footnote)
5. “cupbearer-in-chief (NJB)

Whichever it is he was a high-ranking official (JPSOA footnote) from the Assyrian camp (cf. II Kgs. 18:17).

The NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 1029, lists several of these Assyrian titles.

1. Tartān – supreme commander, cf. II Kgs. 18:17
2. Rab s̄aris – chief officer, cf. II Kgs. 18:17
3. Rab s̄aqēh – field commander, cf. II Kgs. 18:17
4. Rab Kisri – commander of the army
5. Rab hanse – captain of fifty
6. Rab saqu – cupbearer of the king
7. Akkadian
  - a. tartan – cf. #1 above
  - b. rabu sa rēsi – chief eunuch or military commander
  - c. rab s̄aqēh – cf. #3 above
  - d. rab saqu – #6 above
8. Aramaic – rb swq – chief of the march

▣ **“Lachish”** This was one of the walled cities on the coastal plain which was captured by the Assyrian army. It was about thirty miles southwest of Jerusalem in the Shephelah.

▣ **“And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool on the highway of the fuller’s field”** This is the same location where Isaiah confronted Ahaz in 7:3 with the appeal not to trust in Assyria. There may be a purposeful connecting of the geographical site to the response of Hezekiah (belief, cf. 37:14-20,30) versus the response of Ahaz (unbelief).

**36:3 “Eliakim. . .Shebna. . .Joah”** When one compares Isa. 22:15 and 22:20-24 it seems that these two men have exchanged offices.

If we can use Egyptian parallels it seems that these men represented different levels of administrative authority in the ANE.

1. Eliakim
  - a. NASB, NKJV, “over the household”
  - b. NRSV, TEV, JPSOA, “in charge of the palace”
  - c. REB, “the comptroller of the household”
  - d. NJB, “master of the palace”
2. Shebna
  - a. NASB, NKJV, JPSOA, “the scribe”
  - b. NRSV, NJB, “the secretary”
  - c. REB, “the adjutant-general”
  - d. TEV, “court secretary”
3. Joah
  - a. NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV, JPSOA, “the recorder”
  - b. REB, “the secretary of state”
  - c. NJB, “the herald”

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 36:4-10**

**<sup>4</sup>Then Rabshakeh said to them, "Say now to Hezekiah, 'Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria, "What is this confidence that you have? <sup>5</sup> "I say, 'Your counsel and strength for the war are only empty words.' Now on whom do you rely, that you have rebelled against me? <sup>6</sup>Behold, you rely on the staff of this crushed reed, *even* on Egypt, on which if a man leans, it will go into his hand and pierce it. So is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who rely on him. <sup>7</sup>But if you say to me, 'We trust in the LORD our God,' is it not He whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away and has said to Judah and to Jerusalem, 'You shall worship before this altar'? <sup>8</sup>Now therefore, come make a bargain with my master the king of Assyria, and I will give you two thousand horses, if you are able on your part to set riders on them. <sup>9</sup>How then can you repulse one official of the least of my master's servants and rely on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? <sup>10</sup>Have I now come up without the LORD'S approval against this land to destroy it? The LORD said to me, 'Go up against this land and destroy it.'""**

**36:4** The message of Sennacherib was read loudly before the walls of Jerusalem so that everyone could hear and fear (cf. vv. 11-12)!

This verse has three uses of the VERB “say” (BDB 55, KB 65).

1. *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. *Qal* PERFECT

▣ **“What is this confidence that you have”** This is a very significant statement for the rest of chapter 36 and 37 because it is a play on the Hebrew word “trust” (BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 12:2; 26:3,4; 31:1; 32:9-11; 36:4,5,6 [twice],7,9,15; 37:10) or the question “what are you trusting in?” Notice that the Assyrian logic is based on their military victories over numerous other national gods. The line of psychological attack seems to impugn Hezekiah’s actions on behalf of YHWH in order to impugn His power and to impugn the people’s trust in Him (cf. 36:4,5,7,10,15,18; 37:4,6,10,17,20 esp., 23,29). This sets the stage, much like Daniel 3, for YHWH’s confrontation with the Assyrian gods for the purpose that all of the world may know that YHWH is God (cf. 37:20; 45:6; II Chr. 32:7-8).

This question is the theological purpose of the literary unit!

**36:5**

**NASB, NJB** “empty words”

**NKJV** “vain words”

**NRSV** “mere words”

**LXX** “words of the lips”

The LXX is a literal translation of the MT (BDB 182 CONSTRUCT BDB 973). This is an idiom for someone who speaks without thinking (cf. Pro. 14:23).

▣ **“rebelled against me”** This refers to the fact that Hezekiah initially stopped paying tribute to Assyria (cf. II Kgs. 18:7), but then apparently began it again when Sennacherib invaded (cf. II Kgs. 18:14-16) and then refused a second time to pay tribute.

**36:6** **“Behold, you rely on the staff of this crushed reed, even on Egypt”** Apparently, the Assyrians had inside information on Hezekiah’s ill-conceived design for a military alliance with Egypt. Isaiah had earlier condemned this alliance (cf. 30:1-5; 31:1-3).

**36:7 “whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away”** This is an attempt to impugn Hezekiah’s relationship with YHWH (cf. II Kgs. 18:5). The thrust of the argument is that YHWH is angry with Hezekiah for closing the local high places (cf. II Kgs. 18:7). However, this was a misunderstanding by the Assyrians because Hezekiah did exactly what was commanded in Deuteronomy which is the centralization of worship at a site which YHWH would choose (cf. Deut. 12:2-5). The high places had become sites of *Ba’al* and *Asherah* worship (cf. II Kgs. 18:4).

**36:8 “come make a bargain with my master”** The VERB (BDB 786, KB 876) is a *Hithpael* IMPERATIVE denoting the offer of a political pledge (cf. II Kgs. 18:23; Job 17:3; Ps. 119:122). The implication is, “leave your pledge with YHWH and trust in Assyria” (and by implication, her gods). This sounds preposterous, but remember Judah had already tried to form an alliance with Egypt (cf. vv. 6,9), which also involved Egyptian deities! Judah’s monotheism was being tested!

▣ **“I will give you two thousand horses”** This is a mocking statement based on the weakness of Judea’s army. There is some historical doubt about the presence of cavalry in Judah or Assyria at this early date, therefore, many commentators say this is a reference to chariots even though the obvious language refers to cavalry.

**36:9**

NASB, TEV	“official”
NKJV, NRSV	“captain”
NJB	“soldiers”
REB, Peshitta	“servants”
LXX	“governor”

The term (BDB 808, cf. II Kgs. 18:24; see NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 603) may refer to the recently appointed governor of the defeated Judean walled cities. Each of these local governmental officials had a small military contingent. Apparently Lachish became the headquarters of this Assyrian administrator.

Therefore, the sarcastic claim of Rabshakeh was that Jerusalem could not defend itself against a regional, local militia, much less the Assyrian army.

**36:10 “Have I now come up without the LORD’s approval”** This verse is a statement by the Assyrians that (1) they did not consult Judah’s God and (2) that God was even on their side! How they knew of the prophecies concerning God’s choosing of Assyria to judge Israel, 10:5-7, is uncertain. Some believe it is a half-truth related to 37:26.

This verse seems to contradict itself.

1. “did not consult,” literally “apart from” (BDB 116)
2. “the LORD said to me”

Obviously Assyria (i.e., Sennacherib) is flaunting itself against the will of YHWH and His people!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 36:11-12**

**<sup>11</sup>Then Eliakim and Shebna and Joah said to Rabshakeh, “Speak now to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand it; and do not speak with us in Judean in the hearing of the people who are on the wall.” <sup>12</sup>But Rabshakeh said, “Has my master sent me only to your master and to you to speak these words, and not to the men who sit on the wall, doomed to eat their own dung and drink their own urine with you?”**

**36:11 “Aramaic. . . Judean”** Aramaic (BDB 74) was the diplomatic language of the ANE and “Judean” should be translated “Hebrew” (BDB 397, cf. II Kgs. 18:26,28; II Chr. 32:18). The thrust of this verse is

that Hezekiah's officials are asking the Assyrian representative to speak in the diplomatic language so the people of the city could not understand the threats.

**36:12** This was a threat about the problems associated with a siege (i.e., shortage of food and water, cf. II Kgs. 18:27) to cause fear and panic within Jerusalem. Even though Hezekiah may trust YHWH, possibly the citizens would not.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 36:13-20**

**<sup>13</sup>Then Rabshakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in Judean and said, "Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria. <sup>14</sup>Thus says the king, 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you; <sup>15</sup>nor let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, "The LORD will surely deliver us, this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria." <sup>16</sup>Do not listen to Hezekiah,' for thus says the king of Assyria, 'Make your peace with me and come out to me, and eat each of his vine and each of his fig tree and drink each of the waters of his own cistern, <sup>17</sup>until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards. <sup>18</sup>Beware that Hezekiah does not mislead you, saying, "The LORD will deliver us." Has any one of the gods of the nations delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? <sup>19</sup>Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? And when have they delivered Samaria from my hand? <sup>20</sup>Who among all the gods of these lands have delivered their land from my hand, that the LORD would deliver Jerusalem from my hand?"**

**36:13-16** There are several IMPERATIVES and JUSSIVES used in this message from Sennacherib through Rabshakeh (threats and promises).

1. hear, v. 13 – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. do not let Hezekiah deceive you, v. 14 – BDB 674, KB 728, NEGATED *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. 37:10; this is the same VERB used in Gen. 3:13!
3. nor let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, v. 15 – BDB 105, KB 120, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
4. do not listen to Hezekiah, v. 16 – BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
5. make your peace with me, v. 16 – BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
6. come out to me, v. 16 – BDB 422, KB 425, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
7. eat, v. 16 – BDB 37, KB 46, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
8. drink, v. 16 – BDB 1059, KB 1667, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

**36:17** Notice that Sennacherib's two promises are directed to the people from the countryside who had fled into the walled city of Jerusalem for protection. He would let them stay on their own land, but as v. 27 clarifies, only for a short while. He would spare their lives, but still they would be exiled. Even if they surrendered at this time, they would still be taken out of the land of Judah. However, Assyria killed the old and young on the spot!

**36:18** "Has anyone of the gods of the nations delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria?" Here is the theological challenge. The gauntlet has been thrown down and YHWH will pick it up!

The VERB "deliver" (BDB 664, KB 717) is used five times in these two verses. The first and last are *Hiphil* IMPERFECTS and the other three are *Hiphil* PERFECTS.

**36:19** "the gods of Hamath and Arpad"

1. Hamath was a city in central Syria whose king participated in the rebellion against Assyria and was crushed by Sargon II in 720 B.C. and its population deported to Samaria (cf. II Kgs. 17:24).

2. Arpad was a city in northern Syria whose king participated in the rebellion against Assyria and was crushed by Tiglath-pileser III in 720 B.C.

The exact names of their deities are uncertain.

▣ **“the gods of Sepharvaim”** It may have been a city of northern Babylon. This was a location from which Sargon II (722-705 B.C.) sent exiles to settle in Samaria (cf. II Kgs. 17:24). Some scholars assume it refers to Samaria (the captured capital of Israel, 722 B.C.).

From II Kgs. 17:31 we know that the fertility gods they worshiped by child sacrifice were “Adrammelech” and “Anammelech.” The first name is also the name of one of Sennacherib’s sons who assassinated him (cf. 37:38). How they are connected is uncertain.

▣ **“have they delivered Samaria from my hand”** This is interesting because Samaria’s gods are listed separately from Judah’s. They both worshiped YHWH, but apparently the idolatry in the north had become so bad or the Assyrian information so poor that they did not realize that they both worshiped YHWH (cf. II Kgs. 17:5,6,24).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 36:21-22**

**<sup>21</sup>But they were silent and answered him not a word; for the king's commandment was, "Do not answer him." <sup>22</sup>Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn and told him the words of Rabshakeh.**

**36:22 “with their clothes torn”** See Special Topic: Grieving rites at 15:2-3.



# ISAIAH 37

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Hezekiah Seeks Isaiah's Help	Isaiah Assures Deliverance	Hezekiah Consults Isaiah	The King Asks Isaiah's Advice	The Prophet Isaiah is Consulted
37:1-4	37:1-7	37:1-4	37:1-4	37:1-4
37:5-7		37:5-7	37:5-7	37:5-7
	Sennacherib's Threat and Hezekiah's Prayer		The Assyrians Send Another Threat	The Cupbearer Returns to His Master
37:8-13	37:8-13	37:8-13	37:8-13	37:8-9a
				Second Account of Sennacherib's Activities
Hezekiah's Prayer in the Temple				37:9b-13
37:14-20	37:14-20	37:14-20	37:14-20	37:14-20
God Answers Through Isaiah	The Word of the LORD Concerning Sennacherib		Isaiah's Message to the King	Isaiah Intervenes
37:21-29 (22b-29)	37:21-29 (22b)	37:21-29 (22b)	37:21-25	37:21-29 (22b-25)
	(23-25)	(23-25)		
	(26-27)	(26-27)	37:26-27	(26-29)
	(28-29)	(28-29)	37:28-29	A Sign for Hezekiah
37:30-32	37:30-32 (30b-32)	37:30-32	37:30-32	37:30-32
				A Prophecy on Assyria
37:33-35	37:33-35 (33b-35)	37:33-35	37:33-35	37:33-35 (33b-35)
Assyrians Destroyed	Sennacherib's Defeat and Death			Sennacherib Is Punished
37:36-37	37:36-38	37:36-38	37:36-37	37:36
				37:37-38

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Verses 1-7 are the reactions of Hezekiah to the Assyrian message in chapter 36.
- B. It is uncertain if vv. 1-7 and 14-20 are two separate reactions. It seems contextually that after vv. 8-9 Sennacherib sent a second message to be delivered to Jerusalem and vv. 14-20 are Hezekiah's response to this second message, which is similar to the first one.  
Possibly Hezekiah was trusting YHWH and Egypt in vv. 1-7, but after v. 9 he had to trust YHWH alone (cf. vv. 14-20,30).

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 37:1-4

<sup>1</sup>And when King Hezekiah heard *it*, he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth and entered the house of the LORD. <sup>2</sup>Then he sent Eliakim who was over the household with Shebna the scribe and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz. <sup>3</sup>They said to him, "Thus says Hezekiah, 'This day is a day of distress, rebuke and rejection; for children have come to birth, and there is no strength to deliver. <sup>4</sup>Perhaps the LORD your God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to reproach the living God, and will rebuke the words which the LORD your God has heard. Therefore, offer a prayer for the remnant that is left.'"

**37:1** “he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth” These are signs of mourning. See Special Topic at 15:2-3.

▣ “the house of the LORD” This refers to the temple in Jerusalem. Exactly what area of the temple he entered is uncertain. Only priests and Levites had access to the sacred buildings. However, there was a special area set aside for the monarch to be as close as possible and view the activities of festival rituals.

**37:2** “Eliakim. . .Shebna” See note at 36:3,22.

**37:3** Hezekiah vividly describes the situation (cf. II Kgs. 19:3).

1. NASB, NRSV, “a day of distress” (BDB 865 I)  
NKJV, “a day of trouble”  
NJB, “a day of suffering”  
LXX, “a day of affliction”
2. NASB, NKJV, NRSV, “a day of rebuke” (BDB 407)  
NJB, “a day of punishment”  
LXX, “a day of reproach”



3. NASB, “a day of rejection” (BDB 611)  
NKJV, “a day of blasphemy”  
NRSV, NJB, “a day of disgrace”  
LXX, “a day of rebuke”
4. LXX, Peshitta, “a day of anger”
5. “time for birth, but no strength to deliver”

All of these phrases refer to YHWH’s actions, not Assyria’s. Hezekiah knew the problem was covenant disobedience and faithlessness. Assyria was not the real problem, but YHWH’s instrument of judgment against a disobedient covenant people.

**37:4** Hezekiah is hoping that as YHWH heard the blasphemy (i.e., “reproach,” BDB 357, KB 355, *Piel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, cf. vv. 17,23,24) of Assyria’s arrogant boast (cf. 36:15,18,20), He would defend His name (i.e., Ezek. 36:22-23).

▣ **“the remnant”** This term can be used in several senses depending on the context. See Special Topic at 1:9.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 37:5-7**

**<sup>5</sup>So the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah. <sup>6</sup>Isaiah said to them, "Thus you shall say to your master, 'Thus says the LORD, "Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. <sup>7</sup>Behold, I will put a spirit in him so that he will hear a rumor and return to his own land. And I will make him fall by the sword in his own land.'"**

**37:6** Notice how Isaiah responds to the messengers of Hezekiah with the very words of YHWH (cf. v. 21)!

▣ **“Do not be afraid”** This statement (BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense) is a recurrent message from God to His leaders (cf. 7:4; 8:12; 10:24; 35:4; 40:9; 41:10,13,14; 43:1,5; 44:2; 51:7; 54:4; Gen. 15:1; 21:17; 26:24; 46:3; Exod. 20:20; Num. 14:9; Deut. 1:21,29; 3:2,22; 7:18; 20:1,3; 31:6,8; Josh. 8:1; 10:8,25; 11:6; Jdgs. 6:23, etc.).

**37:7**

**NASB, NJB,**

**LXX**

**“I will put a spirit in him”**

**NKJV**

**“I will send a spirit upon him”**

**NRSV**

**“I myself will put a spirit in him”**

**TEV**

**“The LORD will cause the emperor to hear”**

**REB**

**“I shall sap his morale”**

**Peshitta**

**“I will send a blast against him**

The MT has *ruah* (BDB 924), which, in this context, refers to an inner feeling or sense of doom and foreboding. The “great king” of Assyria (cf. 36:4) is controlled by the God of Israel!

▣ **“hear a rumor and return to his own land”** This is YHWH’s response because Hezekiah turned to Him for help (as Ahaz did not). He will confuse the army and send them home (cf. v. 37). Some have wondered if v. 9 is not a fulfillment of this rumor, but it seems, in context, to refer to a rumor that will force him to return to Assyria and not simply meet Egypt in battle.

☐ **“I will make him fall by the sword in his own land”** See v. 38 for the historical fulfillment of this prophecy.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 37:8-13**

**<sup>8</sup>Then Rabshakeh returned and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah, for he had heard that the king had left Lachish. <sup>9</sup>When he heard *them* say concerning Tirhakah king of Cush, "He has come out to fight against you," and when he heard *it* he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, <sup>10</sup>"Thus you shall say to Hezekiah king of Judah, 'Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you, saying, "Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria." <sup>11</sup>Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the lands, destroying them completely. So will you be spared? <sup>12</sup>Did the gods of those nations which my fathers have destroyed deliver them, *even* Gozan and Haran and Rezepth and the sons of Eden who *were* in Telassar? <sup>13</sup>Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, *and of Hena and Ivvah?"***

**37:9-11** This repeats 36:13-20.

**37:9 “Tirhakah king of Cush”** There have been some historical problems connected with this verse because this man, though the younger brother of the current Pharaoh of Egypt (i.e., twenty-fifth Nubian Dynasty), Shebitku, nephew of Shabaka, reigned from 407/06 - 690 B.C. Tirhakah became a Pharaoh and reigned from 690 - 664 B.C. He was also known as the King of Ethiopia (cf. II Kgs. 19:9). However, this may be a military title or an anachronism (which means that one reads a later event or person into an earlier document). Hence, in this text, Tirhakah was only Pharaoh’s representative sent with the army.

**37:12-13** There are several geographical locations mentioned that Assyria had previously conquered.

1. Gozan – In II Kgs. 17:6; 18:11; I Chr. 5:26 this is called a river (i.e., region) of Mesopotamia where Tiglath-pileser III exiled people from the tribal areas of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh. and later, more of the northern ten tribes by Sargon II.
2. Haran – This was a city in Assyria (cf. Gen. 12:4; 24:4) that had rebelled and was destroyed by Asshur-dan III in 763 B.C.
3. Rezepth – This is another significant city in Assyria, conquered by Shalmanezar III (858-824 B.C.). It may have been conquered several times, but information is minimal.
4. Telassar – This is a city or kingdom of Eden which was conquered by Tiglath-pileser III. It was close to the border of Elam.
5. Hamath – This is a city in Syria on the border with Israel. Some of its citizens were exiled into Israel.
6. Arpad – This is a city in northern Syria, the capital of a province or small kingdom (Bit-Agusi). It was defeated by Tiglath-pileser III in 740 B.C.
7. Lair – This is a city of northern Babylon whose spelling is close to “city” (BDB 746, עיר, NJB, NET Bible).
8. Sepharvaim – See note at 36:19
9. Hena – This is a city possibly in upper Mesopotamia (cf. ABD, vol. 3, p. 137).
10. Ivvah – This is an unknown locality. Some scholars associate #8 and #9 with the name of local gods.

The purpose of mentioning these specific cities (which Hezekiah must have known or which were on the way from Assyria to Palestine which Sennacherib conquered) was to show that no one could resist the Assyrian military!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 37:14-20**

**<sup>14</sup>Then Hezekiah took the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it, and he went up to the house of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD. <sup>15</sup>Hezekiah prayed to the LORD saying, <sup>16</sup>“O LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, who is enthroned *above* the cherubim, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. <sup>17</sup>Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; and listen to all the words of Sennacherib, who sent them to reproach the living God. <sup>18</sup>Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have devastated all the countries and their lands, <sup>19</sup>and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were not gods but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. So they have destroyed them. <sup>20</sup>Now, O LORD our God, deliver us from his hand that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You alone, LORD, are God.”**

**37:14** This is obviously firsthand detailed historical narrative. It is very graphic and specific. Readers can see in their minds Hezekiah approaching YHWH, somewhere in the temple compound (cf. I Kgs. 8:33), unscrolling these Assyrian messages before Him so that He could read them. Hezekiah mentions in v. 4 that YHWH heard Rabshakeh read the message from the King of Assyria. Hezekiah now wants to remind Him of their arrogant and blasphemous character!

**37:16** Notice the titles and ways Hezekiah characterizes YHWH.

1. O LORD of hosts
2. the God (*Elohim*) of Israel, cf. Josh. 7:13,19,20
3. who art enthroned *above* the cherubim, cf. Exod. 25:22; I Sam. 4:4; II Sam. 6:2; II Kgs. 19:15; I Chr. 13:6; Ps. 80:1; 99:1
4. You are the God (*Elohim*), cf. Deut. 10:17
5. You alone, this term (BDB 94) is denoting monotheism here and YHWH's choice of Israel as His instrument of redemption for all the world
6. You have made heaven and earth, 42:5; 45:18; Gen. 1:1

See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 1:1.

**37:17** There is a series of IMPERATIVES in Hezekiah's prayer used as reverent requests.

1. incline Your ear, BDB 639, KB 692, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Dan. 9:18
2. hear, BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. open Your eyes, BDB 824, KB 959, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Dan. 9:18
4. see, BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
5. listen, same as #2

Hezekiah is using anthropomorphic language to beseech God to hear, see, and respond to the arrogant, blasphemous message of Sennacherib.

These same VERBS are used in Solomon's dedication of the temple in I Kgs. 8:29,52; II Chr. 6:39-40; 7:15.

▣ **“the living God”** This verse is very anthropomorphic (see Special Topic at 6:1), attributing to YHWH human body parts as if He were a man. The OT presents God as an eternal, ever-present spirit. The term “living God” is a play on the name YHWH from Exod. 3:14, which means “I Am that I Am.”

**37:18** There was surely a measure of truth in Sennacherib's claims.

**37:19** The truth of v. 18 is seen to be overstated because the gods of the cities mentioned were idols, not the true and only God! Idols were made by human hands. They could not see and hear and respond (i.e., v. 17) as YHWH could, would, and will!

**37:20** This verse has two VERBS.

1. deliver, BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. 25:9; 33:22; 35:4. It is used fourteen times in chapters 40-66.
2. know, BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense. See Special Topic: Know at 19:21.

This is a very important verse and shows the ultimate purpose of God's acts. Israel was meant to be a kingdom of priests (cf. Exod. 19:5-6). From the initial call of Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:3), God's plan was to deal with the entire world (cf. 45:8,22). See Special Topic at 1:3.

▣ **“that You alone, LORD, art God”** This is surely an affirmation of the uniqueness of Israel's God in the ancient world. He was God alone. There was no other (cf. 43:11; 45:5,18,21-22). This is the theological affirmation of monotheism!

The phrase “art God” is not in the MT, but is in the DSS, LXX, and the parallel in II Kgs. 19:19.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 37:21-29**

<sup>21</sup>Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent word to Hezekiah, saying, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Because you have prayed to Me about Sennacherib king of Assyria,

<sup>22</sup>this is the word that the LORD has spoken against him:

"She has despised you and mocked you,

The virgin daughter of Zion;

She has shaken *her* head behind you,

The daughter of Jerusalem!

<sup>23</sup>Whom have you reproached and blasphemed?

And against whom have you raised *your* voice

And haughtily lifted up your eyes?

Against the Holy One of Israel!

<sup>24</sup>Through your servants you have reproached the LORD,

And you have said, 'With my many chariots I came up to the heights of the mountains,

To the remotest parts of Lebanon;

And I cut down its tall cedars *and* its choice cypresses.

And I will go to its highest peak, its thickest forest.

<sup>25</sup>I dug *wells* and drank waters,

And with the sole of my feet I dried up

All the rivers of Egypt.'

<sup>26</sup>Have you not heard?

Long ago I did it,

From ancient times I planned it.

Now I have brought it to pass,

That you should turn fortified cities into ruinous heaps.

<sup>27</sup>Therefore their inhabitants were short of strength,

They were dismayed and put to shame;

They were *as* the vegetation of the field and *as* the green herb,  
As grass on the housetops is scorched before it is grown up.

<sup>28</sup>But I know your sitting down

And your going out and your coming in  
And your raging against Me.

<sup>29</sup>Because of your raging against Me

And because your arrogance has come up to My ears,  
Therefore I will put My hook in your nose  
And My bridle in your lips,  
And I will turn you back by the way which you came.

**37:21-24** This is YHWH's response to Hezekiah's faith and the resulting message to Assyria, who went beyond YHWH's purpose (cf. 10:5) and became arrogant and blasphemous.

1. v. 21, she despised (BDB 100, KB 114, *Qal* PERFECT), mocked (BDB 541, KB 532, *Qal* PERFECT), and shook her head at (BDB 631, KB 681, *Hiphil* PERFECT) Judah, here called

- a. the virgin daughter of Zion
- b. the daughter of Jerusalem

The Peshitta, TEV, and REB see this verse as referring to Judah's actions toward retreating Sennacherib, but I think it refers to Assyria's arrogance against Judah that YHWH is reacting to. The question is who does "she" refer to. Sennacherib is the "him" of v. 21a, but "she" could refer to

1. Assyria
2. Judah

2. v. 22, she attacked Judah's God (i.e., the Holy One of Israel)

- a. reproached, BDB 357, KB 355, *Piel* PERFECT
- b. blasphemed, BDB 154, KB 180, *Piel* PERFECT
- c. raised your voice, BDB 926, KB 1202, *Hiphil* PERFECT
- d. haughtily lifted your eyes, BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. 10:12

3. v. 23, lauds her activities

- a. with many chariots I came up to the heights of the mountains, to the remotest parts of Lebanon
- b. cut down its tall cedars and choicest cypresses (Isaiah used many allusions to trees)
- c. I will go to its highest peak, its thickest forest

Verse 24 is similar to the arrogance of the King of Babylon (that I think refers to Merodach-baladan, cf. 39:1), mentioned in 14:13. If so, then possibly the language here also refers to the northern mountain of the gods of Canaanite mythology, see note at 14:13-14.

**37:21 "Because you have prayed to Me"** Hezekiah responds in faith and trust in YHWH, so different from his father, Ahaz. This shows the theological significance of intercessory prayer. I believe that God has limited Himself to act in response to the prayers of His children. Therefore, we have not because we ask not.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: INTERCESSORY PRAYER**

### **I. Introduction**

- A. Prayer is significant because of Jesus' example.
  - 1. personal prayer, Mark 1:35; Luke 3:21; 6:12; 9:29; 22:29-46
  - 2. cleansing of the Temple, Matt. 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46
  - 3. Model Prayer, Matt. 6:5-13; Luke 11:2-4
- A. Prayer is putting into tangible action our belief in a personal, caring God who is present, willing, and able to act on our behalf and others', through our prayers.
- B. God has personally limited Himself to act on the prayers of His children in many areas (cf. James 4:2)
- C. The major purpose of prayer is fellowship and time with the Triune God.
- D. The scope of prayer is anything or anyone that concerns believers. We may pray once, believing, or over and over again as the thought or concern returns.
- E. Prayer can involve several elements.
  - 1. praise and adoration of the Triune God
  - 2. thanksgiving to God for His presence, fellowship, and provisions
  - 3. confession of our sinfulness, both past and present
  - 4. petition of our sensed needs or desires
  - 5. intercession where we hold the needs of others before the Father
- F. Intercessory prayer is a mystery. God loves those for whom we pray much more than we do, yet our prayers often effect a change, response, or need, not only in ourselves, but in them.

### **II. Biblical Material**

#### **A. Old Testament**

- 1. Some examples of intercessory prayer
  - a. Abraham pleading for Sodom, Gen. 18:22ff
  - b. Moses' prayers for Israel
    - (1) Exodus 5:22-23
    - (2) Exodus 32:31ff
    - (3) Deuteronomy 5:5
    - (4) Deuteronomy 9:18,25ff
  - c. Samuel prays for Israel
    - (1) I Samuel 7:5-6,8-9
    - (2) I Samuel 12:16-23
    - (3) I Samuel 15:11
  - d. David prayed for his child, II Samuel 12:16-18
- 2. God is looking for intercessors, Isaiah 59:16
- 3. Known, unconfessed sin or an unrepentant attitude affects our prayers
  - a. Psalm 66:18
  - b. Proverbs 28:9
  - c. Isaiah 59:1-2; 64:7

#### **B. New Testament**

- 1. The Son and Spirit's intercessory ministry
  - a. Jesus

- (1) Romans 8:34
- (2) Hebrews 7:25
- (3) I John 2:1
- b. Holy Spirit, Romans 8:26-27
- 2. Paul's intercessory ministry
  - a. Prays for the Jews
    - (1) Romans 9:1ff
    - (2) Romans 10:1
  - b. Prays for the churches
    - (1) Romans 1:9
    - (2) Ephesians 1:16
    - (3) Philippians 1:3-4,9
    - (4) Colossians 1:3,9
    - (5) I Thessalonians 1:2-3
    - (6) II Thessalonians 1:11
    - (7) II Timothy 1:3
    - (8) Philemon, v. 4
  - c. Paul asked the churches to pray for him
    - (1) Romans 15:30
    - (2) II Corinthians 1:11
    - (3) Ephesians 6:19
    - (4) Colossians 4:3
    - (5) I Thessalonians 5:25
    - (6) II Thessalonians 3:1
- 2. The church's intercessory ministry
  - a. Prayer for one another
    - (1) Ephesians 6:18
    - (2) I Timothy 2:1
    - (3) James 5:16
  - b. Prayer requested for special groups
    - (1) our enemies, Matt. 5:44
    - (2) Christian workers, Hebrews 13:18
    - (3) rulers, I Timothy 2:2
    - (4) the sick, James 5:13-16
    - (5) backsliders, I John 5:16
  - c. Prayer for all men, I Timothy 2:1

### III. Conditions for answered prayer

#### A. Our relationship to Christ and the Spirit

- 1. Abide in Him, John 15:7
- 2. In His name, John 14:13,14; 15:16; 16:23-24
- 3. In the Spirit, Ephesians 6:18; Jude 20
- 4. According to God's will, Matthew 6:10; I John 3:22; 5:14-15

B. Motives

1. Not wavering, Matthew 21:22; James 1:6-7
2. Humility and repentance, Luke 18:9-14
3. Asking amiss, James 4:3
4. Selfishness, James 4:2-3

C. Other aspects

1. Perseverance
  - a. Luke 18:1-8
  - b. Colossians 4:2
  - c. James 5:16
2. Kept on asking
  - a. Matthew 7:7-8
  - b. Luke 11:5-13
  - c. James 1:5
3. Discord at home, I Peter 3:7
4. Free from known sin
  - a. Psalm 66:18
  - b. Proverbs 28:9
  - c. Isaiah 59:1-2
  - d. Isaiah 64:7

IV. Theological Conclusion

- A. What a privilege! What an opportunity! What a duty and responsibility!
- B. Jesus is our example. The Spirit is our guide. The Father is eagerly waiting.
- C. It could change you, your family, your friends, and the world.

**37:22 “She has shaken her head behind you”** This VERB (BDB 631, KB 681, *Hiphil* PERFECT) denotes a Hebrew idiom of shaking one’s head as a sign of contempt (cf. II Kgs. 19:21; Job 16:4; Ps. 22:7; 109:25; Lam. 2:15; Matt. 27:39; Mark 15:29).

**37:25-29** At this point the focus turns from Assyria’s accomplishments (although it is possible that v. 25 refers to the arrogant claims of Sennacherib, but v. 26 cannot) to YHWH’s accomplishments.

1. v. 25, YHWH’s control of water (i.e., life, cf. 11:15; 44:27)
2. vv. 26-27, YHWH’s ancient plans to use Assyria to punish His people (cf. 10:5). Verse 27 refers to Israel and Judah’s humiliation and defeat.
3. v. 28, YHWH’s foreknowledge (very similar to Psalm 139)
4. v. 29, the consequences of arrogance against YHWH
  - a. put a hook in your nose
  - b. put a bridle in your lips (these are metaphors for exile)
  - c. turn you back by the way which you came (cf. 37:37)

**37:26 “Have you not heard?”**

**Long ago I did it,**

**From ancient times I planned it”** This shows that God has always had a plan for dealing, not only with Assyria (10:5; Jer. 18:11), but also with the entire world (cf. 14:24,26; 22:11; 25:1; 46:10-11).



History is not moving in a haphazard manner, but is on a teleological track to an end-time confrontation and restoration.

The word translated “long ago” (BDB 935) can refer to time or space. It also can refer to

1. long past time, here
2. future time, cf. II Sam. 7:19; I Chr. 17:17

**37:28 “your raging against Me”** This VERB (BDB 919, KB 1182, *Hithpael* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) is repeated in v. 20. Notice the personal element!

This VERB in the *Hiphil* stem is often used of fear and trembling (cf. 14:16; 23:11) or eschatological events (cf. 13:13). It is used of YHWH Himself in Ezek. 16:43.

**37:29 “I will put My hook in your nose”** This is exactly what Assyria did to others. She tried to frighten them by boasting of the cruelty that she had done to other nations. She tied the conquered people together using hooks in their noses, lips, or tongues and marched them into exile (cf. II Kgs. 19:28). God will now do the same thing to them.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 37:30-32**

**<sup>30</sup>“Then this shall be the sign for you: you will eat this year what grows of itself, in the second year what springs from the same, and in the third year sow, reap, plant vineyards and eat their fruit. <sup>31</sup>The surviving remnant of the house of Judah will again take root downward and bear fruit upward. <sup>32</sup>For out of Jerusalem will go forth a remnant and out of Mount Zion survivors. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”**

**37:30 “this shall be the sign for you”** This is important because Hezekiah is the Messianic representative (i.e., 7:14-16) as Ahaz was (i.e. 8:8c,10c). God will show him a sign (BDB 16) here and in 38:7 (as He did Ahaz in 7:14). This particular sign is related to a three-year promise of full restoration of the land of Judah. I think 37:30-32 should be a separate paragraph, as should 30:33-35 and 36-38.

Verse 30 has a series of IMPERATIVES as YHWH promises a three-year restoration (i.e., the covenant promises of Deuteronomy 27-28).

1. eat – BDB 37, KB 46, *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE. This form is repeated in this verse (*kethib*), but the MT scholars suggested a change (*Qere*) to a *Qal* IMPERATIVE, which matches the other IMPERATIVES in the verse. The difference is very close.
  - a. ואכול, MT
  - b. ואכלו, suggested change
2. sow – BDB 281, KB 282, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. reap – BDB 894, KB 1126, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. plant – BDB 642, KB 694, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
5. eat, *Qere*, see note at #1

Just one added thought, it is possible that this promised restoration is related to the “Year of Jubilee,” Lev. 25:10, see James M. Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, p. 96.

**37:31 “the surviving remnant”** See Special Topic at 1:9.

▣ The agricultural metaphors continue. Judah is described as

1. taking a strong root
2. bearing fruit

**37:32** Those who survive Assyria’s attack will do so, not by their own plans or provisions, but by the zeal (cf. 9:7; 59:17) of the LORD of hosts! Ahaz planned, but Hezekiah trusted!

▣ **“The zeal of the LORD”** This (BDB 888) refers to YHWH’s special love and care for His covenant people (a faithless wife of Hosea 1-3). YHWH acts passionately for His purposes in redemption (cf. 63:15-19, which involves the children of Abraham, cf. Gen. 12:1-3). The phrase has Messianic implications in 9:7 and 59:17. Context determines whether (1) zealous or (2) jealous is the best translation. The term can have either a positive or negative connotation depending on the context. Here it is surely positive and redemptive!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 37:33-35**

**<sup>33</sup>“Therefore, thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, 'He will not come to this city or shoot an arrow there; and he will not come before it with a shield, or throw up a siege ramp against it. <sup>34</sup>By the way that he came, by the same he will return, and he will not come to this city,' declares the LORD. <sup>35</sup>For I will defend this city to save it for My own sake and for My servant David's sake.”**

**37:33-34** This is a promise that no siege will occur against Jerusalem. At this point the Assyrian army was not before the gates of Jerusalem, but still at walled cities of the Shephelah some distance away, such as Lachish.

There are several things that YHWH will allow and not allow in relation to Assyria’s attack on Jerusalem.

1. the army of Assyria shall not come to Jerusalem to besiege it
2. the army shall not shoot an arrow there
3. the army shall not come with shield
4. the army shall not throw up a siege mound
5. Assyria shall retreat the way she came

**37:35** The reason given for Assyria’s limitations and retreat are

1. YHWH Himself will defend (BDB 170, KB 199, *Qal* PERFECT) the city (i.e., Holy War imagery)
2. YHWH will deliver/save it (BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT)
3. YHWH does it
  - a. for Himself (i.e., His eternal redemptive plan and His personal reputation, cf. Ezek. 36:22-38)
  - b. for His servant David (cf. 9:7; 11:1; 16:5; 22:9,22; 29:1; 38:5; 55:3; II Samuel 7)

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 37:36-38**

**<sup>36</sup>Then the angel of the LORD went out and struck 185, 000 in the camp of the Assyrians; and when men arose early in the morning, behold, all of these were dead. <sup>37</sup>So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and returned *home* and lived at Nineveh. <sup>38</sup>It came about as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons killed him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son became king in his place.**

**37:36 “the angel of the LORD went out”** This is similar to the personage of the death angel who represented YHWH’s presence in the last plague on Egypt in Exodus 11 and 12:23,29 (also note II Sam. 24:16).

There is no “grim reaper.” YHWH controls life and death. It is hard to separate the sovereignty of God from conditions of a fallen world. This is not the world that God intended it to be. Death is the result of human rebellion. God knows, allows, and executes His will. Secondary causes, so important to

us, were not part of the ancient worldview (i.e., Matt. 6:25-27; 10:28-31), where there was no distinction between the supernatural and natural.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE ANGEL OF THE LORD**

It is obvious that Deity manifests Himself physically in human form in the OT. The question for Trinitarians becomes which person of the Trinity fulfills this role. Since God the Father (YHWH) and His Spirit are consistently non-corporeal, it seems possible to suggest that these human manifestations are the pre-incarnate Messiah.

To demonstrate the difficulties one faces in trying to identify a theophany from an angelic encounter the following list is illustrative.

1. the angel of the Lord as an angel
  - a. Gen. 24:7,40
  - b. Exod. 23:20-23; 32:34
  - c. Num. 22:22
- d. Jdgs. 5:23
  - e. II Sam. 24:16
  - f. I Chr. 21:15-30
  - g. Zech. 1:12-13
2. the angel of the Lord as theophany
  - a. Gen. 16:7-13; 18:1-19:1; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16
  - b. Exod. 3:2,4; 14:19 (13:21)
  - c. Jdgs. 2:15; 6:22-24; 13:3-23
  - d. Hosea 12:3-4
  - e. Zech. 3:1-5

▣ **“struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians”** This was not before the walls of Jerusalem, but apparently some distance away at the Assyrian camp (cf. II Kgs. 19:35). Herodotus, an ancient historian, records this plague and implies that it was related to rodents, possibly bubonic plague. This judgment did not kill the entire army. This very event is foreshadowed in 31:8, where it is described as death by the sword of the LORD. However, here it seems to be a plague. Remember this is hyperbolic poetry, not historical narrative. Modern western readers are unduly affected by their own worldviews and read the Bible (an ancient eastern book) through the filter of their current understanding of history and literature, which always causes confusion and misunderstanding!

**37:37 “Nineveh”** This was the capital of Assyria and was located on the Tigris River.

**37:38 “Nisroch his god”** This is an unknown name.

1. The LXX translation of this is a spelling very similar to the god of the city of Asshur, who was the head of the Assyrian pantheon.
2. It is also possible that it is a misspelling of “Nusku” (BDB 652), the Babylonian and Assyrian god of light and fire who was worshiped at Haran and associated with the moon god (i.e., his son).
3. E. J. Young thinks it was an intentional corruption of the name Marduk. See James M. Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, p. 182.

We know from historical documentation that there is a twenty-year gap between vv. 37 and 38. This prophecy was literally fulfilled in 681 B.C. when Sennacherib's two sons assassinated him and the third son took the throne.

▣ **“Esarhaddon”** This is one of the king's sons who reigned in Assyria from 681-669 B.C.

# ISAIAH 38

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Hezekiah Healed	Hezekiah's Life Extended	Hezekiah's Illness and Recovery	King Hezekiah's Illness and Recovery	The Illness and Cure of Hezekiah
38:1-3	38:1-3	38:1-3	38:1 38:2-3	38:1-3
38:4-6	38:4-8	38:4-6	38:4-6 [38:21-22]	38:4-6 [38:21-22 and 7-8]
38:7-8		38:7-8	38:7-8	The Canticle of Hezekiah
38:9-14 (10-14)	38:9-14 (10-14)	38:9-20 (10-15)	38:9-20 (10-15)	38:9-20 (10-15)
38:15-20 (15-20)	38:15-20 (15-19) (20)	(16-20)	(16-20)	(16-20)
38:21-22	38:21-22	38:21-22		

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. As chapters 36-37 related to the Assyrian period, chapters 38-39 point toward the Babylonian period of influence on God's people.
- B. It must be remembered that there are two distinct "Babylons"
  1. Merodach-baladan II (721-710, 703-702 B.C., cf. II Kgs. 20:12; Isa. 39:11) of Hezekiah's day (who I think is the one referred to in Isaiah 13-14).

2. Neo-Babylon under Nabopolassar (626-605 B.C.) and his son, Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 B.C.), who caused the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 586 B.C. He ordered several exiles of Judeans (605, 597, 586, 582 B.C.)
- C. The Jewish Study Bible (p. 858) says, “the events described in chapters 38-39 preceded the events described in chapters 36-37 by at least ten years.” This is because of Assyria’s defeat of Merodach-baladan II.
  - D. Hezekiah’s illness and healing are also recorded in II Kgs. 20:1-11. His psalm is similar to Psalm 6 and 118 or even Jonah 2. The psalm of Hezekiah does not appear in II Kings 20.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 38:1-3

**<sup>1</sup>In those days Hezekiah became mortally ill. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.'" <sup>2</sup>Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, <sup>3</sup>and said, "Remember now, O LORD, I beseech You, how I have walked before You in truth and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in Your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly.**

**38:1-8** This is a good example of the fact that God is in control of history, yet history is also affected by our prayers (cf. 37:21). But also remember that it was during this “extra time” of Hezekiah’s life that his evil son and successor, Manasseh, was born. In some ways God’s answer to Hezekiah brought judgment on Judah. We must pray in God’s will, for we never see the big picture.

**38:3 “Remember”** The VERB (BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) is an IMPERATIVE of request. Hezekiah, like Nehemiah (cf. Neh. 13:14,22), is asking God to take note of his lifestyle faith. It is interesting that in the Bible humans pray for God to forget their sins, while God asks for them to remember His word.

God’s memory is a way to plead with Him to be faithful to His word and promises lived out in an individual life.

Notice what Hezekiah asserts.

1. I have walked (BDB 229, KB 246, *Hithpael* PERFECT) before You in truth (lit. “faithfulness,” BDB 54). “Walked” is a biblical metaphor of lifestyle faith (i.e., Ps. 26:3; 86:11).
2. I have done this with a whole heart, this is a biblical metaphor of total dedication.
3. I have done what is good in your sight.

▣ **“with a whole heart”** This is a statement which is usually related to the reign and life of David (cf. I Kgs. 3:6; 9:4; 11:4; I Chr. 28:9); the people (I Chr. 29:9); or Asa (cf. I Kgs. 15:14). Hezekiah is considered to be one of the godly kings of Judah (cf. II Kgs. 18:5-6).

▣ **“wept bitterly”** There is some question as to why Hezekiah was so upset at the thought of his death: (1) his fear of dying in middle age, based on v. 10 or (2) the fact that he had no heir (cf. v. 19; 39:7; II Kgs. 21:1). It is uncertain which, if either, of these is true because we do not have any psychological way to analyze the statements of people in history. The tragedy is that during this additional fifteen-year extended life span the birth of Manasseh occurred and he was the most evil king that Judah had and was greatly responsible for the Babylonian exile.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 38:4-6**

**<sup>4</sup>Then the word of the LORD came to Isaiah, saying, <sup>5</sup>"Go and say to Hezekiah, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of your father David, "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will add fifteen years to your life. <sup>6</sup>I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city.'"**

**38:4-8** Inspiration is a difficult concept to describe. The doctrine is crucial for our faith, but how it works is undefined.

1. visions
2. dreams
3. symbolic acts
4. verbal statements
5. editors' work
6. even a translation (i.e., LXX used by the early church, i.e., Isa. 7:14)

I believe the Bible is a unique book. A book of divine revelation. In this verse, as so often in the Prophets, the message is a specific verbal statement from YHWH. The eternal God has revealed Himself to His highest creation, mankind.

**38:5 "the God of your father David"** This statement links back to 37:35 and forward to 55:3. David represented the ideal king and YHWH made special promises to him and his family, II Samuel 7; II Kgs. 8:24-26. A future ideal Davidic king is mentioned in 9:7; 16:5; 55:3.

**38:6** Not only will God spare Hezekiah's life, but He will spare Jerusalem's life also! The phrase "I will defend" is Holy War terminology. The covenant God acts on behalf of His covenant people!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 38:7-8**

**<sup>7</sup>"This shall be the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that He has spoken: <sup>8</sup>Behold, I will cause the shadow on the stairway, which has gone down with the sun on the stairway of Ahaz, to go back ten steps." So the sun's *shadow* went back ten steps on the stairway on which it had gone down.**

**38:7-8 "be a sign to you from the LORD"** Here again, this was a physical sign to encourage Hezekiah that God was going to spare his life (II Kgs. 20:9 is a fuller account). It seems to be related to

1. a sun dial designed to use the steps leading to the king's private chamber
2. the term "steps" means "degrees" of a sun dial (cf. II Kgs. 20:9-11, JPSOA translation, see James Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, p. 183)
3. some type of astronomical phenomenon

We must be very careful in being dogmatic about exactly how God accomplished this. A supernatural God can do anything He desires within the laws of nature. However, this could equally be done by some natural phenomenon such as high humidity in a cloud layer. It is obvious that the other solar miracle in Joshua 10:12-13 is primarily more poetic than physical. We who believe in the miraculous must be careful that we do not attribute everything that we do not understand to the miraculous. Many times God used natural means to accomplish supernatural things (i.e., the plagues of Egypt). In the ancient world there was no distinction between the natural and supernatural (see John L. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis 1*).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 38:9-14

<sup>9</sup>A writing of Hezekiah king of Judah after his illness and recovery:

<sup>10</sup>I said, "In the middle of my life

I am to enter the gates of Sheol;

I am to be deprived of the rest of my years."

<sup>11</sup>I said, "I will not see the LORD,

The LORD in the land of the living;

I will look on man no more among the inhabitants of the world.

<sup>12</sup>Like a shepherd's tent my dwelling is pulled up and removed from me;

As a weaver I rolled up my life.

He cuts me off from the loom;

From day until night You make an end of me.

<sup>13</sup>I composed *my soul* until morning.

Like a lion — so He breaks all my bones,

From day until night You make an end of me.

<sup>14</sup>Like a swallow, *like* a crane, so I twitter;

I moan like a dove;

My eyes look wistfully to the heights;

O LORD, I am oppressed, be my security.

**38:10-20** This is a psalm written by Hezekiah. He was well aware of wisdom literature and he promoted the use of Psalms (cf. II Chr. 29:25-30). However, it does not appear in the parallel of II Kgs. 20:1-11.

### 38:10

NASB "In the middle of my life"

NKJV, TEV,

REB "in the prime of my life"

NRSV "in the noontide of my days"

NJB "in the noon of my life"

LXX "in the height of my days"

Peshitta "in the midst of my days"

The MT has מַדְּ (BDB 198, KB 226 II), which means "cessation," "pause," "rest," or "quiet." Some scholars see this as referring to a mid-day time of rest. KB 226 I asserts there is another form of the same root that means "half" (NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 972). The LXX translates it as "height of my days," which assumes a similar reading.

▣ "the gates of Sheol" See Special Topic: Where Are the Dead? at 5:14.

The "gates of death" are mentioned in Job 38:17; Ps. 9:13; 107:18; and Matt. 16:18 (where "Sheol" is called "hades"). This is metaphorical of death as a prison.

▣ "deprived of the rest of my years" The age of one's life was seen as a marker of God's approval (i.e., Moses, cf. Deut. 34:7; Joshua, cf. Josh 24:9). For one to die before having a child would be seen as a judgment of God (cf. Ps. 55:23; 89:45,46-48; Pro. 10:27).

**38:11** The ancient Hebrews did not see death as a reunion and fellowship with God, but a separation from life and the God of life. The OT has little light to shine on the afterlife. Even the NT is somewhat veiled in this area, though it does give more information.



▣ **“LORD. . .LORD”** The MT has *Yah* (יה, cf. 12:2; 26:4) twice, which should probably be just one YHWH (יהוה). The scroll of Isaiah in the DSS has one *Yah*.

▣ **“among the inhabitants of the world”** This translation is found in most English translations. The MT has the word “cessation” (i.e., “the land of the dead,” BDB 293 I, הַדָּל); the change to “world” (BDB 317, הַלָּד, comes from some Hebrew MSS and the Aramaic Targums). USB’s Hebrew Text Project thinks it is a purposeful play on the terms (p. 93), not a textual confusion. The phrase “inhabitants of the world” also occurs in Ps. 49:1.

**38:12** Hezekiah uses two metaphors to describe the end of his earthly life.

1. the taking down of a tent (cf. II Cor. 5:1; II Pet. 1:13,14)
2. cloth cut from a loom

There is a question of how to translate the first word in the MT, דֹּוּר (BDB 189, KB 217).

1. dwelling, form found only here (BDB 190, #4, KB 217 I), NASB, NRSV, NJB, JPSOA, REB
2. generation, life-span, common meaning of the root (BDB 189, KB 217 II), LXX, Peshitta, NKJV, TEV

There is also a question about the VERB (גָּלָה, BDB 162, KB 191). It could mean

1. “rolled up” from גָּלַל, BDB 164 II, *Niphal* PERFECT, cf. 34:4 (used in this sense only here)
2. “removed” from גָּלָה, *Niphal* PERFECT, a unique meaning here, usually it means either
  - a. uncover, reveal
  - b. to go away, send away

Most English translations use option #2, following the MT, but #1 fits the context well.

▣ **“From day until night You make an end of me”** This is idiomatic language (cf. Job 4:20; Ps. 73:14) of a complete action.

**38:13**

NASB           **“I composed *my soul*”**  
NKJV           **“I considered”**  
NRSV, NJB   **“I cry for help”**  
TEV            **“I cried out with pain”**  
REB            **“I am racked with pain”**

The MT has “I have smoothed” (i.e., “stilled my soul”), שָׁוָה, BDB 1000, KB 1436, *Piel* PERFECT, but many translators assume a change to שָׁוַע, BDB 1002, KB 1443 I, which means “to call out for help,” cf. 58:9, which seems to fit best.

▣ **“Like a lion — so He breaks all my bones”** Hezekiah’s death is seen as an action of the sovereign LORD. The OT monotheism attributed all causes to the one God. The ancients did not recognize secondary causes.

The Hebrew uses strong metaphors to describe God’s actions, here a lion.

**38:14** As v. 13 describes the LORD’S power, v. 14 describes Hezekiah’s weakness.

1. NASB, NJB, REB – “twitter”  
NKJV – “chatter”  
NRSV – “clamor”

TEV – “my voice was thin and weak”

This VERB (BDB 861, KB 1050, *Pilpel* IMPERFECT) means “to chirp,” “to peep.” It is used of birds here and 10:14, but in other places, of mediums (cf. 8:19; 29:4).

2. “moan” – BDB 211, KB 237, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. 16:7; 59:11; Ezek. 7:16; Nah. 2:7. It denotes sorrow for a current situation.

3. eyes look wistfully to the heights
  - a. “look wistfully” – BDB 195, KB 223, *Qal* PERFECT, used of prayer to God in Ps. 79:8; 116:6; 142:6 (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 951)
  - b. “heights” – BDB 928, would be a metaphor for heaven (cf. 32:15; 57:15; 58:4)
4. oppressed – BDB 799, this form is found only here. The *Pual* VERBAL form in 23:12 means “crushed.” Maybe Hezekiah was thinking of Ps. 103:6 or 146:7.

▣ **“O LORD”** The MT has *adon* (BDB 10), as in v. 16, not YHWH, as in vv. 3,4,5,7,11,20 (twice), 22.

▣ **“be my security”** This IMPERATIVE (BDB 786, KB 876, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) expresses Hezekiah’s request based on his weakness. The VERB means a pledge (cf. Job 17:3; Ps. 119:122). YHWH Himself was Hezekiah’s hope and guarantee!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 38:15-20**

<sup>15</sup>“What shall I say?

**For He has spoken to me, and He Himself has done it;**

**I will wander about all my years because of the bitterness of my soul.**

<sup>16</sup>O LORD, by *these things men* live,

**And in all these is the life of my spirit;**

**O restore me to health and let me live!**

<sup>17</sup>Lo, for *my own* welfare I had great bitterness;

**It is You who has kept my soul from the pit of nothingness,**

**For You have cast all my sins behind Your back.**

<sup>18</sup>For Sheol cannot thank You,

**Death cannot praise You;**

**Those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your faithfulness.**

<sup>19</sup>It is the living who give thanks to You, as I do today;

**A father tells his sons about Your faithfulness.**

<sup>20</sup>The LORD will surely save me;

**So we will play my songs on stringed instruments**

**All *the* days of our life at the house of the LORD.”**

**38:15-20** This strophe reveals the OT theology of *Sheol*. The afterlife was not a desirable place.

**38:15 “He has spoken. . .He Himself has done it”** This reflects the sovereignty of the monotheistic God of Israel. He speaks, it happens (cf. 55:11)!

**38:16** The second line is difficult in the MT. The LXX translates it as “and you revived my breath”; JPSOA translates it as “my life-breath is revived.”

**38:17**

NASB	“You who has kept my soul”
NKJV	“You have lovingly <i>delivered</i> my soul”
NRSV	“You have held back my life”
NJB	“you have preserved my life”
REB, Peshitta	“you have saved me”

The MT has the VERB “loved” (רָשַׁק, BDB 365 I, KB 362, *Qal* PERFECT), but it does not seem to fit well in this line of poetry, so some scholars assume “hold back,” חָשַׁךְ, BDB 362, cf. 14:6; 54:2; 58:1

▣ **“For You have cast all my sins behind Your back”** This psalm is related to Hezekiah’s relief that he has been delivered from *Sheol*. Yet, somehow in Jewish mentality, disaster is always linked to sin. It is not certain how any of Hezekiah’s actions were seen by YHWH to deserve early death. However, it is a wonderful statement that God forgives and forgets. Please compare Psalm 103:11-14; Isaiah 1:18; 43:2-5; 44:22; Jeremiah 31:34; and Micah 7:19.

This is such an important truth—when God forgives, God forgets! Many believers claim God’s forgiveness based on Bible promises, but have not yet experienced the complete joy of God’s forgetfulness!

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: WORDS FOR FORGIVENESS**

Here are most of the Hebrew words or idioms that express divine forgiveness of human sin and rebellion.

1. “forgive,” “pardon,” סָלַח – BDB 699, KB 757, i.e., Exod. 34:9; Lev. 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10, 13, 16, 18; 6:7; 19:22; Num. 14:20; 15:25-28; 30:5,8,12; I Kgs. 8:30, 34, 36, 39, 50; Ps. 25:11; 103:3; Isa. 55:7; Dan. 9:19; Amos 7:2 (this term is always used of God, never of humans)
2. “wipe away,” “blot out,” נָשָׂא (very common VERB with many meanings) – BDB 669, KB 724, i.e., Exod. 23:21; 32:32; 34:7; Num. 14:18; Josh. 24:19; Ps. 25:18; 32:1,5; 85:2; 99:8; Micah 7:18
3. “cover,” “atone,” כָּפַר – BDB 497, KB 493, i.e., very common in Leviticus; Ps. 65:3; 78:38; 79:9; Isa. 6:7; 22:14; Jer. 18:23; Ezek. 16:63; Dan. 9:24
4. “blot out,” “wipe out,” מָחָה – BDB 562, KB 567, i.e., Neh. 4:5; Ps. 51:1,9; Isa. 43:25; 44:22; Jer. 18:23
5. “heal,” רָפָא – BDB 950, KB 1272, i.e., II Chr. 7:14; Ps. 41:4; 103:3; Isa. 6:10; 57:18; Jer. 3:22; 17:14; 30:17; Hosea 5:13; 14:4
6. “passing over,” עָבַר – BDB 716, KB 778, i.e., Pro. 19:11; Amos 7:8; 8:2; Micah 7:18
7. “wash,” כָּבַשׁ – BDB 460, KB 459, i.e., Ps. 51:2,7; Jer. 2:22; 4:14
8. “cleansing,” טָהַר – BDB 372, KB 369, i.e., Lev. 16:30; Ps. 51:2; Pro. 20:9; Ezek. 24:13; 36:25
9. “cast behind the back,” שָׁלַךְ – BDB 1020, KB 1527, i.e., Isa. 38:17; Micah 7:19
10. “purge,” חָטָא – BDB 306, KB 305, i.e., Ps. 51:7 (this connotation of divine cleansing of this common VERB, is found only here)
11. “hide Your face from,” סָתַר – BDB 711, KB 771, i.e., Ps. 51:9
12. “remember” (neg.), זָכַר – BDB 269, KB 269, i.e., Isa. 43:25
13. “tread on” (lit. “subdue”), כָּבַשׁ – BDB 461, KB 460, i.e., Micah 7:19

**38:20 “The LORD will surely save me”** See Special Topic: Salvation at 33:2.

Notice the “salvation” here involved physical deliverance from death allowing future worship in the temple, cf. v. 22; II Kgs. 20:5, much like Ps. 23:6.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 38:21-22**

<sup>21</sup>Now Isaiah had said, "Let them take a cake of figs and apply it to the boil, that he may recover." <sup>22</sup>Then Hezekiah had said, "What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the LORD?"

**38:21-22** These verses are absent in the DSS of Isaiah, but they are in the LXX. A form of them is found earlier in the account in II Kgs. 20:7. The NJB puts them in their translation after v. 6.

**38:21** “**Let them take a cake of figs, and apply it to the boil, that he may recover**” We know from other ancient Israeli documents that figs were used as a medicine (also in Ugarit). Here we have the exact nature of Hezekiah’s illness (i.e., a boil). Whether it was some kind of cancerous growth or a boil at a vulnerable place is uncertain.

Notice it is YHWH who heals, but court physicians who apply medicine (i.e., figs). Again the ancients did not differentiate between the divine cause and a natural cause. All causation is attributed to God. He is intimately involved in His world, His covenant people, and individuals!

This verse has three JUSSIVES.

1. Let them take – BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. Let them apply it (lit. rub) – BDB 598, KB 634, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
3. Let him live – BDB 310, KB 309, *Qal* JUSSIVE

# ISAIAH 39

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Hezekiah Shows His Treasures	The Babylonian Envoys	Merodach-baladan's Embassy	Messengers from Babylonia	The Babylonian Embassy
39:1-4	39:1-2 39:3-8	39:1-4	39:1-3a  39:3b 39:4	39:1-2 39:3-4
39:5-8		39:5-8	39:5-7 39:8	39:5-8

### READING CYCLE THREE (see p. xvi in introductory section)

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. xvi). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

For a good discussion of the possible dates that these emissaries came see Gleason Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, pp. 212-213.

### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 39:1-4**

**<sup>1</sup>At that time Merodach-baladan son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that he had been sick and had recovered. <sup>2</sup>Hezekiah was pleased, and showed them all his treasure house, the silver and the gold and the spices and the precious oil and**

his whole armory and all that was found in his treasuries. There was nothing in his house nor in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them. <sup>3</sup>Then Isaiah the prophet came to King Hezekiah and said to him, "What did these men say, and from where have they come to you?" And Hezekiah said, "They have come to me from a far country, from Babylon." <sup>4</sup>He said, "What have they seen in your house?" So Hezekiah answered, "They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing among my treasuries that I have not shown them."

**39:1 “Merodach-baladan”** This was prince of Bit-Yakin, who controlled southern Babylon (721-710, 703-702 B.C.) and who rebelled against Assyria, twice. See Contextual Insights to chapter 38.

▣ **“king of Babylon, sent letters”** Apparently this Babylonian king was looking for allies against Assyria and, unfortunately, Hezekiah’s pride caused him to do a foolish thing (cf. v. 2) in revealing his wealth and resources to these Babylonian emissaries. He was possibly looking for a new political alliance.

**39:2**

NASB, NKJV “was pleased”

NRSV, TEV,

REB “welcomed”

NJB “was delighted”

LXX “rejoiced”

The MT has “rejoiced” (BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* IMPERFECT), which is often used in an arrogant sense (cf. Job 31:29; Ps. 35:15,19,24; 38:16; Pro. 24:17; Ezek. 25:6; Micah 7:8).

▣ **“There was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah did not show them”** The VERB “show” (BDB 906, KB 1157) is a *Hiphil* PERFECT. The king was really trying to show off. He must have personally accompanied them to all the civic and sacred sites (cf. v. 4).

**39:3-4** Was Isaiah seeking information? I think it was a rhetorical question to jolt the king!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 39:5-8**

<sup>5</sup>Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD of hosts, <sup>6</sup>'Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house and all that your fathers have laid up in store to this day will be carried to Babylon; nothing will be left,' says the LORD. <sup>7</sup>'And *some* of your sons who will issue from you, whom you will beget, will be taken away, and they will become officials in the palace of the king of Babylon.'" <sup>8</sup>Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good." For he thought, "For there will be peace and truth in my days."

**39:5** This is a literary marker (“hear,” BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) for a divine message, obviously related to Hezekiah’s rash act.

**39:6** This verse is the prophecy of the coming Babylonian exiles under Nebuchadnezzar II (i.e., 605, 597, 586, 582 B.C.). It seems that the biblical thrust is not only (1) Hezekiah’s arrogance; but also (2) the idolatry of his son, Manasseh (cf. II Kgs. 21:1-18); and (3) the peoples’ continuing unbelief and idolatry. The real problem was Hezekiah’s being tempted to trust a political alliance again, as he had Egypt earlier. One would think his answer to prayer in chapter 38 would have insulated him from this type of activity.

**39:7** This verse is surprising, not because it is a true prophecy, but because Isaiah always believed in the inviolability of Jerusalem and the Davidic family (cf. II Samuel 7).

Also note that the Babylon of Hezekiah's visitors is not the same Babylon that caused the four exiles. Much of Isaiah's poetry is ambiguous enough to relate to

1. Assyria
2. Babylon
3. Neo-Babylon
4. end-time events

▣ **“shall be taken away”** This happened to King Jehoiachin (cf. II Kgs. 24:15).

▣ **“officials”** The term (BDB 710) literally means “eunuchs,” but it came to refer to high court officials (cf. Potiphar was married, Gen. 39:1). In this context the term must refer to

1. a token symbol of Babylonian power
2. a ward of the state

**39:8 “The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good”** This is a startling statement. It either means that Hezekiah realizes his pride was the source of God's just judgment and, therefore, is fair, or it may imply, as in v. 8b, that he is just glad that the judgment will not occur in his day. Some scholars have asserted that the reason for the king's happiness is that this means he will have a son.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How is this concept of trust related to the Assyrian official's haunting message in Isaiah 36 and 37?
2. Did Hezekiah pay tribute to Assyria and did he have a military alliance with Egypt?
3. Why is Isaiah 37:20 so significant?
4. Why does God give two signs to Hezekiah?
5. Why is Hezekiah judged so severely for showing the Babylonian officials his treasure?





# APPENDIX ONE

## INTRODUCTION TO HEBREW POETRY

### I. INTRODUCTION

- A. This type of literature makes up 1/3 of the Old Testament. It is especially common in the “Prophets” (all but Haggai and Malachi contain poetry) and “Writings” sections of the Hebrew canon.
- B. It is very different from English poetry. English poetry is developed from Greek and Latin poetry, which is primarily sound-based. Hebrew poetry has much in common with Canaanite poetry. There are no accented lines or rhyme in Near East poetry (but there is a beat).
- C. The archaeological discovery north of Israel at Ugarit (Ras Shamra) has helped scholars understand OT poetry. This poetry from the 15<sup>th</sup> century B.C. has obvious literary connections with biblical poetry.

### II. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF POETRY

- A. It is very compact.
- B. It tries to express truth, feelings or experiences in imagery.
- C. It is primarily written not oral. It is highly structured. This structure is expressed in:
  - 1. balanced lines (parallelism)
  - 2. word plays
  - 3. sound plays

### III. THE STRUCTURE R. K. Harrison, *Introduction To The Old Testament*, pp.965-975)

- A. Bishop Robert Lowth in his book, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (1753) was the first to characterize biblical poetry as balanced lines of thought. Most modern English translations are formatted to show the lines of poetry.
  - 1. synonymous - the lines express the same thought in different words:
    - a. Psalm 3:1; 49:1; 83:14; 103:13
    - b. Proverbs 19:5; 20:1
    - c. Isaiah 1:3,10
    - d. Amos 5:24; 8:10
  - 2. antithetical - the lines express opposite thoughts by means of contrast or stating the positive and the negative:
    - a. Psalm 1:6; 90:6
    - b. Proverbs 1:29; 10:1,12; 15:1; 19:4
  - 3. synthetic - the next two or three lines develop the thought - Ps. 1:1-2; 19:7-9; 29:1-2
  - 4. chiasmic - a pattern of poetry expressing the message in a descending and ascending order. The main point is found in the middle of the pattern.

- B. A. Briggs in his book, *General Introduction to the Study of Holy Scripture* (1899) developed the next stage of analysis of Hebrew poetry:
1. emblematic - one clause literal and the second metaphorical, Ps. 42:1; 103:3.
  2. climatic or stair-like - the clauses reveal truth in an ascending fashion, Ps. 19:7-14; 29:1-2; 103:20-22.
  3. introverted - a series of clauses, usually at least four are related by the internal structure of line 1 to 4 and 2 to 3 - Ps. 30:8-10a
- C. G. B. Gray in his book, *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry* (1915) developed the concept of balanced clauses further by:
1. complete balance - where every word in line one is repeated or balanced by a word in line two - Psalm 83:14 and Isaiah 1:3
  2. incomplete balance where the clauses are not the same length - Ps. 59:16; 75:6
- D. Today there is a growing recognition of literary structural pattern in Hebrew called a chiasm, which denotes an odd number of parallel lines forming an hour glass shape whereby the central line is emphasized.
- E. Type of sound patterns found in poetry in general, but not often in eastern poetry
1. play on alphabet (acrostic. cf. Ps. 9,34,37,119; Prov. 31:10ff; Lam. 1-4)
  2. play on consonants (alliteration, cf. Ps. 6:8; 27:7; 122:6; Isa. 1:18-26)
  3. play on vowels (assonance, cf. Gen. 49:17; Exod. 14:14; Ezek. 27:27)
  4. play on repetition of similar sounding words with different meanings (paronomasia)
  5. play on words which, when pronounced, sound like the thing they name (onomatopoeia)
  6. special opening and close (inclusive)
- F. There are several types of poetry in the Old Testament. Some are topic related and some are form related.
1. dedication song - Num. 21:17-18
  2. work songs - (alluded to but not recorded in Jdgs. 9:27); Isa. 16:10; Jer. 25:30; 48:33
  3. ballads - Num. 21:27-30; Isa. 23:16
  4. drinking songs - negative, Isa. 5:11-13; Amos 6:4-7 and positive, Isa. 22:13
  5. love poems - Song of Songs, wedding riddle - Jdgs. 14:10-18, wedding song - Ps. 45
  6. laments/dirge - (alluded to but not recorded in II Sam. 1:17 and II Chr. 35:25)  
II Sam. 3:33; Ps. 27, 28; Jer. 9:17-22; Lam.; Ezek. 19:1-14; 26:17-18; Nah. 3:15-19
  7. war songs - Gen. 4:23-24; Exod. 15:1-18,20; Num. 10:35-36; 21:14-15; Josh. 10:13; Jdgs. 5:1-31; 11:34; I Sam. 18:6; II Sam. 1:18; Isa. 47:1-15; 37:21
  8. special benedictions or blessing of leader - Gen. 49; Num. 6:24-26; Deut. 32; II Sam. 23:1-7
  9. magical texts - Balaam, Num. 24:3-9
  10. sacred poems - Psalms
  11. acrostic poems - Ps. 9,34,37,119; Prov. 31:10ff and Lamentations 1-4
  12. curses - Num. 21:22-30
  13. taunt poems - Isa. 14:1-22; 47:1-15; Ezek. 28:1-23
  14. a book of war poems (Jashar) - Num. 21:14-15; Josh. 10:12-13; II Sam. 1:18

#### IV. GUIDELINE TO INTERPRETING HEBREW POETRY

- A. Look for the central truth of the stanza or strophe (this is like a paragraph in prose.) The RSV was the first modern translation to identify poetry by stanzas. Compare modern translations for helpful insights.
- B. Identify the figurative language and express it in prose. Remember this type of literature is very compact, much is left for the reader to fill in.
- C. Be sure to relate the longer issue oriented poems to their literary context (often the whole book) and historical setting.
- D. Judges 4 and 5 are very helpful in seeing how poetry expresses history. Judges 4 is prose and Judges 5 is poetry of the same event (also compare Exodus 14 & 15).
- E. Attempt to identify the type of parallelism involved, whether synonymous, antithetical, or synthetic. This is very important.



# APPENDIX TWO

## INTRODUCTION TO OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. Opening Statements

1. The believing community does not agree on how to interpret prophecy. Other truths have been established as to an orthodox position throughout the centuries, but not this one.
2. There are several well defined stages of OT prophecy
  - a. premonarchial (before King Saul)
    - 1) individuals called prophets
      - (a) Abraham - Gen. 20:7
      - (b) Moses - Num. 12:6-8; Deut. 18:15; 34:10
      - (c) Aaron - Exod. 7:1 (spokesman for Moses)
      - (d) Miriam - Exod. 15:20
      - (e) Medad and Eldad - Num. 11:24-30
      - (f) Deborah - Jdgs. 4:4
      - (g) unnamed - Jdgs. 6:7-10
      - (h) Samuel - I Sam. 3:20
    - 2) references to prophets as a group - Deut. 13:1-5; 18:20-22
    - 3) prophetic groups or guilds - I Sam. 10:5-13; 19:20; I Kgs. 20:35,41; 22:6,10-13; II Kgs. 2:3,7; 4:1,38; 5:22; 6:1, etc.
    - 4) Messiah called prophet - Deut. 18:15-18
  - b. non-writing monarchial prophets (they address the king)
    - 1) Gad - I Sam. 7:2; 12:25; II Sam. 24:11; I Chron. 29:29
    - 2) Nathan - II Sam. 7:2; 12:25; I Kgs. 1:22
    - 3) Ahijah - I Kgs. 11:29
    - 4) Jehu - I Kgs. 16:1,7,12
    - 5) unnamed - I Kgs. 18:4,13; 20:13,22
    - 6) Elijah - I Kgs. 18; II Kgs. 2
    - 7) Milcaiah - I Kgs. 22
    - 8) Elisha - II Kgs. 2:8,13
  - c. classical writing prophets (they address the nation as well as the king):  
Isaiah—Malachi (except Daniel)

#### B. Biblical Terms

1. *ro'eh* = seer, I Sam. 9:9. This reference shows the transition to the term *Nabi*, which means “prophet” and comes from the root, “to call.” *Ro'eh* is from the general Hebrew term “to see.” This person understood God’s ways and plans and was consulted to ascertain God’s will in a matter.
2. *hozeh* = seer, II Sam. 24:11. It is basically a synonym of *ro'eh*. It is from a rarer Hebrew term “to see in a vision.” The participle form is used most often to refer to prophets.
3. *nabi'* = prophet, cognate of Akkadian verb *nabu* = “to call” and Arabic *naba'a* = “to announce.” This is the most common OT term to designate a prophet. It is used over 300 times. The exact etymology is uncertain, but “to call” at present seems the best option. Possibly the best understanding comes from YHWH’s description of Moses’ relationship to Pharaoh through Aaron (cf. Exod. 4:10-16; 7:1; Deut. 5:5). A prophet is someone who speaks for God to His people (cf. Amos 3:8; Jer. 1:7,17; Ezek. 3:4).

4. All three terms are used of the prophet's office in I Chron. 29:29; Samuel - *Ro'eh*; Nathan - *Nabi'*; and Gad - *Hozeh*.
5. The phrase *'ish ha - 'elohim*, "man of God," is also a broader designation for a speaker for God. It is used some 76 times in the OT in the sense of "prophet."
6. The word "prophet" is Greek in origin. It comes from (1) *pro* = "before" or "for"; (2) *phemi* = "to speak."

## II. DEFINITION OF PROPHECY

- A. The term "prophecy" had a wider semantic field in Hebrew than in English. The Jews labeled the history books of Joshua through Kings (except Ruth) "the former prophets." Both Abraham (Gen. 20:7; Ps. 105:5) and Moses (Deut. 18:18) are designated as prophets (also Miriam, Exod. 15:20). Therefore, beware of an assumed English definition!
- B. "Propheticism may legitimately be defined as that understanding of history which accepts meaning only in terms of divine concern, divine purpose, divine participation" (*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 3, p. 896).
- C. "The prophet is neither a philosopher nor a systematic theologian, but a covenant mediator who delivers the word of God to His people in order to shape their future by reforming their present" ("Prophets and Prophecy," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 13, p. 1152).

## III. PURPOSE OF PROPHECY

- A. Prophecy is a way for God to speak to His people, providing guidance in their current setting and hope in His control of their lives and world events. Their message was basically corporate. It is meant to rebuke, encourage, engender faith and repentance, and inform God's people about Himself and His plans. They hold God's people to fidelity to God's Covenants. Often it is used to clearly reveal God's choice of a spokesman (Deut. 13:1-3; 18:20-22). This, taken ultimately, would refer to the Messiah.
- B. Often, the prophet took a historical or theological crisis of his day and projected it into an eschatological setting. This end-time view of history (teleological) is unique to Israel and her sense of divine election and covenant promises.
- C. The office of prophet seems to balance (Jer. 18:18) and supplant the office of High Priest as a way of knowing God's will. The Urim and Thummim transcend into a verbal message from God's spokesman. The office of prophet seems to also have passed away in Israel after Malachi (or the writing of Chronicles). It does not appear until 400 years later with John the Baptist. It is uncertain how the New Testament gift of "prophecy" relates to the OT. New Testament prophets (Acts 11:27-28; 13:1; 14:29,32,37; 15:32; I Cor. 12:10,28-29; Eph. 4:11) are not revealers of new revelation, but forth-tellers and fore-tellers of God's will in recurrent situations.
- D. Prophecy is not exclusively or primarily predictive in nature. Prediction is one way to confirm his office and his message, but it must be noted ". . . less than 2% of OT prophecy is Messianic. Less than 5% specifically describes the New Covenant Age. Less than 1% concerns events yet to come" (Fee & Stuart, *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, p. 166).

- E. Prophets represent God to the people, while Priests represent the people to God. This is a general statement. There are exceptions like Habakkuk, who addresses questions to God.
- F. One reason it is difficult to understand the prophets is because we do not know how their books were structured. They are not chronological. They seem to be thematic, but not always the way one would expect. Often there is no obvious historical setting, time-frame, or clear division between oracles. It is difficult (1) to read the books through in one sitting; (2) to outline them by topic; and (3) to ascertain the central truth or authorial intent in each oracle.

#### IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF PROPHECY

- A. In the Old Testament there seems to be a development of the concept of “prophet” and “prophecy.” In early Israel there developed a fellowship of prophets, led by a strong charismatic leader such as Elijah or Elisha. Sometimes the phrase “the sons of the prophets” was used to designate this group (II Kgs. 2). The prophets at times were characterized by forms of ecstasy (I Sam. 10:10-13; 19:18-24).
- B. However, this period passed rapidly into the time of individual prophets. There were those prophets (both true and false) who identified with the King, and lived at the palace (Gad, Nathan). Also, there were those who were independent, sometimes totally unconnected with the status quo of Israelite society (Amos, Micah). They are both male and female (II Kgs. 22:14).
- C. The prophet was often a revealer of the future, conditioned on a person’s or a people’s immediate response. Often the prophet’s task was to unfold God’s universal plan for His creation which is not affected by human response. This universal eschatological plan is unique among the prophets of Israel in the ancient Near East. Prediction and Covenant fidelity are twin foci of the prophetic messages (cf. Fee and Stuart, p. 150). This implies that the prophets were primarily corporate in focus. They usually, but not exclusively, address the nation of Israel.
- D. Most prophetic material was presented orally. It was later combined by means of theme or chronology, or other patterns of Near Eastern literature, which are lost to us. Because it was oral, it is not as structured as written prose. This makes the books difficult to read straight through and difficult to understand without a specific historical setting.
- E. The prophets use several patterns to convey their messages
  1. Court scene - God takes His people to court; often it is a divorce case where YHWH rejects his wife (Israel) for her unfaithfulness (Hosea 4; Micah 6).
  2. Funeral dirge - the special meter of this type of message and its characteristic “woe” sets it apart as a special form (Isaiah 5; Habakkuk 2).
  3. Covenant blessing pronouncement - the conditional nature of the Covenant is emphasized and the consequences, both positively and negatively, are spelled out for the future (Deuteronomy 27-29).

#### V. BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR VERIFICATION OF A TRUE PROPHET

- A. Deuteronomy 13:1-5 (predictions/signs are linked to monotheistic purity)
- B. Deuteronomy 18:9-22 (false prophets/true prophets)

- C. Both men and women are called and designated as prophets or prophetesses
  1. Miriam - Exodus 15
  2. Deborah - Judges 4:4-6
  3. Huldah - II Kings 22:14-20; II Chronicles 34:22-28
- D. In the surrounding cultures prophets were verified by means of divination. In Israel they were verified by
  1. a theological test - the use of the name of YHWH
  2. a historical test - accurate predictions

## VI. HELPFUL GUIDELINES FOR INTERPRETING PROPHECY

- A. Find the intent of the original prophet (editor) by noting the historical setting and the literary context of each oracle. Usually it will involve Israel breaking the Mosaic Covenant in some way.
- B. Read and interpret the whole oracle, not just a part; outline it as to content. See how it relates to surrounding oracles. Try to outline the whole book (by literary units and to paragraph level).
- C. Assume a literal interpretation of the passage until something in the text itself points you to figurative usage; then attempt to put the figurative language into prose.
- D. Analyze symbolic action in light of historical setting and parallel passages. Be sure to remember that this is ancient Near Eastern literature, not western or modern literature.
- E. Treat predictions with care
  1. Are they exclusively for the author's day?
  2. Were they subsequently fulfilled in Israel's history?
  3. Are they yet future events?
  4. Do they have a contemporary fulfillment and yet a future fulfillment?
  5. Allow the authors of the Bible, not modern authors, to guide your answers.
- F. Special concerns
  1. Is the prediction qualified by conditional response?
  2. Is it certain to whom the prophecy is addressed (and why)?
  3. Is there a possibility both biblically and/or historically for multiple fulfillments?
  4. The NT authors under inspiration were able to see the Messiah in many places in the OT that are not obvious to us. They seem to use typology or word play. Since we are not inspired, we best leave this approach to them.

## VII. HELPFUL BOOKS

- A. *A Guide to Biblical Prophecy* by Carl E. Armerding and W. Ward Gasque
- B. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart
- C. *My Servants the Prophets* by Edward J. Young
- D. *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic* by D. Brent Sandy
- E. *Cracking the Old Testament Code*, D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, Jr.



## APPENDIX THREE

### A BRIEF HISTORICAL SURVEY

A Brief Historical Survey of the Powers of Mesopotamia (using dates based primarily on John Bright's *A History of Israel*, p. 462ff):

A. Assyrian Empire (Gen. 10:11):

1. religion and culture were greatly influenced by the Sumerian/Babylonian Empire.
2. tentative list of rulers and approximate dates:
  - a. 1354-1318 Asshur-Uballit I:
    - (1) conquered the Hittite city of Carchemish.
    - (2) began to remove Hittite influence and allowed Assyria to develop.
  - b. 1297-1266 Adad Nirari I (powerful king).
  - c. 1265-1235 Shalmaneser I (powerful king).
  - d. 1234-1197 Tukulti-Ninurta I
    - first conquest of Babylonian empire to the south.
  - e. 1118-1078 Tiglath-Pileser I
    - Assyria becomes a major power in Mesopotamia.
  - f. 1012- 972 Ashur-Rabi II
  - g. 972- 967 Ashur-Resh-Isui II.
  - h. 966- 934 Tiglath-Pileser II.
  - i. 934- 912 Ashur-Dan II.
  - j. 912- 890 Adad-Nirari II.
  - k. 890- 884 Tukulti-Ninurta II.
  - l. 890- 859 Asshur-Nasir-Apal II.
  - m. 859- 824 Shalmaneser III.
    - Battle of Qarqar in 853
  - n. 824- 811 Shamashi-Adad V.
  - o. 811- 783 Adad-Nirari III.
  - p. 781- 772 Shalmaneser IV.
  - q. 772- 754 Ashur-Dan III.
  - r. 754- 745 Ashur-Nirari V.
  - s. 745- 727 Tiglath-Pileser III:
    - (1) called by his Babylonian throne name, Pul, in II Kgs. 15:19
    - (2) very powerful king
    - (3) started the policy of deporting conquered peoples
    - (4) in 735 B.C. there was the formation of the “Syro-Ephramatic League,” which was an attempt to unify all the available military resources of the trans-Jordan nations from the head waters of the Euphrates to Egypt for the purpose of neutralizing the rising military power of Assyria. King Ahaz of Judah refuses to join and is invaded by Israel and Syria. He wrote to Tiglath-Pileser III for help against the advice of Isaiah (cf Isa. 7-12).
    - (5) in 732 Tiglath-Pileser III invades and conquers Syria and Israel and places a vassal king on the throne of Israel, Hoshea (732-722 B.C.). Thousands of Jews were exiled to Media (cf. II Kgs. 15-16).
  - t. 727- 722 Shalmaneser V.
    - Hoshea forms an alliance with Egypt and is invaded by Assyria (cf. II Kgs. 17).

- u. 722- 705 Sargon II:
  - (1) after a three year siege, started by Shalmaneser V, his general and successor Sargon II, conquers the capital of Israel, Samaria. Over 27,000 are deported to Media.
  - (2) the Hittite empire is also conquered.
  - (3) in 714-711 another coalition of trans-Jordan nations and Egypt rebelled against Assyria. This coalition is known as “the Ashdod Rebellion.” Even Hezekiah of Judah originally was involved. Assyria invaded and destroyed several Philistine cities.
- v. 705- 681 Sennacherib:
  - (1) in 705 another coalition of trans-Jordan nations and Egypt rebelled after the death of his father, Sargon II. Hezekiah fully supported this rebellion. Sennacherib invaded in 701. The rebellion was crushed but Jerusalem was spared by an act of God (cf. Isa. 36-39 and II Kgs. 18-19.)
  - (2) Sennacherib also put down rebellions in Elam and Babylon.
- w. 681- 669 Esarhaddon:
  - (1) first Assyrian ruler to attack and conquer Egypt.
  - (2) he had great sympathy for Babylon and rebuilt its capital city.
- x. 669- 663 Assurbanipal:
  - (1) also called Osnappar in Ezra 4:10
  - (2) his brother Shamash-shum-ukin was made king of Babylon. This brought several years of peace between Assyria and Babylon but there was an undercurrent of independence which broke out in 652, led by his brother.
  - (3) fall of Thebes, 663
  - (4) defeat of Elam, 653, 645
- y. 633- 629 Asshur-Etil-Ilani.
- z. 629- 612 Sin-Shar-Ishkun.
- a.a. 612- 609 Asshur-Uballit II:
  - enthroned king in exile in Haran after the fall of Asshur in 614 and Nineveh in 612.

B. Neo-Babylon Empire:

- 1. 703- ? Merodach-Baladan:
  - started several revolts against Assyrian rule.
- 2. 652 Shamash-Shum-Ukin:
  - (a) Esarhaddon’s son and Assurbanipal's brother.
  - (b) he started a revolt against Assyria but was defeated.
- 3. 626- 605 Nabopolassar:
  - a. he was the first monarch of the Neo-Babylonian Empire.
  - b. he attacked Assyria from the south while Cyaxares of Media attacked from the northeast.
  - c. the old Assyrian capital of Asshur fell in 614 and the powerful new capital of Nineveh fell in 612
  - d. the remnant of the Assyrian army retreated to Haran. They even installed a king
  - e. in 608 Pharaoh Necho II ( cf. II Kgs. 23:29) marched north to help the remnant of the Assyrian army for the purpose of forming a buffer zone against the rising power of Babylon. Josiah, the godly king of Judah (cf. II Kgs. 23), opposed the movement of the Egyptian army through Palestine. There was a minor skirmish at Megiddo. Josiah was wounded and died (II Kgs. 23:29-30). His son, Jehoahaz, was made king. Pharaoh Necho II arrived too late to stop the destruction of the Assyrian forces at

Haran. He engaged the Babylonian forces commanded by the crown prince Nebuchadnezzar II and was soundly defeated in 605 at Carchemish on the Euphrates.

On his way back to Egypt he stopped at Jerusalem and sacked the city. He replaced and deported Jehoahaz after only three months. He put another son of Josiah on the throne, Jehoiakim (cf. II Kgs. 23:31-35).

- f. Nebuchadnezzar II chased the Egyptian army south through Palestine but he received word of this father's death and returned to Babylon.

Later the same year he returned to Palestine. He left Jehoiakim on the throne of Judah but exiled several thousand of the leading citizens and several members of the royal family. Daniel and his friends were part of this deportation.

- 4. 605-562 Nebuchadnezzar II:
    - a. from 597-538 Babylon in complete control of Palestine.
    - b. in 597 another deportation from Jerusalem occurred because of Jehoiakim's alliance with Egypt (II Kgs. 24). He died before the arrival of Nebuchadnezzar II. His son Jehoiachin was only king for three months until he was exiled to Babylon. Ten thousand citizens, including Ezekiel, were resettled close to the city of Babylon by the Canal Kebar.
    - c. in 586, after continued flirtation with Egypt, the city of Jerusalem was completely destroyed (II Kgs. 25) and a mass deportation occurred. Zedekiah, who replaced Jehoiachin, was exiled and Gedaliah was appointed governor.
    - d. Gedaliah was killed by Jewish renegade military forces. These forces fled to Egypt and forced Jeremiah to go with them. Nebuchadnezzar invaded a fourth time (605, 596, 586, 582) and deported all remaining Jews that he could find.
  - 5. 562-560 Evil-Merodach, also known as Amel-Marduk
    - he released Jehoiakim from prison but he had to remain in Babylon (cf II Kgs. 25:27-30; Jer. 52:31).
  - 6. 560-556 Neriglissar.
    - he was Nebuchadnezzar's general who destroyed Jerusalem
  - 7. 556- Labaski-Marduk
    - he was Neriglissar's son but was assassinated after only nine months
  - 8. 556-539 Nabonidus:
    - (a) Nabonidus was not related to the royal house so he married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar II
    - (b) spent most of the time building a temple to the moon god *Sin* in Tema. He was the son of the high priestess of this goddess. This earned him the enmity of the priests of Marduk, chief god of Babylon.
    - (c) spent most of his time trying to put down revolts and stabilize the kingdom
    - (d) he moved to Tema and left the affairs of state to his son, Belshazzar, in the capital in Babylon (cf. Dan. 5)
  - 9. ? -539 Belshazzar (co-reign)
    - the City of Babylon fell very quickly to the Medo-Persian Army under Gobryas of Gutium by diverting the waters of the Euphrates and entering the city unopposed. The priests and people of the city saw the Persians as liberators and restorers of Marduk. Gobryas was made Governor of Babylon by Cyrus II. Either Cyrus II or Gobryas is the "Darius the Mede" of Dan. 5:31 and 6:1. Darius means "Royal One."
- C. Medio-Persian Empire: Survey of the Rise of Cyrus II (Isa. 44:28; 45:1-7):
- 1. 625-585 Cyaxares was the king of Media who helped Babylon defeat Assyria.
  - 2. 585-550 Astyages was king of Media. Cyrus was his grandson by Mandane.
  - 3. 550-530 Cyrus II of Ansham was a vassal king who revolted.
    - (a) Nabonidus, the Babylonian king, supported Cyrus.

- (b) Cyrus II dethroned Astyages.
  - (c) Nabonidus, in order to restore a balance of power, made an alliance with:
    - (1) Egypt.
    - (2) Croesus, King of Lydia (Asia Minor).
  - 4. 547- Cyrus II marched against Sardis (capital of Lydia).
  - 5. November 2, 539, Gobryas of Gutium, with Cyrus' army, took Babylon without resistance. Gobryas was made governor of Babylon.
  - 6. 539- in October, Cyrus II “the great” personally entered as liberator. His policy of kindness to national groups reversed years of deportation as a national policy.
  - 7. 538- Jews and others were allowed to return home and rebuild their native temples.
  - 8. 530- Cyrus’ son, Cambyses II, succeeded him.
  - 9. 530-522 reign of Cambyses II.
    - added Egyptian empire in 525 to the Medo-Persian Empire.
    - possibly committed suicide.
  - 10. 522-486 Darius I came to rule.
    - (a) he was not of the royal line but a military general.
    - (b) he organized the Persian Empire using Cyrus’ plans for Satraps (cf Ezra 1-6; Haggai; Zechariah).
    - (c) he set up coinage like Lydia.
  - 11. 486-465 reign of Xerxes I:
    - (a) put down Egyptian revolt.
    - (b) intended to invade Greece and fulfill Persian dream but was defeated in the battle of Thermoply in 480 and Salamis in 479.
    - (c) Esther’s husband who is called Ahasuerus in the Bible was assassinated in 465.
  - 12. 465-424 Artaxerxes I reigned (cf. Ezra 7-10; Nehemiah; Malachi):
    - (a) Greeks continued to advance until confronted with the Peloponnesian Civil Wars.
    - (b) Greece divides (Athenian - Peloponnesian).
    - (c) Greek civil wars lasted about 20 years.
    - (d) during this period the Jewish community is strengthened.
  - 13. 423-404 Darius II reigned.
  - 14. 404-358 Artaxerxes II reigned.
  - 15. 358-338 Artaxerxes III reigned.
  - 16. 338-336 Arses reigned.
  - 17. 336-331 Darius III reigned.
- D. Survey of Egypt:
- 1. Hyksos (Shepherd Kings - Semitic rulers)-1720/10-1550 B.C.
  - 2. 18th Dynasty (1570-1310 B.C.)
    - a. 1570-1546 Amosis
    - b. 1546-1525 Amenophis I (Amenhotep I).
    - c. 1525-1494 Thutmosis I
    - d. ? Thutmosis II
    - e. ? Hatshepsut
    - f. 1490-1435 Thutmosis III
    - g. 1435-1414 Amenophis II.
    - h. 1414-1406 Thutmosis IV
    - i. 1406-1370 Amenophis III
    - j. 1370-1353 Amenophis IV (Akhenaten)
    - k. ? Smenkhare
    - l. ? Tutankhamun
    - m. ? Ay

- n. 1340-1310 Haremhab
- 3. 19th Dynasty (1310-1200 B.C.):
  - a. ? Rameses I
  - b. 1309-1290 Seti I
  - c. 1290-1224 Ramesses (Rameses II)
  - d. 1224-1216 Marniptah (Merenptah)
  - e. ? Amenmesses
  - f. ? Seti II
  - g. ? Siptah
  - h. ? Tewosret
- 4. 20th Dynasty (1180-1065 B.C.):
  - a. 1175-1144 Rameses III
  - b. 1144-1065 Rameses IV - XI
- 5. 21st Dynasty (1065-935 B.C.):
  - a. ? Smendes
  - b. ? Herihor
- 6. 22nd Dynasty (935-725 B.C. - Libyan):
  - a. 935-914 Shishak (Shosenk I or Sheshong I)
  - b. 914-874 Osorkon I
  - c. ? Osorkon II
  - d. ? Shoshnek II
- 7. 23rd Dynasty (759-715 B.C. - Libyan)
- 8. 24th Dynasty (725-709 B.C.)
- 9. 25th Dynasty (716/15-663 B.C. - Ethiopian/Nubian):
  - a. 710/09-696/95 Shabako (Shabaku)
  - b. 696/95-685/84 Shebteko (Shebitku)
  - c. 690/89, 685/84-  
664 Tirhakah (Taharqa)
  - d. ? Tantamun
- 10. 26th Dynasty (663-525 B.C. - Saitic):
  - a. 663-609 Psammetichus I (Psamtik)
  - b. 609-593 Neco II (Necho)
  - c. 593-588 Psammetichus II (Psamtik)
  - d. 588-569 Apries (Hophra)
  - e. 569-525 Amasis
  - f. ? Psammetichus III (Psamtik)
- 11. 27th Dynasty (525-401 B.C. - Persian):
  - a. 530-522 Cambyses II (Cyrus II's son)
  - b. 522-486 Darius I
  - c. 486-465 Xerxes I
  - d. 465-424 Artaxerxes I
  - e. 423-404 Darius II

\*for a differing chronology see *Zondervan's Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 2 p. 231.

#### E. Survey of Greece:

- 1. 359-336 Philip II of Macedon:
  - a. built up Greece.
  - b. assassinated in 336.

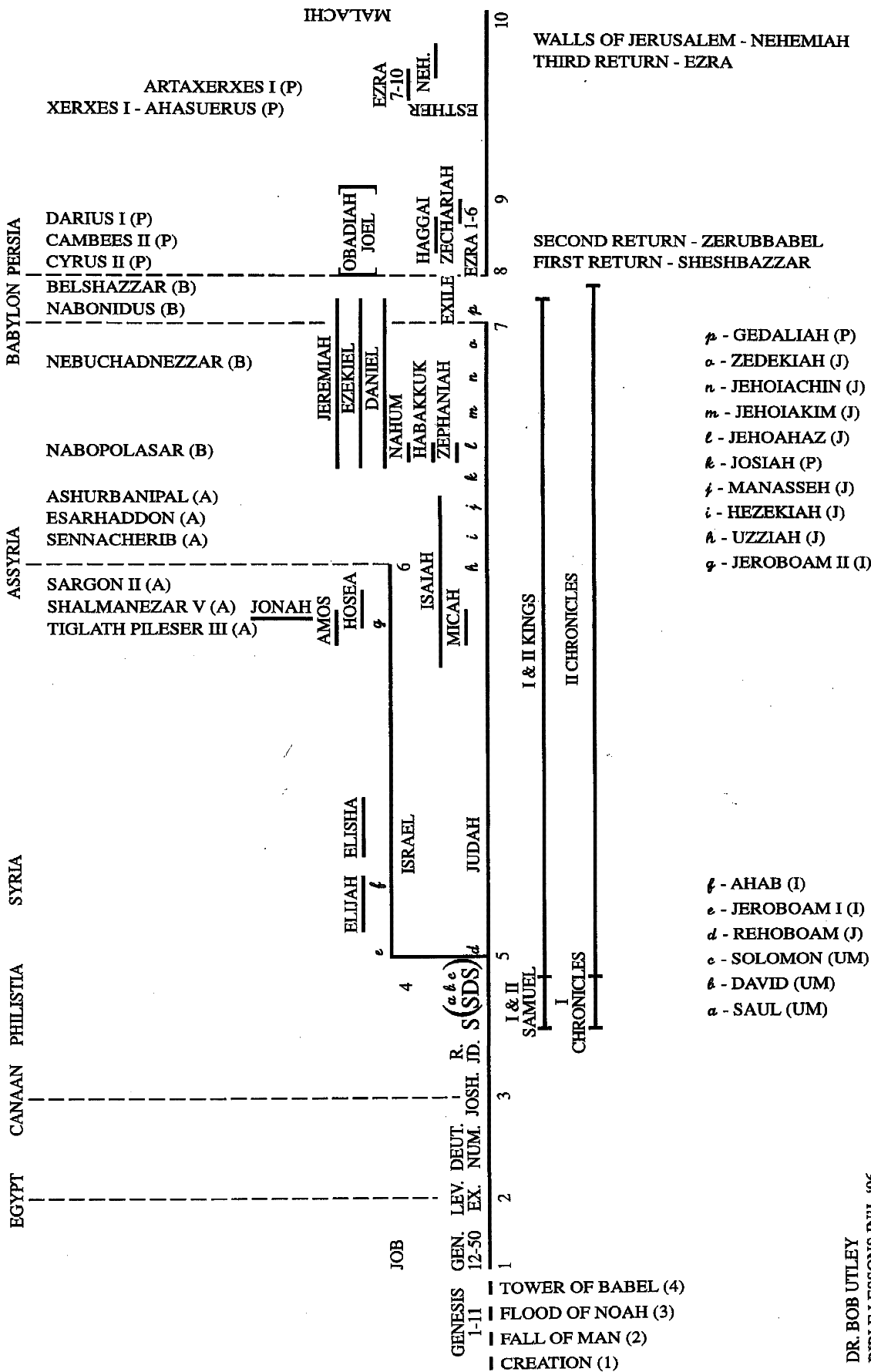
2. 336-323 Alexander II “the Great” (Philip’s son):
  - a. routed Darius II, the Persian king, at the battle of Issus.
  - b. died in 323 in Babylon of a fever at 33/32 yrs of age.
  - c. Alexander’s generals divided his empire at his death:
    - (1) Cassander - Macedonia and Greece
    - (2) Lysimachus - Thrace
    - (3) Seleucus I - Syria and Babylon
    - (4) Ptolemy - Egypt and Palestine
    - (5) Antigonus - Asia Minor (He did not last long)
3. Seleucids vs. Ptolemies for control of Palestine
  - a. Syria (Seleucid Rulers):
    - (1) 312-280 Seleucus I
    - (2) 280-261 Antiochus I Soter
    - (3) 261-246 Antiochus II Theus
    - (4) 246-226 Seleucus II Callinicus
    - (5) 226-223 Seleucus III Ceraunus
    - (6) 223-187 Antiochus III the Great
    - (7) 187-175 Seleucus IV Philopator
    - (8) 175-163 Antiochus IV Epiphanes
    - (9) 163-162 Antiochus V
    - (10) 162-150 Demetrius I
  - b. Egyptian (Ptolemaic) Rulers:
    - (1) 327-285 Ptolemy I Soter
    - (2) 285-246 Ptolemy II Philadelphus
    - (3) 246-221 Ptolemy III Euergetes
    - (4) 221-203 Ptolemy IV Philopator
    - (5) 203-181 Ptolemy V Epiphanes
    - (6) 181-146 Ptolemy VI Philometor
  - c. Brief Survey:
    - (1) 301- Palestine under Ptolemy rule for years
    - (2) 175-163 Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the 8th Seleucid ruler, wanted to Hellenize Jews by force, if necessary:
      - a) constructed gymnasiums.
      - b) constructed pagan altars of Zeus Olympius in the Temple

# **APPENDIX FOUR CHARTS**

**OLD TESTAMENT TIMELINE  
(on following page)**







- p - GEDALIAH (P)
- a - ZEDEKIAH (J)
- n - JEHOIACHIN (J)
- m - JEHOIAKIM (J)
- l - JEHOAHAZ (J)
- k - JOSIAH (P)
- j - MANASSEH (J)
- i - HEZEKIAH (J)
- h - UZZIAH (J)
- g - JEROBOAM II (I)

- f - AHAB (I)
- e - JEROBOAM I (I)
- d - REHOBOAM (J)
- c - SOLOMON (UM)
- b - DAVID (UM)
- a - SAUL (UM)



## **KINGS AND EVENTS OF THE BABYLONIAN, PERSIAN, AND GREEK DYNASTIES**

- 612 B.C. Nineveh falls to neo-Babylonian army (Nebuchadnezzar)
- 608 Pharaoh Necho II marched to Carchemesh to halt expansion of neo-Babylonian power  
Josiah, King of Judah, tries to stop him  
Death of Josiah and assumption of throne by his son, Jehoahaz  
Jehoiakim, another son of Josiah, replaced Jehoahaz on the authority of Pharaoh Necho II within 3 months  
Palestine and Syria under Egyptian rule  
Josiah's reforms dissipate
- 605 Nabopolassar sends troops to fight remaining Assyrian army and the Egyptians at Carchemesh  
Nebuchadnezzar chased them all the way to the plains of Palestine  
Nebuchadnezzar got word of the death of his father (Nabopolassar) so he returned to Babylon to receive the crown  
On the way back he takes Daniel and other members of the royal family into exile
- 605 - 538 Babylon in control of Palestine, 597; 10,000 exiled to Babylon
- 586 Jerusalem and the temple destroyed and large deportation
- 582 Because Jewish guerilla fighters killed Gedaliah another last large deportation occurred

### **SUCCESSORS OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR**

- 562 - 560 Evil-Merodach released Jehoiakim (true Messianic line) from custody
- 560 - 556 Neriglissar
- 556 Labaski-Marduk reigned
- 556 - 539 Nabonidus:  
Spent most of the time building a temple to the mood god, *Sin*. This earned enmity of the priests of Marduk.  
Spent the rest of his time trying to put down revolts and stabilize the kingdom.  
He moved to Tema and left the affairs of state to his son, Belshazzar  
Belshazzar:  
Spent most of his time trying to restore order.  
Babylonia's great threat was Media.

## **Rise of Cyrus**

- 585 - 550 Astyages was king of Media (Cyrus II was his grandson by Mandane)
- 550 Cyrus II, a vassal king, revolted
- Nabonidus, to restore balance of power, made alliances with:
1. Egypt
  2. Croesus, King of Lydia
- 547 Cyrus marched against Sardis (capital Lydia) and captured all of Asia Minor
- 539 Gobiyas took Babylon without resistance (Dan. 5; Belshazzar Nabonidus' co-regent; also Gobiyas possibly Darius the Mede, Dan. 5:31).
- Oct. 11, 539 Cyrus entered as liberator from Nabonidus' moon goddess, *Zin*

## **Cyrus' Successors**

- 530 Cyrus' son succeeded him (Cambyses II)
- 530 - 522 Reign of Cambyses (Elephantine Papyri)
- Added Egypt in 525 to the Medo-Persian Empire
- 522 - 486 Darius I came to rule
- He organized the Persian Empire along Cyrus' plan of satraps
- He set up coinage like Lydia's
- 486 - 465 Xerxes I (Esther)
- Put down Egyptian revolt
- Intended to invade Greece, but was defeated in the Battle of Thermopylae in 480
- Xerxes I was assassinated in 465
- 480 Battle of Thermopylae
- 465 - 424 Artaxerxes I Longimanus (Ezra 7-10, Nehemiah, and Malachi)
- Greeks continued to advance until confronted with Peloponnesian Wars
- Wars lasted about 20 years
- During this period the Jewish community is reconstructed
- 423 - 404 Darius II
- Authorized the feast of unleavened bread in the Elephantine Temple
- 404 - 358 Artaxerxes II
- 358 - 338 Artaxerxes III
- 338 - 336 Arses

336 - 331 Darius III

## GREECE

359 - 336 Philip II of Macedon built up Greece

He was assassinated in 336

336 - 323 Alexander the Great (Philip's son)

Routed Darius II at battle of ISUS

He died in 323 in Babylon of a fever after conquering the eastern Mediterranean and the Near East

Alexander's generals divided his empire at his death:

1. Cassander - Macedonia and Greece
2. Lysimicus - Thrace
3. Seleucus I - Syria and Babylon
4. Ptolemy - Egypt and Palestine
5. Antigonus - small part of Asia Minor

### **Seleucids vs. Ptolemies**

301 Palestine was under Ptolemy's rule for 100 years

175 - 163 Antiochus Epiphanes

Wanted to Hellenize Jews, constructed gymnasium

Constructed pagan altars; priests were mistreated

Dec. 13, 168 Hog was slain on the altar by Antiochus Epiphanes. Some consider this to be the abomination of desolation.

167 Mattathias and sons rebel. Mattathias killed. Judas took control.

Judas Maccabeaus wages successful guerilla warfare

Dec. 25, 165 Temple rededicated

# RULERS

## BABYLON

## MEDIA

626 - 605	Nabopolassar dies (“Nabu, Protect the Sun”) 625 - 585 Cyrzares
605 - 562	Nebuchadnezzar II (“Nebo, Protect the Boundary”) 585 - 550 Astyages
562 - 560	Evil Merodack 550 Cyrus II
556	Labaski Marduk
556 - 539	Nabonidus Belshazzar
539 -	Gobiyas

## MEDO-PERSIAN

550 - 530	Cyrus II (538 Medo-Persian dominate power called Achaemenian Empire)
530 - 522	Cambyses II (Egypt added and Cyprus)
522	Gaumata or Pseudo, Smerdis (reign 6 months)
522 - 486	Darius I (Hystaspes)
486 - 465	Xerxes I (Esther’s husband)
465 - 424	Artaxerxes I (Ezra and Nehemiah in Palestine)
423 -	Xerxes II
424 - 404	Darius II Nothus
404 - 359	Artaxerxes II Mnemon
359 - 338	Artaxerxes III Ochus
338 - 336	Arses
336 - 331	Darius III Codomannus

## GREEK

359 - 336 Philip II of Macedon

336 - 323 Alexander the Great

323 - Generals divide Empire

1. Cassander - Macedonia
2. Lysimicus - Syria
3. Seleucus I - Syria and Babylon
4. Ptolemy - Egypt
5. Antigonus - Asia Minor (killed in 301 B.C.)

The Ptolemies controlled Palestine, but in 175 - 163 control passed to the Seleucids

175 - 163 Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the eighth Seleucid ruler

\*Dates and names have been mostly taken from *A History of Israel* by John Bright, pp. 461-471.





## KINGS OF THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

JUDAH'S KINGS (I CHR. 3:1-16; MATT. 1:6-11)					ISRAEL'S KINGS				
NAMES & DATES	BRIGHT	YOUNG	HARRISON	BIBLE TEXTS	NAMES & DATES	BRIGHT	YOUNG	HARRISON	BIBLE TEXTS
Rehoboam	922-915	933-917	931/30-913	I Kgs. 11:43-12:27; 14:21-31 II Chr. 9:31-12:16	Jeroboam I	922-901	933-912	931/30-910/09	I Kgs. 11:26-40; 12:12-14:20
Abijah (Abijam)	915-914	916-914	913-911/10	I Kgs. 14:31-15:8 II Chr. 11:20,22					
Asa	913-873	913-873	911/10-870/69	I Kgs. 15:8-30; 16:8,10, 23,29; 22:41,43,46 Jer. 41:9	Nadab	901-900	912-911	910/09-909/08	I Kgs. 14:20; 15:25-31
					Baasha	900-877	911-888	909/08-886/85	I Kgs.15:16-16:7; II Kgs..9:9 II Chr. 16:1-6 Jer. 41:9
Jehoshaphat	873-849	873-849	870/69-848	I Kgs. 15:24; 22:1-51 II Kgs. 3:1-12; 8:16-19 I Chr. 3:10 II Chr. 17:1-21:1	Elah	877-876	888-887	886/85-885/84	I Kgs. 16:8-14
(Jehoram Co-regent)	----- ---	----- ---	853-848	I Kgs. 22:50 II Kgs. 1:17; 8:16; 12:18	Zimri (Army General)	876	887	885/84	I Kgs. 16:9-20 II Kgs. 9:31
					Omri (Army General)	876-869	887-877	885/84-874/73	I Kgs. 16:15-28 II Kgs. 8:26 Micah 6:16
Jehoram (Joram)	849-842	849-842	848-841	I Chr. 22:1-20 Matthew 1:8					
Ahaziah	842	842	----- ---	II Kgs. 8:24-9:29 II Chr. 22:1-9	Ahab	869-850	876-854	874/73-853	I Kgs. 16:29-22:40
					Ahaziah	850-849	854-853	853-852	I Kgs. 22:40,41,49,51-53 II Chr. 18:1-3,19
Athaliah (Queen)	842-337	842-836	841-835	II Kgs. 8:26; 11:1-20 II Chr. 22:2-23:21	Jehoram (Joram)	849-842	853-842	852-841	II Kgs. 1:17; 3:1-27; 8:16-9:29
Joash (Jehoash)	837-800	836-797	835-796	II Kgs. 11:2-3; 12:1-21 II Chr. 22:11-12; 24:1-27	Jehu (Army General)	842-815	842-815	841-814/13	I Kgs. 19:16-17 II Kgs. 9:1-10:36; 15:12 II Chr. 22:7-9 Hosea 1:4



JUDAH'S KINGS (I CHR. 3:1-16; MATT. 1:6-11) [CON'T.]					ISRAEL'S KINGS (CON'T.)				
NAMES & DATES	BRIGHT	YOUNG	HARRISON	BIBLE TEXTS	NAMES & DATES	BRIGHT	YOUNG	HARRISON	BIBLE TEXTS
Amaziah	800-783	797-779	796-767	II Kgs. 12:21; 14:1-22 II Chr. 25:1-28					
(Uzziah Co-regent)	----- ---	----- ---	791/90-767	II Kgs. 14:21; 15:1-7	Jehoahaz	815-801	814-798	814/13-798	II Kgs. 10:35; 13:1-9
Uzziah (Azariah)	783-742	779-740	767-740/39	II Chr. 26:1-23 Hosea 1:1; Amos 1:1 Zechariah 14:5	Jehosah	801-786	798-783	798-782/81	II Kgs. 13:9-13,25 II Chr. 25:17-25 Hosea 1:1; Amos 1:1
(Jotham Co-regent)	750-742	----- ---	750-740/39	II Kgs. 15:7,32-38	(Jer. II Co-regent)	----- ---	----- ---	793/92-782/81	II Kgs. 13:13; 14:16,23-29 Hosea 1:1
Jotham	742-735	740-736	740/39-732/31	I Chr. 5:17 II Chr. 26:23-27:9 Isa. 1:1; 7:1 Hosea 1:1; Micah 1:1	Jeroboam II	786-746	783-743	782/81-753	Amos 1:1; 7:9-11 II Kgs. 15:8-12
(Ahaz Co-regent)	----- ---	----- ---	744/43-732/31	II Kgs. 15:30-16:20 II Chr. 27:9-28:27	Zechariah	746-745		753-752	
Ahaz	735-715	736-728	732/31-716/15	Isa. 1:1; 7:1ff; 14:28; 38:8 Hosea 1:1; Micah 1:1	Shallum	745	743	752	II Kgs. 15:10,13-15
(Hezekiah Co-regent)	----- ---	----- ---	729-716/15	II Kgs. 16:20; 18:1-20,21 II Chr. 28:27-32:33 Prov. 25:1	Menahem	745-738	743-737	752-742/41	II Kgs. 15:14,16-22
Hezekiah	715-687	727-699	716/15-687/86	Isa. 1:1; 36:1-39:8 Hosea 1:1; Micah 1:1 Matt. 1:9-10	Pekahiah	738-737	737-736	742/41-740/39	II Kgs. 15:23-26
(Manasseh Co-regent)	----- ---	----- ---	696/95-687/86	II Kgs. 20:21-21:18; 23:12,26; 24:2	Pekah	737-732	736-730	740/39-732/31	II Kgs. 15:27-31; 16:5 II Chr. 28:6; Isa. 7:1
Manasseh	687/86-642	698-643	687/86-642/41	II Chr. 32:33-33:20 Jer. 15:4ff; II Kgs. 21:18-26	Hoshea	732-724	730-722	732/31-723/22	II Kgs. 17:1-18
Amon	642-640	643-641	642/41-640/39	II Chr. 33:20-25 Jer. 1:2; Zeph. 1:1 I Kgs. 13:2-3	Fall of Samaria to Assyria	724 B.C.	722 B.C.	722 B.C.	



JUDAH'S KINGS (CON'T.)					ISRAEL'S KINGS (CON'T.)				
NAMES & DATES	BRIGHT	YOUNG	HARRISON	BIBLE TEXTS	NAMES & DATES	BRIGHT	YOUNG	HARRISON	BIBLE TEXTS
Josiah	610-609	640-609	640/39-609	II Kgs. 21:24; 22:1-23:30 II Chr. 33:25-35:27 Jer. 1:2; Zeph. 1:1 Matt. 1:10-11					
Jehoahaz	609 (3 months)	609	609	II Kgs. 23:30-34 II Chr. 36:1-4					
Jehoiakim	609-598	609-598	609-597	II Kgs. 23:34-24:6,19 II Chr. 36:4-8 Jer. 1:3; 22:18-23; 25:1ff; 26:1ff; 27:1ff; 35:1ff; 36:1ff Dan. 1:1-2					
Jehoiachin	598/97 (3 months)	598	597	II Kgs. 24:6,8-17; 25:27-30 II Chr. 36:8-9 Jer. 52:31; Ezek. 1:2					
Zedekiah	597-586	598-587	597-587	II Kgs. 24:17-25:7 II Chr. 36:10-11 Jer. 1:3; 21:1-7; 24:8-10; 27:1ff; 32:4-5; 34:1-22; 37:1-39:7; 52:1-11					
Fall of Jerusalem to Babylon	586 B.C.	587 B.C.	587 B.C.	Lamentations					

For a good discussion on the problems of dating see E. R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*.



## APPENDIX FIVE – DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

I do not particularly care for statements of faith or creeds. I prefer to affirm the Bible itself. However, I realize that a statement of faith will provide those who are unfamiliar with me a way to evaluate my doctrinal perspective. In our day of so much theological error and deception, the following brief summary of my theology is offered.

1. The Bible, both the Old and New Testament, is the inspired, infallible, authoritative, eternal Word of God. It is the self-revelation of God recorded by men under supernatural leadership. It is our only source of clear truth about God and His purposes. It is also the only source of faith and practice for His church.

2. There is only one eternal, creator, redeemer God. He is the creator of all things, visible and invisible. He has revealed Himself as loving and caring although He is also fair and just. He has revealed Himself in three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Spirit; truly separate and yet the same in essence.

3. God is actively in control of His world. There is both an eternal plan for His creation that is unalterable and an individually focused one that allows human free will. Nothing happens without God's knowledge and permission, yet He allows individual choices both among angels and humans. Jesus is the Father's Elect Man and all are potentially elect in Him. God's foreknowledge of events does not reduce humans to a determined pre-written script. All of us are responsible for our thoughts and deeds.

4. Mankind, though created in God's image and free from sin, chose to rebel against God. Although tempted by a supernatural agent, Adam and Eve were responsible for their willful self-centeredness. Their rebellion has affected humanity and creation. We are all in need of God's mercy and grace both for our corporate condition in Adam and our individual volitional rebellion.

5. God has provided a means of forgiveness and restoration for fallen humanity. Jesus Christ, God's unique son, became a man, lived a sinless life, and by means of his substitutionary death, paid the penalty for mankind's sin. He is the only way to restoration and fellowship with God. There is no other means of salvation except through faith in His finished work.

6. Each of us must personally receive God's offer of forgiveness and restoration in Jesus. This is accomplished by means of volitional trust in God's promises through Jesus and a willful turning from known sin.

7. All of us are fully forgiven and restored based upon our trust in Christ and repentance from sin. However, the evidence for this new relationship is seen in a changed, and changing, life. The goal of God for humanity is not only heaven someday but Christlikeness now. Those who are truly redeemed, though occasionally sinning, will continue in faith and repentance throughout their lives.

8. The Holy Spirit is "the other Jesus." He is present in the world to lead the lost to Christ and develop Christlikeness in the saved. The gifts of the Spirit are given at salvation. They are the life and ministry of Jesus divided among His body, the Church. The gifts which are basically the attitudes and motives of Jesus need to be motivated by the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit is active in our day as He was in the biblical times.

9. The Father has made the resurrected Jesus Christ the Judge of all things. He will return to earth to judge all mankind. Those who have trusted Jesus and whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will receive their eternal glorified bodies at His return. They will be with Him forever. However, those who have refused to respond to God's truth will be separated eternally from the joys of fellowship with the Triune God. They will be condemned along with the Devil and his angels.

This is surely not complete or thorough but I hope it will give you the theological flavor of my heart. I like the statement:

"In essentials—unity, In peripherals—freedom, In all things—love."