

The Book of Isaiah, Introduction and Chapter 1

Isaiah the son of Amoz is often described as the greatest of the writing prophets / spokespersons for YHWH in all of Israel's history. Whether that is true or not, is a question of judgment concerning literary style and content. But from the standpoint of Biblical Theology, we think there can be little doubt that Isaiah is packed with more theological content than any other writing in the **Hebrew Bible**. Isaiah was a great individual, the companion of Judah's kings, whose preaching and political influence made an indelible mark on Israel's thought and life, and also on the writers of the **New Testament**.

The Hebrew name **Yeshayahu** means "YHWH Has Saved," or "YHWH Is Salvation," and the entire **Book of Isaiah** is an impassioned appeal to Israel to trust YHWH, the "Set-Apart One of Israel" as her only Savior.

His writing, the **Book of Isaiah**, however, has been the occasion for a long-running debate with reference to its nature. Is it the work of one historical author, Isaiah of Jerusalem, who lived in the eighth century B.C.E.? Or, is it in reality a combination of the messages of three great individual spokespersons for YHWH, disciples trained in the school of Isaiah,

(1) **Isaiah of Jerusalem**, from the eighth century B.C.E. (**chapters 1-39**, which contain a number of later additions, that obviously have come from a later time, even after the Babylonian captivity and return, as the original message of Isaiah of Jerusalem was applied to later historical events);

(2) **A disciple of Isaiah**, who updated and applied Isaiah of Jerusalem's message to a new generation two centuries later, in the sixth century B.C.E., in the midst of Babylonian exile and captivity, to whom scholars have given the name "**Deutero-Isaiah**," that is, **the "Second Isaiah"** (**chapters 40-55**);

(3) **Another disciple of Isaiah**, who in a similar way to the "Second Isaiah" updated and applied the message of the historical Isaiah to the Jewish people who had returned from Babylonian exile in 536 B.C.E., and who lived in the new circumstances of the rebuilt temple and a nation that was being rebuilt—but that was falling back into the failures of its ancestors who went into captivity. Scholars have given the name **Trito-Isaiah**, to this author, that is, **"Third Isaiah"** (**chapters 56-66**).

Otto Kaiser, in his **Isaiah 1-12, A Commentary** (The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1981; henceforth "Kaiser") states concerning those who made later additions to the **Book of Isaiah**, that they adopted "a different approach. This other approach knows nothing of the Western concept of authorship, inherited from the Greeks; its sole concern is to write along the lines of the man who gives his name to a particular book: this is seen as adequate justification for presenting personal views in his name...It was only drawing conclusions from the information at its disposal...The historical concern of the writers involved in the development of the **Book of Isaiah** was not with the past as such, but with its ideal, typical form and its significance for the time of each particular writer. Thus the prophetic sayings as they had been handed down were not thought to be unalterable; they needed continual reshaping and reinterpretation as history went on...

“In fact both forms of tradition, rewriting and exegesis, are concerned with the same task, that of keeping alive the Divine testimony of the fathers of the faith for each new generation. And this process will continue so long as men are seized by the content of these scriptures and in the light of their conviction recognize the God Who embraces the mystery of all human life at work among themselves and in their world.” (P. 9)

As is obvious from the introduction to the **Book of Isaiah** by H. Wolf and John H. Stek in the **NIV Study Bible** (Grand Rapids, The Zondervan Corporation, 1985; henceforth “Wolf / Stek”), those who hold that **Isaiah 1-66** is the work of only one historical author are forced to admit that **chapters 40-66** are addressed to people of later centuries. But they hold that the historical Isaiah was “projected into the future” (p. 1014) in the same way that futurist interpreters of the **Book of Revelation** in the twentieth century claimed that John was projected into the future (as if in a “time machine”) in **Revelation 4-22**, writing a message that applies, not to the first century, but to the twentieth century (or the “terminal generation” in Hal Lindsay’s language) of the 1980’s! In this same way it is claimed that Isaiah, under Divine influence, wrote these two sections of the book, not for late eighth and early seventh century readers, but for readers some two and three centuries later!

In order to gain the basis for a genuine answer to this much-debated question, it is best to first read and study carefully the **Book of Isaiah** in its entirety, from beginning to end, seeking to drink in and understand the entire **Book** as it comes to us, postponing our decision until we have some overall grasp of its contents. For, the fact is, whether written by the historical Isaiah in its entirety, or by later followers from his “school” (such as “The Second Isaiah” and “The Third Isaiah,” and even others), the message says what it says.

What we have learned from our study of Isaiah over the years, is that **chapters 40-55** are largely addressed to the exiled Judeans in Babylonia, while **chapters 56-66** are addressed to the former exiles who have returned to Israel, and are in the process of rebuilding their city and temple, in the midst of opposition, as opposing parties were forming, differing radically over what the nature of their religious community was to be, and facing a continuing threat of reverting to the sins of their forefathers that had led to their exile.

The person named “Isaiah,” whom we read about in this **Book** [also in **2 Kings 19-20** and **2 Chronicles 26** and **32**] lived and wrote during the stormy period marking the expansion of the Assyrian empire and the decline of Israel. Under King Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 B.C.E.) the Assyrians swept westward into Aram (Syria) and Canaan. About 733 B.C.E. the kings of Aram and Israel tried to pressure Ahaz, King of Judah into joining a coalition against Assyria. Ahaz chose instead to ask Tiglath-Pileser for help, a decision condemned by Isaiah--see **chapter 7:1ff**. Assyria did assist Judah, and conquered the northern kingdom in 722 / 721 B.C.E., bringing the northern kingdom to an end, and later replaced her people with colonists who intermarried with the former inhabitants, and produced a “half-breed” people later hated by the Jews and called “Samaritans.”

But Assyria’s presence in the former northern kingdom made Judah even more vulnerable to Assyrian attack, and in 701 B.C.E. King Sennacherib of Assyria threatened Jerusalem itself (see **Isaiah 36**). The godly King Hezekiah prayed earnestly, and Isaiah predicted that YHWH would force the Assyrians to withdraw from the city (**Isaiah 37:6-7**). See J. B. Pritchard’s **Ancient Near-Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament**, pp. 286-87,

henceforth, **ANET**. It was these two political crises--in the time of Ahaz, then later in the time of Hezekiah--that gave rise to much of the basic teaching that is found throughout much of **Isaiah 1-39**.

The historical Isaiah is pictured as having undergone a life-changing vision in the temple in Jerusalem, that constituted his "call to preach." He entered into a life-time of listening for the Divine voice, and proclaiming what he had seen and heard, and what he believed YHWH was saying. He preached defiance against these foreign threats through confident faith in YHWH, but at the same time is pictured as preaching a devastating message of judgment and condemnation against his own Nation of Judah (as well as Northern Israel), because of its disobedience to, and betrayal of, its covenant Lord, YHWH.

And yet, side by side with the message of doom and destruction, Isaiah's message is pictured as having been punctuated with beautiful promises of hope for those among YHWH's people who put their confident faith in YHWH, and who would become the Divinely saved and blessed "remnant" filled with blessing and truth for the entire world.

Nowhere in the **Hebrew Bible** do we find a stronger, more powerful ethical teaching than that which we find in the writings of Isaiah of Jerusalem! All of the legalistic, ritual emphases of the Jewish religion are laid aside--as Isaiah calls for the central moral and ethical virtues of righteousness, and justice, of merciful kindness to the poor, and true faithfulness in relationship with YHWH. What courage it must have taken for Isaiah to stand up against the leaders of his own nation, and utter the great sermons which are contained in **chapters 1-39!** We are constantly amazed at the dynamic content of those messages, as they show the ethical content of the preaching of the "Later Prophets" of whom we have learned in the "Deuteronomistic History" (**Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings**), but whose teaching and hope does not really become clear until we read their writings, from **Isaiah** through **Jeremiah, Ezekiel** and "the Twelve" (that is, the twelve "Minor Prophets").

We do not believe that there is any comparable ethical teaching, so thoroughly grounded religiously, historically, and sociologically, as is found in these writings, and specifically in those that bear the name of **Isaiah!**

Isaiah's message was not one of only "doom and gloom." For, interspersed throughout **chapters 1-39** we find numerous visions of hope--with Isaiah's conviction that although Divine judgment is coming upon his nation because of its sin, still YHWH God has a universal purpose of peace for both Judah and Israel, and all the nations of this earth. According to **Isaiah**, one day Jerusalem will be lifted up higher than the mountains, and all nations of the earth will flow to it, to share in its worship, and to learn and obey the powerful teaching of its God, YHWH! Out of destruction will come forth a remnant, that will grow into a mighty tree; and out of this very people doomed to devastating destruction (the cutting down of that mighty tree), will come a "New David," a "Branch," a King who will reign over both all of Israel and the nations.

Isaiah encouraged King Ahaz to be unafraid of the northern coalition of Israel and Syria, and to refuse to give in to their threats. At a later time, he urged King Hezekiah to be unafraid of the Assyrians, specifically of its King Sennacherib, with all his proud threats, and to refuse to give in to his demands. Later, Isaiah warned Hezekiah, that because of his naive allowing

the emissaries of Babylon to go through all the treasuries and possessions in his capital city, one day in the future (some 200 years away we know now), Judah would be overwhelmed by Babylon, and taken into captivity. See **Isaiah 39:1** and **6**.

When we finish **chapters 1-39**, and turn to read **Isaiah 40-55**, it is obvious that the Babylonian captivity predicted by Isaiah of Jerusalem has already taken place, and that now the Isaianic voice and message is being spoken to those living in captivity. Although the fall of Jerusalem did not take place until 587 \ 586 B.C.E., these chapters assume the destruction of Judah, and proceed to predict the restoration of the people from captivity, based on the conviction that YHWH had completely forgiven Israel's sin, and was renewing His covenant with His people, calling upon them to become His servant. (See **Isaiah 40:2-3**).

This is the point at which some scholars have held that the historical Isaiah of the eighth century B.C.E. was "projected into the future" [shades of the "Time Machine"!], in order to speak a comforting word to a generation 200 years later.

Many others, however, insist that in reality **chapters 40-55** have been written by a later "Isaiah," a student trained in the basic theology and language of the historical Isaiah (from the "School of Isaiah"--see **Isaiah 8:16-18**), who lived in the sixth century B.C.E. in the midst of the Babylonian captivity, and who has adapted the "Isaianic" message of comfort and hope, and the call to justice and righteousness to the exiles in Babylon. What a difference (and yet similarity) there is in reading these **16 chapters**. Instead of a message of judgment and condemnation, there is a message of hope and salvation; instead of harsh criticism, there is comfort and glad joy.

YHWH is depicted in these chapters as in the act of coming and redeeming His people from Babylonian captivity, just as He had formerly rescued them from Egypt (see **Isaiah 35:9** and **41:14**). These 16 chapters describe the rise of Cyrus the Persian, whom it describes as YHWH's מָשִׁיחַ, **mashiach** or "Anointed [One / King]," whom YHWH is using to bring about the deliverance of the Jewish people from their Babylonian exile. Cyrus, as we know from history, united the Medes and the Persians to conquer Babylon in 539 B.C.E. (see **Isaiah 41:2**). The decree of Cyrus would allow the Jews to return home in 538 B.C.E., a deliverance that has been taken by **New Testament** writers as an illustration of God's redeeming deliverance through Jesus.

This writing, called by many scholars "**Deutero-Isaiah**," contains some of the most powerful words of hope and comfort and in-depth religious understanding of history to be found in the entire **Hebrew Bible**.

But then when we turn from reading **chapters 40-55**, to read **chapters 56-66**, it seems evident that the former exiles have now returned, and are continuing to return, to the Land of Judah, and to Jerusalem. But now, having returned, instead of being the humble, obedient people that YHWH intended them to be, they are described as having returned to their former practices of injustice, using the day of rest for personal advantage, excluding outcasts, and once again engaging in the same kind of fertility worship (including sacred prostitution and the sacrifice of innocent children) that caused Israel to go into exile in the first place! It is, for this author whom many scholars have given the name "**Trito-Isaiah**," indeed a time of profound disillusionment!

But it is also a time for rebuilding--as this "**Third Isaiah**" describes the kind of city YHWH wants His people returning from Babylonian captivity to build--an open city, where all peoples and nations, and those who were formerly "out-casts" (such as non-Jews and eunuchs and children of foreigners--see **Deuteronomy 23:1-5**), will be able to find a home and a future in YHWH's "House of Prayer for All Nations."

Throughout the entirety of **Isaiah** we see the full dimensions of the Divine Warrior motif. YHWH is the God who acts in human history in powerful ways, bringing about the judgment and destruction of wicked oppressors, and delivering the weak and the oppressed--even if this means coming in destructive judgment upon His Own specially chosen people, Israel and Judah. Amos and Hosea before Isaiah had threatened Divine judgment against Israel (with Judah partially included) by an unnamed enemy (**Amos**), or by one of the great powers of the day--either Egypt or Assyria (**Hosea**). By the time of Isaiah of Jerusalem's preaching, there is no longer any question of who the foreign invader and "rod of YHWH's anger" will be--it is Assyria, as Isaiah identifies the enemy again and again.

According to **Isaiah**, YHWH would punish His rebellious people through the Assyrians, but then would turn and punish the Assyrians for their pride and arrogance, and would raise up a remnant from fallen Israel that would be the basis for Israel's hope-filled future. The terrifying judgment that would be unleashed upon Israel, Judah, and the nations that defy YHWH, is called "The Day of YHWH." It is described as a day of great destruction, that can only be described in terms of the darkening of sun, moon, and stars, of the trembling of both heaven and earth (see **chapter 13**). But out of the ruin and destruction of the old order, YHWH would, according to **Isaiah**, raise up a "Branch" and a "Remnant" as the beginning of the wonderful future that He has in store for His faithful people who choose to be His "servant."

Thus we see in **Isaiah 1-39** great swings in theme, from the darkness of Divine judgment and destruction to the bright light of eternal hope and the conquering of death for all peoples and nations. In **chapters 40-55**, we see that message of hope applied to a people suffering in the depths of captivity, while in **chapters 56-66** we see that message of judgment again being applied to a people returning to its former ways of disobedience to the Divine covenant with YHWH.

There can be no genuine question that for Isaiah's message, YHWH's kingdom realized on this earth, with its great mysterious Ruler, and YHWH's cleansed and obedient "servant" people, is the goal of history, and the end towards which Isaiah longingly looks and directs his readers' attention. Again and again we observe the biblical messengers of YHWH "standing on tip-toe," causing their readers to look out into the Divine future that YHWH God is bringing to pass through His actions in history.

The vision of Isaiah, as given to us in the **Book of Isaiah**, has played a very significant role in Christian history. Susan Ackerman, in **The New Interpreter's Study Bible** (Abingdon Press, 2003), henceforth referred to by "Ackerman," states that the **Book of Isaiah** "is quoted or alluded to in the **New Testament** far more often than any other book of the **Hebrew Scriptures** (with the possible exception of **Psalms**)--it is mentioned at least 46 times in the **Gospels**, 30 times in Paul, and 30 or more times in **Revelation**..."

“The **Book** was so highly esteemed by the early church fathers that, by the 4th century, the Christian church father and translator Jerome could write, ‘He (Isaiah) should be called an evangelist rather than a prophet because he describes all the mysteries of Christ and the Church so clearly that you would think he is composing a history of what has already happened rather than prophesying about what is to come...Indeed, the fathers even came to refer to **Isaiah** as their ‘fifth gospel.’” (P. 956)

Ackerman goes on to state that “Because Christianity has embraced **Isaiah** as its ‘fifth gospel’...some Christian interpreters have understood **Isaiah** as they understand the **Gospels** in the **New Testament**; namely, as texts that reject Judaism in favor of the Christian faith. In his interpretation of **Isaiah 1:2-3**, for example, the church father Jerome argues that it is not just the unrighteous among the ancient Israelites who are condemned, but Judaism in its entirety...Justin Martyr similarly uses **Isaiah 1:10** to claim God has rejected the Jews in favor of Christianity (compare **verse 9** as quoted by Paul in **Romans 9:29**), and John Chrysostom cites **Isaiah 1:10** to compare the Jews to Sodomites. Isidore of Seville further alleges that **Isaiah 1:11, 13, and 16** point to God’s rejection of the Jewish Sabbath and sacrificial system in favor of the sacrament of baptism.” (*Excursus: Anti-Semitic Interpretations of Isaiah*, p. 959)

Especially in the **first chapter**, we must be concerned with this matter: is YHWH, according to Isaiah, completely rejecting the religious temple ritual of Judah (and the Jews)? Or is He only rejecting Judah’s (and the Jews’) abuse of the temple and its ritual, because their hands are stained with blood?

Rather than saying more by way of introduction, we will move immediately to the translation of the Hebrew text of **Isaiah**, which has been taken from **Bible Works 8-10**, and which is a replication of **Codex Leningradensis**, as developed by the Groves-Wheeler Westminster Morphology and Lemma Database.

In comparing our translation to other English translations, we have chosen to use the following translations:

King James, 1769, which represents Anglican biblical scholarship across earlier centuries;

Tanakh, 1985, a modern Jewish translation;

New Revised Standard, 1989, which represents broadly ecumenical biblical scholarship, sometimes charged with being “liberal” in orientation.

New International, 1984, a popular translation favored by those more conservative in orientation.

New Jerusalem, 1985, a modern, very free Roman Catholic translation.

Rahlfs, Alfred Rahlfs’ **Septuaginta**, which is based on the major Greek uncial manuscripts

Vaticanus, **Sinaiticus**, and **Alexandrinus**, and when these three manuscripts omit verses they are supplied by later Greek translations, always marked with an obelisk. When in our footnotes we say **Rahlfs**, we are referring to this edition of the Greek text, acknowledging that there are numerous other manuscripts, both uncials (written in capital letters) and minuscules (written in lower case letters) which sometimes have different readings. Where the Greek text is missing in those three earliest uncial manuscripts, it is filled in by these later Greek manuscripts. When this happens, we have placed an asterisk * in the text, to indicate that the verse that follows is not found in the three major uncial manuscripts of **Rahlfs Septuagint**, but has been taken from later manuscripts.

Obviously, this is an attempt on our part to include a wide range of theological orientations in the translation process, without going into the massive number of translations that exist today. As you read these footnotes detailing the varying translations of **Isaiah**, problems in translation will become obvious.

Most important for the text of **Isaiah** is the **Isaiah scroll** which was found in a cave at Qumran, on the northwestern side of the Dead Sea, in 1947. It is dated at about 100 B.C.E., and is the oldest known copy of Isaiah. Before its discovery, the oldest copy of the **Hebrew Bible** (including the **Book of Isaiah**) was **Codex Leningradensis**, dated about 1,000 C.E., the text of which was compiled by the Masoretes around 700 C.E. in Tiberias, Israel, and which we are using for our translation in this commentary. The discovery of this complete scroll of **Isaiah** meant that we now have a copy of the **Book of Isaiah** which is 1100 years older than **Codex Leningradensis**. Nevertheless, the text of the Qumran **Isaiah** scroll is very close to the text of **Codex Leningradensis**. Where there are textual variants, we will refer to them by 1QIs^a, which means cave number one in Qumran, where numerous ancient documents were found, including an almost complete scroll of the **Book of Isaiah**.

The following end-notes appear at the end of chapter 1:

1. The Noun חִזּוֹן, “Vision, in the **Hebrew Bible**
2. The Piel Verb גִּדַּל, giddal, “Raise Up or “Make Great,” in the **Hebrew Bible**
3. The Polel Verb רוּם in the **Hebrew Bible**
4. The Noun מַכָּה, “Blow,” “Wound,” “Slaughter” in the **Hebrew Bible**
5. The Noun שָׂרִיד, Saridh, “Survivor” in the **Hebrew Bible**
6. The Noun קְטֹרֶת, “Sweet-smelling Incense,” in the **Hebrew Bible**
7. Commands for New Moon or Monthly Observances in the **Hebrew Bible**
8. Occurrences of the Noun שַׁבָּת, Shabbath in the **Book of Isaiah**
9. The Noun מִקְרָא, “Convocation,” “Sacred Assembly” in the **Hebrew Bible**
10. The Noun עֲצָרָה, a Synonym of מִקְרָא, “Assembly” in the **Hebrew Bible**
11. A New Testament Example of Washing and Transformation of Life: **Luke 3:3-14**
12. Occurrences of the Hiphil Verb הִרְעִי, “To Do Evil” in the **Hebrew Bible**
13. The Imperative Verb דַּרְשׁוּ, “Seek!” or “Seek Out!” in the **Hebrew Bible**
14. The Piel Form of the Verb אָשַׁר in the **Hebrew Bible**
15. Occurrences of the Noun יְתוֹם, “Orphan” in the **Hebrew Bible**
16. The Root Verb יָכַח in the Hiphil, “Decide,” “Adjudge,” “Reprove” in the **Hebrew Bible**
17. The Noun שָׁנִי, “Scarlet” in the **Hebrew Bible**
18. The Noun שֶׁלֶג, “Snow,” in the **Hebrew Bible**
19. The Verb אָבָה, “To Be Willing,” in the **Hebrew Bible**

20. The Interjection אֵיכָּהּ “How?”, “Where?” in the **Hebrew Bible**
21. The Qal Active Feminine Participle זֹנָה “Prostitute” in the **Hebrew Bible**
22. Isaiah’s Use of “My Hand” with Reference to YHWH in the **Book of Isaiah**

**Isaiah Chapter 1,
A Visionary Indictment of Israel’s Worship,
Coupled with a Divine Invitation to Full Forgiveness,
Based, Not on Religious Ritual,
But on Honest Dialogue with YHWH,
And Commitment to a Life of Genuine Goodness—Justice and Righeousness!
Hebrew Text, with English Translation and Footnotes¹**

¹The Jewish scholar I. W. Slotki, in **Soncino Books of the Bible, Isaiah** (The Soncino Press, New York, 1949), states that the prophet Isaiah “was justly described as one standing ‘with his head in the clouds and his feet on the solid earth, with his heart in the things of eternity and with his hands and mouth in the things of time, with his spirit in the eternal counsel of God and his body in a very definite moment in history’...The time which comes under review in the **Book** may be roughly divided into pre-exilic, exilic and post-exilic: the first being the period when Judah was still an unconquered state; the second, when the state was lost and Judah in captivity; and the third, when the exiles had returned from Babylon to rebuild their country.” (P. x)

Slotki comments on **chapter 1** that though it is the first chapter in the **Book**, it “is not the earliest of Isaiah’s prophecies, which should be looked for in **chapter 6**, where a graphic description of the prophet’s call to, and initiation into, his high office precedes what is obviously the prophetic message.” (P. 1)

Alec Motyer, in **The Prophecy of Isaiah** (Intervarsity Press, Downer’s Grove, Illinois, 1993; henceforth “Motyer”), entitles **1:1-5:30** “The Preface. Judah: diagnosis and prognosis.” He begins his commentary by stating, “The fact that the call of Isaiah to be a prophet is not recorded until **chapter 6** requires explanation...**Chapter 6** is indeed Isaiah’s call, but in order to depict the situation into which he was called he makes use of oracles originally preached after his call, constructing them here into an author’s preface...Like every author’s preface these chapters are the ‘backdrop’ to the whole book...”

“**Chapter 1** reviews three facets of the contemporary scene: national calamity (**verses 6-8**), religious declension [a condition of decline or moral deterioration] (**verses 10-15**) and social collapse (**verses 21-23**) arising from rebellion (**verse 2**), misdemeanor (**verse 15**) and infidelity (**verse 21**).” (P. 40)

John N. Oswalt, **The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39** (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986; a second volume, **The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66**, 1998; henceforth “Oswalt”) states that “**chapters 1-5** are a powerful, though general, statement of the hopes and realities of Judah’s situation. As such, they introduce the content of the **Book** in a remarkably fine way...The folly of Israel’s present choices (**1:2-17; 21-23; 2:6-4:1; 5:1-30**) is placed against the shining backdrop of what she might, nay, will, be (**1:18-20; 2:1-5; 4:2-6**). A striking feature of the section is the interchange between judgment and hope. The prophet moves back and forth between these two

(continued...)

¹(...continued)

themes and although he concludes the section on a note of impending doom, it is still clear that doom is not to be the final outcome...

“While **chapters 1-5** may be justly said to introduce the **book** as a whole, it may also be said that **chapter 1** introduces the introduction. In a very succinct way this chapter details Judah’s situation in God’s sight and calls them to return to Him. It constitutes what Ewald called ‘The Grand Arraignment’...The chapter sets the stage for what follows, declaring the inevitably destructive results of leaving God, the foolishness of rote religion, the necessity of justice, the corruption of the leadership, and in it all the possibility of redemption and restoration. These are the great themes of the **book** and they are stated in a grippingly concise way here.” (Pp. 80-81)

Joseph Addison Alexander, in his **Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah** (Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House, 1846-47, 1953 edition; henceforth “Alexander”), states that the design of **chapter 1** “is to show the connection between the sins and sufferings of God’s people, and the necessity of further judgments, as means of purification and deliverance.

“The popular corruption is first exhibited as the effect of alienation from God, and as the cause of national calamities, **verses 2-9**. It is then exhibited as coexisting with punctilious exactness in religious duties, and as rendering them worthless, **verses 10-20**. It is finally exhibited in twofold contrast, first with a former state of things, and then with one still future, to be brought about by the destruction of the wicked, and especially of wicked rulers, **verses 21-31**.” (P. 79)

²**The New Jerusalem Bible** (New York: Doubleday, 1985; henceforth **New Jerusalem**) states that the title given in **verse 1** “gives the chronological framework for the prophet’s entire activity, but it is difficult to decide whether it introduces the whole book in its final form, **chapters 1-66**, or only **chapters 1-39**, or even only **chapters 1-12**. Be that as it may, [the phrase] ‘Judah and Jerusalem’ is to be taken not in a geographical sense but as a designation for the chosen people for whose instruction all the prophecies are uttered, even those concerning the Northern Kingdom and foreign peoples.” (P. 1191)

George Buchanan Gray, **The Book of Isaiah**, in **The International Critical Commentary** series (T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1912, henceforth “Gray”) notes that “*Judah and Jerusalem* is an inadequate description of the scope of Isaiah’s teaching, still more of **chapters 1-39**; **chapters 13-23** contain a series of oracles directed against foreign nations; and even within **chapters 1-12** at least one prophecy (**9:7-10:4**) is primarily concerned with Ephraim.” (P. 1)

What do you think? How adequate and how far-reaching is this introductory statement?

Oswalt states that “This concern for the identification of the prophetic source at the outset and the lack of any other attribution later in the book provide strong prima facie evidence of the ancient community’s understanding of the single authorship of the book. While it must be granted that this does not constitute proof, it must at least indicate that the Hebrew people made every effort to make it appear to have come from a single prophet [referring to B. S. Childs, **Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture**, pp. 325-26].” (P. 81)

(continued...)

אֲשֶׁר חָזָה עַל־יְהוּדָה וְיִירוּשָׁלַם
בְּיָמָיו עֲזִיָּהוּ יוֹתָם אֲחִיו יִחְזַקְיָהוּ מֶלֶכִי יְהוּדָה:

Vision^{3, 1} of Isaiah⁴ son of Amoz,⁵

which he envisioned⁶ concerning⁷ Judah⁸ and Jerusalem,⁹

²(...continued)

We do not see how this single statement indicates “the Hebrew people making every effort,” but we do think it indicates the view of the final editor of the **book**, and that it represents ancient Israel’s view.

Slotki states that **verse 1** “should be understood as the superscription of **chapters 1-12.**” (P. 1)

³The phrase חֲזוֹן יִשְׁעִיָּהוּ, **chazon yesha(yahu**, means “Vision of Isaiah.” We take this to be the title given to the final form of the **Book of Isaiah**, describing the entire work as the result of Isaiah’s visionary experience, given by YHWH. For occurrences of the noun חֲזוֹן, “vision,” see our end-note 1.

Oswalt comments that “Titling the book a vision is rare among the prophets. Obadiah is the only other prophet to use it as the opening of a book.” (P. 82)

⁴The name יִשְׁעִיָּהוּ, **yesha(yahu**, which we have as “Isaiah,” probably means “Salvation of YHWH,” or “YHWH has Saved,” or “YHWH is Salvation.”

Oswalt comments on the meaning of Isaiah’s name that “One could hardly imagine a more appropriate name in the light of the overall message of the **book**. For while it is true that Yahweh judges and destroys, these are not the final expressions of His will. Ultimately He intends to save.” (P. 82)

We say, Yes! For YHWH’s ultimate saving intention, see **Isaiah 25:6-9.**

⁵The name of Isaiah’s father, אֲמוֹץ, (**amots**, is found only in the phrase “Isaiah, son of Amots,” some 13 times in the **Hebrew Bible**: **2 Kings 19:2; 20; 20:1; Isaiah 1:1 (here); 2:1; 13:1; 20:2; 37:2, 21; 38:1; 2 Chronicles 26:22; 32:20** and **32.**

Oswalt notes that the name has been found on an ancient seal, where the person is identified as a scribe. See J.C.L. Gibson, **Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions**, p. 62)

⁶The phrase, חֲזוֹן אֲשֶׁר... חָזָה, **chazon...asher chazah**, is literally “A vision...which he envisioned.” Jepsen (see endnote 1) states that the verb חָזָה, **chazah**, “refers to a special type of
(continued...)”

in (the) days of Uzziah,¹⁰ Jotham,¹¹ Ahaz¹² (and) Hezekiah,¹³ kings of Judah.

⁶(...continued)

Divine revelation, probably during the night but distinct from a dream. In any case, it is assumed that the God of Israel makes use of this method to reveal His word, just as He uses dreams and Urim [the sacred stones, Urim and Thummim] (**1 Samuel 28:6**). Above all, the word of God was revealed to the [prophets] through **חֲזוֹן**, **chazon**, ‘vision.’” (P. 290)

Compare **2 Chronicles 32:32**, where this same title reoccurs:

And (the) rest / remainder of Hezekiah’s words and his steadfast-loves—
look at them, written in the Vision of Isaiah, son of Amots, the prophet,
upon / in a scroll of kings of Judah and Israel.

⁷The preposition **עַל**, (**al**), has many different meanings: “upon,” “on the ground of,” “according to,” “on account of,” “on behalf of,” “concerning,” “beside,” “in addition to,” “together with,” “beyond,” “above,” “over,” “by,” “on to,” “towards,” “to” and “against.” It is most probable that here the preposition has the meaning “against,” as it is translated in Greek, **κατά**, **kata**, “against.”

Isaiah’s message is certainly “concerning” both Judah and Jerusalem; but it begins with a shockingly harsh message of condemnation by the prophet.

Beginning students of Hebrew are sometimes shocked and discouraged to realize how one small Hebrew word such as this preposition can have so many different meanings. But those who have invested years of their lives to learning Hebrew, will feel quite differently. They will sense in the Hebrew language a richness of possibility of expression, and they will refuse to become overly dogmatic in their interpretation of biblical passages.

⁸The name **יְהוּדָה**, **yehudhah**, Judah, is both a proper name (one of the twelve sons of Jacob / Israel), and a territorial name, the southern kingdom of Judah after the division of the United Kingdom of Israel into two different kingdoms, (Northern) Israel and Judah to the south.

⁹The city-name Jerusalem, which occurs here in the phrase **יְרוּשָׁלַיִם**, **wyrushalam**, is most often spelled **יְרוּשָׁלַיִם**, **yerushalayim**. There is no difference in meaning.

Oswalt comments that “Isaiah sees all of the covenant people Israel as being typified in Judah and Jerusalem...Whatever Isaiah may say about Israel or the other nations is adduced in support of his basic message to Judah and Jerusalem. The Ephraim which is addressed (**28:1**) is the Ephraim which has threatened the Holy City (**7:1-2**). The Babylon to whom Isaiah speaks is typical of that vaunting human pride from which God has promised to deliver His Own (**11:12**).” (P. 83)

¹⁰The personal name עֲזִיָּהוּ, (uzziyyahu, “Uzziah,” means “My Strength Is YHWH.” It is translated into Greek in two different ways: Οζειας, Ozeias, but also Αζαριας, Azarias = עֲזַרְיָהוּ, (azaryahu. He was the king of Judah. The history of his reign is given very briefly in **2 Kings 15:1-5** and then in a lengthier account in **2 Chronicles 26**. He is reported to have become king at the age of 16, and reigned for a total of some 52 years. Uzziah is mentioned elsewhere in **Isaiah** at **6:1** and **7:1**.

From **Wikipedia**, 1/8/2018: “Uzziah, meaning Yah is my strength; also known as Azariah, was a king of the ancient Kingdom of Judah, and one of Amaziah's sons (**2 Chronicles 26:1**)...Uzziah was 16 when he became king of Judah and reigned for 52 years. The first 24 years of his reign were as co-regent with his father, Amaziah.

“William F. Albright has dated Uzziah's reign to 783-742 B.C.E. Edwin R. Thiele's chronology has Uzziah becoming coregent with his father Amaziah in 792 / 791 B.C.E., and sole ruler of Judah after his father's death in 768 / 767 B.C.E. Uzziah was struck with leprosy for disobeying God (**2 Kings 15:5, 2 Chronicles 26:19-21**). Thiele dates Uzziah's being struck with leprosy to 751 / 750 B.C.E., at which time his son Jotham took over the government, with Uzziah living on until 740 / 739 B.C.E. Pekah became king of Israel in the last year of Uzziah's reign.”

¹¹The personal name יוֹתָם, **yotham**, “Jotham,” means “YHWH Is Perfect.” He was the twelfth king of Judah, the son of Uzziah. For the biblical account of his life and reign, see **2 Kings 15:32-38** and **2 Chronicles 27:1-9**.

Jotham was 25 years old at the time of his father's attack of leprosy, and was at once called upon to take over the administration of the kingdom—see **2 Kings 15:5** and **2 Chronicles 26:21**. His father Uzziah was completely isolated because of his leprosy, and as a result Jotham was responsible for the administration of justice, acting as king in the place of his father. His reign lasted for some 16 years. While Uzziah his father loved animal husbandry and had many cattle to occupy his time, Jotham was responsible for the affairs of state, including war with Ammon, and numerous building operations that had been begun by Uzziah.

During Jotham's reign, a combination of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and Syria, began to show signs of hostility to Judah. The Assyrian king, Tiglath-pileser III, was then pushing west-ward, and an Israel-Syrian league was formed to oppose him. Jotham may have refused to join this league—see **2 Kings 15:37**.

Isaiah, Hosea and Micah were all active during the reign of Jotham. It may be that **Isaiah 1-5** was written during Jotham's reign. Hosea's writings refer to the last years of Jeroboam II, who died the year Jotham came to the throne. Jotham's name occurs in **Isaiah** only here and at **7:1**.

From **Wikipedia** (1/8/2018): “Jotham or Yotam, meaning "God is Honest" was a king of Judah, and son of Uzziah by Jerusha, daughter of Zadok. Jotham was 25 when he began his reign, and reigned for 16 years. Edwin R. Thiele concluded that his reign commenced as a coregency with his
(continued...)

¹¹(...continued)

father, which lasted for 11 years. Because his father Uzziah was afflicted with [leprosy / severe skin disease] after he entered the temple to burn incense, Jotham became governor of the palace and the land at that time, i.e. coregent, while his father lived in a separate house as a leper.

“William F. Albright dated his reign to 742-735 B.C.E. Thiele dated his coregency with Uzziah starting in 751 / 750 B.C.E. and his sole reign from 740 / 39 to 736 / 735 B.C.E., at which time he was deposed by the pro-Assyrian faction in favor of his son Ahaz. Thiele places his death in 732 / 731 B.C.E.

“The **Gospel of Matthew** lists Jotham of Judah in the genealogy of Jesus. The archeologist Nelson Glueck found an imprint of king Jotham near Eilat. Also near Eilat there is a wadi called ‘Yatam wadi.’”

¹²The personal name אֲחָז , **ahaz**, “Ahaz,” means “He Has Grasped,” and may be an abbreviation for יְהוָה אֲחָז , “YHWH Has Grasped.” Tiglath-Pileser’s Assyrian inscription of 732 B.C.E. gives his name as la-u-ha-zi. He was the son of Jotham, and father of Hezekiah, and he reigned over Judah for some twenty years. See the story of his life and reign in **2 Kings 16** and **2 Chronicles 28**.

Ahaz quickly, at the beginning of his reign departed from the religious traditions of his fathers and of the nation to adapt to the surrounding Canaanite (and Northern Israel’s) religious worship of the Baals, including the image of the heavenly queen Asherah in the Valley of Hinnom, where he put his own son(s) to death, burning them in the fire. All sorts of other acts of idolatry were to follow.

The kingdom of Judah was at this time in serious peril as a result of the Syrian / Northern Israel coalition, that formed a conspiracy to dethrone Ahaz, and replace him by the "son of Tabeel" –see **Isaiah 7**. The two confederates marched against Jerusalem; the Jews were driven out of Elath (on the Gulf of Akabah), and the country of Judah was ravaged, with large numbers of her citizens taken captive. Consternation was universal, and Ahaz’s heart "trembled, like the trees of the forest tremble with the wind. In the midst of this national emergency, Ahaz appealed to the king of Assyria for help.

But in spite of all the consternation, Isaiah the spokesperson stood strong, calling upon Ahaz and the nation to not seek Assyria’s help, and to not be afraid of Syria / Northern Israel, but instead, to put their trust in YHWH for deliverance.

From **Wikipedia** (1/8/2018): “Ahaz was king of Judah, and the son and successor of Jotham. Ahaz was 20 when he became king of Judah and reigned for 16 years. Ahaz is portrayed as an evil king in **2 Kings 16:2**.

“Edwin R. Thiele concluded that Ahaz was coregent with Jotham from 736 / 735 B.C.E., and that his sole reign began in 732 / 731 and ended in 716 / 715 B.C.E. William F. Albright has dated his reign to 744-728 B.C.E.

(continued...)

¹²(...continued)

“The **Gospel of Matthew** lists Ahaz of Judah in the genealogy of Jesus.

“Ahaz's reign commenced at the age of 20, in the 17th year of the reign of Pekah of Israel. It is described in **2 Kings 16**; **Isaiah 7-9**; and **2 Chronicles 28**.

“Immediately upon his accession Ahaz had to meet a coalition formed by northern Israel, under Pekah, and Damascus (Syria), under Rezin. These kings wished to compel him to join them in opposing the Assyrians, who were arming a force against the Northern Kingdom under Tiglath-Pileser III (Pul). Isaiah counseled Ahaz to trust in God rather than foreign allies, and told him to ask for a sign to confirm that this is a true prophecy (**Isaiah 7:11**). Ahaz refused, saying he would not test God (**Isaiah 7:12**). Isaiah replied that Ahaz would have a sign whether he asked for it or not, and the sign would be the birth of a child, and the child's mother would call it Immanuel, meaning ‘God-with-us’ (**Isaiah 7:13-14**).

“To protect himself Ahaz called in the aid of the Assyrians. Tiglath-Pileser sacked Damascus and annexed Aram. According to **2 Kings 16:9**, the population of Aram was deported and Rezin executed. Tiglath-Pileser then attacked Israel and “took Ijon, Abel Beth Maacah, Janoah, Kedesh and Hazor. He took Gilead and Galilee, including all the land of Naphtali, and deported the people to Assyria.” Tiglath-Pileser also records this act in one of his inscriptions.

“Through Assyria's intervention, and as a result of its invasion and subjection of the kingdom of Damascus and the Kingdom of Israel, Ahaz was relieved of his troublesome neighbors; but his protector henceforth claimed and held suzerainty over his kingdom. This war of invasion lasted two years (734-732 B.C.E.), and ended in the capture and annexation of Damascus to Assyria and of the territory of Israel north of the border of Jezreel. Ahaz in the meanwhile furnished auxiliaries to Tiglath-Pileser. This appeal to Assyria met with stern opposition from the prophet Isaiah, who counseled Ahaz to rely upon the Lord and not upon outside aid. The sequel seemed to justify the king and to condemn the prophet. Ahaz, during his whole reign, was free from troubles with which the neighboring rulers were harassed, who from time to time revolted against Assyria. Thus it was that, in 722 B.C.E., Samaria was taken and northern Israel wholly incorporated into the Assyrian empire.

“Ahaz, who was irresolute and impressionable, yielded readily to the glamour and prestige of the Assyrians in religion as well as in politics. In 732 he went to Damascus to swear homage to Tiglath-Pileser and his Gods; and, taking a fancy to an altar which he saw there, he had one like it made in Jerusalem, which, with a corresponding change in ritual, he made a permanent feature of the temple worship. Changes were also made in the arrangements and furniture of the temple, “because of the king of Assyria” (**2 Kings 16:18**). Furthermore, Ahaz fitted up an astrological observatory with accompanying sacrifices, after the fashion of the ruling people. In other ways Ahaz lowered the character of the national worship. It is recorded that he even offered his son by fire to Moloch.

His government is considered by the Deuteronomistic historian, as having been disastrous to the religious state of the country; and a large part of the reforming work of his son Hezekiah was aimed at undoing the evil that Ahaz had done.

(continued...)

¹²(...continued)

“He died at the age of 36 and was succeeded by his son, Hezekiah. Because of his wickedness he was “not brought into the sepulchre of the kings” (**2 Chronicles 28:27**). An insight into Ahaz’s neglect of the worship of the Lord is found in the statement that on the first day of the month of Nisan that followed Ahaz’s death, his son Hezekiah commissioned the priests and Levites to open and repair the doors of the temple and to remove the defilements of the sanctuary, a task which took 16 days (**2 Chronicles 29:3-20**).

¹³The personal name יְחִזְקִיָּהוּ, **yechizqiyahu**, “Hezekiah,” which means “YHWH Has Strengthened,” transliterated into the Greek by Εζεκίου, **Ezekiou**, occurs only here in the longer form in **Isaiah**, but a shorter form of the name, חִזְקִיָּהוּ, **chizqiyyahu**, occurs some 33 times at **1:1; 36:1, 2, 4, 7, 14, 15, 16, 18, 22 37:1, 3, 5, 9, 10, 14, 14, 15, 21; 38:1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 22; 39:1, 2, 2, 3, 3, 5 and 8**. It may be that this difference in spelling of the king’s name in **1:1** is an indication that this is a later title placed on Isaiah’s writings by an editor compiling Isaiah’s writings.

Hezekiah was one of the greatest of Judah’s kings; his reign began in about 715 B.C.E., and lasted for some 29 years. **Ben Sirach 49:4** describes Hezekiah as one of the three kings who alone did not “commit trespass.” along with David (no trespass?) and Josiah. The story of his life and reign are to be found in **2 Kings 18-20, 2 Chronicles 29-32, Isaiah 36-39** and **Ben Sirach 48:17-25**. He is eulogized as one who “trusted in YHWH, the God of Israel.”

During his reign, the Assyrian inscriptions become illuminating for the history of Israel—especially with reference to the campaign of Sennacherib in 701.

From his father Ahaz, Hezekiah inherited not only a religious community in great need of reformation, but also a nation burdened with Assyrian dominance and taxation, and the constant danger of increasing Assyrian encroachment

As soon as he took the throne from his father, Hezekiah set about making reforms in religion (see especially **2 Chronicles 29-31**). Isaiah played a key role in Hezekiah’s religious reform, and also in counseling him concerning his relationships to Assyria and Babylon.

The compilation of the later Solomonic section of the **Proverbs, chapters 25-29**, are attributed to the “men of Hezekiah.” Again, Hezekiah and his people apparently played a very significant role in the compilation and adaptation of the older Davidic Psalms, and in the composition of new ones.

¹⁴Motyer comments that in **1:2-31**, “the oracles...are undated and no advantage arises from devising hypotheses regarding their point of origin in Isaiah’s ministry. Their significance does not arise from their historical setting but from their searching exposure of sin and its consequences in the people of God. They touch in turn the national [**1:2-9**, a courtroom drama], religious [**1:10-20**] and social [**1:21-26**] facets of contemporary life.” (P. 42)

(continued...)

וְהָאֲזִינֵי אֶרֶץ
כִּי יְהוּה דָּבַר
בְּנִים גְּבֻלָּתִי וְרוֹמְמָתִי
וְהֵם פָּשְׁעוּ בִּי:

¹⁴(...continued)

Ackerman comments on **1:2-20** that it depicts God taking “the people of Judah and Jerusalem to court for covenant violations.” She comments on **verse 2** that “Because the heavens and earth served as witnesses when God’s covenant with Israel was originally made (**Deuteronomy 4:26; 30:19; 31:28**), they are called to hear the Deity’s suit against the people.” (P. 958)

Oswalt entitles **verses 2-9** “Israel’s Condition.” He states that “This opening section of the chapter gives the charge against Israel: She has forsaken the Lord and is, as a result, broken and desolate. Two sub-sections may be identified. In the first (**verses 2-3**) God Himself is depicted as opening the proceedings and makes the charge. In the second (**verses 4-9**), the prophet amplifies the charge and substantiates it on the basis of Israel’s condition.” (P. 84)

Oswalt comments on **verses 2-3** that “In the opening words, the heavens and earth are called to listen in on what amounts to a Divine monologue. God is meditating on the strange situation that has developed. The tone makes it clear that what follows will be not so much a legal presentation as a personal one. While the covenant is clearly in view here, it is in the back-ground and remains there. Israel’s offense is against common decency and common sense. Even animals know better.” (P. 85)

Kaiser states that in these verses, “in clear metaphorical language, Yahweh compares His experience with Israel with that of a father whose sons have repaid all his care by breaking off relations with him. **Verse 3** evocatively stresses the heedless folly of this reaction of the people towards their God by contrasting it with that of beasts of burden towards their owners.” (Pp. 10-11)

He adds that in ancient Israel, “If a father’s attempts to educate his son by admonitions and corporal punishment were to no avail, he could ask the local assembly of elders to investigate the son’s disobedience; if need be, the son could be punished by death (**Deuteronomy 21:18ff.**)...In the light of **verses 4ff.**, which follows, we may say that at any moment Yahweh can proceed to the next, and now final, annihilating blow against His people. In that case heaven and earth would bear witness to the justice of His action (compare **Psalms 50:6**). But at the same time we can and should also understand the words as the lament of the father who sadly looks at the course his children are taking and describes what he sees, provided that in addition we do not forget the inexorable demand for obedience which underlies this.” (P. 13)

Hear,¹⁵ O heavens!¹⁶

And listen,¹⁷ O earth!¹⁸

¹⁵The qal imperative masculine plural שִׁמְעוּ, **shim(u)**, “listen!”, “hear!” occurs some 21 times in **Isaiah**: **1:2** (here), **10**; **6:9**; **7:13**; **28:14, 23, 23**; **33:13**; **36:13** (on the lips of the Assyrian commander); **42:18**; **46:3, 12**; **48:1, 14, 16**; **49:1**; **51:1, 7**; **55:2, 3** and **66:5**. Sometimes the command is on the lips of YHWH, sometimes on the lips of Isaiah, sometimes on the lips of YHWH’s servant Isaiah—once on the lips of an Assyrian army commander. It is all important for people (Israel) to listen to the Divine word that comes from YHWH through His servant, the prophet! But here, it is not the people of Judah who are being called upon to hear—it is the heavens (and the land), probably as witnesses to the truth of what YHWH, through Isaiah, is going to describe.

¹⁶This is apparently the only place in the **Hebrew Bible** where the heavens are commanded to hear, using the verb שָׁמַע. But see **Deuteronomy 32:1**: הֶאֱזִינוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֲדַבְרָה וְתִשְׁמַע הָאָרֶץ אִמְרֵי־פִי, “Give ear O heavens, and I will speak! And listen O earth, (to the) words of my mouth!”, words spoken by Moses.

For Isaiah’s use of this imperative verb elsewhere, see: **1:10**; **6:9**; **7:13**; **28:14, 23**; **32:9**; **33:13**; **36:13**; **42:18**; **46:3, 12**; **48:1, 14, 16**; **49:1**; **51:1, 7**; **55:2, 3** and **66:5**.

¹⁷For this hiphil imperative verb (here, the masculine plural הֶאֱזִינוּ, literally “give ear!), see **Genesis 4:23** (both roots **shama(** and **ha(azan)**); **Numbers 23:18** (both roots); **Deuteronomy 32:1** (both roots; see previous footnote); **Judges 5:3** (both roots); **Isaiah 1:2** (here, both roots), **10** (both roots); **8:9**; **28:23** (both roots); **32:9** (both roots); **51:4**; **Jeremiah 13:15** (both roots); **Hosea 5:1** (both roots plus הִקְשִׁיבוּ); **Joel 1:2** (both roots); **Psalms 5:2**; **17:1** (both roots plus הִקְשִׁיבוּ); **39:13** (both roots); **49:2** (both roots); **54:4** (both roots); **55:2**; **78:1** (plus אֲזַנְכֶם הַטּוֹר); **80:2**; **84:9** (both roots); **86:6** (plus הִקְשִׁיבוּ); **140:7**; **141:1**; **143:1** (both roots); **Job 33:1** (both roots); **34:2** (both roots); **16** (both roots); and **37:14**.

It is a common occurrence for the two synonymous imperatives “listen” or “hear,” and “give ear” to be used together. Oswalt notes that this verb is literally “ear (me)!”

¹⁸Here the noun אֶרֶץ, “land,” or “earth,” is used without the definite article. While the noun oftentimes means “Land of Israel,” here it more probably means “earth,” indicating that Isaiah represents YHWH as calling upon all of the natural creation to listen as witness to the truth of what He is saying and accusing Judah of being guilty of.

Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., in **English Standard Version Study Bible** (Crossway Bibles, Wheaton, Illinois, 2008, henceforth, “Ortlund”) states that “Isaiah calls on the entire cosmos as a faithful witness to God’s word.” (P. 1240)

(continued...)

¹⁸(...continued)

But this is, we think, misleading. We agree with **New Jerusalem** which holds that “Heaven and earth are summoned as witnesses in God’s lawsuit against His people.” (P. 1191) See:

Deuteronomy 4:26,

Today I (Moses) summon as witnesses against you people the heavens and the earth,
that you will certainly perish quickly from upon the land
where you people are crossing over the Jordan to dispossess it.
You will not prolong days upon it,
because you will certainly be exterminated!

Deuteronomy 30:19,

Today I summon as witnesses against you people the heavens and the earth,
(that) I placed the life and the death before you,
the blessing and the curse.
And you (singular) shall choose the life,
so that you may live, you and your descendant(s)!”

Deuteronomy 31:28,

Assemble to me all (the) officials / elders of your tribes, and your scribes,
and I will speak these words in their ears;
and I will summon as witness against them the heavens and the earth.

Deuteronomy 32:1,

Give ear / listen, the heavens and I will speak!
And hear / listen to, the earth, the words of My mouth!

Psalm 50:4,

He (God) calls to the heavens above and to the earth,
to the judgment / case (against) His people.

It is symbolical language: the heavens and the earth have witnessed both what YHWH has done for His people, and the ways in which His people have responded. They can therefore faithfully testify to the Divine faithfulness and goodness, and to His people’s ingratitude and rebellion against Him.

Ackerman notes that “Because the heavens and earth served as witnesses when God’s covenant with Israel was originally made (**Deuteronomy 4:26; 30:19; 31:28**), they are called to hear the Deity’s suit against the people.” (P. 958)

(continued...)

Because YHWH spoke:¹⁹

¹⁸(...continued)

Oswalt comments that “The appeal to the heavens and the earth is not merely a matter of legality; it is a matter of the whole order of life. What God’s people are doing is an offense against nature...An ox or an ass is intelligent enough to know to whom it belongs and upon whom it can depend. But God’s children are not so. Thus the stars and the earth following obediently in their courses are called to see the spectacle of thinking, feeling human beings living in ways which are contrary to their own natures.” (P. 85)

Motyer states that “Here the heavens and earth are called in to underline the dignity of the voice which commands the attention of all creation.” (P. 43)

¹⁹Kaiser translates by “for Yahweh is speaking,” as does Alexander also.

And we ask, What are we to make of such statements attributed to YHWH—which are common throughout the **Hebrew Bible**?

1. Some claim that every word in the **Book of Isaiah** / the **Bible** has come directly from God, and thus have no trouble accepting claims that “YHWH said...” as literally the truth. The prophet / author has a direct connection to YHWH, and is reporting the exact words that YHWH spoke or is speaking. Any doubting or questioning of their view is said to be the result of “not believing the **Bible**.”
2. Others recognize the human element in the **Book of Isaiah** / the **Bible**, and claim that YHWH did not directly write either the **Book of Isaiah** or the **Bible**. Instead, as the biblical documents clearly show, human authors have done the writing. In fact, they claim, the only words in the **Bible** that are said to have been written directly by YHWH are the Ten Commandments (and in the **New Testament**, Jesus is not reported as having written any document at all). All other statements concerning YHWH (or Jesus) speaking must be understood as what Isaiah / the author / Gospel writer believed YHWH / Jesus has said—as Isaiah / the author / Gospel writer has seen the Divine vision, or heard the Divine voice in ecstasy, or personally heard Jesus speaking, or has been told by others what Jesus said—and there is always the possibility that Isaiah / the author / Gospel writer has misunderstood or mis-heard—due to the enigmatic nature of Divine visions / dreams / auditions, and the fact that years had passed following the death of Jesus and the writing of the Gospels, following decades of oral transmission of Jesus’ words.
3. Admitting all of this, it is important to understand the **Book of Isaiah** / the **Bible** / the **Gospels** as “written testimony” by human authors to their personal experiences of “salvation,” “transformation,” “Divine guidance,” “hearing the Divine voice.” The **Book of Isaiah** informs its readers of the prophet Isaiah’s overwhelming experience of YHWH’s presence, and his **book**, with its powerful (and sometimes not so powerful) teachings are the result of that experience. Yes, it is a human document, written by a fallible human being like ourselves. But it is written by one whose life has been transformed and renewed by obedience to a Divine vision—enigmatic, obscure in part—but also uniquely powerful and true and life-changing.

(continued...)

Children²⁰ I raised,^{21, 2} and brought them up--³
and they rebelled against Me²²!

¹⁹(...continued)

When the **Book of Isaiah** / the **Bible** / the **Gospels** relate the “Divine voice,” it is the report of a “heavenly vision / voice” that readers too can share in, if they are willing to be open to that experience, to listen for that voice, to see that enigmatic vision. And with such an experience, the **Book of Isaiah** / the **Bible** / the **Gospels** take on a new and powerful significance, as we too seek to live out our lives in relationship with YHWH, the God to Whom Isaiah / the **Bible** / the / **Gospels** / the **New Testament** testify, and in Whose fellowship Isaiah’s / the authors’ lives have been transformed and commissioned.

We do not have to overlook the human elements, or seek to explain away the many problems that confront us in the biblical literature. We can be honest and diligent students—who accept the biblical writings for what they truly are: human testimony to Divine reality.

²⁰YHWH is depicted as speaking of the the people of Israel as His “בְּנֵי־יְהוָה, literally “sons,” which we translate by “children,” since females as well as males are included.

Ortlund comments that “Israel as a whole is God’s ‘son’ (**Exodus 4:22-23**), and individual Israelites are also ‘sons’...This privilege should have led to gratitude, but it did not.” (P. 1240)

Yes—but we must not forget or overlook the teaching of **Genesis 1-11** that all humanity is God’s creature, bearing the Divine image and likeness!

When the Jewish leadership in the first century accused Jesus of ‘blasphemy’ for acknowledging Himself as the “son of God,” they overlooked the fact that according to their **Bible**, every human being on earth, including of course every Israelite, is a “son of God.”

²¹**Rahlf**s translates גִּדַּלְתִּי, “I raised,” by ἐγέννησα, “I begot.”

Slotki translates by *brought up*, and comments that it is literally ‘exalted’ to a *kingdom of priests and a holy nation* (**Exodus 19:6**).” (P. 1)

For occurrences of the Piel Verb גִּדַּל, “raise,” or “make great,” see our end-note 2. For the next verb, the polel of רָם, “raise,” see our end-note 3.

²²The phrase פָּשְׁעוּ בִּי, **pashe(u bhiy**, means “they rebelled / transgressed against Me.” In spite of YHWH’s fatherly rearing and bringing up of His sons, they rebelled against Him.

Motyer states that “The picture of the attentive parent and the growing child covers the whole historical period from **Exodus** to **Isaiah**. The grace which saved and the love which cared were alike rebuffed when *they...rebelled*. ‘They’ is emphatic—‘they of all people!’, the heirs of redemption, the
(continued...)

²²(...continued)

recipients of parental care.” (P. 43) But Motyer could include the **Book of Genesis**, which depicts all humanity as likewise rebelling against God / YHWH!

Gray comments that “In the simplest terms, without the pathetic details of Hosea’s picture of Yahweh training and tending His child (**Hosea 11:1ff.**, especially **verse 3**) Isaiah places in contrast Yahweh’s parental care which had brought Israel to manhood, and Israel’s unfilial conduct in casting off the father’s authority and disobeying the father’s commands.” (P. 9)

This statement, along with others, ought to put to rest the distorted use of **Proverbs 22:6**, which contends that if a child goes astray, it is the parent’s fault. The verse says literally,

Train / dedicate for the youth according to the mouth of its way,
also, when it grows old, it will not turn aside from it.

We take this to mean, listen to your child, observe its inclinations and gifts, and help to develop and exercise those God-given inclinations and gifts, never squelching or denying them, but nurturing them, enabling them to make the most of them. And in so doing, you will be assuring that when mature, the child will find a good and prosperous life-long occupation. But this wise saying does not at all affirm that good parenting guarantees no rebellion! Would you want to charge YHWH with having failed as humanity’s or Israel’s or Judah’s Parent?

In many ways, this verse is the biblical story of humanity—it is the teaching of Jesus in His parable of the “Prodigal Son” (**Luke 15:11-32**). God’s children, in spite of His parenting skills, still go astray in rebellion. But God never forgets them, and always welcomes them when they come to themselves, and come home!

Oswalt comments that “the relationship between Israel and God [we add, between humanity and God] is described in terms of child and parent. This relationship has even greater immediacy than that of Covenant God and Covenant People...To refuse to submit to the one who engendered you is bad enough; to refuse to submit to the one who has cared for you is incomprehensible.” (Pp. 85-86)

The fact of life is that whether we acknowledge it or not, we have been given life—and all of our amazing abilities—by our Creator / Father; and He has cared for us within the womb of our mother, and throughout our lives, supplying the air to breathe, the water to drink, etc., etc. To fail to respond in love and thanksgiving to our Creator / Father is a tragic perversion of reality! It is the very essence of “rebellion.” Isaiah will not let his fellow-countrymen escape this charge.

²³**Verse 3** is an excellent example of Hebrew parallelism.

Line 1—an ox knew its owner;

line 2—and a donkey its master’s feeding-trough.

(Both lines say essentially the same thing, but in slightly different ways.)

Line 3—Israel did not know;

(continued...)

וְחִמּוֹר יָבוֹס בְּעֵלָיו
יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יָדַע
עַמִּי לֹא הִתְבוּנָן:

An ox knew its owner,²⁴
and a donkey its master's²⁵ feeding-trough;
Israel did not know--²⁶

²³(...continued)
line 4—My people did not understand.
(Again, both lines say essentially the same thing, but in slightly different ways.)

²⁴The phrase קָנָהוּ means literally “one purchasing / acquiring / possessing it.”

²⁵Isaiah uses the phrase בְּעֵלָיו, “its baal / lord / master.” This is the noun so commonly used for the Canaanite Gods, “Baal” / “Masters” / “Owners.”

²⁶Both the Greek translation and the Latin Vulgate interpolate the pronoun “Me” following the verb “know.”

Compare the following passages for this matter of “not knowing”:

Genesis 28:16, where Jacob confesses following his night-time vision that “YHWH is in this place, and I did not know it.”

Hosea 4:6a,

My people are cut off
because of lack of the knowledge!

Hosea 11:3, another “lamentation” of YHWH:

And I, I taught Ephraim to walk
—He took them upon His arms--
and they didn't know that I healed them.

Jeremiah 8:7 uses similar imagery to Isaiah's imagery here:

Even a stork in the heavens knew its appointed times,
and a turtle-dove and a swallow and a crane kept their time of coming;
and My people did not know YHWH's justice.

(continued...)

²⁶(...continued)

Here, in **Isaiah 1:3** where our Hebrew text reads “Israel did not know, My people did not understand,” **Rahlf**s supplies the objects that were not known: “but then Israel did not know *Me*, and the people did not understand *Me*.”

Gray comments that “The objects in Hebrew are left to be supplied in thought.” (P. 15)

Kaiser comments that this statement “presupposes that it is possible for men to elucidate their position and calling in the world adequately by means of their reason...A people which does not know and recognize its God and Father is more irrational than the cattle who are well able to distinguish their owner and master from any other person, and can find the way back to their master’s yard and manger from the fields or from a ride without getting lost.” (P. 14)

Yes! This is, we think, a very apt description of atheism, the failure to acknowledge the truth of Divine creation!

While working on a ranch in southwestern New Mexico, I led a group of people visiting the ranch on horse-back mountain-lion hunts, following the ranch’s English bloodhounds. We rode uphill and downhill, turning in different directions all morning long—until it was afternoon, and time to return to the ranch—when I realized that I had no earthly idea of where we were, or how to get back to the ranch.

In the distance, I saw the smoke of a camp-fire, and led the group there. It was a Mexican sheep-herder, Juan Dodson, who in the winter-time worked for my father in Albuquerque. I took him aside, and told him how lost I was. He said, Don’t worry—just let your horse have its head, and he’ll take you home. I took his advice, and to my delight, the horse took us directly to the ranch (and to his stable).

What do you think? Is there an inner sense / reason within us, that will lead us home to God? Compare **Jeremiah 8:7**,

Even a a stork in the heavens knew her appointed time,
and a turtle-dove and horse (*kethibh*) and swallow (*qere*)
observed / kept its time of coming--
and My people did not know YHWH’s justice / just decision!

Motyer says that “Isaiah uses rich illustrations...The Lord’s dealings with His people are designed to develop true spiritual instincts, a mind-set of attachment to the Lord as automatic and spontaneous as that seen in the animal creation.” (P. 43)

And if you should say, we don’t need such instincts, since we can know the direction we should go by the fact that we possess an inerrant, infallible **Bible**, listen to Jeremiah’s words in the next verse, **8:8**:

How will you people say We (are) wise people,
and YHWH’s instruction / teaching (is) with us?

(continued...)

My people did not understand.²⁷

²⁶(...continued)

Surely, look–

(the) false pen of scribes / writers has acted for the falsehood!

Is Jeremiah the father of modern critics of the **Bible**? Were there in fact biblical scribes / writers who wrote falsehoods? See **Jeremiah 29:21-22** where Jeremiah calls for the cutting off of prophets and priests who had arisen among the Jewish exiles in Babylon. And we wonder, did any of their statements or writings become part of our **Bible**?

Did Ezekiel think that YHWH Himself had given statutes and judgments that were “not good” to His people as punishment? See **Ezekiel 20:25**:

וְגַם-אֲנִי נָתַתִּי לָהֶם חֻקִּים לֹא טוֹבִים
וּמִשְׁפָּטִים לֹא יִחִיו בָּהֶם:

And also I, I gave to them statutes, not good ones,
and commandments–you will not live by them!

In the light of Ezekiel’s statement, the student of the biblical writings has to continually ask, Is this statute, this commandment, this teaching, truly the will of YHWH? And the student of **Ezra-Nehemiah** alongside **Isaiah 40-66** will have to ask, Should we follow Ezra and Nehemiah’s program of wall-building to exclude foreigners, and rejection of inter-marriages with their half-breed children, or Isaiah’s insistence on accepting all people, i.e., tearing down the walls and exclusions, welcoming those children of foreigners, and others excluded by such biblical passages as **Deuteronomy 23:1-6**?

²⁷**Verse 3** sounds very much like a proverb, a “wise-saying,” with its parallel lines. But it is in fact a lament, much like the parallel lines in **Lamentations**. And the lament is depicted as being on the lips of YHWH, the great Creator / Father! His heart is breaking as He utters these words. The non-Hebrew speaking ox and donkey know full well to whom they belong, where their feed comes from, whose bidding they must follow. But Israel (in spite of the division between Northern Israel and Southern Judah, YHWH still calls the people of Judah by the name of their ancestor, Jacob / Israel) does not know. YHWH’s Own people, His beloved sons and daughters, simply do not understand! Compare **Jeremiah 8:7** in the preceding footnote.

Oswalt comments that “Isaiah fortifies his depiction of the unnatural character of sin by reference to the animals. Neither the ox nor the ass was considered very intelligent in the ancient Near East yet even these animals knew who cared for them. Israel could surely do better than they. But no, Israel does not know that much.” (P. 86)

What a tragedy! Even the “dumb” animals exhibit more knowledge and loyalty than do YHWH’s people! Gray states, “Ox and ass find their way to their stables; but Israel cares nothing for Yahweh, nor discerns that it owes everything to Him.” (P. 10)

(continued...)

1.4 הוֹי גּוֹי חָטָא

עִם כִּבֵּד עֵוֹן

זָרַע מְרֵעִים

בְּנִים מִשְׁחִיתִים

עֲזְבוּ אֶת־יְהוָה

נֹאצְוֹ אֶת־קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל

נִזְרוּ אַחֲזֹר:

Alas,²⁸ a nation missing-the-mark / sinning!²⁹

²⁷(...continued)

What do you think? Do you have a pet dog or cat? And if you do, does your pet show more loyalty to you than you do to your Maker?

²⁸The opening word of **verse 4**, הוֹי, **hoy**, “Alas!,” or “Woe!” is a cry of lament, of mourning over the death of a loved one. The only occurrence of this cry outside **Isaiah** and the spokespersons who followed him, is found in **1 Kings 13:30**. It is the story of the death of a “man of God” from Judah, who came north to Bethel, to cry out against Jeroboam and the altar he had built at Bethel, with its golden calf. Having successfully completed his mission, he was deceived by an elderly spokesperson / prophet to disobey God’s command to him to return home immediately, and as a result, when he did return, was met by a lion that mauled and killed him. The elderly spokesperson came, took up his body, and laid it on his donkey, carrying it back to his home town.

And he caused his corpse / dead body to rest in his (own) grave;
and he lamented / wailed over him, (saying) Woe! / Alas! My brother!
(Yes, but it was his deception of the man of God that caused his death!)

Isaiah utters that same piercing cry of lament, “Woe! Alas!” over his beloved nation of Judah. Something terrible has happened to his nation—even though apparently alive, Isaiah senses that she has died. He cries out, “Woe!” “Alas!” And that same cry of lament and sorrow echoes throughout his writing. Beyond this verse, **1:4**, see: **1:24; 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, 10; 55:1**. It is what we may call a “pervading motif” in Isaiah’s preaching. It is as if Isaiah is proclaiming Judah’s death, and preaching its funeral!

Micah, who was a contemporary spokesperson / prophet with Isaiah, gave this same cry of lament—see **Micah 2:1**.

(continued...)

²⁸(...continued)

Then, some of the spokespersons / prophets who followed with a similar message to Isaiah took up this cry of lament. See: **Jeremiah 22:13, 18** (four times); **23:1; 30:7; 34:5; 47:6; 48:1** and **50:27**. Then see **Ezekiel 13:3, 18; 34:2; Nahum 3:1; Habakkuk 2:6, 9, 12, 15, 19; Zephaniah 2:5; 3:1; Zechariah 2:10** (twice), **11** and **11:17**.

Before the time of Isaiah, an earlier spokesperson / prophet had uttered this same cry of lament over Northern Israel. See **Amos 5:18** and **6:1**.

In the **New Testament** we hear a similar cry depicted as coming from the lips of Jesus over Jerusalem. The Greek translation of הוֹי, **hoy**, “Alas!,” “Woe!” is Οὐαί, **Ouai**. See the following passages from **Matthew, Mark** and **Luke** (the cry does not occur in **John**) where this cry occurs:

Matthew 11:21, twice—Alas for Chorazin, Bethsaida, Tyre and Sidon, towns at the time of Jesus, with opportunity to hear and respond to His message, but who have refused to listen; **Luke 10:13**, same;

Luke 6:24, 25 twice, **26**, Jesus’ cry of lament over the wealthy, who are full of food and laughter, and are well-spoken of;

Luke 11:42, 43, 44, 46, 47, 52, similar to **Matthew 23**, but lamenting the Jewish leaders’ lack of justice and the love of God; their pride, their making others unclean, their failure to “carry the load themselves,” their rejection of the prophetic message of God.

Luke 18:7, twice—for the world, and for the person causing others to stumble; **Luke 17:1**, similar;

Luke 23:13, 15, 16, 23, 25, 27, 29, Jesus is depicted as crying out in lament over the “living death” of Israel’s hypocritical religious leaders;

Luke 24:19, a cry of lament over the pregnant women of Jerusalem who are facing the destruction of the city; **Mark 13:17** and **Luke 21:23**, same);

Luke 26:24, a cry of lament over Judas for betraying the Son of the person; **Mark 14:21** and **Luke 22:22**, same.

Obviously, Jesus followed in the steps of Isaiah, with a very similar message to Judah and Jerusalem, both lamenting their spiritual “death,” and offering those who responded to His message forgiveness and new life.

²⁹The Hebrew word here is a qal active masculine singular participle, חָטָא, which means literally “missing-the-mark,” that is, failing to “hit the target” which YHWH has placed before them. All through the **Bible**, both Hebrew and Greek, this verb חָטָא with its Greek translation ἀμαρτάνω,

(continued...)

a people heavy (with) iniquity;³⁰
a seed of evil-doers--³¹

²⁹(...continued)

with the Hebrew verb occurring more than 220 times. The Greek verb occurs some 313 times in the entire **Greek Bible**.

This is the beginning indictment of Judah / Israel in Isaiah's catalog of their failure. Basically, it is a failure to have been the people YHWH intended them to be. They have "sinned," "missed the mark." They have not "hit the target." What do you think Isaiah would say to our present generation?

³⁰The phrase עֲוֹן כִּבֵּד means literally "heavy with iniquity, guilt, or punishment for guilt." The nation is carrying a heavy load, that is burdening it down, suffocating it, leading it to death. This is a unique phrase, occurring only here in the **Hebrew Bible**.

The Greek translation hardly knows what to make of this phrase, translating by πλήρης ἀμαρτιῶν, "full of missings-of-the-mark." But the word עֲוֹן, "iniquity," "guilt," or "punishment for guilt," occurs numerous times throughout the **Hebrew Bible**, some 209 times in all.

Again we ask, what kind of message is this? Is this the way to "win friends and influence people"? Can Judah stand to really listen to Isaiah's preaching? Is it any wonder that Israel stoned the spokespersons / prophets, putting so many of them to death, constantly seeking to silence them?

And we ask, was it because this same kind of message was heard on the lips of Jesus that the religious establishment of His day demanded His death? Couldn't He have "toned down" His message, and tried to reconcile with the religious leaders?

³¹Isaiah insists that it didn't begin with the present generation. No the history of missing-the-mark and iniquity / guilt has as long a history as does the story of YHWH's saving acts. The present generation is a זֶרַע מְרֵעִים, "seed / descendant(s) of evil-doers." In his "taunt song" directed against the King of Babylon, Isaiah repeats this same phrase, applying it to the king himself—see **Isaiah 14:20**:

You will not be joined with them in burial!
Because you have destroyed your land,
your (own) people you have murdered—
it will not be called (by name) to long-lasting time,
a seed of evil-doers!

"Like father, like son; like mother, like daughter; like an earlier generation, like a present generation." We all receive a heritage; we all leave a heritage. It was true in Babylon, and it was true in Judah. Judah's heritage, while containing much that was good, also contained much that was devastatingly evil.

(continued...)

children who are destructive--³²
they forsook YHWH,³³

³¹(...continued)

And we ask, What kind of heritage are we leaving to the coming generation? Will our grandchildren have to be labeled “a seed of evil-doers”?

Compare the words of John the Immerser in **Matthew 3:7**:

ἰδὼν δὲ πολλοὺς τῶν Φαρισαίων καὶ Σαδδουκαίων
ἐρχομένους ἐπὶ τὸ βάπτισμα αὐτοῦ
εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· γεννήματα ἔχιδινῶν...
But then seeing the Separatists / Pharisees and Sadducees
coming to his immersion,
he said to them, Offspring / brood of vipers...”

See also the words attributed to Jesus in **Matthew 12:38-45** and **Luke 11:29-32** where He labels His contemporaries “an evil generation”!

What do you think Jesus’ evaluation of our present generation is?

³²The phrase **בְּנֵי מְשַׁחֲתִים**, is literally “children who are destroying / ravaging,” or possibly, “children of those destroying / ravaging.” Whether the destroying / ravaging is meant as a description of themselves, or their parents, it means that instead of building, being constructive, as YHWH intends for His people to be, they are (along with their parents) guilty of tearing down, destroying their nation by their actions and their inactions.

What an indictment! Jesus is depicted by the **Gospel of Matthew** as promising to “build His church” on confessors like Peter and the others, who would deliver His message to the world, and lead people into living the kind of lives that God intends for them.

But at least one of them, Judas, chose to tear down instead of building up. The first three centuries of Christian history tell a marvelous story of “builders,” who, following in the footsteps of those first followers of Jesus, built His church from a tiny Jewish sect into a world-wide movement.

But in centuries to follow, many of His so-called followers have chosen to tear down instead of building. What about our present generation? Are we “builders” or “destroyers”?

³³Again, what an indictment! **עָזְבוּ אֶת־יְהוָה**, “they forsook / left YHWH”! Sometimes Christian theologians have imagined the doctrine of “impossibility of apostasy,” holding that “once saved, always saved”--the impossibility of God’s chosen, forgiven people ever being lost.

See especially the Calvinist doctrines of “irresistible grace,” and “perseverance of the saints” in **Wikipedia’s** article on “Tulip theology.”

(continued...)

³³(...continued)

Isaiah, however, will have none of that. He takes seriously the story of Israel's / Judah's turning away from YHWH, refusing to listen to His word, choosing "alternative life-styles."

Yes, Isaiah believes that YHWH can save and forgive and renew a covenant and give His people a wondrous future. But not unless they return to Him, not unless they repent, not unless they quit "forsaking / leaving" Him!

What do you think? Do you really believe that devout believers in Christ, who have accepted him as their Lord and Savior, confessing him, being baptized into him, can later turn their backs on Christ, "forsake Him"? Isaiah believes that such a thing is not only possible, but that it had happened to Judah in his day, as they had forsaken YHWH.

In the **New Testament Book of Hebrews**, the author is fully convinced that such a thing can happen, and that when it happens there is no possibility of restoration! See:

Hebrews 6:4-8,

4 For it is impossible,
in the case of those who have once been enlightened,
who have tasted the heavenly gift,
and have shared in the Holy Spirit,
5 and have tasted the goodness of the word of God
and the powers of the age to come,
6 and then have fallen away,
to restore them again to repentance,
since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm
and holding him up to contempt.
7 For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it,
and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated,
receives a blessing from God.
8 But if it bears thorns and thistles,
it is worthless and near to being cursed,
and its end is to be burned. (**English Standard Version**)

Hebrews 10:28-31,

26 For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth,
there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,
27 but a fearful expectation of judgment,
and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.
28 Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses
dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses.
29 How much worse punishment, do you think,
will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God,
(continued...)

they spurned Israel's Set-apart One;³⁴

³³(...continued)

and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified,
and has outraged the Spirit of grace?

30 For we know him who said,
"Vengeance is mine; I will repay."
And again, "The Lord will judge his people."

31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (**English Standard Version**)

However, Isaiah is not that pessimistic. As **chapter one** goes on to teach, if the Israelites will come to YHWH in honest dialogue, and turn their lives around to do good instead of evil, YHWH will give them full forgiveness and newness of life as His people! What do you think?

³⁴This phrase, קָדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל, "Set-apart One of Israel," is a favorite of Isaiah. It occurs in the **Hebrew Bible** at: **2 Kings 19:22** (on the lips of Isaiah); **Psalms 71:22** (in an old man's prayer) and then in **Isaiah 1:4** (here); **5:19, 24; 10:20; 12:6; 17:7; 30:11, 12, 15; 31:1; 37:23; 41:14; 43:3, 14; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 54:5; 60:14** and **Jeremiah 50:29**.

Slotki comments that "This description of God occurs 39 times in **Isaiah**, and only 5 times in all the other Books of Scripture." (P. 2)

Ackerman states that "The epithet *Holy One*...identifies God as an utterly sacred Being, set apart and wholly separated from all defilement and human impurity. It is used far more frequently in **First Isaiah [chapters 1-39]** than elsewhere in the **Hebrew Scriptures**, which is consistent with **First Isaiah's** exalted view of God as a great and powerful Being Who exercises universal dominion from the consecrated city of Jerusalem (see, e.g., **2:11-17; 6:1-13; 33:5...40:25**)." (P. 958)

In arguments over the unity of the **Book of Isaiah**, this phrase has played an important role, since it seems like a genuine mark of Isaiah's language, and occurs throughout the **Book**, in both its earlier materials (**chapters 1-39**; see **5:19, 24; 10:17, 20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19, 23; 30:11, 12, 15; 31:1** and **37:23**—13 occurrences), and in its later materials (**chapters 40-66**; see **41:14; 43:3, 14; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 54:5** and **60:14**—eight occurrences) which many modern scholars have assigned to later disciples of Isaiah, who have taken up Isaiah's language and message and applied it to an exilic generation ("Deutero-Isaiah," **chapters 40-55**) and a post-exilic generation ("Trito-Isaiah," **chapters 56-66**).

Isaiah's indictment is that Judah, instead of honoring and listening to and obeying the "Set-apart One of Israel," has "spurned" Him. It is the root verb שָׁנַן, which occurs twice in **Isaiah**, here (**1:4**) and **60:14**, where the piel participle שֹׁנְנֵי, "the ones spurning / despising you / Israel" occurs.

Gray states that here, in **Isaiah 1:4**, this verb means "to think little of His power, to distrust His capacity to fulfill His promises or His threats." (P. 11)

(continued...)

they became strangers, (going) backward.³⁵

³⁴(...continued)

Elsewhere in the **Hebrew Bible** this verb occurs at: **Numbers 14:11, 23; 16:30; Deuteronomy 31:20; 32:19; 1 Samuel 2:17; 2 Samuel 12:14** (twice); **Jeremiah 14:21; 23:17; 33:24; Psalms 10:3, 13; 74:10, 18; Proverbs 1:30; 5:12; 15:5** and **Lamentations 2:6**.

The Greek translation is *παρωργίσατε*, which means “made (the Set-apart One of Israel) angry.” “Easy” interpretations of Christian theology, represented by Rob Bell in his recent book, **Love Wins**, hold that “God is love,” and that’s the final word. There is nothing that we humans can do that will so anger God that it will cause our rejection / destruction.

We are tempted to agree with Bell, and we long to believe his message that “Love Wins.” But it is difficult to square that message with the biblical message in **Isaiah**, or in such spokespersons / prophets as **Amos** and **Hosea**. The present author’s beloved professor at Duke University, Dr.

Steinspring, held that both Amos and Hosea were “Prophets of Doom,” and that there is no message of hope in either of their original writings. When confronted with the many passages that seem to present hope to Northern Israel, he replied that all of those passages are later additions to the original writings, which had no hope.

We ask, Is Rob Bell, author of the New York Times best seller “Love Wins” doing the same thing, but in the opposite direction, down-playing the biblical messages of “doom,” and over-emphasizing the undeniable biblical messages of “hope”?

Having written extensive commentaries on both **Amos** and **Hosea**, the present author holds that both are “Prophets of Doom and Hope,” and that the only way that the biblical message of hope can be realized is through repentance. The same thing is true in **Isaiah**—it is filled with messages of doom (such as here in **chapter one**), but at the same time has beautiful visions of ultimate hope for Judah / Israel and even for the entire world (see **Isaiah 25:6-9**). But that ultimate hope doesn’t mean that YHWH will not continue to punish His disobedient people, not only in this life, but also in the after-world.

See our study of **Ezekiel 16**, where YHWH is depicted as offering the restoration of fortune to the apostate City of Jerusalem, and as well to the destroyed cities of Sodom and Samaria, all of them sister-cities, and sister-prostitutes. In addition, see **1 Peter 3-4**, where Jesus is depicted as having gone in the Spirit to those who were destroyed by the flood in the days of Noah, to proclaim good news to them. If we are correct in our understanding of these passages, perhaps Rob Bell is right. What do you think?

³⁵This phrase, **נִזְרָוּ אַחֲרָיו**, commonly translated “they were estranged backwards,” is missing in our Greek translation (**Rahlfs**). The verb, **נִזְרָוּ** is the niphil perfect, meaning “they became strangers,” and the phrase adds that it was in a “backward” direction, implying that whereas they once were intimate with YHWH and His people, they had moved backward from that relationship,

(continued...)

³⁵(...continued)

becoming strangers to YHWH. Of course, it is not that YHWH no longer knew them, but that they had forgotten and become strangers to YHWH.

Ortlund comments that this means “their backwardness is beyond self-remedy.” (P. 1240) But as Isaiah’s message continues, he will show that there is still a possibility for them to return to YHWH—they can wash themselves, make themselves clean, remove the evil of their deeds, cease to do evil, learn to do good, seek justice, correct oppression, bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause (**verses 16-17**). Of course, they cannot do this “all on their own,” but only by responding to YHWH’s call and offer of renewed intimate relationship. If they are willing and obedient, a new day of complete forgiveness and hope for them and their land is possible.

Compare the other occurrences of this root verb זָרַח in the **Hebrew Bible**:

Ezekiel 14:5b, YHWH states that the Israelites נָזְרוּ מֵעַלֵּי בַגְּלוּלֵיהֶם כָּלָם: “became strangers from upon Me, with their idols—all of them!” The Greek translation is τὰς ἀπηλλοτριωμένας ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ ἐν τοῖς ἐνθυμήμασιν αὐτῶν, “the ones having become alienated from Me by their reasonings / arguments.” In the **Greek New Testament**, compare Paul’s use of this Greek verb ἀπαλλοτριόω in **Ephesians 2:12; 4:18** and **Colossians 1:21**.

Psalm 58:4^{Heb} / **3**^{Eng},

Wicked people became strangers from (the) womb;
they wandered / went astray from (the) belly / womb (synonym),
speakers of falsehood.

Psalm 69:9^{Heb} / **8**^{Eng},

I became a stranger to my brothers,
and a foreigner to my mother’s children.

Psalm 78:30-31a,

They did not become strangers to their desire;
their eating was still in their mouth;
and God’s anger arose against them.

Job 19:13, Job complains that

He (God) has made my brothers far distant from me;
and those knowing me,
how they became strangers from me.

(continued...)

³⁵(...continued)

Again, what an indictment this is! The people of Judah, the descendants of the great patriarchs, have become strangers to YHWH! They no longer know Him, no longer love Him, no longer seek to be pleasing to Him. Instead of coming forward to meet YHWH, and enter into fellowship with Him, they have gone backwards, becoming strangers!

What do you think? Can this happen to us today? Can we turn away from Jesus Christ, moving backwards instead of forwards, until we become total strangers to Him? And if this happens, is it possible for us to come back to Him?

See the parable of the “Lost Son” in **Luke 15:11-32**, which teaches that lost children, who have left their father’s house, and who in their lost condition “come to themselves,” can return home. But then see the warnings given in the **New Testament Book of Hebrews**, that it is impossible for apostates to return—**Hebrews 2:1-4; 3:7-19; 6:4-8; 10:26-31** (see footnote 33). Are these teachings in contradiction of one another? Or can they be harmonized? We think they can. Jesus is depicted as teaching that the apostate who “comes to himself,” i.e., “repents,” can come home. And that is exactly what Isaiah teaches in this **first chapter** of **Isaiah**. What do you think?

³⁶Kaiser states that **verses 5-6** “compare the state of the people with that of a slave or a son who is flogged because of persistent rebelliousness...The body of the person who has been flogged displays clear marks where the blood vessels have been ruptured under the surface (haematomata), fresh, suppurating weals [discharging pus from red, swollen marks] and open wounds...The sequence in the list of treatments not applied which appears in the same form in **Luke 10:34**, is quite remarkable: here binding up precedes the softening of the scabs on the wound with oil. The Divine Father has already chastised the people over whom He laments (**verses 2-3**) to the limits of what they can bear. There is no room for further visitations. So will God leave them to disaster, because even now they will not give up their disobedience?” (P. 20)

Oswalt comments on **verses 5-6** that “One of the recurring themes of **Deuteronomy 27-30** is the destructive results of forsaking God. To live in covenant with Him is to experience blessing, but to break the covenant is to experience curse. In **verses 5-8** Isaiah delineates the ways in which Israel was now experiencing the results of her sin. First (**verses 5-6**), he uses the metaphor of health...Just as naturally as disease produces certain symptoms, so does rebellion. And those symptoms were present for everyone to see. The nation is desolate, stripped, and forsaken. Surely this should be a sign that a cure is needed.

“But Israel’s ill health is not merely a matter of disease. She has been beaten and smitten. The words occurring in **verse 6** describe injuries received in battle...

“But how can Israel bear the sufferings which have come upon her because of her rebellion? Must they not finally crush her and destroy her? This question must have become particularly real to Isaiah as he recognized more and more how difficult repentance was for his people.

(continued...)

תוֹסִיפוּ סֵרָה
כֹּל-רֵאשׁ לַחֲלִי

³⁶(...continued)

In this light the language of **Isaiah 53** suddenly stands out. What are the sickness and pains which the Servant bears? They are those which have been occasioned by the rebellion of his people. **Chapter 53** shows a clear conceptual unity with **chapter 1**, even to the use of the same metaphor.” (Pp. 89-90)

But why jump to **chapter 53**, implying that there is nothing the Israelites can do themselves, other than wait for the coming of the “suffering servant”? Here in **chapter one**, Isaiah depicts YHWH’s solution to the problem of human sinfulness—it is in returning to YHWH, to enter into open and honest dialogue with Him, and turning away from evil to do good. While many Christian theologians argue that such a thing is impossible, the **Book of Isaiah** “begs to disagree”! What do you think?

Kaiser sees in all of this the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, stating that “The destruction of the kingdom of Judah and its transformation first into a Babylonian and then into a Persian province provide the political presuppositions for the lament that foreigners are consuming the produce of the fields before the eyes of the people...Jerusalem, proud and thought to be impregnable...was caused bitter suffering by the destruction inflicted by its conquerors, the breaches made in its walls, and the burning of the gates and the homes of the nobility, not to mention the temple and the royal palace (compare **2 Kings 25:8ff.**; **Nehemiah 2:11ff.**)...

“As a result it became *de facto* an open city, given over to the attacks of any plunderers. This condition was only remedied when the walls were rebuilt in the second half of the fifth century B.C.E. by Nehemiah...It is in accordance with the evidence that the editor [of the **Book of Isaiah**] interested in the fate of Jerusalem should compare the city in **verse 8** with the temporary shelter afforded to farmers and shepherds against inclement weather by huts of the kind that travelers can still see even today in the fields in the countries of Asia Minor...

“With the picture of the destruction of their city before their eyes, the inhabitants of Jerusalem are asked whether they want to experience the complete annihilation of their city or whether they will turn to Yahweh and see its restoration.” (Pp. 21-22)

Was there such total destruction of Jerusalem as this imagery depicts in the time of the historical Isaiah? Or is Isaiah’s original message being expanded by a later disciple, who has witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians? Oswalt will deny that any historical catastrophe can be connected to the description, as do others. What do you think?

We think Kaiser gets the better of the argument. And if Kaiser is right, we should not view the **Book of Isaiah** as the exclusive work of the historical Isaiah from the eighth century B.C.E.—but rather, as a collection of oracles / teachings collected and put together after the Babylonian exile, including both the works of the historical Isaiah and those of his disciples in later centuries.

וּכְלֵל-לִבְבִי דַּיִי:

For what reason³⁷ will you be struck again,

³⁷The phrase **עַל-מָה**, literally “upon what,” here we think, means, “for what (reason)?”

Gray holds that it means “wherefore?” (p. 11), but we see no evidence for this. The phrase occurs in the **Hebrew Bible** at:

Numbers 22:32, YHWH’s messenger / angel asks Balaam **עַל-מָה**, why, or for what (reason) he has hit his donkey three times.

Deuteronomy 29:23, All the nations will ask why YHWH has brought devastation on the land of Israel. **1 Kings 9:8**; **Jeremiah 22:8**, similar.

2 Chronicles 32:10, Sennacherib, the Assyrian king, asks the people of Jerusalem: “upon what are you people trusting?”

Nehemiah 2:4, Artaxerxes asks Nehemiah, “concerning what is this you are seeking?”

Job 10:2b, Job wants to say to God, “Make known to me for what (reason) You are contending (with) me!”

Job 13:14, where Job asks,

For what (reason) shall I take my flesh in my teeth,
and my innermost-being shall I place in my hands?

Job 38:6, YHWH asks Job to answer His questions, including

Upon what were its (the earth’s) bases sunk?
Or who threw / cast its corner-stone?

Psalms 10:13,

For what (reason) did a wicked person spurn God?
He said in his heart, He will not seek (an account)!

Psalms 89:48^{Heb} / 47^{Eng},

Remember, I, what a duration!
For what vanity did You create all humanity?

Isaiah 1:5a, here,

(continued...)

will you continue turning aside?³⁸

³⁷(...continued)

For what (reason) will you still be struck?
Will you add apostasy?

Jeremiah 8:14a,

For what (reason) are we sitting?

Jeremiah 9:11b,

For what (reason) did the land perish?

Jeremiah 16:10b, the people will ask,

For what (reason) did YHWH speak against us all this great evil?

Ezekiel 21:12b, the people will ask Ezekiel,

For what (reason) are you groaning?

Daniel 2:15, in Aramaic, Daniel asks the king's captain,

For what (reason) is the decree so harsh?"

Malachi 2:14, when Malachi says YHWH will not accept their offerings, the people ask, "For what reason?"

The question is constantly being asked, "Why?" "For what reason do people act as they do?" It is here depicted as the question on YHWH's heart: Why will His people continue to bring destruction and sickness upon themselves? The Divine question calls for introspection, for seriously asking ourselves why we are doing what we are doing—especially, why we turn aside from the God Who created us, Who loves us, and Who wants the very best for us. Why do we do that? What is our excuse?

³⁸Where our Hebrew text has the noun **סָרָה**, "turning aside," "apostasy," our Greek translation has **ἀνομίαν**, "lawlessness." This fairly rare noun **סָרָה** is found in the **Hebrew Bible** at:

Deuteronomy 13:6, warning against a spokesperson / prophet or dreamer of dreams who spoke turning aside from YHWH your God.

Isaiah 1:5, here, for what reason will you people add apostasy / withdrawal (to your list of indictments)?

(continued...)

Every head³⁹--for the sickness,⁴⁰

³⁸(...continued)

Isaiah 31:6,

Return to the One from Whom you deepened withdrawal, sons of Israel!

Isaiah 59:13, included in a long list of Israel's iniquities are the following:

rebelling and deceiving against the YHWH;
and moving away from (following) after our God;
speaking oppression and withdrawal,
conceiving and speaking (synonym) from (their) heart
words of falsehood.”

(**Chapter 59's** list of indictments is similar to this list in **chapter 1.**)

Jeremiah 28:16, YHWH tells the (false) spokesperson / prophet Hananiah,

Look at Me, sending you away from upon (the) face of the ground;
this year, you are a dead person,
because you spoke withdrawal from YHWH!”

Jeremiah 29:32b, YHWH pronounces sentence against Shemaiah and his descendants:

There will not be for him a person dwelling in this people's midst;
and he will not look on the good which I am doing for My people
–it is a saying of YHWH–
because he spoke withdrawal from YHWH!

Again we ask, how can biblical theologians conclude that the **Bible** teaches “the impossibility of apostasy”? We agree that there are some passages that seem to teach such a thing; but passages like this in **Isaiah 1** strongly deny it, making Jerusalem's apostasy quite evident. What do you think?

³⁹Oswalt translates by “The whole head,” and comments that “While the absence of the article on the word being modified by כָּל normally calls for the translation ‘every’ instead of ‘all,’ poetry frequently omits the article (compare, for example, **Isaiah 9:10**^{Heb} / **11**^{Eng}; **Psalms 111:1**), making it possible to translate ‘all’ here, better fitting the metaphorical sense.” (P. 84)

Rahlf's translates this line by πᾶσα κεφαλὴ εἰς πόνον, “every head–for pain.”

⁴⁰Beginning with this third line of **verse 5**, Judah's sickness is diagnosed as extending throughout the entire body, and Judah looks like a soldier who has been extensively injured in battle. It is a devastating diagnosis! There is not a spot on Judah's body that is not injured and sick and hurting, bruised and wounded!

(continued...)

and every mind--faint.

1.6 מִכַּף־רֶגֶל וְעַד־רֹאשׁ׃
אֵין־בוֹ מְתָם׃
פָּצַע וְחִבּוּרָהּ וּמִכָּה טְרִיָּה׃
לֹא־זָרוּ וְלֹא חֲבָשׁוּ׃
וְלֹא רִכְכָּה בַּשָּׁמַיִם׃

From sole of foot, and as far as a head,
there is no soundness in him—⁴¹

⁴⁰(...continued)

As Slotki puts it, Judah's body is "without any healthy part on which a new wound could be inflicted." (P. 2)

Gray holds that the phrase כָּל־רֹאשׁ, our "every head," should be translated "the whole head," and does not mean that "every individual Israelite were physically sick and covered with actual sores." That may make better sense in English, but is not what the Hebrew says.

Compare **Psalm 38:3-8**, where the penitent psalmist describes his own condition in terms of being "sick all over."

Wolf / Stek comment that "The disease ravages the entire body, as with Job." See:

Job 2:7,

And the satan / adversary went forth from (being) with YHWH's presence;
and he struck Job with bad boil(s),
from (the) sole of his foot and as far as his head-top.

⁴¹**New Jerusalem** notes that "These verses, which in their literal sense refer to the people of Judah punished for their sins, have been applied to the passion of Christ, as also the analogous texts about the suffering servant, **Isaiah 53:3ff.**" (P. 1191)

Gray comments that "The whole body politic is sick. In contrast with **verse 5a, b** (plural verbs), we have now one of those personifications of the entire nation which are so frequent with Hebrew writers...Judah is a wounded man whose bruises and sores, so recent that the blood still flows, receive no attention; there is no soundness in him..." (Pp. 11-12)

bruise⁴² and blow⁴³ and injury⁴⁴, ⁴–fresh, raw one(s)--

⁴²The noun פָּצַע, “bruise,” “wound,” occurs elsewhere in the **Hebrew Bible** only at:

Exodus 21:25, in the law of retaliation “burn for burn, bruise / wound for bruise / wound, stripe / blow for stripe / blow.”

Proverbs 20:30, “blows / stripes of a bruise / wound—a scraping / rubbing on evil; and blows / injuries (synonym), chambers of (the) belly.” Waltke has “Bruising wounds scour away evil,

and blows [polish] the innermost being.” Murphy has “Wounds and bruises clean away evil, and blows, the inmost being.”

⁴³The noun חַבּוּרָה, “stripe,” “blow,” “stroke,” occurs elsewhere in the **Hebrew Bible** at:

Genesis 4:23, Lamech tells his wives, אִישׁ הֲרַגְתִּי לְפַעְעֵי וַיִּלְדּוּ לִי חַבְרֹתַי, “a man I killed for my wound / bruise; and a boy / youth for my stripe / blow / stroke.” This is an example of massive retaliation for injury received.

Exodus 21:25, see the preceding footnote.

Isaiah 53:5b,

and by the stripe / blow / stroke of his (YHWH’s ‘suffering servant’) it was healed for us.

Psalms 38:6, the psalmist tells YHWH:

My blows / strokes caused a stench;
they rotted away because of my foolishness.

⁴³**Proverbs 20:30**, see the preceding footnote.

⁴⁴The noun מַכָּה is defined by **Brown-Driver-Briggs** as “blow,” “wound,” “slaughter.” It is obviously a synonym for the two preceding nouns. It occurs in the **Hebrew Bible** some 48 times as shown in our end-note 4.

Wolf / Stek state that “The pitiable moral and spiritual condition of Israel is transferred to the suffering servant in **Isaiah 53:4-5**. The Hebrew words for ‘beaten’ [תָּכַן, ‘be struck’], ‘injured’ [לְחָלִי, ‘for sickness / disease’] and ‘welts’ [חַבּוּרָה, ‘stripe,’ ‘blow’] correspond to those for ‘smitten’ [מַכָּה, ‘struck’] ‘infirmities’ [חַלְיֵנוּ, ‘our sicknesses’] and ‘wounds’ [וּבְחַבְרֹתָיו, ‘and by his stripes / blows’].” (P. 1018)

(continued...)

(the pus) not pressed out,⁴⁵ and not bandaged⁴⁶
and not medicated with oil!⁴⁷

1.7⁴⁸ אֲרָצְכֶם שִׁמְמָה

⁴⁴(...continued)

This is, we think, an important observation, which should be useful in the interpretation of **Isaiah 52:13-53:12**, specifically **53:5**.

⁴⁵The verb אָרַר is 3rd person plural, qal perfect passive, “they are (not) pressed out,” and we think the meaning is that Judah’s wounds are full of pus–infection, even gangrene–needing to have the pus pressed out, and the wound cleansed. But none of this has been done.

Oswalt states the text is literally “the wound is not squeezed together.’ It is unclear whether this means the wound is not closed, or that infection has not been squeezed from it.” (P. 84)

⁴⁶The verb חָבְשׁוּ is 3rd person plural, pual perfect, “they are (not) bound up / bandaged.”

Watts comments that “The figurative flogging has left wound over festered wound, until there seems to be no spot on the bruised, bleeding body where the whip can be applied. The horrible figure then turns toward an equally revolting historical reality: the ravages of war across a country-side, scarring the fields with fire and the cities with destruction.” (P. 19)

⁴⁷The phrase וְלֹא רֵכְכָה בְּשֶׁמֶן, “and not softened (pual perfect, 3rd person feminine singular) with the oil,” refers to the use of oil on wounds to soften them, and speed their healing. Judah’s wound(s) desperately need such treatment, but no such thing has been done.

Compare the story of the “good Samaritan,” who put oil on the injured man whom he nursed (**Luke 10:34**).

Gray notes that “The injuries are described by three terms...(the last of which) includes open, bleeding wounds...they are טְרִייהַ, moist, juicy...i.e., still bleeding. These wounds have not been pressed out to purify them from purulent matter, nor bound up with bandages, nor softened and the pain of them assuaged by the pouring in of oil.” (P. 12)

Ackerman notes that “According to medieval Christian interpreters, this verse refers to the flagellation of Jesus.” (P. 958)

⁴⁸Gray comments that “The figurative (**verses 5a, b, 6**) is followed by a literal description of the desperate state of Judah: the whole country lies desolated by the ravages of war, the cities have been burnt out, and, at the moment, before the very eyes of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, an army of foreigners is encamped and supporting itself on the produce of the fields. The capital, indeed, still stands, but insecure as the slight structures made for their refuge by those working in the fields, too far away from their homes to return to them at night.

(continued...)

עֲרִיכֶם שְׂרָפוֹת אֵשׁ
 אֲדַמְתֶּכֶם לַנְּגֻדָּכֶם זָרִים אֹכְלִים אֶתְהָ
 וּשְׂמֵמָה כְּמַהֲפַכַת זָרִים:

Your land—a devastation;⁴⁹

⁴⁸(...continued)

“The only *known* circumstances that correspond to this description are those of the year 701 B.C.E. Sennacherib in his account of his campaign of that year writes: ‘Hezekiah of Judah, who had not bowed himself under the yoke of his fortified towns, fortresses, and small cities in their neighborhood innumerable, with casting down of battering-rams and assault of siege-engines, with attack of infantry, of arrows...I besieged, I captured...Himself, like a bird in cage, in the midst of Jerusalem, the city of his kingship, I shut up. Fortifications against him I erected, and those coming forth from the gates of his city I turned back.’” (P. 12) See **ANET**, p. 288.

New Jerusalem holds that the passage “refers to the devastation of the country and the siege of Jerusalem, either by Sennacherib in 701 B.C.E., see **Isaiah 36:1ff.; 2 Kings 18:13ff.**, or during the Syro-Ephraimite War of 735 B.C.E., see **Isaiah 7:1-2; 2 Kings 16:5-9.**” (P. 1191)

Watts comments that “Interpreters have made intensive efforts to identify the historical references in this chapter...Some have dated material to 734 B.C. making the invaders Syria and Israel, while others insist on a picture of Assyria’s siege of Jerusalem in 701 B.C...The [passage], like the entire chapter, evades dating and historical identification. It seems to do it deliberately. A fifth century reader [or readers at any other proposed time] would have little concern to distinguish 734 from 701 B.C. He would also have been aware that the description had had multiple applications between the eighth century and his own time. The literary impact is far more important here than historical identification.” (Pp. 17-18) See Kaiser’s view in footnote 36.

⁴⁹Turning from a medical diagnosis of Judah in terms of a human body full of sickness and wounds suffered in battle, the description details the condition of Judah’s devastated, conquered land and burned cities in **verse 6**, and then the besieged, overwhelmed condition of her capital city, Jerusalem / Zion in **verse 7**.

Oswalt comments on **verses 7-9** that “In these verses, the prophet changes the imagery. First he moves from the picture of a sick and injured body to that of the desolation of a conquered land...Spiritually and, to a greater or lesser extent, physically Israel is wasteland...

“Again, while Isaiah does not make specific reference to the old covenant traditions, his fundamental reliance upon them is obvious in the light of almost word-for-word similarities between **verse 7** and the curse formulas found in **Leviticus 26** and **Deuteronomy 28, 29**. He is at one with those passages in believing that it is impossible to enjoy the fruits of nature without being in submission to nature’s Lord...

(continued...)

your cities—burned (with) fire;
your land before you—strangers are devouring it!⁵⁰
And (it is) a devastation, like an overthrow⁵¹ (by) strangers!⁵²

⁴⁹(...continued)

“When our attempts to find ultimate joy in the temporal continue to meet with disaster and frustration, and when that disaster and frustration drive us to the ultimate Source of joy, the curse is not an evil but a good one.” (Pp. 90-91) Yes!

Compare **Isaiah 6:11-12**, where Isaiah asks YHWH “How long?” And the answer is, Until the cities lie ruined and the land is devastated—the condition pictured here. Also compare **Deuteronomy 28:51-52**, where as part of the curses that will fall on Israel for disobedience, conditions such as depicted here are predicted.

Watts notes that the Qumran manuscript 1QIs^a reads שִׁמְמוּ עֲלֶיהָ “they were appalled over it.” (P. 14)

⁵⁰Gray comments that “The enemy have reduced the country behind them to ruin by fire and sword, and they have now closed in on Jerusalem and are living in its immediate neighborhood.” (P. 13)

⁵¹The noun מְהִיכָה, “overthrow,” occurs five times in the **Hebrew Bible**, at:

Deuteronomy 29:21-22^{Heb} / **22-23**^{Eng}

21/ 22 And the generation that follows will say,
 your children who will arise after you people,
 and the foreigner who will come from a land far away;
 and they will see this land’s wounds
 and its diseases with which YHWH will make it sick—
22 / 23 (with) brimstone and salt, all its land burned up—
 it will not be planted, and it will not cause growth;
 and no vegetation will come up on it;
 like (the) overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Tseboyim,
 which YHWH overthrew in His anger and in His rage.

Isaiah 1:7, here,

Your land—a devastation;
 your cities—burned (with) fire;
your land before you—strangers are devouring it!
 And (it is) a devastation, like an overthrow (by) strangers!

Isaiah 13:19,

(continued...)

1.8 וְנִוְתְרָה בְּתַצִּיּוֹן

כְּסִכְּהַ בְּכַרְם

כְּמַלְוֹנָה בְּמִקְשָׁה

⁵¹(...continued)

And Babylon, (the) honor of kingdoms,
(the) beautiful pride of Chaldeans, will be
like God's overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah!

Jeremiah 49:18, Edom is going to become a horror,

like (the) overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and its neighbors,
said YHWH,
Not a man will dwell there,
and no son of a human will be a temporary resident there!

Jeremiah 50:40, Babylon will never again be inhabited, with the exact language of **Jeremiah 49:18** repeated.

In all of these other occurrences of the noun, the reference is made explicit to the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, as Alexander observes, "containing an allusion to that event, which is the great historical type of total destruction on account of sin." (P. 84)

Yes, but we should not overlook the promise made to the sister-cities of Sodom, Samaria and Jerusalem in **Ezekial 16:53-58** of the restoration of their fortunes, in spite of that fiery destruction.

⁵²The picture is that of a land that has been invaded by foreigners, whose troops are devouring the produce and animals of the land, leaving it barren and desolate.

Wolf / Stek comment that "The desolation of the land of Judah is the result of foreign invasion; for example by Aram, the northern kingdom of Israel, Edom and Philistia (**2 Chronicles 28:5-18**); later (701 B.C.E.), by King Sennacherib and the Assyrian army (**Isaiah 36:1-2**); still later (605-586), by King Nebuchadnezzar and the Neo-Babylonian army." (P. 1018)

Motyer comments on **verses 6-7** that "The metaphors of the wounded man untended (**verse 6**) and the land without defense (**verse 7**) alike speak of the helplessness and hopelessness which forsaking the Lord brings." (P. 44)

Slotki translates this line by "And it is desolate, as overthrown by floods," commenting that the Hebrew זָרִים, "usually rendered 'strangers'...is here regarded as the plural of זָרָה, "flood." We think this is highly unlikely.

כְּעִיר נְצוּרָה:

And daughter Zion⁵³ is left remaining

⁵³The description of Jerusalem as בַּת־צִיּוֹן, “daughter Zion,” ἡ θυγάτηρ Σιων, “the daughter Zion” in Greek, is found in the following places in the **Hebrew Bible**: **Isaiah 1:8** (here); **3:16, 17; 4:4; 10:32; 16:1; 52:2; 62:11; Jeremiah 4:31; 6:2, 23; Micah 1:13; 4:8, 10, 13; Zephaniah 3:14; Zechariah 2:14; 9:9; Psalm 9:15; Song of Songs 3:11; Lamentations 2:13, 18 and 4:22.**

This is not unusual in Hebrew, as the phrase “daughter of ...” is commonly used for other cities, lands or people, and as a personification of a city or its inhabitants.

Compare the similar phrases “daughter of Jerusalem,” “daughter of my dispersed ones”; “daughter of Tyre,” “daughter of Babylon,” “daughter of Tarshish,” “daughter of Sidon / Dibon, Judah”; “daughter of my people,” “daughter of Egypt / Edom / Israel / Ammon / Sodom / Samaria / Syria etc.”

It is used for “daughter of a strange God,” and in phrases denoting character, quality, even age. It is used to denote a ewe-lamb, or a she-goat.

Oswalt holds that by the use of this phrase, Isaiah “is evoking all that is fresh and fair, desirable and hopeful about Zion.” (P. 92)

New Jerusalem states that “daughter of Zion” is a “personification of the city of Jerusalem...or of its population...’Zion’ was the name of the Jebusite citadel which later became the ‘City of David.’” (P. 1191)

See **2 Samuel 5:6-9**,

- 6 And the King (David) and his men went (to) Jerusalem, to the Jebusites inhabiting the land.
And he (the Jebusite king?) spoke to David, saying,
You will not enter here—but rather the blind and the lame will turn you aside, saying,
David will not enter here!
- 7 And David captured (the) fortress / masada of Zion—
it is David’s city.
- 8 And David said on that day,
Everyone striking a Jebusite—
and he will strike (synonym) in the conduit / water shaft;
and the lame and the blind, those hated by David’s innermost-being—
therefore they said,
A blind person and a lame person will not enter into the temple!
- 9 And David dwelt in the fortress;
and they called it, City of David.
And David built around (it),
from the Millo and to the house / temple.

like a booth in a vineyard,⁵⁴
like a hut⁵⁵ in a field of cucumbers,⁵⁶

⁵⁴The phrase כֶּסֶפֶה בְּכֶרֶם is given varying translations:

King James, “a cottage in a vineyard”;
Tanakh, “like a booth in a vineyard” (so, **New Revised Standard**);
New International, “like a shelter in a vineyard”;
New Jerusalem, “like a shanty in a vineyard.”

We should think of a temporary shelter / booth built in a large vineyard, for guards to stay in, protecting the as yet unharvested ripe grapes from predators. Compare:

Job 27:18, where Job says of the wicked person,

He built his house like the moth,
and like a hut / booth (that) one guarding made.

Oswalt comments that “Although Zion is little more than a shack in a vineyard, she is at least that. There is hope for her; she is not completely destroyed. That this is so, the prophet makes plain, is God’s doing. The clear implication is that God could have made His people like Sodom and Gomorrah—extinct [but according to **Ezekiel 16:53-63** Sodom is not ‘extinct’!]. But He has chosen not to...

“Isaiah believes there is hope for his people even if he himself does not live to see it, and he dares to believe that even out of a hut in a cucumber patch God is able to do great things.” (Pp. 92-93) We agree. But we expand that agreement to include all humanity. What do you think?

Watts comments that “*The watchman’s booth* is a familiar Near Eastern sight. The ripening fruit cannot be left unguarded against human theft or the invasion of animals or birds. The guard needs protection from the sun. So a booth of branches is made for him, elevated to enhance his field of vision. It will only last a season, but often remains long after the watchman is no longer needed.” (P. 19)

⁵⁵The Dead Sea Scroll 1QIs^a, along with the Greek, Syriac and Latin Vulgate translations, all interpolate the conjunction “and” at the beginning of this phrase.

⁵⁶The phrase כַּמְלוּנָה בְּמִקְשָׁה is given varying translations:

King James, “as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers”;
Tanakh, “Like a hut in a cucumber field”;
New International, “like a hut in a field of melons.”

Again we should think of a temporary shelter for guards protecting a crop.

like a besieged city!⁵⁷

1.9⁵⁸ לֹלֵי יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת הוֹתִיר לָנוּ שְׂרִיד

כְּמַעֵט כְּסָדָם הֵינּוּ לְעִמְרָה דְּמִינּוּ:

Unless YHWH of Armies⁵⁹ left remaining for us a survivor,⁶⁰,⁵

⁵⁷This is the third of Isaiah's three similes for depicting Judah's condition. The first two similes depict her condition as temporary, weak and unsubstantial. This third simile is that of a besieged city, depicting imminent danger, the threat of overthrow and destruction.

Our Greek translation has πολιορκουμένη, "(a city) being besieged." Perhaps the siege will be lifted; but perhaps not, and utter devastation and captivity await. Zion is in an extremely weak, dangerous condition!

See the next verse's use of שְׂרִיד, "survivor from defeat"—describing all that is left of Zion, meaning that the enemy's siege has been successful, and only a tiny remnant is left of Zion.

⁵⁸Kaiser entitles **verse 9** "Survival as grace." He comments that "survival itself is a sign of the grace of Yahweh...If everything happened only in terms of law and righteousness, there would be no escape from the Divine judgment. This conclusion is drawn by the scribe from the story of the two cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (compare **Genesis 19:24-25**), which he knew, and the address to the authorities and the people which follows in **verse 10**." (P. 23) Compare **Psalms 94:17**,

Unless YHWH (was) a help for me,
in a little my innermost-being (would have) dwelt (in) silence (**Rahlf's** has 'in hades,' that is, in the grave / underworld)!

⁵⁹This phrase is a Divine name, יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת, "YHWH of Armies." It occurs some 245 times in the **Hebrew Bible**, at: **1 Samuel 1:11; 4:4; 15:2; 17:45; 2 Samuel 6:2, 18; 7:8, 26, 27; 1 Kings 18:15; 2 Kings 3:14; 1 Chronicles 17:7, 24; Psalms 24:10; 46:8, 12; 48:9; 69:7; 84:2, 4, 13.**

Here in **Isaiah** it occurs at **1:9** (here), **24; 3:1, 15; 5:7, 9, 16, 24; 6:3, 5; 8:13, 18; 9:6, 12, 18; 10:16, 23, 24, 26, 33; 13:4, 13; 14:22, 23, 24, 27; 17:3; 18:7; 19:4, 12, 16, 17, 25; 21:10; 22:5, 12, 14, 15, 25; 23:9; 24:23; 25:6; 28:5, 22, 29; 29:6; 31:4, 5; 37:16, 32; 39:5; 44:6; 45:13; 47:4; 48:2; 51:15** and **54:5**.

Ackerman calls this "a favorite epithet of **First Isaiah**, used 46 times in his oracles." (Pp. 958-59) But the Divine title also occurs in the latter portion of the **Book**, at least 7 times.

It also occurs in **Jeremiah 2:19; 6:6, 9; 7:3, 21; 8:3; 9:6, 14, 16; 10:16; 11:22; 16:9; 19:3, 11, 15; 23:15, 16, 36; 25:8, 27, 28, 29, 32; 26:18; 27:4, 19, 21; 28:2, 14; 29:4, 8, 17, 21, 25; 30:8; 31:23, 35; 32:14, 15, 18; 33:11, 12; 35:13, 18, 19; 39:16; 42:15, 18; 43:10; 44:2, 11, 25; 46:10, 18, 25; 48:1, 15; 49:5, 7, 26, 35; 50:18, 25, 31, 33, 34; 51:14, 19, 33, 54, 58.**

(continued...)

like a few / in a little,⁶¹ we were like Sodom, we were like Gomorrah!⁶²

⁵⁹(...continued)

Then it also occurs in **Micah 4:4; Nahum 2:14; 3:5; Habakkuk 2:13; Zephaniah 2:9, 10; Haggai 1:2, 5, 7, 9, 14; 2:4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 23; Zechariah 1:3, 4, 6, 12, 14, 16, 17; 2:12, 18, 15; 3:7, 9, 10; 4:6, 9; 5:4; 6:12, 15; 7:3, 4, 9, 12, 13; 8:1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 11, 14, 8, 19, 20; 9:15; 10:3; 13:2, 7; 14:16, 17, 21; Malachi 1:4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14; 2:2, 4, 7, 8, 16; 3:1, 5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 17, 19 and 21.**

The name is a part of the “Holy War Motif” of the **Hebrew Bible**, and is especially prominent in **Isaiah** (63 times), **Jeremiah** (77 times), **Zechariah** (53 times) and **Malachi** (24 times).

Slotki holds that the “hosts” or “armies” signifies hosts, armies of Israel (p. 4). We think the reference is to the hosts or armies of heaven.

Some theologians either reject or seek to minimize the “Holy War Motif” in their theologies; but for the biblical theologian, we think, this is impossible.

What do you think? How big a part does the “Holy War Motif” play in your personal theology? Do you think you can have an adequate biblical understanding if you either neglect or simply omit this motif?

For people who have lived through the 20th century, with all of its devastating wars, the recognition of this biblical motif plays a very important role in their world-view, and self-understanding.

⁶⁰The noun שָׂרִיד, **saridh** means “survivor (from a defeat).” It comes from the root שָׂרַד, which means “escape,” and implies “escape in fright.” For occurrences of this noun in the **Hebrew Bible**, see our end-note 5, which also includes the passages in **Isaiah** which refer to a “remnant.”

Wolf / Stek comment that “Isaiah often refers to the remnant that will survive God’s judgment on the nation and take possession of the land.”

Ackerman is more specific, stating that “In **verse 9**, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is alluded to in order to describe the destruction Jerusalem would have suffered if King Sennacherib’s siege had been successful.” (P. 959)

⁶¹The Greek, Syriac and Latin Vulgate translations omit this line’s last phrase, כְּמִנִּיעַט, “like a little” or “like a few.”

Slotki comments that this adverbial phrase can be taken with the preceding word, “remnant,” or with what follows in the next line, “we had almost been as...” (P. 4) We are going against the Masoretic punctuation [which was done in medieval times in both Israel and Babylon], and reading the phrase with what follows.

⁶²Sodom and Gomorrah are, of course, the two infamous cities destroyed by YHWH in the story of **Genesis 13-14** and **18-19**, for which Abraham interceded, and from which only Lot and his
(continued...)

⁶²(...continued)

two daughters escaped as survivors. Isaiah mentions the two cities again in **13:19**, saying that Babylon will become like them.

Gray comments that “Had not Yahweh allowed some of the Jews to escape, the nation would have perished as completely as the ‘cities of the plain.’” (P. 14)

For other mentions of the two cities outside of the stories in **Genesis 18-19**, see **Deuteronomy 29:23; Jeremiah 49:18; 50:40; Amos 4:11; Matthew 10:15; 2 Peter 2:6** and **Jude 1:7**.

Also, see **Ezekiel 16:46-63** where the prostitute city Jerusalem is compared to her prostitute sisters Samaria and Sodom, and where Ezekiel depicts YHWH as predicting the restoration of the fortunes of Sodom and Samaria, as well as the restoration of the fortunes of Jerusalem—a prediction rarely mentioned in commentary literature.

In **Isaiah 3:9** Isaiah says the people of Jerusalem openly proclaim their missing-of-the-mark like Sodom did. Compare **Revelation 11:8**, where the name Sodom is a code-name for the city of Rome.

Sodom by itself is also mentioned in **Deuteronomy 32:32; Jeremiah 23:14; Lamentations 4:6; Zephaniah 2:9; Matthew 11:23-24; Luke 10:12** and **17:29**.

In **Romans 9:29**, Paul quotes **Isaiah 1:9** exactly (“verbatim”) from the Greek translation:

And just as Isaiah said in advance,
Unless Lord Sabaoth has left behind for us a seed / descendant(s),
like Sodom then we (would have) become,
and like Gomorrah then (we would have) been likened.

Ortlund comments that “Paul quotes this verse to teach God’s gracious purpose to preserve a remnant that is truly His people. There is nothing within their own nature to keep God’s people from the worst of paganism and its appropriate judgment.” (P. 1241)

Do you agree with Ortlund at this point? What about the following imperative verbs, urging Judah to deep-seated transformation, which imply that if Judah is willing, the nation can turn from its sinfulness and do the will of YHWH? It appears that this passage in **Isaiah** is a test-passage for the Augustinian / Calvinist teaching concerning human abilities in response to God, offering a much more positive evaluation of those abilities than either Augustine or Calvin imagined.

Motyer comments on **verse 9** that “Into this situation where forsaking the Lord has brought the nation to the end of its tether, internally (**verse 6**) and externally (**verses 7-8**), comes the unmerited factor of Divine preservation. There is a point at which the Lord sets His fence around His people and says ‘No’ to the consequences of sin and the power of the foe. Merit may call for an overthrow like Sodom (**Genesis 19**) but mercy determines on survival.” (P. 44)

(continued...)

⁶²(...continued)

Do you agree with Motyer? We do. And **Ezekiel 16:53-63** causes us to agree even more! It is Ezekiel's conviction that YHWH's mercy is far more powerful than human sinfulness and its consequences!

⁶³Motyer introduces **verses 10-20** with the statement, "Every religion has its necessary outward forms, and every religion is susceptible to the same danger of defining the reality in terms of the form...Hebrew religion was no different, saving that the expenditure of time (New Moons, Sabbaths, festivals, pilgrimages to Zion etc.) and money (bulls, lambs, goats etc.) which their religion required may have made them proportionately the more affronted that such exercises meant nothing to the God Whom they thus thought to honor..."

"Was Isaiah, then, renouncing the tradition in which he had been reared, which held that all these religious practices were commands of the Lord? Was he advocating 'morality without religion'? No, but he was issuing a call to return to the primitive integration of the two elements of ethics and rite..."

"The cultus [ritual of worship] was given so that those who were committed to the life of obedience might remain in the Lord's presence notwithstanding their failures and have recourse to mercy and forgiveness for their lapses from obedience. Outside the context of the law of obedience the law of sacrifice had no utility." (Pp. 45-46)

What do you think? Do you agree with Motyer? We think it is very important for the student / worshiper to wrestle with this. What good are animal-sacrifices, religious services, baptisms, taking of communion, etc.? Are they what God wants? Isn't what He wants our hearts, our love, our devotion—most of all, our obedience, our fulfilling His will? And if so, then what is the use of religious rituals? Are they simply for our good, to remind us of our commitments and responsibilities, to remind us of who we are?

Alexander comments on **verses 10-15** that "Having assigned the corruption of the people as the cause of their calamities, the prophet now guards against the error of supposing that the sin thus visited was that of neglecting the external duties of religion, which were in fact punctiliously performed, but unavailing because joined with the practice of iniquity." (P. 85)

Slotki entitles **verses 10-17** "False and true worship of God," and comments that "The one (**verses 11-15**) is objectionable, the other (**verses 16-17**) acceptable to Him." (P. 4)

Do you agree with Slotki? **Verses 11-15** have to do with the externals of religion, with the signs of our devotion to YHWH. **Verses 16-17** have to do with "cleaning up our act," with ceasing to do evil, learning to do good, seeking justice, correcting oppression, defending orphans and widows. If we practice **verses 16-17**, can we simply omit and forget the externals of **verses 11-15**?

Ortlund comments that in **verses 10-20**, Isaiah highlights "the hypocrisy of the people's worship. Isaiah, like other prophets who comment on sacrificial practices, recognizes that God appointed the system of worship and authorized the central sanctuary. But these ordinances were
(continued...)

⁶³(...continued)

always intended to foster true piety among God's people, which would move them to humble purity of heart and energetic promotion of others' well-being. Isaiah denounces the way his contemporaries have divorced the ordinances from their proper purpose. It seems that they treated their worship as a way of manipulating God; they also mixed in elements from Canaanite religions (**verse 29**)...

"God rejects His people's worship, however lavish, because they use it as a pious evasion of the self-denying demands of helping the weak..." (P. 1241)

Do you agree with Ortlund? Early in our study of Isaiah we disagreed, thinking that it was a nervous attempt to avoid the sharpness of this passage's attack on Judah's religion. But as we have read through the occurrences of Isaiah's words in other places in **Isaiah**, we have come to think that Ortlund is correct. In a number of passages Isaiah shows his recognition of the validity of these elements of worship, and depicts YHWH as desirous of such worship. There are external elements of religion in the "heavenly city / Zion." What do you think?

Ackerman states that "Here [**verse 10**], as **verses 11-17** make clear, the reference is to the two cities' failure to treat the poor and the needy justly...and Jerusalem's similar failure." (P. 959) This is true, but Ezekiel describes that failure as also including "doing a disgusting thing," which is most probably a reference to their homosexual rape of temporary residents. See **Ezekiel 16:49-50**:

49 Look—this was Sodom, your sister's iniquity:
 exaltation, plenty of bread,
 and quietness (with) ease
 was her's and her daughter (cities');
 and (the) hand of (the) poor and needy (synonyms)
 she did not take strong hold of!
50 And they became haughty,
 and did a disgusting thing before me.
 So I removed them,
 just as I saw.

Gray entitles **verses 10-17** "The futility of sacrifices," and comments that "With the formula, *Hear the word of Yahweh*, a fresh section...begins...There has been too much sacrifice and too little justice—that is what has alienated Yahweh from Israel and led Him to punish His people again and again (**verses 5-9**), and that is why even now He takes no notice of their prayers (**verse 15**) so as to rescue them.

"This is one of the most notable statements of the common standpoint of the prophets: that what He [YHWH] demands of those who worship Him is not sacrifice, but justice and humanity...

"Sacrifice, and many of the forms of religion, Israel shared with the nations, and it is not the institution, but the repudiation, of sacrifice that distinguishes the religion of Israel. Not, perhaps, that the utterances of the prophets need to be taken as a prohibition absolute of sacrifice (contrast **Isaiah 30:29**:

(continued...)

⁶³(...continued)

The song will be for you people like a night for setting-apart a pilgrimage-festival,
and rejoicing of heart, like the walking with the flute,
to enter into YHWH's mount,
to Israel's Rock.

Gray states that the outcome of such teaching would be “certainly a non-sacrificial, not less than a monotheistic, religion...Historically, the unessential character of sacrifice in the higher development of Hebrew religion is shown by the continuance of the religion without sacrifice during the first exile and, subsequently, both in Judaism, after the fall of the temple, and in Christianity...The emphasis laid by the prophets on the essentially ethical nature of Yahweh and of His demands upon [people]...enabled the nation not only to survive the exile, but as a religious community to emerge from it even stronger.” (P. 17) What do you think? Do you agree with Gray?

Kaiser states that **Isaiah 1:10-17** is “a prophetic instruction on sacrifice or a sacrifice Torah,” and “is one of the most significant texts in the **Book of Isaiah** from a historical point of view, though at the same time it is one over which there is the most dispute...The main problem in elucidating it, which has been discussed a great deal, is whether it is meant to reject sacrifice in principle or whether it is concerned with cultic regulations connected with a particular situation.” (P. 24)

Oswalt entitles **1:10-20** “God’s Desire: Justice, Not Hypocritical Worship.” He entitles **1:10-17** “The Folly of Empty Cult.”

He comments on **verses 10-20** that “In this section the prophet lays out two alternative means of relating to God. One way is through religious ceremonies—cult—performed in manipulative ways (**verses 10-15**), the other is through a life of ethical purity (**verses 16, 17**). He closes with a challenge to choose between these ways (**verses 18-20**)...”

“The language, like that of **verses 4-9**, is intensely bitter. Isaiah’s contempt for hypocritical cult is boundless. Like the other prophetic announcements on the subject (**Hosea 6:4-6; Amos 4:4-5; 5:21-25; Micah 6:6-8; Jeremiah 7:4, 21ff.; Psalm 50:8-15**), his words are laden with sarcasm...”

“There is every reason to believe, as the Scripture claims, that Israel had a complex cult long before the age of the prophets and that what the prophets opposed was not the existence of cult but rather the attempt to use cult in magical, manipulative ways without reference to the character and attitude of the worshiper.” (Pp. 94-95)

What do you think? Do you agree with Gray that Isaiah believes in the abolition of sacrifices in religion? Or is Oswalt correct in saying that it is only sacrifices that are devoid of social concern that Isaiah condemns? We understand Gray’s view; but we think it is overstatement, and that in the long run, Oswalt’s view is best.

Watts apparently agrees with Gray. He refers to **Isaiah 66:2-5**:

1 In this way YHWH spoke:
The heavens—My throne!

(continued...)

⁶³(...continued)
 And the earth—footstool for My feet!
 Where (is) this,
 —a house which you people will build for Me?
 And where is this—
 a place for My rest?
 2 And all of these—My hands made!
 and all these became!
 —(it is) a saying of YHWH!
 And to this (person) I will look—
 to a poor person,
 and one contrite of spirit,
 and trembling before My Word.
 3 One slaughtering the bull—
 someone killing a man;
 and one sacrificing the sheep—
 someone breaking a dog’s neck;
 one offering up a grain offering—
 (one offering) a pig’s blood;
 one making a memorial sacrifice of frankincense—
 one blessing an idol-nothing!
 Also they chose their ways—
 and their innermost being(s) took pleasure in their detested idols.
 4 Also, I, I will choose among their immoral cruelties;
 and their terrors, I will bring to them.
 Because I called, and there was no one answering;
 I spoke, and they did not listen.
 And they did the evil in My eyes
 and among whatever I did not like, they chose!
 5 Listen to YHWH’s word,
 those who tremble at His word!...

Watts states that “The rejection of sacrificial worship is not only due to the abrogation of covenant but also belongs to the vision of the new Jerusalem (**66:3-4**) and is stated in much the same language. Sacrificial worship is characterized as something the people have chosen (**66:3b**) rather than responded to as the genuine call of God. God seeks those who will do what He requires and who seek that which delights Him, those who are ‘willing and obedient’ (**1:19**) and who ‘tremble at His word’ (**66:2, 5**).” (P. 21)

We think, from our reading of the **Book of Isaiah**, and the various commentaries upon it, that differing views with regards to sacrificial worship are certainly possible, and as a result, differing conclusions have been drawn by those studying the **Book**.

But of one thing we can be certain. Isaiah teaches powerfully that there can be no genuine religion without heart-felt obedience to God, and without commitment to social concern, with seeking

(continued...)

הֲאִינוּ תּוֹרַת אֱלֹהֵינוּ עִם עֲמֹרָה:

Hear⁶⁴ YHWH's word,⁶⁵ rulers of Sodom!⁶⁶

⁶³(...continued)

justice for the least people in society, namely, orphans and widows. What do you think? Where do you think Jacob / James got his idea concerning “true religion” that underlies **Jacob / James 1:27**?

⁶⁴See footnote 15 for this imperative verb, “Hear!”

Motyer states that “*Hear and listen* are the same verbs as in **verse 2**. The identical Divine voice speaking through the prophet, now summons people, not the heavens.” (P. 46)

⁶⁵For occurrences of this phrase, “Hear YHWH's word” in the **Hebrew Bible**, see:

2 Kings 7:1, a prophetic message spoken by Elisha, predicting the overthrow of Ben-Hadad;
2 Chronicles 18:18, a prophetic vision with a message from Micaiah for King Ahab;
Isaiah 1:10, here, Isaiah's visionary message for Judah;
Isaiah 28:14, Isaiah's visionary message for the rulers of Jerusalem;
Isaiah 66:5, Isaiah's visionary message for those who tremble at YHWH's word;
Jeremiah 2:4, Jeremiah's message for the house of Jacob and Israel;
Jeremiah 7:2, Jeremiah's “temple message”;
Jeremiah 19:3, Jeremiah's message for the Kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem;
Jeremiah 21:11, Jeremiah's message to the household of the King of Judah;
Jeremiah 29:20, Jeremiah's message for the exiles in Babylon;
Jeremiah 31:10, Jeremiah's message for the nations and coastlands;
Jeremiah 42:15, Jeremiah's message to the remnant of Judah;
Jeremiah 44:24, 26, Jeremiah's message to all the people and women of Judah, in Egypt;
Ezekiel 13:2, Ezekiel's message to those who prophesy from their own heart, but who have not seen a vision from YHWH;
Ezekiel 34:9, Ezekiel's message to the shepherds of Israel, who have been feeding themselves rather than the sheep of Israel;
Ezekiel 36:1, Ezekiel's message to the mountains of Israel;
Ezekiel 37:4, Ezekiel's message to the dry bones of Israel;
Hosea 4:1, Hosea's message for the children of Israel.

What do you think this means? Does it mean “Read the **Bible**!” Hardly—there was no such thing as “the **Bible**” in the time of the prophets of Israel. Does it mean “Remember the teachings of Moses and the prophets concerning YHWH's will”? Or does it mean, “Humble yourself before YHWH, open your heart and your ears to hear the Divine voice speaking to you, deep in your conscience”? We say, none of the above. It means “Listen to the voice of the prophet of YHWH in your midst—pay attention to the YHWH-given message!” It has to do with the living voice of YHWH in the midst of Israel, through His messengers / prophets.

⁶⁶The phrase קִצְיֵי סֹדֶם, is certainly meant as a “put-down” of the rulers of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is another “Sodom,” its people compose another “Gomorrhah,” according to Isaiah. The
(continued...)

Give ear to our God's **Torah** / teaching,⁶⁷ people of Gomorrah!⁶⁸

⁶⁶(...continued)

noun **רֹאשׁ** is certainly not a “flattering” title for Jerusalem’s rulers, as Isaiah uses it. See its only other occurrences in the **Hebrew Bible** at:

Isaiah 3:6-7,

6 Because a man will take hold on his brother, of his father’s house, (by his) garment,
(saying,) Come! A chief / ruler you will be over us!
And this overthrown mass (will be) beneath your hand!
7 He will lift up (his voice) in that day, saying:
I will not be one binding up (our wounds);
and in my house there is not bread, and there is no garment.
You will not make me a chief / ruler of a people!
(Such a “ruler” would be a “ruler over hunger and heaps of ruins.”)

Isaiah 22:3,

All your chiefs / rulers fled together
without a bow they were imprisoned.
All your people being found were imprisoned together.
They fled from afar.
(These “rulers” are those who instead of standing and fighting, have fled and left the city defenseless.)

Gray comments that “Under the suggestive and caustic titles *chiefs of Sodom, people of Gomorrah*, Isaiah addresses the prophets of Jerusalem and Judah, and especially their leaders, whom he elsewhere regards as responsible for the moral condition of the people.” (P. 17)

Isaiah 1:23

Your rulers—rebellious men,
and companions of thieves;
all of it loving a bribe,
and pursuing rewards!
They do not seek justice (for the) orphan,
and a widow’s case will not come to them!

Gray states, “Chiefs of the people of Yahweh ought to make it their aim to keep things right in the State (**Micah 3:1**); but, since Isaiah shares with Micah (**3:9**) the view that their aim is just the opposite, he addresses them not as chiefs of Yahweh’s people, but as chiefs of Sodom; so also the people misled by them are worthily termed people of Gomorrah. Yet the prophet has for these misleading chiefs and misled people a communication from Yahweh: they have gone astray because they have misunderstood what Yahweh really cares for.” (P. 18)

⁶⁷This phrase, הַאֲזִינוּ תּוֹרַת אֱלֹהֵינוּ, “Give ear (imperative plural) (to) our God’s **torah** / teaching,” is a unique phrase, not found elsewhere in the **Hebrew Bible**. It is placed in parallel with the preceding phrase, “Hear the word of YHWH,” and is simply an alternative way of saying the same thing. It seems apparent that here, **torah** of our God does not mean “the law of Moses,” but rather the message / teaching that Isaiah is giving as YHWH’s word to the people of Jerusalem and Judah at this critical time in their history.

We agree with Slotki who states that “Hebrew *Torah*, ‘instruction, direction’; [is] generally religious teaching.” (P. 4)

We hold that the **Torah** of Israel, while given originally through Moses, was not all given by Moses at one time, but rather, continued to be given through the judges that Moses appointed to help him in his work, and then by Aaron and the subsequent high priests, and by Joshua, then the Judges (such as Deborah and Samuel), David, Solomon, the early and later prophets (including Isaiah), the wise teachers of Israel, and then through Jesus and His disciples—all of whom “sat on Moses’ seat” (compare **Matthew 23:2**, where Jesus states that the Pharisees in His day held that position).

We take this present passage as confirmation that Isaiah should be included in that number. See footnote 76 for a fuller statement of this view.

What do you think?

Gray comments that “The instruction of God is teaching concerning the will and ways of God...more especially as communicated through prophets...or priests.” (P. 19) See:

Isaiah 8:16,

Bind / tie up testimony;
seal up **torah** / teaching
among my disciples.

We understand **8:16** to be Isaiah’s call to his disciples (see **verse 18**) to put together and seal his teaching / message, to which they would give their witness as signs and symbols in the coming generations in spite of Judah’s / Israel’s hardness of heart and unwillingness to hear.

Wolf / Stek comment on **Isaiah 8:16** that “By preserving Isaiah’s teaching (‘the law’), his disciples could later prove that his predictions had come true...The Hebrew word for ‘law’ can also mean ‘teaching’ or ‘instruction.’ The legal document containing Isaiah’s teaching about Assyria’s invasion was tied and sealed and then given to the prophet’s followers, who were to preserve it until the time of its fulfillment, when God would authenticate it by the events of history.” (P. 1029)

Although the text does not make the matter this clear, we agree with Wolf / Stek. See:

Isaiah 30:8-11,

(continued...)

⁶⁷(...continued)

8 Now come—write it upon a tablet with them
and upon a writing / book inscribe it.
And it will be for a later day,
for the witness until long-lasting time!

9 Because it is a rebellious people,
lying children,
children not willing to hear YHWH's teaching;

10 who said to the seers, Do not see!
And to the visionaries, Do not give visions for us!
Speak straight-forward things to us--
smooth things!
Envision deceptions!

11 Turn aside from (the) way!
Incline from a path!
Remove from our faces
(the) Set-apart One of Israel!

We think it is obvious that Isaiah is describing the visions of the prophets like himself as those who continued to give “YHWH's **torah**.”

Lamentations 2:9b, the devastated City of Jerusalem is described:

There is no **torah** / teaching;
even her spokespersons did not find a vision from YHWH.

We think it is obvious that the **torah** referred to here is found in the visions given to the spokespersons by YHWH. Those who “sat in Moses’ seat” (**Matthew 23:2**) giving **torah** had not gone out of existence!

Romans 3:10-19, Paul quotes / alludes to a number of passages from the **Jewish Bible**, including **Isaiah 59:7-8**, and then in **verse 19** collectively calls them “the law.”

1 Corinthians 14:21, where Paul describes **Isaiah 28:11-12** as being written “in the law.”

Oswalt understands the passage differently: “Isaiah is saying that the instruction which God gave Moses did not have chiefly to do with cultic prescription and legalistic righteousness. Rather, God's **torah** has to do with character and attitudes and relationships, all of which may be symbolized in the ceremonies but which are not to be replaced by the ceremonies.” (P. 96)

What do you think Isaiah is referring to—Moses' **torah**, or his own visionary **torah**?

⁶⁸Isaiah's language is harsh and belittling to Jerusalem's rulers and its people. The city is about to suffer, or has suffered, the same fate that came upon Sodom and Gomorrah. Isaiah could hardly depict a more dangerous situation. Jerusalem is tottering on the edge of destruction by YHWH of Armies!

(continued...)

1.11⁶⁹ לְמַה־לִּי רַב־זְבַּחֵיכֶם׃

יֹאמֶר יְהוָה

שְׁבַעְתִּי עַל־זֹת אֵילִים וְחֶלֶב מְרִיאִים

וְדָם פְּרִים וְכַבְשִׁים וְעֵתוּדִים לֹא חִפְצָתִי׃

For what to Me,⁷⁰ your multitude of sacrifices?⁷¹

⁶⁸(...continued)

Kaiser states that “As in **1:2-4ff.**, it is maintained here that the *whole* people as constituted at that time has fallen under Yahweh’s judgment of extermination, which was said once to have destroyed the legendary cities of Sodom and Gomorrah...As there is not only an accusation, but positive instruction at the end, this prelude gives the whole discourse the character of an emphatic call to repentance; it becomes a lesson in how the people doomed to destruction can still escape Divine judgment.” (P. 29)

⁶⁹Oswalt comments on **verses 11-15** that “The tendency of the Hebrew people is easily understood. Throughout the history of religion the trend has always been to maximize the physical while minimizing the spiritual. The physical aspects of religion are observable and, to some extent, measurable, whereas the spiritual aspects are very difficult to measure. How can you be sure you are being loving toward your neighbor? Yet you can count the number of times you have gone to church, and you can record the amount of money you have given...

“The capacity to make a distinction between the symbol and that which is symbolized is of critical importance for the understanding of Hebrew religion.” (Pp. 96-97)

⁷⁰This question, לְמַה־לִּי, literally “for what to me,” occurs elsewhere in the **Hebrew Bible** at:

Genesis 27:46, Rebekah tells Isaac that if Jacob marries one of the Hittite women whom she hated, לְמַה לִּי חַיִּים׃, literally, “for what to me (is) lives / life?” Her meaning is that life is worthless to her if Jacob marries a Hittite.

Job 30:2a, in proud disdain, Job speaks of men whose strength is gone, asking

Also, their hands’ strength, for what to me?

(Job’s meaning is that their pretended, but non-existent strength, is worthless to him.)

Here, in **Isaiah 1:11**, YHWH means something similar. What good is Judah’s multitude of sacrifices to Him? He doesn’t need it, and He doesn’t want it. What good, then, is it? None!

Kaiser the question as “The angry rhetorical question which...expects a negative answer, and marks the beginning of Yahweh’s discourse proper in **verse 11.**” (P. 29)

(continued...)

⁷⁰(...continued)

Oswalt asks, "Of what use to God were sacrifices and festivals, sabbaths and blood, if they were not accompanied by the kind of devotion that manifests itself in lives lived according to His holiness? Such sacrifices were not pleasing to God; they were an abomination (**verse 13**). He was not happy they had come into His courts; He wished they would leave (**verse 12**). He did not find their endless worship services a pleasure; rather, they were a terrible burden (**verse 14**)." P. 97)

Gray comments, "Why this constant bringing of sacrifices? That is the question which Yahweh is repeatedly putting to the people. How mistaken a proceeding, if it is intended to please, not the people themselves (**Amos 4:5**), but *Yahweh!*" (P. 19)

⁷¹For a similar question, see **Jeremiah 6:20**:

For what (use is) this to Me—sweet-smelling incense (that) comes from Sheba?
and the good aromatic reed(s) from a distant land?
Your (plural) offerings-up (are) not for acceptance,
and your (animal) sacrifices were not sweet to Me!

In addition, see **Isaiah 66:3**, which issues a devastating critique of animal sacrifices:

One slaughtering the ox—
one striking / killing a man;
one sacrificing the sheep / goat—
one breaking a dog's neck;
one offering up a gift—
blood of a pig;
one making a memorial offering of incense—
one blessing wickedness!
Also these chose their ways,
and with their abominations their innermost-being was delighted!

Also, see **Malachi 1:10**:

Who also among you people—
and he will shut (the) doors,
and they will not set alight My altar in vain / for nothing!
There is no delight for Me among you people,
said YHWH of Armies;
and I will not be pleased with a gift from your hand!
(Again, this is an apparent complete denunciation of Israel's sacrificial worship!)

Compare **1 Samuel 15:22-23**, where Samuel asks:

22 Is there pleasure for the YHWH in offerings-up and (animal) sacrifices,
as (in) hearing YHWH's voice?

(continued...)

YHWH says / asks.

I was filled (with) offerings up of rams, and fat of fatlings,⁷²
and blood of young bulls, and lambs⁷³ and male-goats—I was not delighted with!⁷⁴

⁷¹(...continued)

Look—to listen is better than (animal-) sacrifice,
to draw near (to YHWH is better) than (the) fat of rams!

23 Because divination (is) sin—rebellion;
and (it is) wickedness and *teraphim* to be obstinate.

Because you rejected YHWH's word—
and He will reject you from (being) King!

We understand this to be not a complete denunciation of sacrificial worship, but rather a statement that obedience to YHWH's voice is far more important than animal sacrifices and vain attempts to manipulate the voice of God through divination and *teraphim* (idols used as means of divination).

Wolf / Stek comment on **Isaiah 1:11-15** that “The sincerity of the worshiper, not the number of his religious activities, is most important.” (P. 1018)

Slotki comments that “No attack by the prophet is intended upon the offerings in the temple. A sacrifice is welcomed from the sincere penitent but not from the hypocrite who brings it while still clinging to his evil ways.” (P. 4) We basically agree, but the text does not make it that obvious, and can be understood differently, as attacking the sacrificial system as such.

Ackerman notes that “The people have brought God the *sacrifices* that the cultic law requires, but the Deity finds these worthless as long as injustice is present.” (P. 959)

What do you think? Is Isaiah totally denouncing Judah's sacrificial worship in its temple? Or is he only denouncing their worship that was offered with “bloody hands,” that had no connection to social justice and genuine goodness?

⁷²YHWH says He has his “full” of their sacrifices. He doesn't want any more!

Wolf / Stek note that the “fatted animals” of the **New International** translation refers to “those kept in confinement for special feeding.”

⁷³The phrase וְכִבְשִׁים, “and lambs” is omitted by our Greek translation (**Rahlfs**).

⁷⁴You worshipers thought that I would take delight in all of your various offerings / sacrifices. But you were wrong. I was not delighted in them!

Gray comments that “**Verse 11** has implicitly denied that sacrifices form any essential part of the religion of Yahweh—What good are they to Him? At any rate, He has received them in superabundance; and they give Him no pleasure.” (P. 19)

1.12 כִּי תִבְאוּ לִרְאוֹת פָּנַי

מִי־בִקֵּשׁ זֹאת מִיְדַכֶּם רִמָּס חֲצֵרַי:

When you come to see My face,⁷⁵

⁷⁵Where our Hebrew text spells לִרְאוֹת, one Hebrew manuscript and the Syriac spell לְרִאוֹת, which makes no difference for the meaning.

The phrase here, לִרְאוֹת פָּנַי, **lera)oth panay**, is ambiguous, and calls for analysis. The verb לִרְאוֹת is a niph'al infinitive construct, and means “to be seen.” It is followed by the noun פָּנַי, which means “My face,” or “My presence.” This much is clear.

But what does the phrase mean as a whole, “to be seen My face”? Does it mean “to be seen / to appear (to) My face / presence,” or does it mean “for My face / presence to be seen / to appear (to you)”? Our English translations commonly have “to appear before Me,” but “before” would be לְפָנַי, “before My face,” or לְפָנַי, “before Me.”

According to **Brown-Driver-Briggs**, sometime the verb רָאָה, is used in a “technical” sense, “to see one's face,” that is, “to appear before someone,” “to be in someone's presence.” See:

Genesis 32:21, Jacob instructs the parties going ahead of him, when they meet Esau,

and you people shall say also, Look, your servant Jacob (is) behind us;
because he said, I will cover his (Esau's) face with the gift(s) that are going before me;
and afterwards, I will see his face;
perhaps he will lift up my face.
(Here, to see Esau's face means Jacob's privilege of having access to Esau's presence, and being accepted by him, rather than being rejected / killed.)

Genesis 33:10, where Jacob says to Esau:

And Jacob said,
No, now; if now I found favor in your eyes,
and you shall accept my gift from my hand.
Because for this reason I saw your face,
like seeing God's face—
and you accepted me!

Genesis 43:3, 5, Judah tells Jacob that “the man” (meaning Joseph, who has not yet made himself known to his brothers) said,

(continued...)

⁷⁵(...continued)

You people will not see my face
unless your brother (is) with you!

Genesis 44:23, 26, this same phrase occurs, לְרִאֲוֹת פָּנַי, “for my face(s) to be seen,” where it is meant as a privilege, that is, of having access to “the man” (Joseph), a person of high rank.

Exodus 10:28-29, Pharaoh says to Moses,

28 Go from before me;
guard yourself (from coming) again to see my face / to be seen before me,
because on (the) day of your seeing my face,
you shall die!

29 And Moses said,
So you said.

I will not add again to see your face / to be seen before you.

(The same ambiguity as in our **Isaiah** passage is found here, where the infinitive verb “to see” can be pointed as niph'al, “to be seen.”)

2 Samuel 14:24, 28, 32, King David orders Absalom to be returned to his house, “and my face he shall not see.” Absalom lived for two years in Jerusalem, “and face of the King he did not see.

2 Kings 25:19 = Jeremiah 52:25, Esther 1:14, “those seeing the King’s face” (implying the favor of the person seen).

Job 33:26a, Elihu tells Job, if a man will only return to God,

he will pray to Eloah,
and He will accept him;
and he will see His face
with a shout (of joy).

We conclude that the phrase in **Isaiah** is ambiguous, but the overall meaning is clear. The people of Judah come into the temple, desiring to “appear before YHWH,” or seeking for YHWH to be seen by them.”

We agree with Slotki, who comments that the phrase is “used of pilgrimage to the temple three times a year (**Deuteronomy 16:16**); here employed in a more general sense of any visit for the purpose of bringing a sacrifice.” (P. 5)

What Isaiah is talking about becomes apparent in the following passages:

Exodus 23:15b, 17,

(continued...)

who sought this from your hand,⁷⁶ to trample My courts?⁷⁷

⁷⁵(...continued)

15b And My face will not be seen empty-handed!

17 Three times in the year, every one of your males will be seen / will appear
to the Lord YHWH's face / before the Lord YHWH!

Exodus 34:20b, 23,

20b And My face will not be seen empty-handed!...

Three times in the year, every one of your males will appear
before the Lord YHWH's face, God of Israel!

Deuteronomy 16:16,

Three times in the year your (singular) every male will appear to YHWH your
God's face,
in the place which He will choose,
at a pilgrim-festival of unleavened breads,
and at a pilgrim-festival of the weeks,
and at a pilgrim-festival of the booths.
And he will not appear to YHWH's face empty-handed!

That is, every Israelite male was required to come before YHWH's presence three times a year, and he was required to bring something with him "in his hand"—presumably, an acceptable offering or sacrifice.

So if the question is asked, Who asked for this coming before YHWH (i.e., in the temple), and bringing something to offer in the hand, the answer in the light of these passages is, You did, YHWH! You commanded it in the Covenant Code, in the "Law of Moses"!

But see the next footnote, where Jeremiah is quoted as denying that it was YHWH Who commanded such sacrifices!

⁷⁶Gray translates by "*Who hath required this?*" and comments "certainly not Yahweh. Isaiah criticizes the law and religious customs of his time with the same freedom as Jeremiah (7:22ff.), and later, our Lord Himself (**Matthew 5**)." (P. 20) See:

Jeremiah 7:21-26:

21 In this way YHWH of Armies, God of Israel spoke:
Your offerings-up, add to your (animal) sacrifices,
and eat (their) flesh!

22 Because I did not speak to / with your fathers,
and I did not command them,
on (the) day I brought them from Egypt-land,

(continued...)

⁷⁶(...continued)

- concerning matters of offering-up and (animal) sacrifice!
- 23 Instead, this word I commanded them, saying,
Listen to My voice,
and I will be for you people for a God;
and you people will be for me, for a people.
And you will walk in all the way which I commanded you people,
so that it may be good for you people.
- 24 And they did not listen,
and they did not incline their ear;
and they walked in (their own) counsels,
in (the) stubbornness of their evil heart;
and they went backwards,
and not forwards.
- 25 From the day when your fathers went forth from Egypt-land,
until this (present) day;
and I sent to you people all My servants the prophets,
(every) day rising early and sending.
- 26 And they did not listen to Me,
and they did not incline their ear;
and they hardened their neck;
they were more evil than their fathers!

For the key **verse 22**, see the following translations:

King James, “For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in he day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices.”

Tanakh, “For when I freed your fathers from the land of Egypt, I did not speak with them or command them concerning burnt offerings or sacrifice.”

New Revised Standard, “For in the day that I brought your ancestors out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to them or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

New International: “For when I brought your forefathers out of Egypt and spoke to them, I did not just give them commands about burnt offerings and sacrifices.” (Interpolating the word “just” into the text, and thereby changing its meaning, forcing the text to conform to these translators’ preconceived ideas!)

New Jerusalem, “For when I brought your ancestors out of Egypt, I said nothing to them, gave them no orders, about burnt offerings or sacrifices.”

English Standard, “For in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

Rahfs, “Because I did not speak to the fathers of yours, and I did not command them in a day on which I led them out of (the) land of Egypt concerning whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

It is our belief that the **Five Books of Moses** were not given all at once by Moses in the wilderness. Rather, the basic legislation of the covenant of YHWH with Israel was given there, including the **Ten Commandments** and the **Covenant Code**. But then in the centuries that followed, and all sorts of historical developments and changes confronted the nation of Israel, those who came
(continued...)

⁷⁶(...continued)

after Moses, and “sat in Moses’ seat” (see Jesus’ words in **Matthew 23:2**) applying the laws given by Moses to new situations and needs, gradually added to that initial legislation. It was done by such people as the judges appointed to help Moses in his work (**Exodus 18**), and then Aaron, the High Priest, and his descendants, who especially added to legislation concerning sacrifices and offerings, such as are found in the **Book of Leviticus**. There was Joshua (see **Joshua 24:25-26**), who was followed by Judges such as Deborah, and Samuel. And then came the Kings over Israel, such as David and Solomon, who added to the growing body of teaching, especially songs and proverbs, that were to become the **Hebrew Bible**, and of course, after them, the “writing prophets.”

Where did this demand for a “multitude of sacrifices” come from? YHWH implies in this passage in **Isaiah**, and states clearly in **Jeremiah 7:22**, Not from Me! It’s not what I desired! From whom then? Our answer is that it came from the growing body of the priesthood in Israel, who made their living off the animal and grain sacrifices, and who sought to enhance their position and their finances through that multiplication of sacrifices, turning Israel’s worship into something never intended by YHWH, but self-serving to the priesthood.

In **Matthew 5**, beginning in **verse 17**, Jesus is depicted as affirming that he has come, not to abolish the law or the prophets (that is, two major sections of the **Hebrew Bible**, the **Torah** and the **Nebiiym**), but rather to fulfill them. He insists that all of their commandments must be kept and taught—and that his followers must go much further in keeping the commandments than did the scribes and Pharisees of His day.

Then Jesus takes up two of the **Ten Commandments**, the laws forbidding murder and adultery, and expands them, getting to the roots of both murder and adultery. Jesus calls upon his followers to get rid of the anger that leads to insult, and to seek reconciliation with any offended brother before approaching God in worship, settling differences without going to court. He calls upon his followers to do whatever it takes to get rid of the sexual desire that leads to adultery.

Then he goes beyond the **Ten Commandments**, to forbid divorce, even though Moses allowed it (**Deuteronomy 24:1-4**), and to forbid the common practice, taught in the **Hebrew Bible**, of taking oaths, swearing by the name of YHWH (even though it is commanded in the **Hebrew Bible**—see **Leviticus 19:12; Deuteronomy 6:13; 10:20**, etc.).

And then he teaches his followers to love their enemies, following God’s practice of sending His sunlight on the evil and the good, His rain on the just and the unjust, making God’s love for all humanity their own, completely overlooking the many passages in the **Hebrew Bible** that describe God as taking vengeance on His enemies.

Jesus’ teaching / **torah** is far from the legalistic 613 commandments of the Pharisees, and it is far from the legalistic use of the **Bible** in much contemporary religion.

Jesus holds that all of the laws must be taken seriously, but some of them must be rejected in the light of other, more important laws, as violating the love of God; still others must be deepened, to get at their roots. The ultimate standard is not an inspired **Bible**, but the God of love!

(continued...)

⁷⁶(...continued)

What do you think? Do you agree that Isaiah is questioning the laws of sacrifice in a similar way to that of **Jeremiah 7**, or to that of Jesus?

⁷⁷The fact is that coming before YHWH in worship, and bringing something to give in one's hand, is a far cry from what was actually happening in Israel, with its multitude of sacrifices, and with people crowding noisily in the temple courts—what YHWH considers “trampling” those courts [which reminds us of the story in the **Gospels** of Jesus' cleansing of the temple with its noisy money-changers and sellers of animals for sacrifice].

Gray states that “The awe which fell upon Isaiah as he entered the temple-precincts, the place of the Holy One of Israel (compare **chapter 6**), makes the careless familiarity with which others treated them peculiarly offensive to him.” (P. 20)

And so, this is YHWH's question to Judah's worshipers: “Who asked you to do all of this sacrificing, all this trampling of My courts? Did I ask you to do all of this? Is all of this religious ritual what I wanted, or what I want?” And the implication of the question is, No, it is not!

Thousands of years later, with the completion of the “canon of scripture,” and with the printing press pouring out millions of copies of the **Torah**, the **Five Books of Moses**, with the **Book of Leviticus** and its multitude of sacrifices at its center, we are easily inclined to answer YHWH, “Why it was You Yourself who asked for all of this! You're the One Who commanded this multitude of sacrifices—You're the One Who ordered the sacrifices of rams, and the fat of fatlings, and the blood of young bulls, and the lambs and the male-goats! What do You mean, asking us Who asked you to do all this sacrificing, this trampling through Your temple-courts with our animals for offering up to You? It's Your doing, not ours!” See the preceding footnote.

We are reminded of Christian ministers who insist on their parishioners giving ten percent of their income to the church, based on the Jewish teaching of the tithe—but which was the Jewish “income tax,” supporting both religion and state!

And what did the other prophets whom YHWH sent to Israel say about the multitude of Israel's sacrifices? See the following passages from Israel's prophets:

Hosea 6:6,

Because I desired steadfast love,
and not (animal) sacrifice;
and knowledge of God
more than offerings-up.

Amos 5:21-24,

21 I hated, I rejected your pilgrim festivals;
and I will not smell (the incense) in your assemblies!

(continued...)

-
- ⁷⁷(...continued)
- 22 Because if you offer up to me offerings-up and your gifts,
I will not be pleased;
and (the) peace offering of your fat animals,
I will not look at!
- 23 Take away from upon Me your songs' noise;
and I will not listen to your guitar instrumental music!
- 24 And let justice roll along like the waters,
and right-relationship like a perennial wadi!

Micah 6:6-8,

- 6 With what shall I meet /encounter YHWH?
shall I bend before God of (the) height?
Shall I meet / encounter Him with offerings-up,
with one year old calves?
- 7 Will YHWH be pleased with thousands of rams?
With ten thousand rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn son (for) my transgression,
my body's fruit (for) my innermost-being's missing-of-the-mark?
- 8 He declared to you, O human being, what (is) good,
and what is YHWH seeking from you—
only to do justice,
and to love steadfast love,
and to humbly walk with your God!

Sacrifices brought to the temples, whether in Samaria, or Bethel, or Jerusalem, had their role to play in Jewish religion. They were symbols, capable of being very effective symbols, of Israel's desire to worship YHWH God, and unite their lives in obedience to His teaching, and at the same time to support the priesthood and feed the needy. But they were symbols, and the danger always existed that the symbols would become ends in themselves, and serve as substitutes for what YHWH really wanted from His people. This is exactly what had happened in Israel, and in Judah, according to **Isaiah 1**. Hosea emphasizes that unless the truth that the animal sacrifices symbolized was actual reality in the life of the people, those sacrifices were less than worthless!

No, YHWH God doesn't need our animal sacrifices, or our money, or our public prayers. He owns all the animals on this earth, and all the money in all the vaults on earth are nothing in comparison to His wealth. What our God wants is for us to be like Him--to have the same kind of steadfast love that He has, and to live daily by that love--always acting and forming relationships in such a manner, never acting spitefully, or hatefully, or selfishly. That's the true "sacrifice" that our God wants from His people--whether Jews in Northern Israel, or Christians in 21st century America! Do you agree? Consider the following passages from the **Psalms**:

Psalms 50:8-15,

(continued...)

⁷⁷(...continued)

8 Shall I not reprove you on the basis of your sacrifices,
and your burnt offerings [that are] before me constantly?

9 I will not accept a young bull from your home,
[nor] male-goats from your cattle-pens!

10 For every beast of the forest is mine--
[the] cattle on a thousand hills!

11 I know every bird of [the] mountains;
and moving creatures in [the] country-side are my companions!

12 If I were hungry, I would not tell you!
For [the] world is mine, and its fullness!

13 Shall I eat [the] meat of mighty [animals]?
And blood of male-goats shall I drink?

14 Sacrifice to God thanksgiving,
and fulfill your vows to the Most High!

15 Then call upon me in [the] day of your distress--
I will rescue you, and you will honor me!

At the very least, this **Psalm** in Israel's temple-worship teaches the worshipers that their offerings-up and slaughterings-for-sacrifice were not a matter of YHWH's needing them, or eating them. Their proper role was one of thanksgiving, and fulfillment of vows, and calling upon YHWH for help—not at all a matter of their helping YHWH!

Psalm 51:18-21^{Heb} / **16-19**^{Eng},

18/16 For You will not be pleased with [animal] sacrifice--
and / or I would give (it);
an offering-up--
You would not be pleased (with).

19/17 God's sacrifices are a broken spirit,
a broken and crushed heart,
O God, You will not despise!

20/18 Do good, in Your good pleasure, to Zion!
Build Jerusalem's walls!

21/19 Then You will take pleasure in the sacrifices of right-relationship,
offering-up and whole burnt offering--
then bulls will be offered up on Your altar!

Psalm 51 teaches worshipers in Israel's temple that the only real sacrifice or offering-up pleasing to God is spiritual in nature—it consists of a broken spirit, a contrite heart. Only this can truly please God—and those who possess it can be used to build up God's people, and participate in acceptable worship at that temple, with its physical offerings.

In **Matthew 9:13**, Jesus is quoted as telling the Pharisees who criticized His eating with tax collectors and missers-of-the-mark,

(continued...)

1.13 לֹא תוֹסִיפוּ הָבִיא מִנְחַת-שָׁוָא

קִטְרֶת

תוֹעֵבָה הִיא לִי

חֲדָשׁ וְשַׁבָּת

קָרָא מִקְרָא

לֹא-אוֹכַל אֶון וְעִצְרָה:

⁷⁷(...continued)

So then, having gone, learn what it is:

I desire mercy and not sacrifice.

For I did not come to call rightly-related people,

but rather, missers-of-the-mark!

(Jesus here quotes **Hosea 6:6a** from its Greek translation)

In **Matthew 12:7**, Jesus is depicted as telling those criticizing His followers for their failure to keep their strict traditions concerning day-of-rest observance,

But then if you knew what it is:

I desire mercy and not sacrifice,

you would not then have condemned the guiltless!

Obviously Jesus thought this statement in **Hosea** was very important for religious leaders to meditate upon and understand! And its teaching is closely similar to Isaiah's teaching here!

Isaiah 1:11-17 is another of those prophetic words sent by YHWH to His people in Israel. It is a powerful statement that a multitude of animal sacrifices is not at all what YHWH desires! Religious rituals are no substitute for social justice and concern for the weakest members of society! Isaiah will not agree with those who say there is nothing we can do about such things—YHWH's word through Isaiah is a call to repentance, to a transformation of practices.

We agree that there are “nuances” to be considered—such as become explicit in **Psalms 51:18-21^{Heb} / 16-19^{Eng}**. But we also insist that the voice of the prophets, with its denunciation of slaughterings-for-sacrifice and offerings-up, without the nuances, must be heard, loudly and clearly, by all religions—and not be so watered down by nuances as to cease to be heard.

A surprisingly similar sentence from Egyptian wisdom is: “More acceptable is the character of one upright of heart than the ox of the evildoer. Act for the God, that He may act similarly for you...” (“The Instruction of King Meri-ka-re,” Pritchard, **ANET**, p. 417, line 129).

How will you teach and apply this biblical statement to your community's worship?

You shall not continue to bring empty / vain offering(s)--⁷⁸

⁷⁸Kaiser states that **verse 13** “forbids the whole practice of the cult and gives the reason why. [The first part of the verse] is formulated in the style of a prohibition, an unconditional Divine prohibition such as we find for example in the **Decalogue [Ten Commandments]**...It stresses Yahweh’s implacable opposition to meaningless cultic activity. Therefore any further offering of sacrificial gifts is vain and injurious. The smoke of the sacrifices which was thought to be well-pleasing to Yahweh and able to assuage His wrath...is in fact an abomination to Him. The same goes for regularly recurring festivals like that of the new moon...and any days of penitence or thanksgiving that might be called...Yahweh finds intolerable the juxtaposition and combination of conduct which injures the community...with the festive assemblies which are consequently degraded so that they become pious affectation [artificial behavior, designed to impress].” (Pp. 30-31)

Do you agree with Kaiser? We think this is overstatement, and that what is being forbidden is only cultic activity that is not combined with genuine love for God and fellow human beings.

The noun **מִנְחָה**, “gift,” “tribute,” “offering,” refers to an integral part of Israel’s sacrificial worship. The noun occurs some 213 times in the **Hebrew Bible**. In **Isaiah** it occurs at:

1:13a Don’t continue to bring an offering of vanity / emptiness.
(But does this mean YHWH rejects all “offerings”?)

Isaiah 19:1-18, Isaiah predicts devastating judgments coming on Egypt. But in verses **19-25** Isaiah’s oracle changes into an oracle of hope. An altar and a pillar built for YHWH will be in Egypt, witnessing to YHWH. The Egyptians will cry out to YHWH because of oppressors, and YHWH will send them a **מוֹשִׁיעַ**, savior, and will deliver them. **19:21** states,

And YHWH will be known to Egyptians;

and Egyptians will know YHWH in that day;

and they will offer (animal) sacrifice and offering (**מִנְחָה**);

and they will vow vow(s) to the YHWH; and will fulfill them.

(In the light of this prediction, we think, it becomes obvious that Isaiah is not opposed to sacrifices as such, but is only opposed to sacrifices that are not associated with justice and that come from humble, obedient hearts.)

39:1, Merodach-Baladan, king of Babylon, sends a **מִנְחָה**, “gift” to Hezekiah.

43:22-24, YHWH complains concerning His people whom He formed for His praise:

22 And you did not cry out to Me, Jacob,

because you grew weary against me, Israel.

23 You did not bring for me a sheep / goat (for) your offering-up;

and (with) your (animal) sacrifices—you did not honor Me.

(continued...)

(sweet smelling) incense^{79, 6}

⁷⁸(...continued)

I did not cause you to serve with offering(s),
and I did not weary you with sweet-smelling incense.

24 You did not buy / purchase for Me with the silver aromatic reed(s);
and you did cause Me to drink (the) fat of your (animal) sacrifices.
Surely you have caused Me to serve with your missings-of-the-mark;
you wearied Me with your iniquities!

(Quite differently from **Isaiah 1:1-20**, here YHWH complains against His people that they have not offered animal sacrifices and incense, and it is a picture of YHWH wanting the sacrificial offerings of His people, when those offerings truly honor Him.)

57:6, where the **מִנְחָה** is depicted as part of Israel's pagan worship, not as a part of their worship of YHWH.

66:3, where Israel's **מִנְחָה** is equated with pig's blood—that is, it is totally wrong.

66:20, in the good times coming, Israel's brothers will be brought from among all the nations as a **מִנְחָה**, "offering to YHWH."

In the light of these passages, we conclude that the **Book of Isaiah** as a whole is not opposed to Israel's sacrificial worship as such. It is opposed to such worship that is not joined intimately with social justice, that is not humble and from the heart. It is "empty," "vain" offerings that the **Book of Isaiah** is opposed to. Kaiser is not far from this view, as he states, "So long as the community believes that it can draw a distinction between its direct duties towards God and its duties to those in its midst in need of help, or behaves as though this is what it is doing, the whole religious enterprise, including prayer in the Jerusalem temple, is hateful to Yahweh." (P. 33) What do you think?

⁷⁹The noun **קִטְרֶת**, sweet-smelling incense, occurs some 60 times in the **Hebrew Bible**. See our end-note 6 for these occurrences.

There can be no doubt that the burning of sweet-smelling incense was an integral part of Judah's worship in the temple in Jerusalem. But that worship has become so far from what YHWH desires, that Isaiah calls incense an "abomination"!

Gray comments that "The early Hebrews, in common with the Babylonians, thought of the Gods as delighting in these savory smells...The prophets with their more spiritual conception of Yahweh repudiate the belief; the scent of burnt flesh is not a pleasure, but an abomination to God (compare **Amos 5:21**)." (P. 21) See the quotation of this passage in footnote 77.

Gray adds that "The attitude of the successors of the prophets is in striking contrast to Isaiah's." (**Ibid.**) By this he means "Trito-Isaiah" and Jeremiah. See:

(continued...)

⁷⁹(...continued)

Isaiah 56:7, Eunuchs and foreigners will be welcomed in YHWH's temple in Jerusalem (even though such a thing is forbidden in **Deuteronomy 23:1-5**^{Eng}):

and I will bring them to (the) mountain of My set-apartness;
and I will cause them to rejoice in My house of prayer;
their offerings and their sacrifices (will be) acceptable upon My altar--
because My house will be called A house of prayer for all the peoples!
(What do you think? Is this a return by Isaiah's successors to a less spiritual view of God?
We think not, in spite of what Gray says.)

Jeremiah 17:19-27,

- 19 In this way YHWH spoke to me:
Going—and you shall stand in (the) gate of (the) Sons of the People,
by which the kings of Judah go in,
and by which they go out,
and in all Jerusalem's gates.
- 20 And you shall say to them,
Hear YHWH's word, Kings of Judah,
and all Judah,
and all those dwelling (in) Jerusalem,
those entering through these gates!
- 21 In this way YHWH spoke:
Guard yourselves with your innermost-beings,
and you people shall not lift up a burden on the Sabbath day,
and bring them through (the) gates of Jerusalem!
- 22 And you shall not bring forth a burden from your houses on the Sabbath day;
and any work you shall not do;
and you shall set-apart the Sabbath day,
just as He commanded your fathers!
- 23 And they did not listen,
and they did not bend their ear;
and they hardened their neck,
so as not to listen;
and so as to not take correction.
- 24 And it will happen, if you will truly listen to Me—
a saying of YHWH—
so as not to bring a burden through the gates of the this City on the Sabbath day,
and (so as) to set-apart the Sabbath day(s),
so as to not do any work on it / them,
- 25 And they will enter through this City's gates, kings and princes,
those sitting upon David's throne,
riding in the chariot and on the horses,
they and their princes,

(continued...)

–it is an abomination to Me!⁸⁰

New moon / month^{81, 7} and day of rest,^{82, 8}

⁷⁹(...continued)

a man of Judah and those inhabiting Jerusalem;
and this City will be inhabited for long-lasting time.

26 And they shall enter, from Judah's cities and from Jerusalem's surroundings,
and from (the) land of Benjamin, and from the lowland,
and from the mountain, and from the negebh / south,
bringing an offering-up and a gift, and frankincense;
and bringing a thank-offering (to) YHWH's house / temple.

27 And if you (plural) will not listen to Me,
to set-apart the Sabbath day;
and so as to not carry a burden,
and to enter through Jerusalem's gates on the Sabbath day;
and I will kindle a fire,
and it will devour (the) citadels of Jerusalem,
and it will not be extinguished.

Here, in **Jeremiah**, YHWH is quoted as calling for renewed observance of Rest-Day laws, as well as the making of offerings. Gray calls this passage from Jeremiah “post-exilic”—but whatever its date, it is attributed to Jeremiah, and instead of rejecting the observance of Rest-Days, as Isaiah apparently does in **Isaiah 1:13**, calls for their continuing observance.

⁸⁰The noun תועבה, **to(ebhah)**, occurs some 118 times in the **Hebrew Bible**. It refers to things that provoke a feeling of extreme disgust, revulsion and abhorrence. YHWH could not have used a stronger word to express His feeling toward this important part of Judah's worship in the temple!

But what are we to take this to mean? Is that YHWH's final word on temple-worship? Or is this only the expression of His disgust with Judah's abuse of temple-worship? Again, we think that consideration of the **Book of Isaiah** as a whole, will cause decision for the latter conclusion.

⁸¹The noun חֹדֶשׁ, **chodhesh**, means “month,” or “new moon.” It occurs some 284 times in the **Hebrew Bible**. Most often the noun occurs simply as a marker of time. But in addition, the first days of the months / new moons were commanded in the **Hebrew Bible** as a time for special religious observances. See our end-note 7 for these commandments.

See the article on שָׁחַט (‘‘to make new,’’ ‘‘to renew’’) and חֹדֶשׁ (‘‘month / new moon’’) by R. North in **Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament** IV, pp. 225-44.

North characterizes **Isaiah 1:13-14** as ‘‘blatantly pejorative [expressing contempt or disapproval],’’ and ‘‘devastating.’’ ‘‘This strong language is chiefly intended to reinforce the more imperative demand of social justice for the underprivileged (**verse 17**). Rejection of liturgy in

(continued...)

to call for a set-apart assembly!^{83, 9}

⁸¹(...continued)

comparison with this demand constitutes indirect praise of liturgy, or at worst a warning that there is no real liturgy that does not grow out of suitable inward disposition (**verse 15**)." (P. 235)

North goes on to observe that later in the **Book of Isaiah, 66:23**, "a more favorable view of the חֹדֶשׁ ["month / new moon"] feast has been preserved..." (P. 236) This passage reads:

66:23 And it will happen as often as month by month,
and as often as rest-day by rest-day,
all flesh will come to worship before Me,
said YHWH.

This passage predicts a month by month observance of the new-moon in the "good times coming," but we doubt that anything more than observance at Israel's pilgrimage-festivals is commanded in the **Hebrew Bible**.

What do you think? Again we conclude that in the light of the **Book of Isaiah** as a whole, the criticism of Judah's new-moon observances is only intended as a criticism of their abuse, not a total denunciation of such worship.

⁸²The noun שַׁבָּת, **shabbath**, simply means "rest," but in the **Hebrew Bible** it refers to the יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת, the "day of the rest," which is commanded by YHWH in the **Ten Commandments** to be observed by all of the people of YHWH every seventh day, throughout every month of the year. See **Exodus 20:8-11** and **Deuteronomy 5:12-15**.

There is a vast literature that has grown up around this commandment, beginning with the tractate **Shabbath** in the **Mishnah**, and then the much larger **Shabbath** in the **Babylonian Talmud**. See the excellent article *σάββατον* in **Theological Dictionary of the New Testament** VII, pp. 1-35, by the former German bishop, Eduard Lohse.

As has been oftentimes observed, this is the only one of the **Ten Commandments** which has not been quoted and enforced in the **New Testament**, and it is the commandment that was most often used by Jewish religious leaders in condemning Jesus for its violation.

Here, Isaiah states that YHWH cannot endure Israel's "day of rest" observance—since it is combined with wickedness! Do you think that perhaps this is the reason that Jesus paid so little attention to the strict enforcement of this commandment, because it was affected by the wickedness of proud religious people who cared little for the poor and outcast people of His day?

For all the occurrences of the noun שַׁבָּת, **shabbath** in **Isaiah**, see our end-note 8.

I cannot (endure) wickedness and assembly!^{84, 10}

⁸³The phrase **קָרָא מִקְרָא** is a unique phrase that occurs only here in the **Hebrew Bible**. It is literally “to call / proclaim a convocation,” or perhaps, “to proclaim a calling out.” English translations vary:

King James, “the calling of assemblies”;

Tanakh, “Proclaiming of solemnities”;

New Revised Standard,

“calling of convocation”;

New International, “convocations”;

New Jerusalem, “assemblies.”

Slotki translates by “holding of convocations,” and comments that these are “festival religious assemblies...literally ‘calling of reading.’ Reading from the Torah doubtless formed a part of proceedings at sacred gatherings.” (P. 5)

Gray comments that “What is particularly intolerable to Yahweh on the sacred days is the meetings, or rather, the summoning of such meetings, to which the Jews were probably called by the voice, as are Moslems today.” (P. 21)

We disagree with Gray, and think that it is not the calling of such assemblies that is intolerable to YHWH, but the fact that wickedness was present at those assemblies.

For occurrences of the noun **מִקְרָא** in the **Hebrew Bible**, see our end-note 9.

⁸⁴The last line of this verse is **לֹא-אֶכְלֵ אֶזְרָח וְעֵצְרָה**, literally, “I cannot wickedness and assembly!” Our Greek translation has, differently, οὐκ ἀνέχομαι νηστείαν καὶ ἀργίαν, “I do not endure / put up with going hungry / fasting and rest / leisure.”

As Gray notes, “According to [the Greek translation] we have another of the absolute statements that abound here: fasting and sacred seasons are not demanded by Yahweh under any circumstances: He cannot endure them.” (P. 21) Again, we think this is overstatement.

English translations vary:

King James, “I cannot away with; *it is* iniquity, even the solemn meeting.”

Tanakh, “Assemblies with iniquity, I cannot abide.”

New Revised Standard, “I cannot endure solemn assemblies with iniquity.”

New International, “I cannot bear your evil assemblies.”

New Jerusalem, “I cannot endure solemnity combined with guilt.”

The last word of this verse is **עֵצְרָה**, “assembly,” a synonym for **מִקְרָא** (see the previous footnote). For occurrences of this noun in the **Hebrew Bible**, see our end-note 10.

(continued...)

1.14 חֲדָשֵׁיכֶם וּמוֹעֲדֵיכֶם

שְׁנֵאתָה נַפְשֵׁי

הֵיוּ עָלַי לְטָרַח

נְלֵאִיתִי נְשֵׂא:

Your new moons / months⁸⁵ and appointed meetings,⁸⁶

⁸⁴(...continued)

According to Isaiah, this is YHWH's "bottom line" for this matter of His worship: לֹא-אוֹכֵל

אוֹן וְעֵצְרָה: , literally, "I cannot wickedness and assembly!" YHWH says "I am not able."

We Christians oftentimes say "All things are possible with God"—quoting Jesus out of context. Miracles of healing, of overcoming obstacles, which our minds tell us are impossible, are entirely possible with God. But it is not possible for YHWH to accept worship that mixes wickedness with ritual. Hands that are lifted up to YHWH must be hands that are cleansed of blood! So Isaiah maintains!

Oswalt comments on **verse 13** that "The rationale for Isaiah's attack becomes clear in this verse. He opposes the offerings because they are vain, not because they are cultic activity...It is religion which leaves iniquity unchallenged and unchanged that the prophet and, more importantly, God detest. This religion is in fact a support for the continuation of iniquity. God hates it." (P. 97)

⁸⁵See footnote 81 for "new moons / months."

⁸⁶The noun מוֹעֵד, here in the plural, means "appointed time / place / meeting."

Slotki translates by "appointed seasons," and comments that it means "the pilgrimage festivals." It occurs some 222 times in the **Hebrew Bible**, four times in **Genesis**, thirty-eight times in **Exodus** (mostly in the last half of the book), forty-eight times in **Leviticus**, sixty-five times in **Numbers**, and only four times in **Deuteronomy** (for a total of 159 times in the **Five Books of Moses**). In the rest of the **Hebrew Bible**, it occurs as follows: three times in **Joshua**; once in **Judges**; seven times in **1 and 2 Samuel**; three times in **1 and 2 Kings**; three times in **Isaiah (1:14; 14:13 and 33:20)**; twice in **Jeremiah**; five times in **Ezekiel**; seven times in the "Minor Prophets"; five times in **Psalms**; once in **Job**; never in **Proverbs, Ruth, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes or Esther**; six times in **Lamentations**; six times in **Daniel**; once in **Ezra**; once in **Nehemiah** and twelve times in **1 and 2 Chronicles**.

Obviously this is a term that is "at home" in the "legal books," **Exodus, Leviticus** and **Numbers**, where it most often occurs with reference to Israel's pilgrimage-festivals. The occurrences of the noun in **Isaiah** are as follows:

(continued...)

My innermost being hated!⁸⁷

⁸⁶(...continued)

1:14, here; YHWH says He “hates” Judah’s appointed meetings.

14:13, depicts the King of Babylon aspiring to attend an appointed meeting on a heavenly mountain with God / the Gods;

33:20, YHWH states that in the good times coming,

Envision Zion, City of our appointed meetings!
Your eyes will see Jerusalem, a secure dwelling-place!
A tent (that) will not travel—
its stakes will not be pulled up for perpetuity,
and all its tent-cords will not be broken!

It seems obvious from this last passage, that the **Book of Isaiah** as a whole does not reject “appointed meetings” as hated by YHWH—and that therefore we should conclude that the denunciation of appointed meetings in **Isaiah 1:14** only applies to the appointed meetings that were being abused and perverted by the people of Judah. What do you think?

⁸⁷For statements in the **Hebrew Bible** concerning Divine hate, see the article by E. Lipinski on נִשְׂטָה in **Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament** XIV, pp.164-174.

Lipinski states that “The feeling of hate is ascribed to God just as are other human feelings such as love, remorse, jealousy, and wrath...”

“In the **Old Testament**, Yahweh directs His hate less against concrete persons than against certain behaviors. He ‘hates’ the originally Canaanite cultic practices (**Deuteronomy 12:31**), especially the erection of sacred pillars (**Deuteronomy 16:22**)...and the cult of alien Gods (**Jeremiah 44:4**). He similarly displays great repugnance toward the hypocritical festivals of His people (**Isaiah 1:14; Amos 5:21**) and the pilfered goods offered in sacrifices (**Isaiah 61:8**)...”

“Yahweh also hates false oaths (**Zechariah 8:17**), wickedness (...**Psalm 45:8**^{Heb} / **7**^{Eng}), though also kingship in Israel (**Hosea 9:15**)...”

“God’s ‘hate’ manifests itself in His distance, as **Jeremiah 12:7-8** states explicitly: because God ‘hates’ His house [temple] and heritage, He abandons them and delivers them into the hands of their enemies. According to **Amos 6:8**, He ‘hates the strongholds’ of Israel and delivers up His cities to their enemies. God’s ‘hate’ toward His Own people is also expressed by the verbal substantive נִשְׂטָה [‘hating,’ ‘hatred’]...(Deuteronomy 1:27; 9:28).

“God also shows His hatred toward Esau-Edom (**Malachi 1:3**); He ‘hates’ evil-doers (**Psalm 5:6**^{Heb} / **5**^{Eng}) and those who love violence (**Psalm 11:5**) as well as those who worship useless idols

(continued...)

They became upon Me the burden⁸⁸
that I grew weary of carrying!⁸⁹

1.15 וּבִפְרֹשְׁכֶם כְּפִיכֶם
אֲעֲלִים עֵינַי מִכֶּם
גַּם כִּי־תִרְבוּ תִפְלֶה אֵינְנִי שֹׁמֵעַ

⁸⁷(...continued)

(Psalm 31:7^{Heb} / 6^{Eng}). **Proverbs 6:16-19** enumerates seven abominable deeds that God hates (compare **Sirach 10:7**).” (P. 167)

It is a deep-seated hatred or antagonism that YHWH feels towards Judah’s perverted worship. It comes from YHWH’s “innermost-being”!

What do you think? Do you think it possible that the God Who is “love,” could hate the liturgy of worship of His people when it does not result in loving care for the poorest people among their society? Do you think God loves people who selfishly pile up wealth for themselves and care little for the suffering poor around them?

What about Jesus? Is not Jesus depicted in the **Gospels**, especially in **Matthew 23**, **Mark 12:38-39** and **Luke 20:45-46** as being totally against the religious establishment of His day and its practices, denouncing Israel’s religious leaders in extremely harsh terms? And we ask, Was Jesus purposely following in the footsteps of Isaiah of Jerusalem?

⁸⁸The noun טָרַח, “burden,” occurs only twice in the **Hebrew Bible**, here and in **Deuteronomy 1:12**, where Moses, as responsible leader of Israel speaks to them of טָרַחְכֶם וּמִשְׂאֵכֶם :וְרִיבְכֶם, “your burden and your load / burden (a synonym) and your strife / dispute.”

Gray calls this language “a bold anthropomorphism,” depicting YHWH as growing weary from their burden. He notes that the Greek translation “euphemizes” this language. (P. 22)

The Greek translation has οὐκέτι ἀνήσω τὰς ἀμαρτίας ὑμῶν, “I will no longer loosen / unfasten your missings-of-the-mark / sins!”

⁸⁹YHWH speaks in the same vein as did Moses–Judah’s temple worship and calendar of pilgrimage festivals that are disconnected from loving social action has become a “burden,” which He no longer is willing to bear!

What do you think? When you see churches / synagogues / mosques / temples that are filled with judgmental attitudes towards others, and that are not actively engaged in loving ministry to widows, orphans, the poor and immigrants, do you think that YHWH feels any differently towards them than He felt towards Judah and its worship?

יְדֵיכֶם דְּמִים מִלְּאֵוֹ:

And when you spread out your hands,⁹⁰

⁹⁰For the phrase “spread out hands (in prayer),” see the following passages:

Exodus 9:29, 33, Moses tells Pharaoh that as soon as he goes out of the city,

I will spread out my hands to YHWH.”

1 Kings 8:22, Solomon stands before YHWH’s altar and spreads out his hands heavenwards.”

1 Kings 8:38, Solomon requests in his prayer that:

Every prayer, every request for favor
which will belong to any human-being,
(and) to all Your people Israel,
who recognized each one an urge in his heart,
and will spread out his hands towards this house / temple
(that such a prayer will be heard.) **2 Chronicles 6:12-13**, and **6:29**, similar.

Isaiah 1:15a, here,

and when you people spread out your hands,
I will close My eyes from you!
(YHWH will refuse to watch them pray!)

Jeremiah 4:31, YHWH says,

Because I heard a voice, like (that of) a sick woman,
distress like a woman giving birth to her first child—
daughter of Jerusalem’s voice.
She will breathe heavily;
she will spread out her hands,
(saying) Alas now to me;
because my innermost-being fainted before murderers!

Psalms 44:21^{Heb}, **20**^{Eng}

If we forgot our God’s name,
and spread out our hands to a foreign God.

Ezra 9:5,

(continued...)

I will hide My eyes from (seeing) you!⁹¹

⁹⁰(...continued)

And at the evening offering, I stood up from humiliation (in fasting),
and in my torn garment and robe,
and I bowed upon my knees,
and I spread out my hands to YHWH my God.

⁹¹For YHWH's statement that He will hide His eyes from Judah's worship, see the following passages:

1 Kings 9:3b, YHWH's promise to Solomon,

and My eyes and My heart (will be) there, all the days.

2 Chronicles 7:15-16, the same promise, expanded:

15 Now My eyes will be opened,
and My ears attentive,
to (the) prayer of this place.
16 And now I have chosen,
and I have set-apart this house / temple,
for My name to be there until long-lasting time;
and My eyes and My heart / mind (will be) there
all the days!

Job 3:10, Job states that if he had died in his mother's womb, it would have hidden trouble from his eyes.

Isaiah 8:17,

And I will wait for the YHWH,
Who is hiding His face(s) from Jacob's household;
and I will wait (synonym) for Him.

Isaiah 59:2,

But rather, your (plural) iniquities were dividing
between you people and your God!
And your missings-of-the-mark hid faces from you,
(keeping you) from hearing!

Micah 3:4,

Then they will cry to YHWH,
and He will not answer them;

(continued...)

Also if you people will multiply prayer(s), I am not listening!⁹²

⁹¹(...continued)

and He will hide His face(s) from them at that time,
because they made their deeds evil.

Yes, the promise is that YHWH's eyes will always be open, His ears always attentive—but not if unrepented iniquities and evil deeds stand between them and YHWH!

Gray comments that “Prayers, too, though long and frequent (compare **Matthew 6:7**), when offered by blood-stained evil-doers who persist in their wrong-doing, are of no avail. It is significant that the absolute terms in which the inefficacy of sacrifices and sacred seasons is asserted is followed by a careful definition of the prayers that are without effect. Not all prayers, but *your prayers*, are useless; not unto all who call upon Him does Yahweh turn a deaf ear, but to those who pray without recognizing the need for amendment of life; even these murderers, and these violent and oppressive men whom Isaiah addresses will find Yahweh ready to hear if they cease from their evil ways, and instead of defrauding and oppressing the weak—*the widow and the orphans*—see that they get their rights.” (P. 22) See:

Proverbs 15:8,

An animal sacrifice of wicked people—
an abomination of YHWH!
And a prayer of upright people,
His favor!

Proverbs 15:29,

Far away (is) YHWH from evil-doers;
and a prayer of rightly-related people, He will hear!”

Proverbs 28:9,

One turning away his ear from listening to **torah** / teaching,
even his prayer (is) an abomination!

Matthew 5:23-24,

If therefore you should bring the gift of yours to the altar of sacrifice,
and there you should remember that the brother of yours has something against you,
leave your gift there before the altar of sacrifice,
and go—first be reconciled to your brother,
and then, coming, offer your gift.

⁹²1QIs^a interpolates the phrase **אצבעותיכם בעאון**, “your fingers with iniquity” at this point in the text.

(continued...)

Your hands were full of blood!⁹³

⁹²(...continued)

Sometimes people mistakenly assume that whenever anyone prays, God will be watching, and will hear their prayer. YHWH, according to Isaiah, tells us that this is simply not the case. There are people praying to whom He will pay no attention; there are prayers that He will not hear—prayers that are not producing loving action on behalf of the poor and needy of their world.

Oswalt comments that “Prayer which lifts bloody hands to God is revolting to Him. He will not look at such a worshiper or listen to what he says. It is not because prayer is displeasing in itself. What is displeasing is the attitude of the one praying. He wants to separate his religion from his life—in fact, to have God confirm him in his sin. But God will not do so.” (Pp. 97-98)

What a devastating critique of Judah’s religious “worship” this first chapter of **Isaiah** is! What do you think? Do you agree with Isaiah? Why? Why not?

Is there any element in Judah’s traditional worship that **Isaiah** has overlooked or failed to mention? Animal sacrifices, offering up of rams fat of fatlings, blood of young bulls, lambs, male-goats, offerings, sweet smelling incense, new moons, days of rest, calls for sacred assemblies, appointed meetings, the spreading out of hands (in prayer), the multiplication of prayers. That about takes care of all of Israel’s worship, doesn’t it? But YHWH doesn’t want it; in fact, He hates it! He closes His eyes to it! He will not listen to Judah’s prayers! These are mighty religious people, but their worship is not getting through to YHWH, their God!

And we must ask ourselves—are we immune from Isaiah’s critique of worship? Especially when we drive up to our beautifully built houses of worship in expensive automobiles to worship, and across the street in a dilapidated rent-house lives a single mother with six hungry children, whom we have forbidden from playing on the church lawn, or high-rise apartments where immigrants live, who can hardly speak our language, and who see no indication that we want them in our worship.

What do you think?

⁹³For related passages to this charge of Judah’s hands being filled with blood, see:

Deuteronomy 21:7, the leaders of a city, proclaiming their innocence of murder, say
Our hands did not pour out this blood;
and our eyes did not see (it happen).

Proverbs 6:17, among six things that YHWH hates are:

haughty eyes,
a tongue of falsehood,
and hands pouring out innocent blood.

Isaiah 26:21,

(continued...)

⁹³(...continued)

Because look—YHWH is going forth from His place,
to visit (with punishment) (the) iniquity of the earth's inhabitant upon it.
And the earth will uncover / reveal its blood;
and it will not again cover its murdered victim(s).

Isaiah 33:14-16,

- 14 Missers-of-the-mark / sinners in Zion were in dread;
trembling took hold of godless people.
(They say:) Who will be a temporary resident for us (in) devouring fire?
Who will be a temporary resident for us (in) a long-lasting burning mass?
- 15 (The answer:) One who walks (in) right-relationships,
and who speaks upright things;
who despises unjust gain by extortions;
who shakes off his hands from laying hold on the bribe;
who shuts his ear from hearing (plans for) bloods / murder;
who closes his eyes from looking at evil--
- 16 he will dwell (on the) heights;
rocky fortresses / Masadas (will be) his refuge;
his bread / food supplied / given,
his water(s) unailing.

Isaiah 59:3,

Because your hands were defiled with the blood;
and your fingers with the iniquity;
your lips spoke falsehood,
your tongue utters injustice.

Isaiah 59:7,

Their feet run to (do) the evil,
to pour out innocent blood;
their thoughts, thoughts of wickedness;
violence and crushing (are) in their highways!

See **Isaiah 59:1-8** for a “catalog of iniquity,” which is similar to **Isaiah 1's** catalog, but centered on social injustice, not on bad worship.

⁹⁴**Verses 16-20** are Isaiah's statement of what Judah must do to remedy the critical situation in which she finds herself. Judah has work to do, which only she can do—it is the work of genuine repentance, of turning around! We are reminded of the initial message of Jesus according to **Mark 1:14-15,**

(continued...)

⁹⁴(...continued)

- 14 But then after the John's being handed over / put in prison, the Jesus came into the Galilee,
preaching / announcing the good news of the God, and saying that
- 15 The time has been fulfilled,
and the kingdom of the God has drawn near / arrived!
Repent / turn around!
And believe in the good news!

The prophets of Israel, and the greater prophet, Jesus, all agree. There can be no good news without repentance, without radical change of life-style! The so-called "prophets of doom" become "prophets of hope" when their message is responded to in repentance!

Oswalt comments on **verses 16-17** that "Now the prophet, having shown what God does not want, turns to show what He does desire. In a series of terse imperatives that stand in sharp contrast to the lengthy and repetitive statements of the previous verses, God's demands are set out. The evident simplicity, in comparison to complex ceremonial codes, is strongly reminiscent of **Deuteronomy 10:12, 13** and **Micah 6:8**, which make the same point; namely, that at heart God's expectations are simplicity itself. The eight statements include three which are negative and five which are positive, the negative relating to the past the positive to the future." (P. 98)

Deuteronomy 10:12-13,

- 12 And now, Israel, what is YHWH your God asking from you,
other than to tremble in awe before / fear YHWH your God,
to walk in all His ways,
and to love Him
and to serve YHWH your God
with all your heart and with all your innermost-being;
- 13 to keep YHWH's commandments and His statutes
which I am commanding you (singular) today, for your good?
(This is not nearly as simple as Isaiah's requirements; indeed, it is understood by Jewish scholars as including all 613 commandments of the **Torah**, Five Books of Moses!)

Micah 6:8,

He declared to you, O human being, what (is) good,
and what is YHWH seeking from you—
only to do justice,
and to love steadfast love,
and to humbly walk with your God!
(This is indeed a much more simple requirement—with only 3 positive imperatives—but the fulfillment of which demands an entire lifetime!)

Motyer senses the good news inherent in this passage, and states that "when the people are here called to the bar to hear the verdict it is expressed as an offer of free pardon and the chance of

(continued...)

רְחַצוּ
הִסִּירוּ רַע מֵעַלְיֵיכֶם מִנְּגַד עֵינַי
חִדְלוּ הָרַע:

Wash!^{95, 11}

⁹⁴(...continued)

a new life!...The emphasis in **verse 11** that the ritual of sacrifice is unavailing is matched by this emphasis here on free pardon.” (P. 48)

⁹⁵For other passages in the **Hebrew Bible** where the imperative verb רְחַצוּ, “wash!” occurs, see:

Genesis 18:4, Abraham tells his three guests, רְחַצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם, “wash your (plural) feet!”

Genesis 19:2, when two of those same men come to Sodom, Lot urges them to come and spend the night in his house, וְרַחֲצוּ רַגְלֵיכֶם, “and wash your (plural) feet!”

2 Samuel 11:8, King David urges his military officer, Uriah, to go down to his house, וְרַחֲצֵךְ רַגְלֶיךָ, “and wash your (singular) feet!”

2 Kings 5:13, Naaman’s servants remind him that if Elisha had asked him to do some great thing, he would have done it; but what Elisha said was רַחֵץ וְיִטְהַר, “Wash! And be clean!”

Using the identical verb that Abraham and Lot used, Isaiah tells the people of Judah to “Wash (yourselves)!” It is only in this way that they can become clean!

What do you think? Is it impossible for sinful people to “wash themselves” in order to become clean, as is claimed in Augustinian / Calvinist theology? And if it is impossible, why would YHWH through Isaiah command it?

Oswalt states that this commandment to wash, to be clean, refers “of course, to repentance, that change of attitude which the **New Testament** calls ‘the baptism of repentance (**Acts 13:24**, etc.; compare also **Acts 2:38**) or ‘the washing of regeneration’ (**Titus 3:5**).

“[Edward J. Young, who wrote a 3-volume commentary, **The Book of Isaiah**, Eerdmans; henceforth, ‘Young’] was concerned that no Pelagian tone [the belief that original sin did not taint human nature in such a way that the human being’s will is no longer capable of choosing good or evil without special Divine aid; Pelagius was disagreeing with Augustine; he lived in the 4th century C.E. (354-420 / 440)] enter in here with its suggestion that a people can make *themselves* clean in God’s
(continued...)

⁹⁵(...continued)

sight [Young's commentary is a great work of scholarship, but a scholarship tainted with the demand that everything fit into Young's creedal beliefs, explaining away anything that could possibly differ from them]...

“But surely the prophet's point is to stress the responsibility the people do have. Of course, apart from God's free grace in forgiveness, repentance and changing the course of one's life are valueless [We doubt that this is true. Ask the children of an alcoholic who has gotten sober, and who see bread on their table instead of six-packs of beer!]. But Isaiah's point is to say that unless people accept their own responsibility, God's grace cannot be applied to them [but again, careful here! God's grace is not subject to human calculation, and is free to act whenever and wherever God desires, in spite of human dogmatism and creedal beliefs—this is what the **Book of Job** teaches, and this is what Jesus practiced, granting forgiveness and healing and newness of life to exactly those people orthodox Judaism's narrow doctrines excluded from the grace of God]. What concerns him [Isaiah? Or YHWH?] is the tendency of cultically oriented people everywhere to see religion as something done for them and to them, rather than as a way of thinking, acting, and living that a person elects in response to God's grace.” (P. 98)

Oswalt thinks that this reference to repentance is a natural interpretation—“Of course!”—relating it to Christian baptism in the **New Testament**. But surely such an interpretation is anachronistic, and could hardly be what Isaiah's audience understood by the commandment.

However, when we read in the **New Testament** about John the Baptist's ministry, we think it is obvious that he had been influenced by **Isaiah's** teaching (the Gospel writers cite **Isaiah 40:3-5** as being fulfilled by John, and the ethical demands made by John are similar to those of **Isaiah 1**)—see **Matthew 3:1-12; Mark 1:2-8; Luke 3:2-17** and **John 1:6-7**, and our end-note 11.

⁹⁶The hithpael imperative verb **הִצַּקוּ**, **hizzaku**, means “cleanse yourself!” This is the only place in the **Hebrew Bible** where the root verb **הִצַּק**, “be clean, pure, clear,” occurs in the imperative tense. The verb always has to do with moral purity, not with physical uncleanness, or ritual purity. For other occurrences of this root verb, see:

Micah 6:11,

Shall I be clean with scales of wickedness,
and with a purse of deceitful stone-weights?

(That means, false scales and weights make a person unclean, and implies that such a person cannot become clean as long as he has such items in his possession.)

Psalms 51:6,

Against You alone, I missed-the-mark;
and I did the evil in Your eyes,

(continued...)

Remove⁹⁷ your deeds of wickedness from before My eyes!

⁹⁶(...continued)

so that You will be rightly-related in Your sentence,
will be clean in Your judgment.

Psalm 73:13, seeing the wicked prospering, the psalmist says,

Surely in vain I cleansed my heart,
and I washed my hands in innocence!

Psalm 119:9,

By what will a youth cleanse his way,
to guard (himself) according to Your word?

(Note the varying English translations, which give the answer to the psalmist's question in the second half of the verse.)

Job 15:14, Eliphaz asks Job,

What is a (weak) man that he will be clean?

And that he will be justified, one born of a woman? **25:4**, Bildad asks almost the same question.

Proverbs 20:9,

Who will say, I cleansed my heart?

I was cleansed from my missing-of-the-mark?

(Probably implying that such claims are impossible for weak human beings.)

Isaiah tells the nation of Judah that the only way it can escape the Divine judgment that is threatening it is through washing and purifying themselves. Isaiah will have nothing to do with a theology that says human beings are so totally depraved and helpless, that there is nothing they can do about their sinfulness and guilt. He urges the people to take action immediately, to “clean up their act.” What do you think? Do you agree with Isaiah?

⁹⁷Isaiah uses the hiphil imperative verb הִסִּירֵי, “cause to turn aside!”, or “remove!”, or “take away!” For other occurrences of this imperative verb in the **Hebrew Bible**, see:

Joshua 24:23, where Joshua commands the Israelites:

And now, remove the foreign Gods which (are) in your midst!
And incline your heart to YHWH, God of Israel!

1 Samuel 7:3,

(continued...)

Cease to do evil!^{98, 12}

⁹⁷(...continued)

And Samuel spoke to all Israel's household, saying,
If with all your (plural) heart you are returning to YHWH,
remove the foreign Gods from your midst, and the Ashtaroth / Female Goddesses;
and establish your heart to YHWH,
and serve Him alone!
And He will deliver you from (the) hand of (the) Philistines!

2 Chronicles 30:14, In preparation for Hezekiah's great Passover feast,

And they stood up, and they removed the altars which (were) in Jerusalem;
and all the incense-altars they removed;
and they threw (them) into (the) Wadi Kedron.

Jeremiah 5:10, in a symbolic statement, Jeremiah is told to go up into Jerusalem's "vineyard," and remove the branches that did not belong to YHWH, symbolizing the judgment that is soon to come on Judah.

Ezekiel 45:9,

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:
Princes of Israel, (the) violence and devastation belonging to you people (is)
great—
remove (it)!
And practice justice and right-relationship!
Take away your evictions [throwing people off their land] from upon My people!
It is a saying of my Lord YHWH!

Zechariah 3:4, the people standing by Joshua are told to remove his filthy garments.

⁹⁸The phrase **תִּדְרֹשׁוּ תִרְעוּ**, "Cease to do evil!" uses the imperative form of the verb "to cease," "to stop." This imperative verb occurs again in the **Hebrew Bible** only at **Isaiah 2:22**,

Cease for yourselves from the human-being,
whose breath (is) in his nose;
because with what will he be considered?"

English translations of this verse vary:

King James, "Cease ye from man, whose breath *is* in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?"

Tanakh, "Oh, cease to glorify man, who has only a breath in his nostrils! For by what does he merit esteem?"

(continued...)

⁹⁸(...continued)

New Revised Standard, “Turn away from mortals, who have only breath in their nostrils, for of what account are they?”

New International, “Stop trusting in man, who has but a breath in his nostrils. Of what account is he?”

New Jerusalem, “Have no more to do with humankind, which has only the breath in its nostrils. How much is this worth?”

Isaiah certainly thinks that it is possible for the people of Judah to cease doing evil, and instead to begin doing good. He believes that they can decide their relationships—for good or for bad! They are not the helpless victims of their prior loyalties, or of the so-called “original sin” of Adam and Eve!

We remember how YHWH is depicted as counseling Cain before his murder of his brother Abel, telling him that while missing-of-the-mark was crouching at the door of his heart, like a vicious animal, he both could and must rule over it. (**Genesis 4**) What do you think? There are many theologians who claim that such a thing is impossible. Do you agree?

For occurrences of the hiphil verb **עָרַע**, “to do evil,” see our end-note 12.

⁹⁹Alexander comments on **verse 17** that “The negative exhortation is now followed by a positive one. Ceasing to do evil was not enough, or rather was not possible, without beginning to do good. ‘Learn to do good,’ implying that they never yet had known what it was. This general expression is followed by several specifications, showing how they were to do good.” (P. 89)

Gray comments that **verse 17** gives “illustrations of the positive requirements of Yahweh—the powerful must be kept within bounds, the rights of the weak must be secured: compare the denunciation of the opposite conduct in **Isaiah 10:1-2**.” (P. 23)

- 1 Alas, those making statutes--
statutes of wickedness!
And those writing--
they wrote trouble--
- 2 to turn aside poor people from judgment,
and to rob justice of afflicted ones of My people;
for widows to become their prey,
and orphans they plunder.

Isaiah warns his hearers / readers that governmental statutes are not all good—those in power, making the statutes, are sometimes making those laws for their own benefit, taking advantage of those who have little or no voice in such legislation—the poor, the afflicted, the widows and orphans.

What do you think? Does such a thing still happen in our government—whether Federal, or State, or Local? How can you avoid such a thing? Is it the responsibility of those who hear the
(continued...)

דַּרְשׁוּ מִשְׁפָּט
 אֲשֶׁר־וַחֲמוּץ
 שִׁפְטוּ יְתוּם
 רִיבוֹ אֶל־מִנְהָ:

Learn to do good!¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹(...continued)

prophetic word to get involved in such legislation? Was this what Jesus was doing when he criticized those in power (the Scribes and Pharisees who “sat on Moses’ seat”) so harshly, as depicted in **Matthew 23**? We think it was.

¹⁰⁰The qal imperative command, לִמְדוּ, “learn!”, does not occur elsewhere in the **Hebrew Bible**. Where the root verb does occur elsewhere in the imperative, it is in the piel, and means “teach.” See:

Deuteronomy 31:19, in the piel,

And now write for yourselves this song,
 and teach it to Israel’s children;
 place it in their mouth,
 in order that this song will be for me for a witness among Israel’s children.

Jeremiah 9:19^{Heb} / **20**^{Eng}, the women of Jerusalem are told to teach (לְלַמְּדָנָה) their daughters a lament, using the piel form of the verb.

Psalm 25:4-5, the verb is used in the piel, in a request for YHWH to “teach” the psalmist His ways:

Cause me to walk in the true-faithfulness of Yours,
 and teach me!”

Psalm 119:12, 26, 64, 66, 68, 108, 124, 135—all in the piel, “teach me, i.e. Your statutes!”

Psalm 143:10a, in the piel, “Teach me to do Your will!”

Isaiah does not believe that these people who are so separated from YHWH, and whose worship is so wrong, are helplessly lost. No, he thinks they can learn to do good.

(continued...)

¹⁰⁰(...continued)

Jeremiah 13:23 asks the people of Jerusalem a question which shows he does not agree with Isaiah:

Will an Ethiopian change his skin,
and a leopard his spots?
Also will you people be able to do good,
taught to do evil?

Jeremiah evidently thinks the answer is, It is impossible. Ethiopians cannot change the color of their skin; leopards cannot change their spots. Why should anyone think that it is possible for people who have been taught to do evil, to be able to do good? What do you think? Do you agree with Jeremiah, or with Isaiah?

We say, Ethiopians and leopards do not have any choice concerning the colors that they are given by birth. But human beings do have the responsibility for choice concerning doing good or doing evil. What do you say?

Those who study the “TULIP” theology of Calvinism, will quickly learn that there are numerous passages in the **Bible** that teach “total depravity,” and the impossibility of sinners doing anything about their condition, apart from a miraculous operation of God. **Jeremiah 13:23** is one of the “proof-texts” that are used to support that conviction.

But here in **Isaiah 1**, Isaiah is apparently rejecting any such view, holding that apostates can “learn to do good.”

What do you do in such a situation? Throw the **Bible** away, holding it contradicts itself? We hold that it is much wiser to “hold truths in tension,” to refuse to reject **Jeremiah** in favor of **Isaiah**, or to reject **Isaiah** in favor of **Jeremiah** (refusing to use biblical statements as “proof-texts.”

YHWH told Aaron and Miriam in **Numbers 12:6-8** that prophets / spokespersons like themselves would receive revelation from YHWH in dreams and visions, and that their revelation would oftentimes be in riddles--“enigmatic”--“puzzling.”

The great apostle Paul takes up that language in **1 Corinthians 13:9-12**, stating that while he could certainly prophesy, his knowledge was only partial, and his vision was “through a mirror”--“in a riddle,” using the Greek phrase taken from the Greek translation of **Numbers 12**--βλέπομεν γὰρ ἄρτι δι’ ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι, “For we see now through a mirror *in an enigma / riddle*.”

We should not expect those who are seeing things “through a mirror”--not clearly, only partially, “in a riddle”--to be entirely consistent, to never contradict themselves or one another. That is why, in our opinion, it is so foolish for **Bible** believers to insist on their having learned “absolute truth” in reading the words of the prophets--such as Isaiah, or Jeremiah, or the apostle Paul--and then being able to condemn others who disagree with them.

(continued...)

¹⁰⁰(...continued)

We believe that all who study the **Bible** openly and honestly will learn much truth, and will be greatly profited by such study. They will be given powerful ethical teaching and guidance.

But we also believe we are fools, if we pretend that we know “all the answers” as a result of our study, and if we feel empowered to condemn others who disagree with us! We can certainly disagree; but we can do so lovingly and kindly, without making ourselves into little Gods who have possession of absolute truth!

What do you think? Do you hold that your spiritual vision is 20/20, perfectly clear, enabling you to see through all the enigmas and mysteries of human existence, and especially of God?

And what do you think Isaiah means when he says “Learn to do good”? Is it within the ability of human beings to know what is “good”? And how can they gain that knowledge? And if they gain it, can they do it? Isaiah obviously thinks they can!

Oswalt comments that “The contrast between evil (**verse 16**) and good (**verse 17**) is a significant one in that good expresses that which is in keeping with the plan of creation (**Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31; 2:18**), while evil expresses what is not in keeping with that plan (**Genesis 6:5-7** [but this passage says no such thing!]). Thus, injustice and oppression are wrong because they are in defiance of the nature of creation. Similarly, to do good is to learn to value persons as the Creator does.” (Pp. 98-99)

This reference to **Genesis 1-2**, with its many statements concerning the Creator’s calling His creations “good” (light, earth and sea, trees bearing different kinds of fruit, sun, moon and stars, fish and birds, animals living on the land, everything that God created) still does not say a word concerning how humans are to distinguish between good and evil—and according to the story in **Genesis 3** the knowledge of good and evil is forbidden to human beings—they are expected simply to follow the commandments of God.

In **Job 38-41** YHWH shows Job the kind of universe He has created, with its animals that live by the laws of “survival of the fittest,” and “might makes right,” where human ideals of “retribution” and “justice” simply do not apply.

Since the Creator has designed such a world, how can humans know what is wrong with taking the life of innocents in order to further their own welfare? If animals are designed by the Creator to live by taking the life of other animals, why should this be forbidden to humans?

We do not think Oswalt’s position is valid. Simply because something is God’s creation, does not mean that it is “good” to partake of—all sorts of drugs and poisons exist by God’s creation, and the neighbor’s mate is God’s creature—but that does not mean that it is good to use whatever drugs one may choose, or take poison, or have sex with the neighbor’s mate, etc. etc.

Without attempting to go into detail, we suggest that human beings simply cannot know what is good and what is evil apart from Divine revelation—Divinely-given **Torah**, whether through nature, or through Moses, or through the spokespersons (such as Isaiah!), but especially through Jesus the
(continued...)

¹⁰⁰(...continued)

Christ, whose life and teachings inform us so powerfully what is good and what is evil. Reading the **Gospels**, and then reading the letters of Paul and Peter, we hear words which powerfully set forth ethical teaching, which speak to the heart of those who open their eyes and ears—in a way that belief in the Creator and creation does not. But still, even with that teaching, we are not certain as to the what is right or wrong simply by quoting one or more of them. They need interpretation, they need application, they need to take into account changes in culture, etc., etc., and we humans cannot escape the need for seeking Divine wisdom and guidance as we seek to follow those teachings.

Isaiah has centuries of **Torah**-teaching lying behind his words, and he has been open to the guidance of the Spirit, informing his mind, giving him messages to proclaim. In all of this there has been dynamic teaching distinguishing between good and evil, between right and wrong. Those who enter into that continuum begin to learn what is good and what is bad. Isaiah expects his hearers to be able to make those distinctions.

What do you think? Do you think Isaiah is too optimistic with regards to humanity's ethical abilities? One thing is obvious, Isaiah believes that human beings must be taught, they must "learn" what is good! And what about yourself? Do you believe that you can determine what is good and what is evil, what is right and what is wrong, without getting being taught, without being caught up in that continuum, without entering into ethical inquiry, without seeking the guidance of the Spirit? Only those with little knowledge of history or human character will so claim!

¹⁰¹The verb here is qal imperative, masculine plural, **יִרְשׁוּ**, "seek!" or "seek out!" See our end-note 13 for occurrences of this imperative verb in the **Hebrew Bible**. Notice what the objects of that "seeking" are:

Knowledge of YHWH's word;
Knowledge of one's personal future from foreign Gods (such activity condemned);
Knowledge concerning a religious scroll that has been found;
Justice;
God—not necromancers;
YHWH's scroll--and read it;
YHWH—while He is near;
YHWH—on behalf of others;
The peace / welfare of an enemy city (Babylon) where Judah has been taken into exile;
YHWH, and live; YHWH, and live;
Good, and not evil;
YHWH and His strength;
YHWH's commandments.

Notice how central YHWH God is for all of this biblical "seeking"!

¹⁰²While Isaiah encourages his readers to seek YHWH, he is just as concerned that they seek justice in their community, and that they seek YHWH's guidance in understanding their **Bible**.

(continued...)

¹⁰²(...continued)

Gray thinks that the “seeking” here means “inquire what is demanded by מִשְׁפָּט [‘justice’], that is, old established *custom* which rested on the will of Yahweh as it had been declared of old by successive decisions; such customs were gathered together into a body of *customs* or *judgments* [we would say, ‘judicial decisions’] before the time of Isaiah, and one such collection has come down to us (**Exodus 21:1ff.** [that is, the ‘Covenant Code’]).

“As our Lord selected (**Matthew 22:37ff.**), or approved (**Luke 10:27**) the selection, from the great bulk of the later Jewish law, of two principles, love of God and love of [people], as a summary of the law of God, so Isaiah here selects (compare **Exodus 22:20-21; 23:6-7**) the duty of maintaining even-handed justice between the strong and the weak as the very essence of Yahweh’s demands. Compare the somewhat fuller summary of a later writer in **Micah 6:8** [see our footnote 94].” (P. 24)

Yes, Isaiah teaches, “Seek justice!” But again we must ask, What is justice? Can you define justice by looking at God’s creation? Where is the justice in the lion’s taking the life of an innocent lamb to feed her cubs? Where is the justice when “might makes right,” and those with power take the land of those who are weaker as their own?

Just as we have held with regards to what is “good,” so we hold that justice too is something that depends upon Divine revelation to know. And here again, the biblical materials are loaded with teaching that can instruct the earnest, seeking reader to understand the true nature of justice.

Not that any and every statement in the **Bible** can be taken as defining justice—for the biblical teachings are subject to human frailty and racial and national prejudices. For example, look at the very next statement of Isaiah, which is baffling at best, and look at such passages as **Exodus 17:14-16**, which calls for extermination of the Nation of Amalek.

But still, the biblical materials struggle to depict justice, and Moses and the spokespersons will not let us down in this seeking / search. Nowhere in the **Bible** is the teaching of justice more profound than in the writings of Isaiah!

Isaiah tells the people of Judah and of Jerusalem that if they will only become involved in his teaching, and join in the search for justice, they will be rewarded by finding. It has been my experience through a long life-time of biblical study and teaching, that those who drink deeply of the rich wine of the prophets of Israel will find themselves imbued with a longing and love for justice! It was in biblical study that the 20th century prophet Martin Luther King Jr. learned his message.

What do you think? Are you so wise that you can do without the guidance of the **Bible** in your quest for justice? We say, You are not—and neither are we!

¹⁰³The phrase מְשֹׁפֵט אֶת־הַיָּתוּם, is highly ambiguous. English translations of the phrase vary:

King James, “relieve the oppressed”;

(continued...)

¹⁰³(...continued)

Tanakh, “Aid the wronged”;
New Revised Standard, “rescue the oppressed”;
New International, “encourage the oppressed”;
New Jerusalem, “discipline the violent.”
Gray, “make the violent keep straight.”
Oswalt, “straighten out the ruthless.”
Slotki, “relieve the oppressed.”

Slotki comments that “The Hebrew should be translated ‘set right the oppressor,’ i.e., restrain him by the power of the law.” (P. 6)

For all of the occurrences of the piel form of the verb אָשַׁר in the **Hebrew Bible**, see our end-note 14.

Brown-Driver-Briggs gives the following definitions for this root verb:

1. intensive, “go straight on,” “advance.” See **Proverbs 4:14**.
2. causative, “lead on.” See **Proverbs 23:19, Isaiah 3:12, Isaiah 9:15**.
3. “set right,” “make right.” See **Isaiah 1:17**. We think this is only a guess.
4. “pronounce happy,” “call blessed.” See **Genesis 30:13; Job 29:11; Psalm 72:17; Proverbs 31:28; Song of Solomon 6:9; Malachi 3:12, 3:15**.

The masculine singular noun חָמוֹץ is defined by **Brown-Driver-Briggs** as a generic noun meaning “(the) ruthless.” But the noun occurs only here in the **Hebrew Bible**, and therefore its meaning is uncertain. It is related to words like חָמוֹץ, “be sour,” or “leavened”; חֶמֶץ, “vinegar”; חָמוּץ, “seasoned (with salt),” and חָמוֹץ, “made red.” We are at a loss as to the meaning of this phrase, אֲשַׁרְךָ חָמוֹץ.

We think that this phrase is certainly enigmatic / puzzling, and probably non-understandable, and that here another indication of the human limitations of the biblical writing becomes apparent. What do you think?

¹⁰⁴The phrase שְׁפֹטוּ יְתוֹם, is literally “You people judge an orphan!” We think this means to take responsibility for acting on behalf of the orphans, protecting them from those wanting to take advantage of them.

Slotki says it means “Give a just verdict to.” (P. 6)

Isaiah is much more concerned for what happens to an orphan in Israelite society than for what happens in their temple-liturgies!

(continued...)

Take up the cause of (the) widow!¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴(...continued)

If this noun, “liturgy” means “the work of the laity,” **Isaiah** directs the laity to loving concern and seeking of justice for the orphan in their midst—that’s the true, most important work!

We have often affirmed that there are four “touch-stones” for whether or not there is justice in a community. It is, what happens to the orphan, or to the widow, or to the temporary resident (our ‘immigrant,’ ‘wet-back’), or to the poor (with a number of synonyms used in Hebrew for this last noun). These are the people with the least power in Israelite society, and the most apt to be preyed upon / taken advantage of by those in power.

For occurrences of the noun יתום, “orphan” in the **Hebrew Bible**, see our end-note 15.

¹⁰⁵The phrase רִיבוּ אֶלְמָנָה is literally, “you people contend for / take up the case of a widow!” English translations vary between “plead for the widow” and “defend the cause of the widow.”

Slotki comments that “The Hebrew *ribu* bears also the meaning of ‘strive.’ One should not hesitate to fight for the right.” (P. 6)

See the passages quoted in end-note 15, and compare in the **New Testament**,

Jacob (“James”) 1:27,

Clean and undefiled worship / religion before the God and Father is this:

to visit / make a careful inspection (meaning, with the Hebrew **paqadh** in mind, to correct anything wrong, and affirm everything good) orphans and widows in their affliction / tribulation,
to keep oneself unspotted / unstained from the world.

Isaiah believes that it is possible for a sinful, apostate people to remove their evil deeds. He does not believe that they are so locked in sin (totally, hereditarily depraved) that they are helpless, and that there is nothing they can do about it. They can turn around, they can change, they can repent!

Kaiser comments on **verses 16-17** that “Only the final instruction becomes specific, showing what the poet sees as standing between God and sacrifices and prayers of His people: the exploitation of the situation of those who are helpless when it comes to the law and therefore need the honest support of an advocate, the widows and the fatherless, classic examples of the wretched of the ancient Near Eastern world...”

“They were thought to be in particular need of protection and therefore were specially entrusted to the keeping of the Gods and the king. According to his own report, the sign of sure justice brought about by the reforms of the Sumerian king Urukagina of Lagash in the twenty-fourth century B.C.E. is that ‘The mighty no longer wrong the fatherless and widow.’ And in the epilogue to the famous codex of the Babylonian king Hammurabi, from the eighteenth century B.C., the

(continued...)

1.18¹⁰⁶ לְכוּ־נָא וְנוֹכַחְהָ

יֹאמֶר יְהוָה

אִם־יִהְיוּ חַטָּאֵיכֶם כַּשָּׁנִים

כַּשָּׁלַג יִלְבִּינוּ

אִם־יֹאדְיִמוּ כַתּוֹלַע

כַּצֶּמֶר יִהְיוּ:

Come now,¹⁰⁷ and let us be reproved (by each other)!—¹⁰⁸, ¹⁶

¹⁰⁵(...continued)

monarch does not fail to mention that he has seen to it that the mighty do not oppress the weak and that fatherless and widow get their rights...

“If we turn to Egypt, we also find references in the teaching for kings to give protection at law for widows and fatherless, and in Ugarit in Canaan the capacity of the king to rule had to be demonstrated by his concern for their rights. Obviously the same thing held for Israel.” (P. 35)

¹⁰⁶Gray entitles **verses 18-20** “Yahweh’s Invitation.” Oswalt entitles them “The Wisdom of Obedience.”

We see why Gray has chosen his title, but see little justification for Oswalt’s choice, since neither the words wisdom or obedience occur in the Hebrew text of the passage.

The passage is an invitation to enter into debate, or mutual reproof with YHWH, combined with a beautiful promise of full forgiveness and plenty as the reward that will come with responding to the Divine invitation, but the threat of destruction if the invitation is refused. How would you entitle this passage?

Alexander comments that “Having shown that the cause of their ill-success in seeking God was in themselves, and pointed out the only means by which the evil could be remedied, [Isaiah] now invites them to determine by experiment on which side the fault of their destruction lay, promising pardon and deliverance to the penitent, and threatening total ruin to the disobedient, **verses 18-20.**” (P. 89) We think much more is meant than “determining by experiment.” See footnote 108.

¹⁰⁷It is YHWH’s unique invitation to His sinful / missing-the-mark people: לְכוּ־נָא “Come now, you people!” or “Please come, you people!” This exact phrase occurs elsewhere in the **Hebrew Bible** at:

Exodus 10:11, Pharaoh tells the Israelite men to go and serve YHWH.

(continued...)

¹⁰⁷(...continued)

1 Samuel 23:22, king Saul tells the Ziphites to go and make sure where David is hiding.

Jeremiah 7:12, YHWH tells the people of Judah / Jerusalem to “come now” to His place / temple in Shiloh, to witness how it has been destroyed.

Slotki states that whereas the Hebrew is translated “Come!,” it is literally “Go!” He explains that the Hebrew language views the action from the starting point, the English from that of destination.” (P. 6)

¹⁰⁸The phrase **וְנִכְחַתְּ** begins with the conjunction “and,” and then continues with the niph'al imperfect 1st person plural, which can be translated “and we will...” or “and let us...” We think a good translation is “and let us be reproved by each other.” English translations vary:

King James, “and let us reason together.” **New International, Slotki**, same.

Tanakh, “let us reach an understanding.”

New Revised Standard, “let us argue it out.”

New Jerusalem, “let us talk this over.”

Gray, “let us reprove one another,” which he suggests may mean “to reprove one another, to point out one another’s faults, to discuss with one another who is right and who wrong.” (P. 28)

Oswalt, “let us argue it out together.”

Kaiser, “let us judge together.”

Brown-Driver- Briggs gives the meaning of the root verb **נִכַּחַת** in the hiphil as meaning “to decide,” “to prove,” or “to argue with.”

H. -J. Fabry, in an article on this verb in **Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament VI**, pp. 64-71 states that “The basic meaning is ‘set right,’ ‘show what is right.’” (P. 65)

He states that here, in **Isaiah 1:18**, “An exhortative niph'al plural is used to address the opponent [i.e., sinful Judah], urging that both parties present their dispute together to a court for decision.” (P. 67) Perhaps, but we see no mention of “a court” in this passage. Rather, we think, the invitation is for the people to come honestly into communication with YHWH, arguing their case with Him, being open to His response and presentation of His case. Out of that dialogue will come learning and understanding, as well as forgiveness and cleansing.

But how would this be done? Would it involve coming to the prophet, with his personal knowledge of and communication with YHWH, to let him represent YHWH in the argument / debate? What else could it mean? How do you envision / interpret this Divine invitation?

Two nouns derived from this verb are: **תּוֹכַחָה**, “rebuke,” “correction,” which occurs some 4 times in the **Hebrew Bible**, and **תּוֹכַחְתָּ**, “argument,” “reproof,” which occurs some 24 times in the

(continued...)

¹⁰⁸(...continued)

Hebrew Bible (mostly in **Proverbs**). For occurrences of the root verb פָּדַן, “decide,” “adjudge,” “reprove,” in the **Hebrew Bible** see our end-note 16.

Perhaps the best parallel to **Isaiah 1:18**, and its invitation to Judah to enter into mutual reproof / debate with YHWH, is found in **Isaiah 43:25-26**:

25 I, I (am) He
Who wipes out your transgressions for My sake;
and your missings-of-the-mark I will not remember!
26 Cause Me to remember!
Let us enter into judgment / have controversy together!
You recount (your case),
so that you may be righteous!

Compare a similar invitation in **Isaiah 41:1**:

Be silent for Me, islands;
and peoples, renew strength!
Let them draw near!
Then let them speak together!
For the justice, let us draw near!

Through the prophet Isaiah, YHWH is issuing an invitation to His people to enter into debate with Him—to bring their minds, their questions, their objections, and their honest feelings, to enter into an open discussion with their God.

We think that the depiction of Job in the **Book of Job** is an excellent example of what YHWH wants from His people. Job pulls no punches; he expresses his honest feelings and doubts; he makes criticisms of, and biting charges against God. And at the close of the **book**, YHWH approves of what Job has said, while disapproving of the three friends of Job who have sought to defend God’s reputation, totally disapproving of Job’s accusations aimed at God.

The **Book of Job** is a profound depiction of an honest, suffering human being debating with YHWH, asking the pointed questions that emerge from his heart as he endures suffering. But if you “google” “debate with God,” all you will find is debates between atheists and theists—nothing so profound as the **Book of Job**.

What do you think? Are you willing to respond to YHWH’s invitation to debate with Him, to enter into a session of mutual reproof, of controversy with your Creator / God, or with the God you were taught to believe in as a child? Or will you wait until tragedy strikes in your life, and your heart is filled with grief, to ask God the honest questions of your heart? Isaiah urges his hearers / readers to start the debate here and now!

(continued...)

says YHWH--

if your missings-of-the-mark will be like the scarlets,^{109, 17}
they will become white like (the) snow!^{110, 18}

¹⁰⁸(...continued)

Oswalt states that “What God is asking the people to debate with Him is the wisdom of the two alternatives that are left them. Should they continue as they are and be destroyed, or should they obey God and be blessed?” (P. 101)

We think this is a very narrow understanding of the invitation—which we take to mean something much broader and much more inclusive than a simple either / or such as Oswalt suggests. What do you think?

¹⁰⁹1QIs^a plus a few Hebrew manuscripts reads כַּשְׁנִי, “like scarlet,” instead of our Hebrew text’s plural, כַּשְׁנִיִּים, “like the scarlets.”

The singular masculine noun שְׁנִי is properly the *coccus ilicis*, a worm (תּוֹלֵעַ) which attaches itself to leaves and twigs of *quercus coccifera*, oak trees and bushes native to the Mediterranean. The dried body of the female, about the size of a pea, contains coloring matter analogous to the deep red, purplish color of carmine, and is used in dyeing.

Our sins can be like that—darker than blood, staining us, marking us out, proclaiming our nature. Here, Wolf / Stek note, the colors scarlet and crimson refer to “the blood that has stained the hands of murderers (see **verses 15, 21**).”

For occurrences of the noun שְׁנִי, “Scarlet” in the **Hebrew Bible**, see our end-note 17.

The “Temple Institute” in Jerusalem today has thoroughly researched this matter of the תּוֹלֵעַ שְׁנִי, the “crimson worm,” from the dead body of which they are successfully making dyes to be used in their attempt to recreate the ancient biblical temple and its textiles, which they believe must be completed before Messiah can come. Their publications on the Internet depict this work in great detail.

¹¹⁰The phrase כַּשְׁלֵג יִלְבִּינוּ is literally “like the snow they will become white.” Wolf / Stek call this “a powerful figurative description of the result of forgiveness...This offer of forgiveness is conditioned on the reformation of life called for in **verse 19**.” (P. 1019)

For occurrences of the verb לָבַן in the hiphil elsewhere in the **Hebrew Bible**, see:

Joel 1:7, with their bark stripped off, fig-tree branches become white.

(continued...)

¹¹⁰(...continued)

Psalm 51:9, the penitent's prayer is

Purify / de-sin me with hyssop (small plant used for sprinkling liquids), and I will be clean; wash me and I will be white, more than snow!" Closely similar to **Isaiah 1:18**.

Daniel 11:35,

And some from the wise people will stumble,
to refine among them, and to purify and to cleanse,
until (the) time of (the) end; because still for the appointed time.

For occurrences of the noun **שֶׁלֶג**, "snow," see our end-note 18.

This passage directly refutes the claim of some that there is "no forgiveness in the **Old Testament**." Sins "red as scarlet" become "whiter than snow" when sinful people enter into open and honest dialogue with YHWH—centuries before the coming of Jesus Christ! The forgiveness that Jesus gives to all is not a denial of that fact, but rather, an embodiment and fulfillment of it!

Some scholars, as Oswalt points out, have taken the statement to be sarcastic. He states that "Marti and Duhm argued that unconditional forgiveness was out of place with the whole tenor of the context. Thus they argued that the intent was sarcastic: 'If your sins are as scarlet, shall they be white as snow?! Etc.'" (P. 101)

We have heard similar comments made by Jewish students of **Isaiah**, holding that such an offer of full forgiveness apart from temple-ritual is simply not possible in the **Hebrew Bible**!

Slotki comments that "Since the particle **אִם** usually bears the meaning of 'if,' some translate, 'if your sins be as scarlet, shall they be as snow? If they be red like crimson, shall they be as wool?', the implication being that such a possibility is unthinkable." (P. 6)

Gray comments that "Even though the people may have committed the most flagrant sins, they may regain the highest degree of innocence; and if, hereafter, they continue obedient to Yahweh (**verse 19**), they may enjoy prosperity." (P. 28)

Christian interpreters of the **Hebrew Bible** must ask themselves whether there is any greater promise of absolute forgiveness in the **New Testament**. Some Christian interpreters (including J. D. Michaelis, B. Duhm, Julius Wellhausen, K. Marti and H. Hackmann—see Gray, pp. 28-29) have taken the affirmation as a question, even a cynical question, that does not imply forgiveness at all. But we suspect an anti-Jewish bias in such readings of the text. Christians who long for Jews to read the **Gospels** without bias, must be careful to not read the **Hebrew Bible** with a similar bias!

What do you think? Can it be true that the **Hebrew Bible** offers penitent sinners free and full forgiveness in just as full and meaningful way as Jesus Christ and the **New Testament**? Are we to
(continued...)

If they will be made red like the scarlet-worm,¹¹¹
they will become like the (white) wool!¹¹²

¹¹⁰(...continued)

believe that YHWH God has always been a God of forgiveness to penitent sinners, and that He didn't just become a forgiving God with the coming of Jesus?

Compare the great promises of forgiveness in **Psalm 103** and **Psalm 51**. We hold that the grace and forgiveness of God through Jesus Christ is an affirmation and fulfillment of what God has always been about and given to those who seek Him. Do you agree?

We agree with the translation of the Jewish Publication Society's **Tanakh**: "Come, let us reach an understanding, --says the LORD. Be your sins like crimson, They can turn snow-white; Be they red as dyed wool, They can become like fleece."

¹¹¹The phrase אִם-יֵאֲדִימוּ כְּתוֹלֵעַ is literally "If they emit / show redness like the worm." See footnote 109. We think the two nouns, תּוֹלֵעַ and שָׁנִי are synonyms, both indicating the worm whose dead body is crushed and used for making deep red dyes.

¹¹²Translations of the last four lines of **verse 18** vary:

King James, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." **New Revised Standard**, **New International**, and **New Jerusalem**, all similar;

Tanakh, "Be your sins like crimson, They can turn snow-white; Be they red as dyed wool, They can become like fleece."

Rahfs, "and if the sins of yours (plural) may be like purple-red, like snow I will whiten; and then if they may be like red / scarlet, like wool I will whiten!"

Kaiser, "If your sins are like a glittering garment, are they at the same time as white as the snow? If they are red like crimson material, are they at the same time like the wool?" So also, J. D. Michaelis, Augusti, Marti, Duhm. Kaiser insists that "This double question undeniably establishes that the people's sins, compared to bright red material dyed with egg and the bodies of the kermes, a kind of insect, cannot at the same time be as white as snow or as bright as natural wool...A sinful people cannot be sinless at the same time, nor can a guilty people expect to be treated as though it were innocent." (P. 38)

We say that Kaiser is right--unless those sinful people enter into mutual debate and reproof with YHWH--and then all things can change radically, and the impossible can become possible! We take these four lines of **verse 18** to be a two-fold statement, emphasizing the possibility and reality of complete forgiveness for those who make themselves vulnerable, and enter into mutual reproof and honest debate with YHWH.

Gray comments concerning this phrase, "like wool," that "a sheep's fleece as typical of whiteness may appear to us as anti-climactic after snow; but not so for the Hebrews. Black sheep were exceptional (**Genesis 30:32ff.**); the color of wool was regularly white. Hence the 'beloved's' (continued...)

1.19 אִם־תֵּאבֹוּ וְשִׁמַּעְתֶּם

טוֹב הָאֲרֶזְךָ תֹאכְלוּ:

If¹¹³ you will be willing,¹¹⁴ ¹⁹ and will listen,¹¹⁵

¹¹²(...continued)

teeth are compared to ewes shorn and washed (**Song of Solomon 4:2**), and the hair of the ‘Ancient of Days’ is compared to wool as well as snow (**Daniel 7:9**). **Revelation 1:14**, however, is explicit—‘as white as wool.’” (P. 30)

And again we ask, Is there any greater promise of Divine forgiveness in the **New Testament**? We do not think so.

Those who oppose the possibility of such Divine forgiveness as we find depicted here in **Isaiah 1:18**, turning its two affirmations into questions, do so, we think, on two grounds:

Jews do so because there is no mention of the temple or its Levitical sacrifices--How can an Israelite prophet promise forgiveness without mention of YHWH’s sacrificial system instituted by Moses and Aaron in **Exodus-Leviticus**?

Christians do so because there is no mention of the necessity for the death of the servant-messiah Jesus Christ.

But such arguments are like those of Job’s friends, who limit God’s possibilities to their dogmatic positions. YHWH God is not limited by human dogmas, even if those dogmas are rooted in biblical teaching. He is free to act or not to act, whenever, and wherever, and to whomever He chooses! In the light of this passage, He is free to miraculously cleanse and fully pardon the guilty who enter into dialogue with Him, even when orthodox theology and reason says it is impossible.

This passage teaches that by entering into the openness of personal debate / mutual reproof with YHWH, there can be free and full forgiveness for those heavily laden with sin and guilt; it also teaches that such forgiveness is offered to YHWH’s people with no mention of the temple or its sacrifices, and long before the coming of Jesus Christ.

Alexander states that in the absence of the interrogative particle, to translate the lines 2 and 4 as interrogative “is gratuitous and arbitrary.” (P. 90) We agree, and note that all sorts of sentences in biblical Hebrew can be arbitrarily turned into interrogatives in the absence of the interrogative **אִם**, *he*.

¹¹³We have oftentimes remarked that there is a big “IF” (**אִם**) in biblical theology (it occurs some 1070 times in the **Hebrew Bible**!). This statement of Isaiah is another example of that fact.

(continued...)

¹¹³(...continued)

Its manifold occurrences emphasize the reality of human freedom, and the Divine demand that human beings are responsible for their response and actions.

¹¹⁴YHWH will not force His sinful people to respond. They have to be “willing,” and only if they are, can the mutual reproof between them and YHWH take place, with its consequent cleansing and forgiveness.

For the verb אָנָה , “to be willing,” in the **Hebrew Bible**, see our end-note 19.

As the passages in end-note 19 show, in biblical literature, the “willingness” of human beings plays an important role in human history, and in humanity’s relationship with YHWH / God. For Isaiah, whether or not Judah’s sinfulness can be cleansed and forgiven depends squarely upon whether or not they are willing to listen to YHWH, a parallel thought to that of **verse 18** with its invitation to mutual reproof and debate.

Alexander comments on **verse 19** that “The unconditional promise is now qualified and yet enlarged. If obedient, they should not only escape punishment but be highly favored. *If you (plural) consent to My terms, and hear My commands, implying obedience, the good of the land, its choicest products, you shall eat, instead of seeing them devoured by strangers.*” (P. 90)

But here again, we must not assume that YHWH cannot act in the lives of those who are not willing to listen to Him. In the **Hebrew Bible**, we think of YHWH’s decision to forgive idolatrous Israel following the golden-calf incident at Mount Sinai, and of Ezekiel’s depiction of YHWH’s restoration of fortune to His prostitute daughter / adulterous wife Jerusalem, along with her sister prostitute cities Samaria and Sodom (see **Ezekiel 16:53-63**). The prime **New Testament** example of how God can act in spite of human unwillingness to listen is that of Jesus Christ’s appearing to Saul of Tarsus at the very time of his attempting to put followers of Christ in prison.

Humans, quite naturally, want to lay out laws which God must follow—based on what they believe to be biblical, canonical revelations of God’s nature. But while there is much truth in their dogmas and creeds, the true and living God of the **Bible** is not bound by those dogmas and creeds, and can act as He sees fit. He is free; and He wants His human creatures to be free also, to make decisions for themselves. But He can override human freedom if He so chooses!

Oswalt disagrees with this, and seeks to formulate a statement that can explain God’s forgiveness. He wants to be very careful in formulating such a statement, and so he says, “There is a delicate balance to be maintained here between human freedom and Divine sovereignty [‘Lordship’]. On the one hand, it ought not to be said that obedience produces forgiveness. God forgives and cleanses not because He must, but because He wishes to and has made a way for that to be done through the death and resurrection of Christ. But, on the other hand, it is also plain that God does not proclaim forgiveness to those who are unwilling to obey. All the rhetorical language of the prophets, urging people to obey, is in opposition to any position that God’s forgiveness can ever be experienced apart from a disposition to obey Him.” (P. 102)

(continued...)

you will eat the goodness of the land / earth!¹¹⁶

1.20¹¹⁷ וְאִם־תִּמְאֲנוּ וְנִמְרִיתֶם

חֶרֶב תֹּאכְלוּ

¹¹⁴(...continued)

We hold that such attempts to formulate a statement that removes the mystery from Divine action, or seeks to put limits on God's actions, will always fall short, and cannot do justice to the entirety of the biblical teaching. What do you think?

¹¹⁵Again Isaiah affirms the necessity for “hearing” / “listening.” This too is parallel to the mutual reproof and debate, and to the willingness just mentioned. YHWH wants to interact with His people; He wants them to enter into a lively, honest relationship with Him. All things are possible when and if that happens!

YHWH wants His people to listen to Him. But it is not a meek listening that refuses to speak its deepest thoughts, and doubts, and desires. It is a mutual reproof and debate, but one in which each side genuinely listens to the other. And we ask, Is this the nature of our relationship with God? Do we dare to be “Job-like,” openly expressing our hurts, our doubts, our deepest desires in prayer to our Creator? It is not performing a ritual, or making pretenses of worship—but being “honest to God!” Only such a relationship can transform our lives!

¹¹⁶For this promise of eating the the produce of the land, compare **Ezra 9:12**, where Ezra commands the returnees from Babylon:

And now your daughters you shall not give to their sons,
and their daughters you shall not take for your sons.
And you shall not seek their peace and their good until long-lasting time,
so that you people may be strong, and will eat the land's goodness;
and you will cause your children to possess (the land) until long-lasting time.

In **Ezra** the promise is based on the willingness of the returned exiles to discriminate against the non-Jewish peoples of the land, refusing to intermarry with them, and if married to them, to divorce them, getting rid of their half-breed wives and children, filling the land with single-mothers and children without fathers.

Here in **Isaiah 1**, the promise is made to sinners with the marks of death upon them, who are willing to repent, and enter into mutual reproof and debate with YHWH, honestly listening for His voice, of eating the produce of the land.

This promise unites with the preceding promise of total forgiveness; if they respond to YHWH's invitation, they will once again be blessed with the fulness of their land's produce.

¹¹⁷Alexander comments on **verse 20** that “This is the converse of **verse 19**, a threat corresponding to the promise. *And if you (plural) refuse to comply with My conditions, and rebel, continue to resist My authority, by the sword of the enemy shall you be eaten.*” (P. 90)

כִּי פִי יְהוָה דָּבַר:

And if¹¹⁸ you will refuse and will rebel,¹¹⁹

(with) a sword—you people will be devoured!¹²⁰

Because YHWH's mouth spoke!¹²¹

1.21¹²² אֵיכָה הִיְתָה לְזוֹנָה קָרִיָּה נֶאֱמָנָה

¹¹⁸Compare footnote 113. Again Isaiah says “If...”

¹¹⁹The opposite of being “willing,” and “listening,” is “refusing,” and “rebellious.”

Gray comments that “The alternative here presented—obedience and prosperity, or disobedience and destruction—recalls Isaiah’s attitude when the Syro-Ephraimitish army was approaching Jerusalem (**chapters 7-8**).” (P. 30)

¹²⁰Where our Hebrew text reads תִּחַרְבַּן תְּאֵכְלוּ, literally, “a sword you people will be devoured / eaten (by),” 1QIs^a and the Syriac and Latin Vulgate translations read בְּחַרְבַּן תְּאֵכְלוּ, “with the sword you people will be devoured / eaten,” correcting a difficult original text. In the **Hebrew Bible** the “sword” is depicted as having a “mouth,” and as devouring those it comes against.

Slotki states that “The construction is called by the grammarians ‘the accusative of instrument,’ there being no preposition in the Hebrew.” (P. 7)

Wolf / Stek note that whereas in **verse 19** there is the promise that the penitent people of Judah “will eat the best of the land,” here in **verse 20** the alternative is presented—if they resist and rebel, they “will be eaten / devoured [by the sword].”

¹²¹Isaiah affirms that the message he is preaching has come from YHWH’s mouth. This same phrase, כִּי פִי יְהוָה דָּבַר, “because YHWH’s mouth spoke,” is found at **Isaiah 40:5** and **58:14**; the phrase פִּי יְהוָה, “mouth of YHWH,” occurs again at **Isaiah 62:2**. See our footnote 19, where we ask what is meant by the continuous biblical claim that YHWH has spoken.

¹²²Alexander states that in **verse 21**, “the prophet seems to pause for a reply, and on receiving no response to the promises and invitations of the foregoing context, bursts forth into a sudden exclamation at the change which Israel has undergone, which he then describes both in figurative and literal expressions, **verses 21-23**. In [**verse 21**] he contrasts her former state, as the chaste bride of [YHWH], with her present pollution, the ancient home of justice with the present haunt of cruelty and violence.” (P. 91)

Oswalt comments that in **verses 21-26**, “Isaiah turns to discuss the present condition of the nation and what God’s response will be. He seems to be saying, ‘Yes, in theory, Israel could know forgiveness and healing (**verses 18-20**), but, as a matter of fact, Israel’s condition is so far gone that destruction cannot be averted.’ But, as throughout the book (**2:1-4, 6; 8:23ff^{Heb} / 9:1ff^{Eng}; 10:33-11:1**;
(continued...)

מִלְאֲתֵי מִשְׁפָּט
צֶדֶק יֵלֵךְ בָּהּ
וְעַתָּה מְרֻצָּחִים:

How^{123, 20} has a faithful city¹²⁴ become a prostitute?^{125, 21}

¹²²(...continued)

33:10-22; 62:1-11; etc.), God’s final purpose is not destruction. His final purpose is blessing achieved through purification...While His purpose for the community is ultimately beneficial, those individuals who insist upon rebellion (**verse 28**) and arrogance will know only destruction (**verse 31**).” (P. 103)

But is this not to limit God’s grace and possibilities? If “God’s final purpose is not destruction,” then can it not be that following fiery destruction and death, God can still reach out to restore the fortune of those destroyed (exactly what YHWH is depicted as promising in **Ezekiel 16:53-63** and what we think **1 Peter 3-4** depicts Jesus doing upon dying—going in the Spirit to the people destroyed in the universal flood (**Genesis 6-9**) and proclaiming good news to them. We believe that God’s final purpose is expressed in **Isaiah 25:6-9**--throwing a great drinking-feast of rich wine and fat meat for all people and nations, at which He will swallow up death forever, and wipe away every tear. In other words, death is not the final word—but life is!

And if this is true, what good news it is! Do we dare believe it?

¹²³The interjection אֵיכָּהּ, “How?”, “Where?” occurs some 17 times in the **Hebrew Bible**. For those occurrences, see our end-note 20. We translate by “How...!” but others translate by “Alas...!”, that is, as a lament.

Brown-Driver-Briggs gives the following definitions for the word:

1. Interrogative, “In what manner?”
2. Exclamatory, “How!”
3. Interrogative, “Where?”

¹²⁴Our Greek translation (**Rahlfs**) interpolates the name Σιών, “Zion” at this point in the text. Compare **verses 26-27**, where the name צִיּוֹן, “Zion,” appears in the Hebrew text.

¹²⁵We have translated this line as a question. Our English translations all have it as an exclamation: “How a faithful city has become a prostitute!”

The Hebrew זֹנָה means a woman prostituting herself, selling her body sexually. Here the female prostitute is the City of Jerusalem. This qal active feminine participle occurs in the **Hebrew**

(continued...)

I filled (her with) justice;
right-relationship would spent the night in her--¹²⁶
and now those committing murder!¹²⁷

1.22¹²⁸ כִּסְפֶךָ הָיָה לְסִינִיּוֹת

סִבְאֶךָ מֵהוּל בְּמִים:

Your silver became worthless dross;¹²⁹

¹²⁵(...continued)

Bible some 35 times. See our end-note 21 for these occurrences. And for Jerusalem being called a “prostitute,” see our study of **Ezekiel 16** at the close of **Isaiah 1:31**.

¹²⁶These two lines depict the ideal city in YHWH’s estimation—it is a city filled with justice, where right-relationship can spend the night—that is, peacefully, with no crime to disturb it.

Slotki comments that righteousness “is the principle of rectitude and just dealing of men with each other, while [justice]...also rendered ‘judgment,’ is the practice of the principle in the courts of law and daily life and action.” (P. 7)

¹²⁷What a contrast this is with the two preceding lines! Not justice, not right-relationship, but now, murderers inhabiting the once faithful city!

¹²⁸Alexander comments on **verse 22** that “The change, which had just been represented under the figure of adultery [sexual immorality], is now expressed by that of adulteration, first of silver, then of wine.” (P. 91)

¹²⁹“Dross” means unwanted material that is removed from a mineral (such as silver) to make it pure; it is the scum or mass of solid impurities floating on a molten metal. Instead of Judah and Jerusalem being the pure silver that YHWH intended, they have become just that—impure, worthless dross!

Motyer states that “Silver can contain some alloy and still be silver, but *silver* which has become *dross* has suffered total degeneration.” (P. 49)

But this is overstatement. As Isaiah’s message continues, in **verses 25-26** YHWH is depicted as predicting that He will get rid of Jerusalem’s “dross” and “alloy,” restoring the City of Jerusalem to its former condition—a city of righteousness and faithfulness.

We say, YHWH’s “fire” is a cleansing, purifying fire! It destroys, gets rid of dross and alloy, but it brings forth from the furnace pure, clean silver! So, get in touch with YHWH. Bring your best arguments. Enter into His fire!

your liquor / strong drink mixed with the water!¹³⁰

1.23 שָׁרִיף סוּרְרִים

וְחֻבְרֵי גִנְבִים

כֵּלֹ אֲהַב שָׁחַד

וְרֹדֵף שְׁלֵמָנִים

יְתוֹם לֹא יִשְׁפֹטוּ

וְרִיב אֶלְמָנָה לֹא־יָבֹוא אֵלֵיהֶם:

Your rulers¹³¹—rebellious men,¹³²

and companions of thieves;

every one of them loving a bribe,

¹³⁰Whereas YHWH intended His people to be like rich, full-bodied wine, she has become mixed with water, losing her strength. Whereas good wine will make the head spin, YHWH's people have lost their strength, their power, their influence for good!

Rahifs has “your retail-dealers / peddlers are mixing the wine with water,” understanding the text in a literal sense as meaning the wine-sellers are mixing their wine with water, rather than understanding it figuratively, as a description of the people of Judah whose purity of relationship with YHWH has been “adulterated.” But that this is mistaken is apparent in **verse 23**, where the figurative meaning is applied to Judah's public officials / rulers.

¹³¹The Hebrew שָׁרִיף, “your (feminine singular, referring to Jerusalem) *sars*” is defined by **Brown-Driver-Briggs** as “chiefs, rulers, officials, captains, or princes.”

¹³²We understand **verse 23** as explaining the metaphors of **verse 22**. The dross and the strong drink mixed with water are intended as descriptions of those holding official positions of leadership in Jerusalem—especially her judges and counselors. Instead of fulfilling their responsibility for protecting orphans and widows, they have become corrupt, seeking little more than personal gain! Isaiah describes them as “stubborn,” or “rebellious,” and as companions of thieves. They have fallen in love with gifts and bribes, rather than being devoted to their assigned task of caring for the poorest people of Jerusalem! Instead of fulfilling their calling, they are filling their pockets!

Isaiah presents a demanding ethic. How do you think your city officials—city hall—would come out in terms of Isaiah's criticism? What about your county, state, and federal officials? Are the lawyers, members of the courts of justice, concentrating their attention on protecting and counseling the poorest and weakest members of society? Or has money—their own personal income—become the focus of their attention?

and pursuing rewards!

They do not seek justice (for the) orphan,
and a widow's case will not come to them!¹³³

1.24¹³⁴ לֹכֵן נָאִם הָאֲדוֹן יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת

אֲבִיר יִשְׂרָאֵל

הוּא אֲנַחֵם מִצָּרֵי

¹³³Slotki comments that the fatherless or orphan is one “who has no protector and can offer no bribes...The orphan having come before the judges and failed to secure justice, the widow, frail and helpless, is afraid even to approach the court.” (P. 7)

¹³⁴Alexander comments on **verse 24** that “To this description of the general corruption the prophet now adds a promise of purgation, which is at the same time a threatening of sorer judgments, as the appointed means by which the [Jewish] church was to be restored to her original condition, **verses 24-31.**” (Pp. 91-92)

From **Wikipedia's** article of “Purgatory” (1/10/2018) we quote:

“In Roman Catholic theology, purgatory is an intermediate state after physical death in which some of those ultimately destined for heaven must first ‘undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven,’ holding that ‘certain offenses can be forgiven in this age, but certain others in the age to come.’ And that entrance into Heaven requires the ‘remission before God of the temporal punishment due to [venial] sins whose guilt has already been forgiven,’ for which indulgences may be given which remove ‘either part or all of the temporal punishment due to sin,’ such as an ‘unhealthy attachment’ to sin. Only those who die in the state of grace but have not yet fulfilled the temporal punishment due to their sin can be in purgatory, and therefore, no one in purgatory will remain forever in that state nor go to hell. The notion of purgatory is associated particularly with the Latin Rite of the Catholic Church (in the Eastern churches or rites it is a doctrine, though it is not often called ‘purgatory,’ but the ‘final purification’ or the ‘final theosis’).

“Although denying the existence of purgatory as formulated in Roman Catholic doctrine, the Anglican and Methodist traditions along with Eastern Orthodoxy, affirm the existence of an intermediate state, Hades, and thus pray for the dead. Eastern Orthodox Churches believe in the possibility of a change of situation for the souls of the dead through the prayers of the living and the offering of the Divine Liturgy, and many Orthodox, especially among ascetics, hope and pray for a general apocatastasis [‘restoration’]. Judaism also believes in the possibility of after-death purification and may even use the word “purgatory” to present its understanding of the meaning of Gehenna.

“The word purgatory has come to refer also to a wide range of historical and modern conceptions of postmortem suffering short of everlasting damnation and is used, in a non-specific sense, to mean a condition or state of suffering or torment, especially one that is temporary.”

וְאִנְקִמָה מֵאֹיְבֵי:

Therefore, it is a saying of the Lord YHWH of Armies,
Mighty One of Israel,¹³⁵

¹³⁵Oswalt comments that “The horror of the perversion which has taken place in Judah is emphasized in the messenger formula by means of a mounting up of Divine titles that occurs nowhere else in the **book**...

“The term **הָאֵלֹהִים**, ‘the Sovereign (or Lord), as applied to God, is almost peculiar to **Isaiah** (only elsewhere in **Exodus 23:17** paralleled in **34:23**, and **Malachi 3:1**). In **Isaiah** it occurs exclusively in threats...in conjunction with the following phrase, [YHWH of Armies].” (P. 106)

Isaiah 3:1,

Because look—the Lord, YHWH of Armies
is removing from Jerusalem and from Judah,
male support and female support,
every support of food / bread,
and every support of water(s).

Isaiah 10:16,

Therefore the Lord YHWH of Armies will send forth
with His stout ones leanness / wasting;
and beneath His glory will be kindled a burning,
like a burning of fire.

Isaiah 10:33,

Look--the Lord, YHWH of Armies
is about to lop off his leafy boughs with an awful crash!
And his highest limbs are about to be cut down,
and the highly exalted ones will fall!

Isaiah 19:4,

And I will shut up / deliver Egypt into (the) hand of hard lords,
and a fierce king will rule over them—
a saying of the Lord YHWH of Armies!

Oswalt adds that “The effect is only heightened by the addition of *the Mighty One of Israel*. He Who is mighty to save can also be mighty to destroy, all the more so because the enemy is His Own, Israel.” (**ibid.**)

Alas,¹³⁶ I will be comforted from My opponents,
and I will be avenged from My enemies!¹³⁷

1.25¹³⁸ וְאֲשִׁיבָה יְדֵי עָלְיָךְ

¹³⁶The Hebrew וְהִי is an interjection / exclamation usually expressing dissatisfaction and pain, “Ah,” “Alas”; “Ha” (not distinctly “Woe!” which is וְהִי): it is used in lamentations. YHWH is depicted by Isaiah as being greatly dissatisfied with what is happening in Jerusalem, all of which is leading to the death of the City.

¹³⁷Translations of the last half of **verse 24** vary:

King James, “Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies:”

Tanakh, “Ah, I will get satisfaction from My foes; I will wreak vengeance on My enemies!”

New Revised Standard, “Ah, I will pour out my wrath on my enemies, and avenge myself on my foes!”

New International, “Ah, I will get relief from my foes and avenge myself on my enemies.”

New Jerusalem, “Disaster, I shall get the better of my enemies, I shall avenge myself on my foes.”

Rahifs, “Woe, the strong ones of Israel—for the wrath of Mine will not cease against those opponents, and judgment our of the enemies of Mine I will make / execute!”

Motyer comments that “Any facile statement that God always hates the sin but loves the sinner needs to be countered by Isaiah’s insistence that those who transgress are *My foes* and *My enemies*. They have made themselves the adversaries of the helpless (**verse 23**), *therefore* the sovereign Lord holds them as His enemies.” (P. 49)

Slotki says, “Those who sin against the moral and Divine law are the enemies of God.” (P. 8)

¹³⁸Alexander comments on **verse 25** that “The mingled promise and threatening is repeated under one of the figures used in **verse 22**. The adulterated silver must be purified by the separation of its impure particles.” (P. 92)

Oswalt observes that both **verses 25** and **26** begin with the same phrase, וְאֲשִׁיבָה, “and I will return...” “but the English translations tend to blur the duplication. In **verse 25** the Lord will cause His hand to return, whereas in **verse 26** it is their judges He will cause to return. Most of the translations give the idea that the Lord will turn His hand against Israel. This is a possibility, but it is also possible that the idea of return’ is as significant in **verse 25** as it is in **verse 26**. In this case the idea might be that after a time of abandonment the Lord will put His hand upon them again for purification...

“Here the hopeful note begins to emerge. God’s hand will not be upon them to destroy, but rather to restore. The slag and the tin will be removed; the rulers will be as they once were, and the city name, City of Righteousness, Faithful City, will reflect the return to the old values (**verse 21**)...The prophet looks forward to a time when God’s people, having passed through the fires, will relate to Him, and thus to one another, as they ought.” (P. 107)

וְאֶצְרֶף כֶּבֶד סִינִיךָ

וְאֶסִּירָה כָּל-בְּדִילֶיךָ:

And I will cause My hand to return against you,¹³⁹, ²²
and I will refine your worthless dregs with lye,
and I will remove all your alloys!¹⁴⁰

1.26¹⁴¹ וְאֶשִׁיבָה שְׂפָטֶיךָ כְּבִרְאשֹׁנָה

וְיַעֲצִיךָ כְּבַתְחִלָּה

אַחֲרֵי-כֵן יִקְרָא לְךָ עִיר הַצֶּדֶק

קָרְיָה נְאֻמָּנָה:

And I will cause your judges to return, like at the first;

¹³⁹For Isaiah's use of "My hand" with reference to YHWH, see our end-note 22.

Watts comments that "'Turn My hand' means change from supporting to chastising." (P. 25)

Motyer states that "*I will turn My hand against you* is a phrase which always describes hostile action (e.g. **Psalm 81:14**) yet here it introduces a work of restoration [see also **Jeremiah 6:9**; **Ezekiel 38:12**; **Amos 1:8**; **Zechariah 13:7**. Against this background of usage the immediate sounding of a note of hope in **Isaiah** is startling, an example of his brilliant literary skill.]

"Even in the very exercise of His wrath the Lord remembers mercy (compare **Isaiah 60:10**), and mercy and justice are perfectly blended in the Divine nature (**Isaiah 45:21**)." (Pp. 49-50)

¹⁴⁰Young comments on the last two lines of this verse that "the hand...is here employed in order that it may perform a work of purifying judgment and so restore the church [meaning, Israel]. The judgment to come, then, is not for the purpose of complete destruction, but of purification...This dross is the unjust rulers and leaders and their sinful practices as well as the general hypocrisy and sinfulness of the people themselves. These must be subjected to a thorough and drastic judgment in order that the city itself may continue in existence." (Pp. 86-87)

¹⁴¹Alexander comments on **verse 26** that "Here again the figurative promise is succeeded by a literal one of restoration to a former state of purity, to be effected not by their conversion of the wicked rulers, but by filling their places with better men...There is here a twofold allusion to **verse 21**. She who from being a faithful wife had become an adulteress or harlot, should again be what she was; and justice which once dwelt in her should return to its old home." (Pp. 92-3)

and your counselors like in the beginning;¹⁴²
afterwards, it will called to you, the City of Right-Relationship,
Faithful City.¹⁴³

1.27¹⁴⁴ צִיּוֹן בְּמוֹשָׁפֶט תִּפְדֶּה

¹⁴²Oswalt comments that “The mention of judges and counselors...introduces one of the themes of the **book**, that of a just, impartial rulership which will govern out of a sense of responsibility for the people rather than out of greed. The very corruption of the rulers fueled the fires of longing for a King who would one day rule in righteousness and peace.” (P. 108)

¹⁴³Motyer comments that “The climax of this section is a Davidic restoration...What Isaiah adumbrates [reports in outline] here is the fulfilment of the Davidic promises (**2 Samuel 7; Psalm 89**)...In **11:1, 10-16** the promised Davidic king becomes the magnet of a new exodus, and in **55:3** the Servant of the Lord becomes the ground of fulfilment of the Davidic promises.” (P. 50)

¹⁴⁴Oswalt comments on **verses 27-31** that “This segment concludes the brief introduction to the **book**. It sounds a similar note to that which concludes the longer introduction (**5:24-20**) and to the concluding verse of the **book** (**66:24**). That note is that the reality of hope which stems from God’s good intentions toward us cannot blot out another, grimmer reality: continued arrogant rebellion against God will result in destruction.” (Pp. 108-09)

Alexander comments on **verse 27-28** that “The promise of purification to the silver involved a threatening of destruction to the dross. But now the two elements of the prediction are exhibited distinctly...first the promise to the [Jewish] church. *Zion...shall be redeemed*...The very same events, by which the Divine justice was to manifest itself in the destruction of the wicked, should be the occasion and the means of a deliverance to Zion or the true people of God...

“[In **verse 28**], the other element is now brought out...The destruction of the wicked, which was to be simultaneous and coincident with the deliverance promised to God’s people in [**verse 27**]...The same judgments which destroyed the wicked should redeem the righteous, or in other words...the purification of the [Jewish] church could be effected only by the excision of her wicked members.” (Pp. 93-94)

Translations of **verse 27** vary considerably:

King James, “Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.”

Tanakh, “Zion shall be saved in the judgment; Her repentant ones, in the retribution.”

New Revised Standard, “Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and those in her who repent, by righteousness.”

New International, “Zion will be delivered with justice, her penitent ones with righteousness.”

New Jerusalem, “Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.”

Rahfs, μετὰ γὰρ κρίματος σωθήσεται ἡ αἰχμαλωσία αὐτῆς καὶ μετὰ ἐλεημοσύνης, “For with judgment / justice the captivity of hers will be saved, and with alms / charitable giving.”

(continued...)

ושביה בצדקה:

Zion¹⁴⁵ with justice will be ransomed / redeemed,¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴(...continued)

These differences in translation raise numerous questions. What does “ransom” or “redemption” mean, coming from the root פָּדָה, **padhah**? Is it a synonym for “salvation” as the Greek translation apparently has it? What does the Hebrew word מִשְׁפֹּט, **mishpot**, mean? Does it mean “judgment,” or “legal decision,” or “justice”? What does צְדָקָה mean? Does it mean “righteousness,” or can it mean “alms / charitable giving,” as the Greek understands it? And what does the phrase שְׁבִיָּה mean? “Her returnees,” or “her captivity” (so the Greek translation).

¹⁴⁵Oswalt comments that “Zion [צִיּוֹן, **tsiyyon**] is a favorite term of Isaiah’s, occurring forty-seven times in the **book** with twenty-nine of the occurrences in **chapters 1-39**. **Micah** shows a similar frequency with nine occurrences in four chapters. The only other book where Zion occurs so often is the **Psalms**, where it appears twenty-eight times. These occurrences in the **Psalms** (as well as the 15 in the **Book of Lamentations**) indicate that the term is a poetic and hymnic one which draws from the Jerusalem imagery to create a larger picture of the chosenness, hope, and beauty which belong to those who are in God.” (P. 109)

See the article on צִיּוֹן in **Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament XII**, pp. 333-365, by E. Otto. The article begins with 8 full pages of bibliography, demonstrating how important this word is for biblical theology.

The first mention of Zion in the **Hebrew Bible** is at **2 Samuel 5:7**:

וַיִּלְכַּד דָּוִד אֶת מְצֻדַת צִיּוֹן
הִיא עִיר דָּוִד:

And David captured (the) stronghold of Zion--
it (is the) City of David.

The first mention of Zion in the **Book of Isaiah** is **1:8**:

וְנֹתְרָה בַת-צִיּוֹן
כַּסְפָּה בְּכֶרֶם
כַּמְלוּנָה בְּמִקְשָׁה
כְּעֵיר נְצוּרָה:

And daughter Zion is left remaining
like a booth in a vineyard,

(continued...)

and her returnees¹⁴⁷ with right-relationship.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵(...continued)

like a hut in a field of cucumbers,
like a besieged city!

¹⁴⁶**Isaiah 1:27** is the second mention of Zion in the **Book of Isaiah**, and what a powerful expression of hope it is! The first line of this verse is:

צִיּוֹן בַּמִּשְׁפָּט תִּפְדָּה

Zion by justice will be redeemed.

Isaiah is no pessimist. He has experienced the transformation of his life through the vision of YHWH. It has been a “saving” “redeeming” experience. And if that could happen in his own life, he is confident that YHWH both can and will do the same thing for Zion! Zion, the City of David, which has been devastated and left like a besieged city, because of the sinfulness of its inhabitants, will be redeemed by “justice.” Whereas the city has been filled with injustice, leading to its devastation, redemption will come to Zion—through justice. Nothing else can save or redeem the city—only the return of the genuine justice that is now so lacking in the City! Isaiah does not know how YHWH will accomplish this—but he is totally confident that it will happen. Zion by justice will be redeemed!

Oswalt observes that “Zion will be redeemed. She will not be cast off. Her chosenness and her beauty are not passing; they are constant as a gift from God. It is the desolation and destruction which are passing.” (P. 109)

¹⁴⁷Where our Hebrew text reads וְשׁוֹבֵייהָ, “and her returnees,” our Greek translation has ἡ αἰχμαλωσία αὐτῆς, literally “the captivity of hers,” evidently reading a Hebrew text, וְשׁוֹבֵיהָ. And where our Hebrew text has בְּצִדְקָה, “by righteousness, our Greek translation has ἐλεημοσύνης, “alms” or “charitable giving.”

This second line of the Hebrew **verse 27** is parallel to the first line, and we take it to be expressing the same confident hope in a slightly different way:

וְשׁוֹבֵיהָ בְּצִדְקָה

and her returnees by righteousness

Isaiah knows that because of her sinfulness, her utter disregard for justice and righteousness, the inhabitants of Zion will be taken captive, or as the Greek translation has it, Zion will go into captivity. But again, Isaiah knows through his own experience of radical transformation, that YHWH both can and will remedy the situation. He will accomplish it through the return of “justice,” and through the return of “righteousness.” When, and how, Isaiah does not say. But he assures his hearers / readers, it will happen, even if only after Zion’s people have suffered captivity!

(continued...)

1.28 וְשֹׁבֵר פְּשָׁעִים וְחַטָּאִים יַחְדָּו

וְעֹזְבֵי יְהוָה יִכְלוּ:

And (the) crushing of rebels and missers-of-the-mark (will be) together,
and those forsaking YHWH will be finished / come to an end!

1.29¹⁴⁹ כִּי יָבֹשׁוּ מֵאֵילִים אֲשֶׁר חִמְדֶּתֶם

¹⁴⁷(...continued)

Ortlund comments that “The prophet looks forward to a cleansed people after the historical judgment of the exile...” (P. 1242) As the Greek translator has it, following their being captives, the people of Zion who formerly oppressed the poor in their midst, will practice “alms-giving,” or “charitable giving.”

¹⁴⁸Oswalt comments on the understanding of the function of *justice* and *righteousness* as follows: Calvin and Young have insisted that it is God’s justice and righteousness alone by which Zion will be redeemed. On the other hand, Kissane argued that it is through the just and righteous behavior of Zion that she will be delivered [Slotki comments that the righteousness and justice ‘will be executed by its people and its rulers,’ p. 8]...

“From the passage itself it must be apparent that there is no basis for dogmatism in either direction [in our language, it is not ‘Either-Or,’ but ‘Both-And’!]. There is no indication as to whose justice and righteousness will be the means of salvation. From the larger context, however, the correct answer seems to be ‘both-and’...It is as humanity chooses to do what God makes possible that restoration and redemption occur.” (P. 110)

We think this is a very wise comment, and should be remembered in many contexts, where theologians want to say “Either / Or,” when “Both / And” is so often much more appropriate. And at the same time, we must remember that God is not bound by our theological formulations, no matter how correct they may be, but is free to act in any way He pleases.

Isaiah will have much more to teach us concerning justice and righteousness. But one thing seems clear already from this passage: There will be no redemption, no salvation for Zion, apart from justice and righteousness! So, we can put words into the mouth of Isaiah, “If you want redemption and salvation, fight for justice and for righteousness!”

¹⁴⁹Slotki comments on **verses 29-31** that “The return to the ways of righteousness will also lead to a purified worship of God, all kinds of idols and alien forms of ritual being ignominiously [disgracefully] rejected.” (P. 9)

Oswalt comments on **verses 29-30** that “These verses make it plain that it was the worship of idols to which ‘rebellion’ and ‘forsaking God’ (**verse 28**) referred...The suggestion that one can abandon God and thus be free is as much a lie today as it was in Eden.” (P. 110)

וְתִתְפָּרוּ מִהַגְנוֹת אֲשֶׁר בְּתַרְתֵּם:

Because they will be ashamed¹⁵⁰ of their oak trees which they take pleasure in,¹⁵¹
and they will be ashamed of the gardens which they chose.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰Instead of our Hebrew text's "they will be ashamed," a few Hebrew manuscripts and Sperber's Targum read "you people will be ashamed."

¹⁵¹Translations of the first line of **verse 29** vary:

King James, "For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired";

Tanakh, "Truly, you shall be shamed Because of the terebinths you desired";

New Revised Standard, "For you shall be ashamed of the oaks in which you delighted"; **New International** has "sacred oaks";

Rahlf's, διότι αἰσχυνθήσονται ἐπὶ τοῖς εἰδώλοις αὐτῶν ἃ αὐτοὶ ἠβούλοντο, "for which reason they will be put to shame over their idols which they wished."

The ambiguous Hebrew phrase causing the differences is מֵאֵילִים, literally "from or because of leaders / rams / pillars / terebinths (oaks)." Because of the line that follows, with its "gardens," we think it most likely that it should be taken as referring to oak trees as objects of superstitious worship. This is the way the Greek translator has taken the passage; it is about "their idols."

¹⁵²For Isaiah's mention of הַגְנוֹת, "the gardens" in connection with the people of Judah's chosen worship, substituting it for the traditional worship in the temple, compare the following passages, which depict graphically some of the elements of that worship which were leading Israel away from justice and righteousness, to engage in actions totally contrary to Israel's teaching / torah, given by Moses and the prophets—actions such as sacred prostitution and the murder of innocent children:

Isaiah 1:29, here,

Because they will be ashamed of their oak trees which they take pleasure in,
and they will be ashamed of the gardens which they chose.

(This doesn't sound so bad. What's wrong with taking pleasure in beautiful trees? What so bad about choosing gardens to relax and meditate in? Keep reading!)

Isaiah 27:9,

Therefore by this Jacob's iniquity will be covered / atoned (for);
and this—all fruit (of) removing his missing-of-the-mark / sin:
by his placing all stones of an altar like stones of chalk, having been pulverized--
Asherahs will not arise, and (neither will) the sun-pillars / incense-altars.

(The asherahs were sacred poles placed near altars, leading to the worship of a "Mother Goddess," such as the wife of Baal. All sorts of sexual connotations and practices were associated with such worship. Keep reading!)

(continued...)

¹⁵²(...continued)

Isaiah 57:3-10,

- 3 And you (plural)--draw near here,
children of a [palm-reading] spiritualist,
you descendant(s) of an adulterer--
and she [your mother] prostituted (herself)!
- 4 Against whom will you (plural) mock?
Against whom will you open wide (your) mouth,
stick out a tongue?
Are you people not children of transgression,
descendant(s) of falsehood--
- 5 the ones inflaming themselves among the oak-trees,
beneath every luxuriant tree,
sacrificing the children in the wadis,
beneath clefts of the rocks?
- 6 Among the smooth stones of a ravine is your portion;
they, they are your lot!
Also to them you have poured out a drink offering,
and offered up a grain offering.
In the light of these things, should I relent?"
- 7 Upon a mountain high and lifted up you placed your bed,
also there you went up to offer a sacrifice.
- 8 And behind the door and the doorpost
you placed your memorial;
because away from Me you uncovered and you went up
you enlarged your bed
and you cut (a covenant) for yourself from / with them.
You loved their bed;
you gazed at a hand / penis!
- 9 And you traveled to the king / Molech with the oil,
and you enlarged your perfumeries;
and you sent forth your messengers far away;
and you were made low--as far as (the) grave / underworld!
- 10 By (the) greatness / length of your way, you grew weary.
You did not say, I am in despair / was despaired.
You found your hand's / sexual organ's live animal / strength.
Therefore you were not weak.

(What a picture of "fertility religion," where sexual intercourse was at the center of worship, and innocent children were murdered, and their bodies burned as an integral part of that worship! There was no justice or righteousness in such religion! See the article "Sacred Sex, Sacrifice and Death," by Susan Ackerman in **Bible Review**, February 1990, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 38-44. Also, see the article by Jacobs-Hornig in **Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament** 3, p. 34, who states that "The kings of Mesopotamia tell of their gardens, where they had fruit trees, cedars, and other kinds of trees planted. These gardens were planted with great skill and often attained the size of a park. Assyrian emperors like

(continued...)

¹⁵²(...continued)

Tiglathpileser I, Ashurnasipal II, Sargon II, and Sennacherib made sure that the horticulture of their land was well known far beyond their borders. Usually, too, the Babylonian sanctuaries were surrounded by gardens. According to Sumerian and Babylonian creation stories, man's purpose and task consisted of 'making the field of the Gods grow.' In a figurative sense, the king and prince is given the rule over a 'garden of plenty'...when he worships the God Ashur and celebrates his holy New Year Festival."

We think that in Israel, lush gardens, copied after those of their Mesopotamian neighbors, were adapted by the Israelites as the location for worshiping the fertility Gods of Mesopotamia--with burials taking place in them, and with rituals designed to get in contact with the spirits of the dead ("necromancy"), as worshipers spent the night sitting by / in the graves and as **Isaiah 66:17** shows, eating pork and rats along with other "abominations," including the offering of infant sacrifices in the Valley of the Sons of Hinnom, and the burning of incense on bricks as mentioned in this present passage.

Ackerman agrees with this, stating that "'Sacrificing in gardens' refers to fertility rituals associated with the Canaanite Mother Goddess Asherah (as in **Isaiah 1:29; 17:8, 10-11; 27:9; and 57:5**), Who was worshiped by some alongside the Lord." (P. 1046)

Isaiah 65:2-5,

- 2 I spread out My hands all day-long
to a people being stubborn,
the ones walking (in) the way not good
--after their imaginations--
- 3 the people, the ones provoking Me
to My face constantly,
sacrificing in the gardens,
and burning sacrifices upon the bricks--
- 4 those who sit among the graves,
and they spend the night in the guarded places,
those eating the pig's flesh,
and fragment(s) of detestable things (are in) their vessels.
- 5 The ones who are saying, Keep to yourself
--do not touch me, because I am set-apart (from) you!
These are smoke in My nostrils,
a fire burning all the day-long!

Isaiah 66:17,

The ones consecrating themselves
and cleansing themselves in the gardens
following one in the midst,
eating flesh of the pig,
and the detestable thing, and the mice

(continued...)

¹⁵²(...continued)

–together they will be brought to an end–
(it is) a saying of YHWH!

(This is not a matter of Isaiah's religious prejudice. It is a matter of Isaiah's recognition of the extreme danger such fertility religious practices posed to genuine justice and righteousness in Zion!, and his hope for a better future for his nation and all the world!)

Compare:

Ezekiel 6:13,

And you shall know that I (am) YHWH,
when their pierced ones / slain are in (the) midst of their idols,
surrounding their altars,
to / upon every high hill,

at every summit of the mountains,
and beneath every luxuriant tree,
and beneath every oak's leaves,
a place where they offered pleasing smell / incense
to all their idols.

Hosea 4:13,

Upon tops of the mountains they slaughter for sacrifice,
and upon the hills they cause sweet-smelling smoke to arise–
beneath oak tree(s) and poplar tree(s) and terebinth tree(s)
–because its shade is good.
As a result your daughters prostitute themselves,
and your daughters-in-law are sexually immoral!

Motyer comments on **verses 29-31** that “Isaiah did not believe that any religion was as good as any other. His insistence in **verses 10-15** that religion must have moral commitment is amplified here by the implication that true religion is more than human preference and satisfaction (**verse 29**) and reaches a source of life not subject to earth's withering and waning (**verse 30**)...

“The fundamental cause of disaster is false, inadequate religion. *Oaks and gardens* are the symbols of the life of 'nature' and of the fertility Gods...The governing factor in their religion (compare **Amos 4:5**) was what they found helpful (*in which you have delighted*) and what they determined upon (*that you have chosen*). According to Calvin, 'True religion must be conformable to the will of God as its unerring standard.'" (P. 51)

We say, According to Isaiah, True religion must be committed to genuine justice and righteousness, in the service of the one God of all the earth, YHWH. Any religion that takes the

(continued...)

1:30¹⁵³ כִּי תִהְיוּ כְּאֵלֶּה נֹבֵלֹת עֲלֵיהֶן

וְכַגֵּנָה אֲשֶׁר־מַיִם אֵין לָהּ:

Because you people will be like an oak-tree—its leaf withering,
and like a garden whose water(s) it no longer has.¹⁵⁴

1:31¹⁵⁵ וְהָיָה הַחֲסוֹן לְנִעָרָת

¹⁵²(...continued)

lives of innocent children, and that places sexual fulfillment on the Divine throne, turning mothers and daughters into prostitutes, cannot be true! What do you say?

¹⁵³Alexander comments on **verse 30** that “They who chose trees and gardens, in preference to God’s appointed place of worship, shall themselves be like trees and gardens, but in the most alarming sense... *You yourselves shall be like an oak...fading, decaying, in its leaf or as to its leaf, and like a garden which has no water.*” (P. 94)

Motyer states that “The evergreen tree aptly symbolized undying life and therefore became the focus of nature religion and the Gods of fertility. But such religion cannot keep its promises; it is ‘a tree with fading leaves.’ False religion has no inherent life.” (Pp. 51-52)

¹⁵⁴We take Isaiah to mean somewhat cynically that worshipers will become like the objects they worship. If they worship the oak tree, they will become like the oak tree whose leaves wither and fall to the ground in the cold of winter. If they worship in the idolatrous garden, they will become like a garden whose supply of water has failed. The implication may well be that if they worship the Set-apart One of Israel, they too will become set-apart.

The oak tree gives no torah / teaching calling its worshipers to justice and righteousness. By sharing in sexual promiscuity beneath its shade, and sacrificing their children to the Gods it symbolizes, the worshipers will be destroying their own families and children—the very opposite of justice and righteousness! Such worship is leading to their destruction—to barrenness and death—not to peace and security! True justice will protect innocent children from being murdered. True righteousness will protect the relationship between husbands and wives, rejecting the kind of sexual relationships that destroy the ties of home and family!

¹⁵⁵Alexander comments on **verse 31** that “This verse contains a closing threat of sudden, total, instantaneous destruction to the Jewish idolaters, to be occasioned by the very things which they preferred to God, and in which they confided.” (P. 95)

If, as we hold, Isaiah teaches “universal salvation” in **Isaiah 25:6-9**, it does not mean that YHWH will not continually punish, or constantly come in devastating destruction against sinful peoples and nations, including Israel! But the fires of destruction are YHWH’s fire—a fire that burns up dross, while refining silver and gold, and that will ultimately destroy all evil, bringing all peoples and nations to His feast, where death is swallowed up forever!

וּפְעֵלוֹ לְנִיצוּץ
וּבְעֵרָוֹ שְׁנֵיהֶם יַחְדָּו
וְאֵין מְכַבֵּה:

And the strong one¹⁵⁶ will become a piece of flammable string,¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶Where our Hebrew text reads הַחֲסִין, “the strong one,” the Qumran manuscript 1QIs^a reads הַחֲסִינִים, “the strong ones of yours (plural).”

Slotki thinks that it means “the powerful worshiper,” but observes that “others explain it of the idol.” (P. 9)

Oswalt comments that “This use of tree imagery for the apparent power of the mighty is a frequent one in **Isaiah**.” (P. 111) See:

Isaiah 2:12-13,

- 12 Because YHWH of Armies has a day,
against all pride and exaltation,
and against everything lifted up--
and it will be brought low.
- 13 And against all (the) cedars of the Lebanon,
the tall ones, and the ones lifted up
and against all (the) oaks of the Bashan;

Isaiah 10:33-34,

- 33 Look--the Lord, YHWH of Armies
is about to lop off his leafy boughs with an awful crash!
And his highest limbs are about to be cut down,
and the highly exalted ones will fall!
- 34 And he will root out the forest-thickets with an iron tool;
and Lebanon will fall by the Majestic One!

See also **Zechariah 11:1-3**, where the shepherds of Israel are depicted as mighty trees that are destroyed:

- 1 Open your door, Lebanon,
and fire will devour among your cedars!
- 2 Howl, cypress tree,
because a cedar fell,
whose majestic ones were destroyed!

(continued...)

and its product¹⁵⁸ a spark;
and the two of them will burn together--
and there is no one to put out (the fire)!

¹⁵⁶(...continued)

Howl oak-trees of Bashan,
because the forest of the vintage went down!
3 A voice—howl of the shepherds,
because their glory was destroyed;
a voice—roar of young lions,
because the Jordan’s pride was destroyed!

Oswalt continues: “In fact, the prophet says, the mighty of the earth will one day be stripped bare. Then it will be seen that they are not mighty at all. They are merely tow [a bundle of untwisted fibers], the chaff from flax, good for nothing but burning.” (P. 111) See the next footnote.

¹⁵⁷The noun נְעִירָתַי means tow, as shaken off from the flax when beaten. Flax tows are often used today as upholstery stuffing.

Wikipedia (1/11/2018) states that “In the textile industry, a tow is a coarse, broken fibre, removed during processing flax, hemp, or jute. Flax tows are often used as upholstery stuffing, and tows in general are frequently cut up to produce staple fibre. The very light color of flax tow is the source of the word “towhead,” meaning a person with naturally tousled light blonde hair.”

In ancient Israel tows were used to make wicks for oil lamps., since they make an extremely inflammable substance that would suck up the oil in the lamp, and would not be consumed by the flame at its tip.

¹⁵⁸Where our Hebrew text reads וּפְעֵלָיו, “and his / its product / work,” 1QIs^a reads וּפְעֵלְכֶם, “and your (plural) product / work.”

Watts comments that “The paragraph has varied from third to second person. The Dead Sea scroll has chosen the second person. The Greek translation [**Rahlfs**] has turned to the third person. The Masoretic Text has an impersonal reading first and a third person for the second. The Masoretic Text should be sustained as the ‘more difficult reading,’ that is as the reading most likely to have been changed, and therefore probably the original reading. (P. 23)

1. **The Noun חֲזוֹן, “Vision, in the Hebrew Bible:**

1 Samuel 3:1, וַדְּבַר־יְהוָה הִיָּה יָקָר בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם אֵין חֲזוֹן נִפְרָץ, “and YHWH’s word was rare (or ‘precious’) in those days; there was no vision spread abroad.”

Isaiah 1:1, the vision of Isaiah which he saw, which we take to be the title for the entire **book**.

Isaiah 29:7, וַהֲיָה כַחֲלוֹם לַיְלָה חֲזוֹן לַיְלָה, “and it will be, like the dream, a night vision” (that is, the enemy hordes attacking Jerusalem will suddenly disappear).

Jeremiah 14:14, the false prophets see a “vision of falsehood”; **23:16**, similar; they speak visions of their heart, not what YHWH gives them.

Ezekiel 7:13, the vision concerning the whole crowd—Ezekiel has just spoken concerning “the end” having arrived on Judah and Jerusalem.

Ezekiel 7:26, when terror comes, people will try to get a vision (Greek: ὄρασις) but will find none, no **torah** from priest, no counsel from the officials. That means torah comes through visions.

Ezekiel 12:22, 23, 23, 24, 27 the Israelites have a proverb—the days go by, and the vision (of the prophet) comes to nothing. But the false visions will cease, and the saying that the visions have to do with far-distant future, not with the present, will be shown to be false, as YHWH’s word declared in the prophetic vision is fulfilled in their day. In this way, YHWH will put an end to this proverb in Israel!

Ezekiel 13:16, false visions of peace when destruction is surely coming.

Hosea 12:11^{Heb} / **10**^{Eng},

And I will speak / spoke to the prophets;
and I, I multiplied vision(s),
and by the hand of the prophets, I will give likenesses / parables.

Obadiah 1:1, “Vision of Obadiah,” which we understand to be the title for the entire **book**.”

Micah 3:6, night without vision, and darkness without divination is coming upon the false prophets.

Nahum 1:1,

Burden (or ‘oracle’) (concerning) Nineveh;
a scroll, a vision of Nahum the Elqoshite.

Habakkuk 2:2-3,

- 2 And YHWH answered me and He said,
 Write a vision, and make plain upon the tablets,
 so that one reading it may run.
- 3 Because (there is) still a vision for the appointed time;
 and it breathes anxiously for the end;
 and it will not lie.
 If it lingers, wait for it.
 Because it will surely come;
 it will not delay!"

Psalm 89:20^{Heb} / 19^{Eng}, Once YHWH spoke in a vision concerning David's choice to be king—see **1 Samuel 16:12**.

Proverbs 29:18,

When there is no vision, a people will be unrestrained;
 and one who keeps **torah**, how blessed (is) he!
 (Again we note the close connection between vision and torah!)

Lamentations 2:9,

There is no **Torah**;
 also her prophets did not find vision from YHWH.
 (Likewise, no vision, no torah!)

Daniel 1:17, Daniel understood all vision and dreams.

Daniel 8:1-2, Daniel's vision in the 3rd year of King Belshazzar; **13, 15, 17, 26**, all concerning this vision, Daniel's desire to understand it, and Daniel's being told to seal it up, because it pertained to the distant future. **Daniel 9:21**, concerning that earlier vision.

Daniel 9:24, vision to be sealed up.

Daniel 10:14, the vision concerns a time yet to come.

Daniel 11:14, violent men will rebel in fulfillment of Daniel's vision.

1 Chronicles 17:15, Nathan's vision concerning God's promise to David in **verses 4-14**.

2 Chronicles 32:32, referring to Isaiah's vision as in **Isaiah 1:1**.

We are reminded of the statement made to Moses in **Numbers 12:6-8**, concerning the nature of Divine revelations to spokespersons ("prophets"):

- 6 If your spokesperson will be (for) YHWH,
 I will make Myself known to him in the vision (synonym of חֲזוֹן),
 in the dream I will speak with him.

- 7 Not so, My slave, Moses—
in all My house, he is faithful.
- 8 Mouth to mouth I will speak with him,
and (through Personal) appearance,
and not in riddles (Greek: καὶ οὐ δι' αἰνιγμάτων, “and not through enigmas”);
and YHWH’s likeness he will observe!
And for what reason were you (Aaron and Miriam) not afraid to speak against My slave,
against Moses?

This synonym of חֲזוֹן, מַרְאֵה, **mar)ah**, occurs at the following places in the **Hebrew Bible**:

Genesis 46:2, “And God spoke to Israel (Jacob) בְּמֵרָאֵת הַלַּיְלָה, in visions of the night”
–translated into Greek by ἐν ὁράματι, “in a vision”).

Numbers 12:6 (see above; YHWH will speak to the spokesperson בַּמַּרְאֵה, **bammar)ah**, “in the vision,” evidently pointing to a well-known phenomenon in Israel; translated into Greek by ἐν ὁράματι, **en horamati**, “in a vision,” without the definite article).

1 Samuel 3:15, in the morning, following his night-time hearing YHWH’s call to him, telling him of the coming destruction of Eli’s household, Samuel was afraid to tell Eli the vision, הַמַּרְאֵה, **hammar)ah**; τὴν ὄρασιν, **ten horasin**.

Ezekiel 1:1, “they were opened, the heavens—and I saw visions of God”; **8:3**, similar; **40:2**, similar; **43:3**, a three-fold repetition.

Daniel 10:7, 7, 8 and 16 (Daniel’s terrifying vision).

See the articles by Fuhs in **Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament XIII**, pp. 208-42, and Jepsen in IV, pp. 280-90.

It is important for biblical studies that Paul uses the language of **Numbers 12** in his description of his own gift of speaking for God / prophecy in **1 Corinthians 13:12**:

13:12 For now we are seeing through a mirror, in a riddle--
but then face to face!
Now I know partially,
but then I will know fully,
even as also I was fully known!

Paul affirms that his knowledge was not complete or final, but child-like; and that his vision was like looking through an ancient metal mirror, which would not reflect exactly, and which meant that what he saw was “in enigmas,” or “riddles.”

When we pretend that Paul (and we) knew / know everything, and have a clear vision of God, or the future, we are denying what Paul says about his own knowledge. He is a great hero of faith; he unashamedly proclaims the good news of Jesus Christ; but he tells us that at his best he can only speak partially, and that there is much that is enigmatic in what he says. Those who take this seriously will not expect Paul to know everything exactly or fully, or expect his statements concerning the future to be “iron-clad” predictions, to be precisely fulfilled. The same thing applies to the writing prophets of Israel. We should expect to find much that is “enigmatic,” that is puzzling and unclear in their writings.

But that said, we acknowledge gladly the powerful ethical and theological teaching of Paul, and of the prophets of Israel. In spite of their limitations, they, along with Paul, have much to teach us still today in our modern world!

For a description of the nocturnal reception of a “vision,” see **Job 4:12-16**, where Job’s so-called friend Eliphaz describes it as follows:

- 12 And to me a word was stolen
and it took my ear, a whisper—from where?
13 In excited thoughts from visions (of the) night,
when deep sleep falls upon people.
14 Dread encountered me, and trembling,
and it caused my bones to tremble greatly.
15 And a spirit will pass by my face;
hair of my flesh stood erect!
16 It stops, and I do not recognize its sight--
a likeness before my eyes
a whisper and a voice I hear.

Have you ever had an experience like that? What do you think of the promise that Peter quotes in **Acts 2:16-18**, from **Joel 2:28-29**^{Eng} **3:1-2**^{Heb}, that God in the last days would pour out His Spirit on “all flesh,” enabling sons and daughters (male and female) to speak for God / prophesy, old men to dream dreams, strong young men to see visions? Peter claimed that this statement was being fulfilled on that first “day of Pentecost” of the Christian movement. Compare **Isaiah 2:2**.

People who have never had such an experience will easily laugh at all of this, and consider it all a religious “illusion.” They will insist that if they haven’t had such an experience, it can’t exist. But those who have had the experience find their lives enriched, challenged and transformed. What do you think?

Gray holds that the title “vision” was given to the **Book of Isaiah** by its final editor, and that “Since actual vision plays but little part in the recorded experience of Isaiah, and when he does refer to such experiences (**6:1**), he, like Amos, uses the verb רָאָה, the use of וַיִּזְוֶן in this and similar titles may be due to the later conception that the chief function of the prophecy was apocalyptic, that prophecy was a revelation of the final stage of history. Compare:

Daniel 8:2,

And I saw in the vision [note the use of both roots, **ראה** and **חזו**],
and it happened in my seeing [again the root **ראה**],
and I (was) in Shushan [Susa, the winter residence of Persian kings] the Castle / Palace,
which (is) in Elam, the Province;
and I saw in the vision [again the two roots, **ראה** and **חזו**]
And I, I was beside (the) River Ulai.

Ben Sirach 48:24-25, speaking of Isaiah the prophet, who was “great and faithful in his vision”:

24 πνεύματι μεγάλῳ εἶδεν τὰ ἔσχατα
καὶ παρεκάλεσεν τοὺς πενθοῦντας ἐν Σιων
By a great spirit / Spirit he saw the last things,
and he comforted those mourning in Zion.
25 ἕως τοῦ αἰῶνος ὑπέδειξεν τὰ ἐσόμενα
καὶ τὰ ἀπόκρυφα πρὶν ἢ παραγενέσθαι αὐτά
Until the age he indicated the things coming,
and the hidden things before their happening.

Gray concludes that “To the authors of these titles the prophecies of Isaiah, Nahum, Obadiah may have been, as they subsequently were to many generations of Christian scholars, not so much or at all the teaching of those prophets to their own age, but a record of events seen in vision several centuries before they actually happened. Consequently, ‘vision’ not improbably retains here (in **Isaiah 1:1**) [the meaning] ‘the verbal record of what is seen in vision.’” (P. 2)

We think Gray is overlooking or forgetting the many passages where “vision” has to do with torah—with Divine teaching—not by any means exclusively with things to come in the future.

2. The Piel Verb גִּדַּד, giddal, “Raise Up or “Make Great,” in the Hebrew Bible:

Genesis 12:2, YHWH promises to make Abram’s name great;

Number 6:5, the Nazirite must let the hair of his head grow great;

Joshua 3:7, YHWH tells Joshua that he is beginning to make him great in the eyes of all Israel;
4:14, similar;

1 Kings 1:37, Benaiah prays for YHWH to make Solomon’s throne even greater than David’s, **1:47**, similar;

2 Kings 10:6, the leading men of the city were rearing / making great the royal princes;

Isaiah 1:2 here; YHWH has raised up / reared Israel;

Isaiah 23:4 the sea speaks,
I did not rear young men,
raise up virgins.” (Using the same two root-verbs that are used in **Isaiah 1:2**)

Isaiah 44:14, the rain made a tree grow;

Isaiah 49:21, barren Israel asks, Who raised these children for me?

Isaiah 51:18, of all the sons Jerusalem reared, there is none to take her by the hand.

Ezekiel 31:4, Assyria, a cedar in Lebanon, made to grow tall by nourishing water;

Hosea 9:12, even if Ephraim rears children, YHWH will bereave them of every one;

Jonah 4:10, Jonah was upset over a vine which he did not cause to grow;

Psalms 34:4^{Heb} / 3^{Eng}, “make great to the YHWH,” i.e., with praise;

Psalms 69:31^{Heb} / 30^{Eng}, the Psalmist vows to make YHWH’s name great with thanksgiving;

Job 7:17, what is a weak man, that You, YHWH, should make him great?;

Esther 3:1, King Ahasuerus / Xerxes made Haman great; **5:11** (similar);

Esther 10:2, the Persian king had raised Mordecai to greatness;

Daniel 1:5, young men were to be trained / raised / made great for three years;

1 Chronicles 29:12, it is in YHWH’s hands to raise up and strengthen,

1 Chronicles 29:25, YHWH made Solomon great in the eyes of all Israel; **2 Chronicles 1:1**, similar.

3. **The Polel Verb ׁל in the Hebrew Bible:**

Exodus 15:2, in worship, I will exalt Him!; **Isaiah 25:1**, same;

1 Samuel 2:7, YHWH sends poverty and wealth; He humbles and He exalts;

2 Samuel 22:49, YHWH exalted David above his enemies;

Isaiah 1:2, YHWH exalted His sons;

Isaiah 23:4,

Be ashamed, Sidon!
Because (the) sea spoke,
(the) stronghold of the sea,
saying:
I did not have labor-pains,
and I did not give birth,
and I did not raise young men;
I raised up virgins.

Ezekiel 31:4, Assyria was a cedar in Lebanon, and:

Water raised it,
Deep ocean raised (synonym),
with its rivers going around its place of planting,
and with its water-courses it sent for to all trees of the field.

Hosea 11:7, even if YHWH's people call to the Most High, He will not exalt them!;

Psalm 9:14^{Heb} / **13**^{Eng}, a prayer, O YHWH, lift me up from the gates of death!);

Psalm 18:49^{Heb} / **48**^{Eng}, YHWH has exalted David above his enemies;

Psalm 27:5, in the day of trouble, YHWH will lift me high upon a rock;

Psalm 30:2, in worship; I will exalt You, YHWH!;

Psalm 34:4^{Heb} / **3**^{Eng}, let us exalt YHWH's name together!;

Psalm 37:34, YHWH will exalt you to inherit the land;

Psalm 99:5, in worship; exalt YHWH our God!; **Psalm 99:9**, same;

Psalm 107:25, YHWH lifted high the waves;

Psalm 107:32, in worship; let people exalt YHWH;

Psalm 118:16, YHWH's right hand is lifted high;

Psalm 118:28, in worship; I will exalt You, YHWH!; **Psalm 145:1**, similar;

Job 17:4, God has closed the mockers' minds; therefore the mocker will not be exalted;

Proverbs 4:8, esteem wisdom highly, and she will exalt you;

Proverbs 14:34, right-relationships exalt a nation;

Ezra 9:9, to raise up the house of our God.

4. **The Noun מַכָּה, “Blow,” “Wound,” “Slaughter” in the Hebrew Bible:**

Leviticus 26:21, included in the curses that will come upon Israel if they disobey is:

And if you people will walk with me (in) opposition / contrariness,
and you are not willing to listen to Me;
and I will add upon you seven blow(s) / wound(s),
according to your sins!
(English translations have “seven-fold,” or “seven times.”)

Deuteronomy 28:59-61, those curses include מַכּוֹת גְּדוֹלוֹת, “great blows / wounds / slaughters.”

Deuteronomy 29:21, similar.

Numbers 11:33b, YHWH, after giving the Israelites quail to eat, became angry with them,
and YHWH struck against the people, an exceedingly great blow / wound.

Joshua 10:10, 20, Joshua struck the kings of the Amorites with an exceedingly great blow.

Judges 11:33, similar, of Jephthah against the Ammonites.

Judges 15:8, similar, of Samson against the Philistines.

1 Samuel 4:8-10, similar, of the Philistines against the Israelites.

1 Samuel 6:19, similar, of YHWH, against the men of Beth-Shemesh.

1 Samuel 19:8; 23:5, similar, of David against the Philistines.

1 Kings 20:21, similar, of Ahab against the Syrians.

Deuteronomy 25:3, a person found guilty is laid down and beaten in punishment:

Forty (times) he shall strike him;
he shall not add (additional strikes),
to avoid his adding to strike him above these many strike(s),
and your brother will be dishonored in your eyes.

1 Samuel 14:14, the first strike of Jonathan and his armor-bearer against the Philistines. **14:30**, similar.

1 Kings 22:35, the blood of Ahab’s wound (דַּם הַמַּכָּה) flowed into the floor of his chariot.

2 Kings 8:29; 9:15, the wounds which Joram of Israel suffered at the hands of the Syrians. **2**

Chronicles 22:6, same.

Isaiah 1:6, Judah’s sickness includes טְרִיָּה מַכָּה, “a fresh wound.”

Isaiah 10:26, YHWH will strike Assyria like He struck Midian at the rock of Oreb.

Isaiah 14:6, the king of Babylon has struck peoples unrelentingly.

Isaiah 27:7, it is a question,

Has He (YHWH) struck him (Israel) like the wound of his / His wounding?

King James, “Hath he smitten him, as he smote those that smote him?”

Tanakh, “Was he beaten as his beater has been?”

New Revised Standard, “Has he struck them down as he struck down those who struck them?”

New International, “Has *the LORD* struck her as he struck down those who struck her?”

New Jerusalem, “Has he struck him as he was struck by those who struck him?”

Isaiah 30:26, in the good times coming,

And (the) light of the moon it will be like (the) light of the heat / sun;

and (the) light of the heat / sun will be seven times—

like (the) light of the seven days,

on (the) day of YHWH’s binding up His people’s breaking / crushing;

and He will heal (the) severe wound of His striking.

Jeremiah 6:7,

Like a cistern / well keeps its water(s) cool,

so she (Jerusalem) kept cool her evil!

Violence and devastation is heard in her;

before Me constantly—sickness and wound(s)!

Jeremiah 10:19, personified Jerusalem cries out

נִחַלָּה מִכְּתִי

my wound was sick!

Jeremiah 14:17b, Jeremiah cries out concerning Jerusalem,

a great crushing crushed (the) virgin daughter of my people—

a wound was exceedingly sick!

Jeremiah 15:18a, Jeremiah asks,

For what reason was my pain enduring,

and my wound made sick / incurable?

Jeremiah 19:8, everyone passing by destroyed Jerusalem

will be appalled,
and will hiss over all her wounds!

Jeremiah 30:12-17, YHWH says that Jerusalem's crushing is incurable, her wound(s) sick—but nonetheless, YHWH promises,

I will raise up healing for you;
and from your wounds, I will heal you—
it is a saying of YHWH...

Jeremiah 49:17, similar, of Edom.

Jeremiah 50:13, similar, of Babylon.

Micah 1:9,

Because her blows / wounds (are) incurable; because it came as far as Judah;
it reached as far as my people's gate, as far as Jerusalem!

Nahum 3:19, Nahum says to the king of Nineveh / Assyria,

There is no lessening / alleviation to your crushing;
your wound / stroke is made sick;
all who hear your report will clap a hand over you;
because over whom did your evil not pass by constantly?

Zechariah 13:6, a prophet who has wounds between his hands / on his back.

Psalms 64:8^{Heb} / 7^{Eng},

And God shot them (with
an) arrow suddenly; there were their wounds.

Proverbs 20:30,

Blows / stripes of a bruise / wound—
a scraping / rubbing on evil;
and blows / injuries (synonym),
chambers of (the) belly.

Esther 9:5,

And the Jews / Judahites struck against all their enemies (with the) sword-blow(s) and a
slaughter and destruction;
and they did to / against those hating them as they pleased.

2 Chronicles 2:9, evidently מַכּוֹת, “wounds,” is a mistaken reading.

2 Chronicles 13:17a,

And Abijah and his people struck against them (the northern Israelites) (with) a great wound / blow.

2 Chronicles 28:5,

And YHWH his God gave him (Ahaz, king of Judah) into (the) hand of Syria's / Aram's king;
and they (the Syrians / Arameans) struck him;
and they took captive from him a great captivity;
and they brought (them) to Darmascus.
And he was also given into (the) hand of Israel' king,
and he struck against him, a great blow / wound.

5. **The Noun שָׂרִיד, Saridh, “Survivor” in the Hebrew Bible**

Numbers 21:35, Israel, under Moses, struck King Sihon of the Amorites, along with his sons and entire army, leaving no survivors. **Deuteronomy 2:34**, same; **Deuteronomy 3:3**, similar;

Numbers 24:19, Balaam predicts the coming of a ruler out of Jacob, who will destroy the city of Seir, leaving no survivors.

Joshua 8:22, under Joshua, the Israelites killed all the people of Ai, leaving no survivors except the king;

Joshua 10:20, the Israelites under Joshua killed the 5 Amorite kings with others in a cave, leaving a few survivors,

הַשְּׂרִידִים שְׂרְדוּ מֵהֶם
the survivors survived from them.

Joshua 10:28, Joshua took Makkedah, putting the city and its king to the sword, leaving no survivors. **10:30**, similar, at Libnah; **10:33**, similar, of Horem king of Gezer; **10:37**, similar, at Hebron; **10:39**, similar, at Debir.

Joshua 10:40, similar, but here including the hill country, the Negebh, the western foothills and the mountain slopes, leaving no survivors; **11:8**, similar, to the northern kings, leaving no survivors.

Judges 5:13, Deborah’s song tells of evidently Israelite survivors who came to join in the battle.

2 Kings 10:11, Jehu killed everyone of Ahab’s people in Jezreel, leaving him no survivors.

Isaiah 1:9, a שָׂרִיד, “survivor” has been left to Judah, probably meant as “a group of survivors.” Compare Isaiah’s use of the term שְׂאֵר “remnant / residue” in **10:21-22**.

Jeremiah 31:2,

In this way YHWH spoke:

It found favor / grace in the wilderness,
a people, survivors of (the) sword,
going to give rest to Israel.

(English translations vary for the last three words:

King James, “even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest.”

Tanakh, “When Israel was marching homeward.”

New Revised Standard, “when Israel sought for rest.”

New International, “I will come to give rest to Israel.”

New Jerusalem, “Israel is marching to his rest.”

Jeremiah 42:17, Jeremiah tells the Israelites intending to go to Egypt that YHWH will not allow one of them to survive; **44:14**, similar;

Jeremiah 47:4, YHWH announces that the time has come to destroy the Philistines, cutting off all survivors who could help Tyre and Sidon;

Joel 3:5^{Heb} / 2:32^{Eng},

And it will happen—everyone who will call on YHWH’s name will be delivered / escape, because in / on Mountain Zion and in Jerusalem, there will be an escape / deliverance, just as YHWH said, and in / with the survivor whom YHWH will call.

Obadiah 1:14, the Edomites waited along the roads when Jerusalem was destroyed, to cut down Jerusalem’s fugitives, and hand over their survivors to their enemies.

Obadiah 1:18, the Israelites will be a fire to burn the house of Esau (Edom), leaving no survivors;

Job 18:19, Bildad describes the fate of the wicked in **verses 5-21**, stating that the wicked person will have no survivors; **20:21, 26**, Zophar, similarly.

Job 27:15, Job expresses a similar view to that of his “friends,” claiming like them that the wicked will be destroyed, and their survivors will be devoured by the plague.

Lamentations 2:22, in the day of YHWH’s anger against Jerusalem, there was no survivor!

For statements in **Isaiah** concerning a “remnant” that is left surviving, see:

Isaiah 4:2-3, in the good times coming,

- 2 In / on that day, YHWH’s branch / sprout will be for beauty and for honor / glory; and the land’s fruit for exaltation and for beauty for those escaped of Israel.
- 3 And the remnant / what is left in Zion, and the one(s) left over in Jerusalem will be called set-apart to Him—everyone written / recorded for lives / life in Jerusalem.

Isaiah 10:20-23,

- 20 And it will on that day, Israel’s remnant / remainder and (the) escaped remnant of Jacob’s house will not again (have) to rely on (the) one who struck him / them; and it will rely upon YHWH, Set-apart One of Israel in true faithfulness.
- 21 A remnant / remainder will return, a remnant / remainder will return to God (El) Mighty One.
- 22 Because if Your people Israel will be like sand of the sea, a remnant will return in it; annihilation, strictly decided, overflowing right-relationship.

23 because a complete destruction and one decided,
my Lord YHWH of Armies is making
in (the) midst of all the land / earth.
(English translations of **verse 23** vary:
King James, “For the Lord GOD of hosts shall make a consumption, even determined, in the
midst of all the land.”
Tanakh, “For my Lord GOD of Hosts is carrying out A decree of destruction upon all the land.”
New Revised Standard, “For the Lord GOD of hosts will make a full end, as decreed, in all
the earth.”
New International, “The Lord, the LORD Almighty, will carry out the destruction decreed upon
the whole land.”
New Jerusalem, “for, throughout the country, the Lord Yahweh Sabaoth will enforce the
destruction now decreed.”

Isaiah 11:11, in the good times coming,

And it will happen in that day,
my Lord will add a second time His hand to acquire a remnant of His people,
which will be left remaining from Assyria,
and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from islands of the sea.

Isaiah 11:16,

and there will be a raised road / public way for My people’s remnant,
which will be left remaining from Assyria,
just as it was for Israel in (the) day of his / its coming up from Egypt-land.

Isaiah 14:30,

and (the) first-born of weak, poor people will find pasture,
and those in want / poor people (synonym) will lie down in safety / for the security;
and I will kill / put to death with the famine your (Philistia’s) root,
and your remnant / remainder it will murder / kill.
(Here it is the remnant of the Philistines, not of Judah / Israel.) **Isaiah 15:9**, similar, the
remnant of Moab.

Isaiah 37:4b, King Hezekiah sends messengers to Isaiah, asking him to pray for the remnant of
Judah being threatened by the king of Assyria:

and you shall lift up a prayer on behalf of the remnant that is left.

Isaiah 37:31-32, Isaiah assures Hezekiah that YHWH will turn Sennacherib back,

And an escaped remnant of Judah’s house that is left remaining
will again (send) a root downward,
and will make / bear fruit upwards.
Because from Jerusalem will go forth a remnant
and an escaped remnant from Mount Zion–

YHWH's ardor / zeal will do this!

Isaiah 44:17, the "remnant / remainder" of a tree from which an idol is made.

Isaiah 46:3,

Listen to Me, house of Jacob, and (the) whole / entire remnant / remainder of Israel's
house—
the ones carried as a load from (the) belly,
the ones lifted up / carried from (the) womb (synonym).

6. **The Noun קִטְרֶת, “Sweet-smelling Incense,” in the Hebrew Bible**

Exodus 25:6, 30:1, 7, 8, 9, 27, 35, 37; 31:8, 11, the use of sweet-smelling incense is commanded for use in the moveable sanctuary;

Exodus 35:8, 5, 15, 28, the materials are given for making the sweet-smelling incense;

Exodus 37:25, 29; the altar for burning the incense, and the incense are made by the Israelites;

Exodus 40:5, 27, the altar and its burning incense are put in place and used;

Leviticus 4:7, blood places on the horns of the altar of incense;

Leviticus 10:1, Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu offer unauthorized incense fire, and are put to death;

Leviticus 16:12, 13, 13, on the day of covering / atonement, the high priest is to take burning incense inside the most set-apart place, the smoke of which will cover the cover of the chest of the covenant;

Numbers 4:16, Eleazar, Aaron’s son, has charge of the sweet-smelling incense;

Numbers 7:14, 20, 26, 32, 38, 44, 50, 56, 62, 68, 74, 80, 86, leaders of the different tribes of Israel all bring their offerings including a golden dish filled with sweet-smelling incense;

Numbers 16:6-7, Moses tells Korah and his followers to take censers with sweet-smelling incense to burn before YHWH, to show whom YHWH has chosen to lead Israel;

Numbers 16:17-18, Korah and those with him, 250 in all, took censers filled with incense, as also did Aaron and Moses, to stand before the entrance of the moveable sanctuary;

Numbers 16:35, YHWH sent fire to devour / consume the 250 men in opposition to Moses and Aaron;

Numbers 17:5^{Heb} / 16:40^{Eng}, the bronze censers from Korah’s rebellion are beaten into a bronze cover for the altar, to remind the Israelites that no one except a descendant of Aaron should burn incense before YHWH;

Numbers 17:11-12^{Heb} / 16:46-47^{Eng}, the whole assembly of Israel gathered to complain about the death of so many Israelites, resulting in YHWH’s sending a plague that caused the death of 14,700 Israelites—a plague that was stopped by Aaron’s taking his censer with burning incense to make a covering / atonement for those not yet killed;

1 Samuel 2:28, Eli the high priest is reminded of how YHWH chose his Aaronic family to burn incense and officiate in Israel’s offerings;

Isaiah 1:13, the only mention of incense in **Isaiah**; YHWH declares Israel's sweet-smelling incense to be an "abomination" (תועבה);

Ezekiel 8:11, among the wicked things happening in the temple that are shown to Ezekiel, is 70 Israeli officials, each with a censer in his hand, burning sweet-smelling incense;

Ezekiel 16:18, the prostitute city of Jerusalem is accused of burning YHWH's sweet-smelling incense before her male idols; **23:41**, Oholibah (Jerusalem) the prostitute has burned YHWH's incense before the couch on which she practiced prostitution with foreigners;

Psalms 66:15,

Offerings-up of fatlings I will offer up to You,
with sweet-smelling incense of rams;

I will make an (offering of) an ox with male goats. Selah.

(**King James**, "I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams; I will offer bullocks with goats. Selah.

Other English translations, evidently assuming that the use of "with sweet-smelling incense" must be a mistake, have:

Tanakh, "I offer up fatlings to You, with the odor of burning rams; I sacrifice bulls and he-goats. Selah."

New Revised Standard, "I will offer to you burnt offerings of fatlings, with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams; I will make an offering of bulls and goats. Selah."

New International, "I will sacrifice fat animals to you and an offering of rams; I will offer bulls and goats. Selah."

New Jerusalem, "I will offer you rich burnt offerings, with the smoke of burning rams. I will sacrifice to you bullocks and goats. Pause."

Psalms 141:2,

My prayer will be established (as) sweet-smelling incense before You,
a lifting up of my hands, an evening-offering!

(This is the first place in biblical literature where prayer is considered a symbol of incense. See **Revelation 5:8** and **8:13**.)

Proverbs 27:9,

Oil and sweet-smelling incense make a heart / mind glad;
and sweetness of his friend—
from counsel of an innermost being."

(English translations vary greatly:

King James, "Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel."

Tanakh, "Oil and incense gladden the heart, And the sweetness of a friend is better than one's own counsel."

New Revised Standard, "Perfume and incense make the heart glad, but the soul is torn by trouble."

New International, “Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of one's friend springs from his earnest counsel.”

New Jerusalem, “Oil and perfume gladden the heart, and the sweetness of friendship rather than self-reliance.”

1 Chronicles 6:34^{Heb} / **49**^{Eng},

And Aaron and his sons—(were) making sacrifices smoke upon (the) altar of the offering-up,
and upon (the) altar of the sweet-smelling incense,
for all (the) work of (the) most set-apart place,
and to cover over / make atonement on behalf of Israel,
according to all which Moses, the God's servant, commanded.

1 Chronicles 28:18, king David gave plans to Solomon for building the temple,

and for (the) altar of the sweet-smelling incense—
refined gold by the weight;
and for the construction / pattern of the chariot of the cherubim—
gold for spreading out and covering over (the) chest of YHWH's covenant.

2 Chronicles 2:3a, Solomon announces,

Look—I am building a house / temple for YHWH my God's name,
to set apart for Him,
to cause smoke before Him—
sweet-smelling incense of spices...

2 Chronicles 13:11a, Abijah of Judah tells the people of Jeroboam of Northern Israel, that they have forsaken YHWH to serve other Gods; but in Judah YHWH's worship under the Levite priests goes on.

And they are making smoke to the YHWH—
offerings-up by the morning, by the morning;
and in the evening by the evening;
and sweet-smelling incense of spices...

2 Chronicles 26:16-19, the story of king Uzziah of Judah, who was powerful and accomplished many good things, but who, when he became strong, also became proud. He went into the temple, took a censer of sweet-smelling incense in his hand to burn to YHWH, something only the priests were authorized to do—and Uzziah was punished by YHWH with severe skin disease until his death.

2 Chronicles 29:7, King Hezekiah, who restored the worship of YHWH in the temple, tells how their fathers had been unfaithful, and had stopped the burning of incense and offering-ups in the temple.

7. **Commands in the Hebrew Bible for New Moon or Monthly Observances:**

Leviticus 23:24,

Speak to Israel's children saying,
In the seventh month, on (the) first (day) to the month,
there will be for you people an observance of rest of remembrance,
a trumpet-call, a called set-apart (day).

Numbers 10:10-11,

- 10 And on a day of your rejoicing, and on your appointed times, and on beginnings of your months—
and you shall give a blast on the trumpets,
over your offerings-up and over your sacrifices of peace;
and they will be for you people for a remembrance before your God.
I am YHWH your God!
- 11 And it happened on the second year on the second month, on (the) twentieth (day) in the month,
the cloud was taken up from upon the congregation's dwelling-place / tabernacle.

Numbers 28:11-15,

- 11 And on beginnings of your months you people shall bring near an offering-up to the YHWH—
two young bulls, offspring of cattle, and one ram;
seven lambs without blemish, one year old,
12 and three tenths of fine flour,
an offering mixed with the oil for each young bull;
and two tenths of fine flour,
an offering mixed with the oil for each ram.
13 and a tenth, a tenth of fine flour,
an offering mixed with the oil
for each lamb, an offering-up,
a pleasing smell for the YHWH.
14 And their drink-offerings, half a hin it will be for the young bull, and a third of a hin for the ram;
and a fourth of a hin for the lamb—wine.
This (is) an offering-up, month by month, for (the) months of the year.
15 And one buck of (the) goats
for a missing-of-the-mark offering to the YHWH;
in addition to the continual offering-up,
it shall be made, and its drink-offering.

8. Occurrences of the Noun שַׁבָּת, Shabbath in the Book of Isaiah:

Isaiah 1:13,

You shall not continue to bring empty / vain offering(s)--
(sweet smelling) incense—it is an abomination to Me!
New moon and day of rest; to call for a set-apart assembly!
I cannot (endure) wickedness and assembly!

Isaiah 56:2-7,

- 2 How blessed a man (who) will practice this,
and a son of humanity (who) will lay strong hold on it--
observing a Rest-day, avoiding profaning it,
and restraining his hand, avoiding doing anything evil.
- 3 And the foreigner's child, the one joined to YHWH,
shall not speak, saying,
YHWH will certainly separate me from His people!"
And the eunuch / castrated man will not say,
Look—I (am) a dried up tree!
- 4 Because in this way YHWH spoke:
to the castrated men who observes My Rest-days,
and who chooses that in which I took pleasure,
and who takes strong hold of My covenant--
- 5 and I will give to them in My house, and within My walls
a hand / memorial and the name,
better than sons and daughters--
a long-lasting name I will give to him,
which will not be cut off.
- 6 And the foreigner's children,
who have joined (themselves) to YHWH,
to serve Him,
and to love YHWH's name,
to belong to Him as slaves / servants,
everyone who observes a Rest-day,
not profaning it,
and who are takes strong hold on My covenant--
- 7 and I will bring them to (the) mountain of My set-apartness;
and I will cause them to rejoice in My house of prayer;
their offerings and their sacrifices (will be) acceptable upon My altar--
because My house will be called A house of prayer for all the peoples!
(Obviously, the **Book of Isaiah** as a whole is not against temple-worship, including animal sacrifices, or against observing days of rest—when such liturgical worship is done sincerely, to honor YHWH, and not as a cover-up for sinning!)

Isaiah 58:13, in the good times coming, you will be blessed,

If you will turn back your foot from (busy activities on the) day of rest,
(from) doing your pleasures on My set-apart day;
and (if) you will call the set-apart day an exquisite delight,
to set apart YHWH (as) an Honored One;
and (if) you will honor Him / it, by not making your journeys,
by not finding your (own) pleasure, and speaking (empty) words—

Isaiah 66:23,

And it will happen as often as a month (comes) in its month,
a Rest-day in its Rest-day,
all flesh will come to worship before Me—
said YHWH.

These passages are evidence of the **Book of Isaiah's** not being against observance of the day of rest when observed sincerely, and not affected by wickedness.

9. **The Noun מִקְרָא, “Convocation,” “Sacred Assembly”**

Exodus 12:16,

and on the first day [of the pilgrim-festival of Pentecost] a set-apart assembly;
and on the seventh day a set-apart convocation will be for you people;
all work shall not be done on them,
howbeit that which will be eaten by every person,
it alone will be prepared for you (plural).

Leviticus 23:1-8,

- 1 And YHWH spoke to Moses, saying,
- 2 Speak to Israel’s children, and you shall say to them,
 YHWH’s appointed meetings which you shall call set-apart assemblies–
these are those appointed meetings:
- 3 (For) six days work shall be done;
 and on the seventh day, a rest of resting, a set-apart assembly;
you people shall not do any work.
 It is a rest for the YHWH in all your dwelling-places.
- 4 These (are) YHWH’s appointed meetings, set-apart assemblies,
 which you shall proclaim at their appointed time.
- 5 In the first month, on the fourteenth of the month, between the two evenings / twilight,
 a passover for the YHWH.
- 6 And on the fifteenth day of this month,
 a pilgrimage-festival of the unleavened breads for the YHWH.
(For) seven days you shall eat unleavened breads.
- 7 On the first day, there will be a set-apart assembly for you.
 You shall not do any work of service.
- 8 And you shall bring near a fire-offering for the YHWH (for) seven days.
 On the seventh day, a set-apart assembly;
you shall not do any work of service. **Leviticus 23:21, 24, 27, 35-37; Numbers 28:18, 25-26;
29:1, 7, 12, all similar.**

Numbers 10:2, two silver trumpets made for signaling a convocation / assembly or for breaking camp.

Isaiah 1:13, here, the unique phrase מִקְרָא קָרָא, “to call / proclaim an assembly,” a generalization, applying to all called convocations / assemblies.

Isaiah 4:5, in the good times coming, when YHWH has cleansed Jerusalem from all its blood-stains,

And YHWH will create over all Mountain Zion’s established place,
and over her called assemblies a cloud by day,
and smoke and brightness of fire’s flame by night–
because over all glory, a canopy.

(Obviously, it is not the assemblies as such that YHWH cannot endure, but only those that are tainted by His people's wickedness. In YHWH's promised future, those tainted assemblies will be returned to glory / honor!)

Nehemiah 8:8,

And they called out / read in the scroll, in the God's **torah** / teaching,
making distinct / explaining [translating into Aramaic?] and making clear;
and they understood in the assembly / reading.

(This may refer to the fact that returning exiles from Babylonia, no longer fluent in biblical Hebrew, but having spoken Aramaic for some two generations, had to have the reading of the Hebrew **torah** / teaching translated into Aramaic. This is the only passage where we have found the noun מִקְרָא with the possible meaning "reading.")

10. The Noun **עֲצָרָה**, a Synonym of **מִקְרָא**, “Assembly”

Leviticus 23:36,

Seven days you shall bring near a fire-offering for the YHWH;
on the eighth day, there will be for you people a set-apart assembly (**מִקְרָא**),
and you shall bring near a fire-offering for the YHWH.

It is an assembly (**עֲצָרָת**, alternative spelling);
you shall not do any work of service.” **Numbers 29:35**, similar.

Deuteronomy 16:8,

Six days you shall eat unleavened breads;
and on the seventh day, an assembly to the YHWH your God.
You (singular) shall not do work.

2 Kings 10:20,

And Jehu said, Set-apart an assembly for the Baal;
and they called / proclaimed (it).

Isaiah 1:13b,

I (YHWH) cannot–wickedness and assembly!

Jeremiah 9:1b, Jeremiah complains that his people,

all of them–sexually immoral people,
an assembly of treacherous / faithless people!

Joel 1:14, Joel issues this appeal for YHWH:

Set-apart an abstinence from food!
Proclaim an assembly!
Gather (the) officials / elders!
Everyone dwelling (in) the land!
(To) YHWH your God’s house / temple,
and cry out to YHWH! **Joel 2:15**, similar.

Amos 5:21, Amos quotes YHWH as saying,

I hated, I despised your (plural) pilgrimage festivals;
and I will not smell (the incense) at your assemblies!

Nehemiah 8:18,

And he (Nehemiah? Ezra?) read in (the) scroll of the God's **torah** / teaching, day by day,
from the first day until the last day (a total of seven days);
and they made a pilgrimage-festival (for) seven days;
and on the eighth day, an assembly according to the legal decision.

2 Chronicles 7:9,

And they (the people of Solomon's day) made on the eighth day an assembly;
because they made a dedication of the altar (for) seven days,
and the pilgrimage-festival seven days.

11. **A New Testament Example of Washing and Transformation of Life: Luke 3:3-14**

- 3.3 And he [John the Immerser] came into all (the) surrounding country of the Jordan,
proclaiming an immersion of turning around for forgiveness of sins,
3.4 as it was written in a scroll of words of Isaiah the prophet:
A voice crying out in the wilderness,
Prepare the Lord's road;
make straight his pathways;
3:5 every ravine will be filled,
and every mountain and hill will be leveled,
and the crooked will be (turned into) straight,
and the rough (roads) into smooth (roads);
3.6 and all flesh will see the salvation of God.
- 3.7 He was saying therefore to the crowds going out to be immersed by him,
Offspring of poisonous snakes—
who gave you people directions to flee from the soon-coming wrath?
3.8 Therefore produce fruits corresponding to (your) turning-around;
and do not begin to say within yourselves,
We have Abraham (as) father.
For I tell you people that
God is able out of these stones to raise up children for Abraham.
- 3.9 Then also, already the ax lies at the root of the trees;
therefore every tree not producing good fruit is being cut out,
and is being thrown into fire.
- 3.10 And the crowds were asking him, saying,
What therefore shall we do?
- 3.11 Then answering, he was saying to them,
The one having two under-garments,
let him share with the one having none;
and the one having food, let him do similarly.
- 3.12 Then tax-collectors also came to be immersed, and they said to him,
Teacher, what shall we do?
- 3.13 Then he said to them,
Collect nothing more, beyond that which has been decreed for you.
- 3.14 Then also those serving in the army were asking him, saying,
What shall we also do?
And he said to them,
Extort (from) no one by violence, nor oppress;
and be satisfied with your wages.

12. **Occurrences of the Hiphil Verb לְהַרְעֵל, To Do Evil”**

Genesis 19:7, 9, Lot calls what the men of Sodom are wanting to do evil, and then the men of Sodom threaten Lot that they will do evil to him; **Judges 19:23** has a closely similar story at Gibeah in Benjamin;

Genesis 31:7, Jacob tells his wives that God has not allowed Laban to do evil to him;

Genesis 43:6, Israel (Jacob) tells his sons that they have done evil to him by telling Pharaoh about Benjamin’s existence;

Genesis 44:5, Joseph tells his servant to tell his brothers that they have done evil in stealing his cup with which he foretells the future / practices divination (!--a practice forbidden by the Mosaic torah!)

Exodus 5:22-23, Moses complains to YHWH that He has done evil to the people of Israel, as has Pharaoh;

Leviticus 5:4, if someone takes an oath אִם לְהַרְעֵל אִם לְהַיְטִיב “to do evil or to do good”...

Numbers 11:11, Moses complains to YHWH that He has done evil to him, placing the burden of the people of Israel upon him;

Numbers 16:15, Moses denies to YHWH that he has done evil to the people of Korah, Dathan and Abiram;

Numbers 20:15, the Israelites tell the king of Edom that the Egyptians have done evil to them;
Deuteronomy 26:6, a similar statement;

Joshua 24:20, Joshua warns the Israelites that if they forsake YHWH and serve other Gods,

and He will turn / repent and do evil to you people;

and He will finish you off, after He did good to you!

(Like the people, YHWH also chooses between doing good and doing evil! What do you think? Is your theology capable of handling this kind of assertion concerning God?)

1 Samuel 12:25, Samuel tells the people of Israel,

And if doing evil you will do evil,

both you people and your king will be swept away!

(Here the hiphil infinitive absolute is combined with the finite (imperfect) verb, making the statement strongly emphatic concerning doing evil.)

1 Samuel 25:34, David tells Abigail that YHWH, the God of Israel, has kept him from doing evil to her.

1 Samuel 26:21, Saul tells David that he will not again do evil to him.

1 Kings 14:9a, the blind spokesperson / prophet Ahijah tells Jeroboam's wife to inform Jeroboam, and you did evil, to do (more) than all who were before you!" **1 Kings 16:25**, a similar statement concerning Omri, king of Israel in Samaria; **2 Kings 21:11**, a similar statement concerning Manasseh, king of Judah;

1 Kings 17:20, Elijah cries out to YHWH claiming that

You did evil, to kill her son! (the widow's son with whom Elijah had been staying)
(Have you ever felt like accusing God of having done evil?)

Isaiah 1:4, Isaiah accuses the people of Jerusalem and Judah with being "a seed (descendant(s) of those doing evil."

Isaiah 1:16, Isaiah uses the imperative tense to command Judah to "cease to do evil!"

Isaiah 9:16b,

...because all of it (Israel ?)—
godless, and doing evil;
and every mouth is speaking foolishness!

Isaiah 11:9a, in the good days coming,

"they will not do evil, and they will not destroy,
in all My set-apart mountain..."; **Isaiah 65:25**, similar;

Isaiah 14:20, depicting the terrible future that awaits the King of Babylon, Isaiah mentions a saying that will be heard at his death:

(the) seed / descendant(s) of those doing evil will not be named for long-lasting time!

Isaiah 31:2b, it is said of YHWH:

"and He will arise against a house-hold of those doing evil..."

Isaiah 41:23b, the idols are challenged,

indeed, do good and do evil,
and we will worship,
and we will see together...! **Jeremiah 10:5** is closely similar.

Jeremiah 4:22,

Because My people (is) foolish;
they did not know Me;

they (are) children—fools;
and they are not discerning / understanding;
they are wise people to do evil,
and / but to do good they did not know!

Jeremiah 7:26b,

they did evil more than their fathers! **Jeremiah 16:12**, similar;

Jeremiah 13:23,

Will an Ethiopian change his skin?
And a leopard his spots?
Also, you people, will you be able to do good,
having been taught to do evil?"

Jeremiah 20:13b, Sing a song of praise to YHWH,

because He delivered a poor person's innermost-being from (the) hand of evil-doers!

Jeremiah 23:14b, YHWH has seen a horrible thing in the prophets of Jerusalem, including the fact that they

strengthened (the) hands of doers of evil,
so that they did not repent / turn, each one from his evil.

Jeremiah 25:6b, if the people do not turn to other Gods, then YHWH says,

I will not do evil to you people.

Jeremiah 25:29, YHWH says He is beginning to do evil to Jerusalem, the city called by His name.

Jeremiah 31:28,

And it will happen, just as I watched over them to pull up and to pull down,
and to throw down and to destroy and to do evil,
so I will watch over them to build and to plant—a saying of YHWH!

Jeremiah 38:9, Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian tells king Zedekiah that his men had done evil to Jeremiah, throwing him into a cistern to die of hunger.

Micah 3:4b, Micah tells the leaders of Judah that YHWH will not hear their prayers, because they made their deeds evil.

Micah 4:6,

On that day—it is a saying of YHWH—
I will gather the lame / the one limping;
and the one cast out I will gather (synonym),
and to whom I did evil.

Zephaniah 1:12b, YHWH says He will punish

the ones saying in their heart,
YHWH will not do good,
and He will not do evil!

(How do you understand this? And how do you understand the other statements in which YHWH is described as “doing evil”? Does this simply mean “bringing evil consequences on evildoers”?)

Zechariah 8:14, YHWH of Armies reminds the readers of a time when He purposed to do evil to Israel when their fathers provoked Him to wrath.

Psalms 15:4, one of the qualities of the person who will dwell on YHWH’s set-apart mountain is:

he swore to do evil,
and will not change.

(English translations vary:

King James, “*He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.*”

(The words in italics are not in the Hebrew text);

Tanakh, “who stands by his oath even to his hurt.”

(We suspect that what is in mind is someone who swears “to do evil” to a criminal, or to destroy an enemy in war, and who will not turn back from such a task. What do you think?)

Psalms 22:17, the suffering psalmist cries out, “a congregation / gang of evildoers surrounded me...!”

Psalms 26:5, the suffering psalmist, testifying to his innocence, states that “I hated an assembly of evildoers!”

Psalms 27:2,

When evildoers draw near against me, to devour my flesh—
they are my adversaries and my enemies—they stumbled and they fell!

Psalms 37:1b, “don’t let yourself burn with anger against evildoers.”

Psalms 37:8b-9a, “...do not let yourself burn with anger, surely to do evil;
because evildoers will be cut off!”

Psalms 44:3,

You (God), Your hand dispossessed nations, and You planted them;
You did evil to peoples, and You sent them forth.

Psalm 64:3, the psalmist prays to God: “Hide me from (the) counsel of evildoers!”

Psalm 74:3b, “everything in the set-apart place / sanctuary an enemy has done evil to!

Psalm 92:12^{Heb} / **11**^{Eng},

“And my eye looked on my journeys(?),
on the evildoers standing against me;
my ears heard.”

(English translations have:

King James, “Mine eye also shall see *my desire* on mine enemies, *and* mine ears shall hear *my desire* of the wicked that rise up against me.”

Tanakh, “ I shall see the defeat of my watchful foes, hear of the downfall of the wicked who beset me.”

New Revised Standard, “My eyes have seen the downfall of my enemies; my ears have heard the doom of my evil assailants.”

New International, “My eyes have seen the defeat of my adversaries; my ears have heard the rout of my wicked foes.”

New Jerusalem, “I caught sight of the ambush against me, overheard the plans of the wicked.”

Psalm 94:16,

Who will arise / stand up for me against evildoers?
Who will take a stand for me with / against workers of wickedness?

Psalm 105:15,

You people shall not touch / strike My anointed ones;
and to my prophets you shall not do evil!”; **1 Chronicles 16:22**, same.

Psalm 119:115a,

Turn aside from me, evildoers!

Job 8:20, Bildad tells Job,

Look—God will not reject a complete / perfect person;
and He will not lay strong hold on (the) hand of evildoers!

Proverbs 4:16a, wicked people will not sleep if / unless they do not do evil.”

Proverbs 17:4, An evildoer pays attention to a lip of wickedness.

Proverbs 24:8,

One who plans to do evil,
to him Master of Devices they will call.

Proverbs 24:19a, Don't get yourself heated up over evildoers.

Ruth 1:21b, Naomi says that "Shaddai did evil to me!"

1 Chronicles 21:17,

And David said to the God,

Did I not say / order to count the people?

And I (am) he—who sinned;

and doing evil I did evil (Hebrew way of making emphasis, infinitive absolute with finite verb).

And these, the flock / sheep—what did they do?

YHWH my God, please let Your hand be on me and on my father's house—
and on Your people, not for a plague / pestilence!

What conclusions should we draw from reading all of these passages? One is that the age-old problem of choosing between good and evil, between doing good and doing evil, continues throughout human history. That means, the story of the garden of Eden is our story; we constantly keep making the same choice that Adam and Eve did.

A second conclusion is that Isaiah believed that human beings in his day still had the ability to reverse the choice to do evil, and could choose to do good. He was no "Calvinist"!

13. **The Imperative Verb** **יִרְשָׁו**, “Seek!” or “Seek Out!” in the Hebrew Bible

1 Kings 22:5, King Jehoshaphat of Judah tells Ahab of Israel:

Seek (singular imperative) now YHWH’s word!” **2 Chronicles 18:4**, same.

2 Kings 1:2b, Ahaziah, the injured king of Israel, tells his messengers:

Go, seek by Baal-Zebub, God of Ebron,
whether I will recover from this sickness.

2 Kings 22:13, King Josiah instructs his officials,

Go, seek YHWH on my behalf,
and on behalf of the people, and on behalf of all Judah,
concerning (the) words of this scroll that was found;
because great (is) YHWH’s wrath, which is kindled against us,
because our fathers did not listen to (the) words of this scroll,
to do according to all that is written upon it!” **2 Chronicles 34:21**, same.

Isaiah 1:16,

...seek justice!

Isaiah 8:19b, **Isaiah** predicts that people will say to his disciples,

seek those who consult the dead and those who communicate with familiar spirits...
Instead, **Isaiah** asks,
“should not a people seek to its God?”

The next verse begins, **לְתוֹרָה וְלִתְעוּדָה**, “to **torah** / teaching and to testimony,”
that is, **Isaiah** implies they should seek the written record of YHWH’s revelation, instead
of humanly manufactured attempts at communication with the dead / spirits.

Isaiah 34:16a,

Seek from upon a scroll of YHWH, and read!...
(This statement and **8:19b** are among the earliest references in the **Hebrew Bible** to written
scrolls as containing YHWH’s revelation, which the people can take up and read for
themselves.)

Isaiah 55:6,

Seek YHWH in / while He is to be found!
Call Him while He (is) near!

Jeremiah 21:2, King Zedekiah's messengers come to Jeremiah with the request,

Seek now YHWH on our behalf!

Jeremiah 29:7, Jeremiah tells the people of Judah going into exile, to build homes and have their children marry, and

Seek the city's (Babylon's) peace / welfare, where you people were taken as exiles,
and make intercession on its behalf to YHWH,
because in its peace / welfare will be your peace / welfare.

Amos 5:4,

Because in this way YHWH spoke to Israel's household:
Seek Me, and live!

Amos 5:6,

Seek YHWH and live!
So that He will not rush like the fire (on) Joseph's [Northern Israel's] household, and
devour (it),
and there is no one quenching (the fire) for Bethel!

Amos 5:14a,

Seek good, and not evil,
so that you people will live!

Psalms 105:4,

Seek YHWH and His strength;
seek (a synonym) His presence constantly! **1 Chronicles 16:11**, identical.

1 Chronicles 28:8, the elderly king David charges his son Solomon,

And now in the eyes of all Israel, YHWH's assembly, and in our God's ears,
keep and seek (both plural imperatives) all YHWH your (plural) God's commandments,
so that you people will inherit the good land,
and will give (it) as an inheritance to your children after you,
until long-lasting time!

The objects of seeking that are mentioned in these passages include: YHWH's word; answer to question of healing from a non-Israelite God; the meaning of a scroll that was found in the time of King Josiah; justice; communication with the dead—no, seek God; from a scroll of YHWH; YHWH Himself; YHWH on behalf of others; peace for the City of Babylon; YHWH as the Source of life; YHWH to avoid catastrophe; good and not evil, to enable life; YHWH, His strength and presence; YHWH's commandments.

14. **The Piel Form of the Verb אָשַׁר in the Hebrew Bible:**

Genesis 30:13,

And Leah said, In my happiness—
because daughters pronounced me happy—
and she called his name Happy One.”

(Here is a play on the root אָשַׁר, with 3 different words in the same sentence from that root.)

Isaiah 1:17, אָשַׁרְוּ חַמּוֹץ, but what does this strange phrase mean? “They pronounced *chamots* happy”? Or, “they caused *chamots* to advance”? And what does *chamots* mean?

Isaiah 3:12,

My people—his taskmaster, acting (like) a child; and women ruled over him!
My people—those guiding leading your footsteps are causing to err / go astray;
and (the) way of your paths they swallowed up!” Compare the next verse:

Isaiah 9:15,

And those guiding this people’s footsteps are leading them astray;
and those having their footsteps guided are being swallowed up.

Malachi 3:12,

And they will pronounce you people happy, all the nations;
because you will be a land of delight, said YHWH of Armies!

Malachi 3:15, words that the returned exiles have spoken against YHWH include these:

And now, we are pronouncing happy (the) insolent / arrogant people;
also, evildoers were built up;
also they tested / tried God, and they escaped!

Psalms 72:17,

His name will be / may it be to long-lasting time;
before (the) sun His name be increased;
and all nations will bless themselves in it / Him;
they will pronounce it / Him happy!

Job 29:11, Job recounts how

If / when an ear heard,
and it would pronounce me happy;

and an eye saw, and it would bear

witness to / testify concerning me!

Proverbs 4:14,

In a way of wicked people, you shall not go / enter;
and you shall not advance / go straight on a way of evil people.

Proverbs 23:19,

Listen, you, my son, and be wise;
and advance / go straight in the way of your heart / mind;
make straight your heart in the way!

Proverbs 31:28a,

her sons / children arose and pronounce her happy .

Song of Solomon 6:9b,

daughters saw her and pronounced her happy .

15. **Occurrences of the Noun יָתוֹם, “Orphan” in the Hebrew Bible**

Deuteronomy 10:18, YHWH, the great and awesome God Who shows no partiality and won't take a bribe, is One

Doing justice (to) orphan and widow,
and loving a temporary resident / immigrant,
to give to him bread / food and a garment. (See **verse 19**, which commands love for the temporary resident / immigrant.)

Deuteronomy 24:17,

You (singular) shall not thrust aside (the) justice of a temporary resident, an orphan;
and you shall not hold in pledge a garment of a widow!

Deuteronomy 27:19a,

Cursed—one thrusting aside (the) justice of a temporary resident / immigrant,
an orphan, and a widow!

Job 6:27, Job charges his so-called “friends”:

Also, over an orphan you (plural) will cast (lots, evidently to take away their belongings),
and you will get by trade over your friend.
(But what does this last phrase mean?)

Job 24:9, in this chapter where Job describes the wicked who abuse the poor and the widow; this statement is included:

They seize an orphan from (its mother's) breast;
and from a poor person they take pledges!

Job 31:17, in this chapter Job defends his righteousness, denying he has hurt others, including the statement:

And I (was not) eating my morsel / bit of food by myself,
and an orphan did not eat from it,” meaning, we think, he shared his food with the orphan.

Job 31:21,

If I (meaning, I have not) waved my hand over an orphan (to take his goods),
because I would see in the gate my helper (i.e., one who would take my side in court,
vote on my behalf against the orphan).

Psalm 10:14, while the wicked deny God and God's judgment, the psalmist affirms:

You saw, because You will observe trouble and vexation,
to take (them) into Your hand;
upon You an unfortunate orphan will be left;
You became One Helping.

Psalm 10:17-18,

17 You YHWH heard (the) desire of poor / afflicted people;
You will establish their heart; You will give attention / listen,
18 to judge / bring justice (to) orphan and oppressed person;
man will not again frighten (away) from the land
man (who is) from the land!

Psalm 146:6-9, YHWH is the One

6 making heavens and earth,
the sea / ocean and all that is in them;
the One keeping true faithfulness to long-lasting time;
7 doing justice for the oppressed people;
giving bread to the hungry people;
YHWH sets prisoners free.
8 YHWH opens (eyes of) blind people;
YHWH raises up bent down people;
YHWH loves rightly-related people.
9 YHWH protects temporary residents / immigrants;
orphan and widow He restores / relieves.
And (the) way of wicked people, He will make crooked!
(What a creedal statement! This is the Divine activity that YHWH accomplishes through
human judges who act as "Gods"!)

Isaiah 1:17, "judge / seek justice for an orphan," or in terms of these biblical passages "do like God does!"

Isaiah 1:23,

Your rulers—rebellious men,
and companions of thieves;
all of it loving a bribe,
and pursuing rewards!
They do not seek justice (for the) orphan,
and a widow's case will not come to them!

Jeremiah 5:28, said concerning wicked people:

They became fat, they became smooth;
also they passed over evil words / went beyond evil deeds.

They did not judge / defend an orphan' case, and cause it to prosper;
and poor people's justice they did not judge / defend.

Jeremiah 7:6, If Judah and Jerusalem want to continue to live in their land,

Temporary resident / immigrant, orphan and widow you people shall not oppress,
and innocent blood you shall not pour out in this place;
and you shall not walk / go after other Gods,
to (bring) evil for yourselves.”

Jeremiah 22:3,

In this way YHWH spoke:

Practice justice and right-relationship;
and deliver the person robbed from the hand of one oppressing!
And a temporary resident / immigrant, orphan and widow you people shall not oppress
(synonym), you shall not treat violently.
And innocent blood you shall not pour out in this place!

Jeremiah 22:15-17, more generally, YHWH speaks to Shallum, king of Judah:

- 15 Will you reign because you strive earnestly in the cedar-wood?
Your father (Josiah), did he not eat and drink and do justice and right-relationship?
Then (it was) good for him.
- 16 He defended (the) cause of (the) poor people and those in want (synonym)–
then (it was) good (for him).
Is this not the knowledge of Me?
It is a saying of YHWH!
- 17 Because your eyes and your heart are not (on anything) except upon your unjust gain,
and upon blood of the innocent, to pour (it) out;
and upon the oppression and upon the crushing,
to do (it)!

Ezekiel 22:7, the land of Judah is filled with evil, including:

Father and mother were made light of / treated with contempt by you (singular);
the temporary resident / immigrant you (plural) oppressed in your midst;
orphan and widow they oppress among you!”

Hosea 14:4b,

because in You an orphan will be treated with compassion.

And students of these passages must ask ourselves, What am I, and what is my community of faith, doing on behalf of orphans?

16. The Root Verb **נָדַן** in the Hiphil, “Decide,” “Adjudge,” “Reprove”

Genesis 20:16,

And to Sarah he (Abimelech) said, Look—I gave a thousand (pieces of) silver / money to your brother (meaning Abraham who had told Abimelech Sarah was his sister).

Look—it is yours, a covering of eyes for everyone who (is) with you, and everyone, and you (feminine singular) were set right.

(We are uncertain as to the meaning of the niphal participle here. Fabry holds that “It constitutes a formal judgment of innocence, pronounced by the opponent.” P. 67)

Genesis 21:25,

And Abraham reproved Abimelech
about a well of the water
which Abimelech’s servants / slaves stole.

Genesis 24:14b, the young woman who offers drink to Abraham’s servant and his camels,

her You decided for Your servant, for Isaac. **24:44**, similar;

Genesis 31:37, Jacob tells Laban, after he has felt through all of Jacob’s belongings,

Place (it) here before my brothers and your brothers;
and they will decide between (the) two of us!

Genesis 31:42, Jacob tells Laban,

God saw and He reproved (you) last night.

Leviticus 19:17,

You (singular) shall not hate your brother in your heart;
you shall certainly reprove your fellow!

And you shall not carry missing-of-the-mark over him.

(The last phrase is very ambiguous, but the second phrase, which is of importance here, is much clearer. The use of the infinitive absolute with the finite verb makes the statement emphatic—literally, “Reproving you shall reprove!”

English Standard has “you shall reason frankly.”

New Revised Standard has “you shall reprove your neighbor.”

2 Samuel 7:14, YHWH says concerning David’s descendant(s)

when he commits iniquity—and I will reprove him with a rod of people,
and with strokes of humanity’s children.

2 Kings 19:4b, Isaiah says

and (YHWH) will reprove the words which He heard” (the words of Rab-Shakeh, the Assyrian commander). **Isaiah 37:4**, same.

Isaiah 1:18, here; YHWH invites,

Come now / please, and let us be reprov'd (by each other).

(YHWH wants to enter into dialogue with His sinful people, and He invites them to enter into a mutual reproof of each other. The people can state, argue their case, and YHWH in turn will state, argue His case. We think that YHWH is depicted by **Isaiah** as asking Judah to do exactly what Job was asking Shaddai / El / Eloah to do in the **Book of Job!** We also think the best parallel to **Isaiah 1:18** is **Isaiah 43:25**.)

Isaiah 2:4, in the good times coming, when Jerusalem is lifted up above the mountains and hills, and many nations shall come to it to learn YHWH's ways,

And He will judge between the nations;
and He will decide / reprove / rebuke for many peoples.

And they will beat their swords into pieces,
and their spears into pruning knives.

Nation will not lift up a sword to a nation,
and they will not again learn war!

(Isaiah depicts YHWH as acting as Judge / Referee, One reprov'ing the wrongs of the nations, enabling them to transform their destructive weapons into instruments to serve human needs, that is, “setting them right.”) **Micah 4:3**, same.

Isaiah 11:3-4, Isaiah predicts concerning the “shoot / branch” from Jesse's stump, who is filled with YHWH Spirit,

3 And his delight will be in YHWH's trembling respect.

And he will not govern by his eyes' sight,
nor will he decide by his ear's hearing.

4 But he will judge / govern poor people through righteousness;
and he will decide for earth's humble people through what is right.

And he will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
and with his lips' breath he will put wickedness to death!

(However we may define this hiphil verb, it is obvious that Isaiah uses it to describe YHWH's great work in the future, and in the work that He will do through the “shoot / branch” from Jesse's stump. And evidently, here in **1:18**, YHWH invites His sinful people to already, here and now, long before those “good times coming,” to enter into that work with YHWH, allowing YHWH to reprove them, as well as YHWH's listening to their reproofs against Him.)

Isaiah 29:21b, in that “good time coming,” workers of evil will be cut off, including those who “lay a snare” for מוֹכִיחַ בַּשַּׁעַר “one reprov'ing in the gate,” evidently meaning those prophets who speak YHWH's word in the city-court, denouncing evil.

Jeremiah 2:19a,

Your evil will discipline / correct you (singular);
and your apostasies will reprove you.

Ezekiel 3:26, YHWH is going to make Ezekiel mute, so that he will no longer be an **אִישׁ מוֹכִיחַ** “man reproofing.” Compare **Isaiah 29:21b** above.

Hosea 4:4, a statement which we consider ironical—Northern Israel is flooded with crime and disobedience to YHWH’s covenant, yet a voice says,

Surely a man shall not contend,
and a man shall not reprove a man!”
(Compare **Isaiah 29:21b** and **Ezekiel 3:26** above.)

Amos 5:10,

They hated one who reproves / rebukes in the gate / city court,
and one speaking wholesome things, they will abhor!
(Compare **Isaiah 29:21b**, **Ezekiel 3:26** and **Hosea 4:4**.)

Micah 6:2b, there is

contention for the YHWH with His people;
and with Israel, He will Himself reprove / argue,
(using the hithpael form of the verb. It is this kind of reproofing / argumentation that YHWH invites His sinful people to enter into with Him here in **Isaiah 1:18**.)

Habakkuk 1:12, the spokesperson / prophet, questioning the coming of the wicked invaders (Babylonians), gives an explanation of why YHWH has allowed it:

YHWH, for judgment / justice You placed him;
and a rock for reproofing, You established him!

Psalms 6:2^{Heb} / 1^{Eng},

YHWH, You in Your anger, do not reprove me!
And do not in Your rage, discipline me!”
(Notice the parallel between “reproof” and “discipline.”) **Psalms 38:2^{Heb} / 1^{Eng}**, closely similar.

Psalms 50:8a,

Not for your (singular) animal sacrifice will I reprove you!

Psalm 50:21b,

I will reprove you (singular),
and I will set (it) in order before your eyes.

Psalm 94:10^{Heb} / 9^{Eng},

The One disciplining peoples,
will He not reprove—
the One teaching humanity knowledge?

Psalm 105:14,

He (YHWH) did not give a human being rest to oppress them (the patriarchs of Israel);
and He reproved kings concerning them. **1 Chronicles 16:21**, same.

Psalm 141:5a,

A rightly-related person will strike me (with) steadfast love;
and it will reprove me—(like) oil (for my) head...

Job 5:17, Eliphaz tells Job

Look—blessed, a man whom Eloah reproves;
and Shaddai's discipline you shall not reject!

Job 6:25-26, Job replies:

- 25 How grievous—words of uprightness!
And what does it reprove, reproof from you people?
26 Will you think to reprove words,
and to (the) spirit of words be despairing?

(English translations vary:

King James, How forcible are right words! but what doth your arguing reprove? Do ye imagine to reprove words, and the speeches of one that is desperate, *which are* as wind?"

Tanakh, "How trenchant honest words are; But what sort of reproof comes from you? Do you devise words of reproof, But count a hopeless man's words as wind?"

New Jerusalem, "Fair comment can be borne without resentment, but what are your strictures aimed at? Do you think mere words deserve censure, desperate speech that the wind blows away?"

(It is obvious that in the **Book of Job**, what Job and his so-called "friends" are engaging in is mutual reproof and argument, both of which are pointed to in this root verb, found so often in **Job**.)

Job 9:33,

There is no one deciding / arbitrating between us,
(who) will place his hand upon (the) two of us.

Job 13:3,

But indeed I, to Shaddai I will speak;
and to give reproof to El, I will be delighted!

Job 13:10,

He will certainly reprove you people,
if hiddenly you show partiality.

Job 13:15, Job says,

Look—He (Shaddai / El) will kill me—
(yet) for Him I will wait!
Surely my way to His face I will reprove!

Job 15:3, Eliphaz tells Job,

To reprove (Shaddai / El) with a word will not benefit;
and words will not profit with them.

Job 16:21, Job says,

And He will reprove for a strong man with Eloah;
and a son of a human for his friend.
(Job still believes that he has a dependable “witness” in the heavens, and it is to Him, God,
that he appeals, and Whom he wants to reprove.)

Job 19:5, Job, reproving his so-called “friends,” states:

If indeed you will magnify (yourselves) against me,
and will reprove me (for) my reproach.

Job 22:4, Eliphaz, insisting that Job is evil, asks,

Is it from your fear / fear of you He reproves you,
He enters with you into the judgment?
(He goes on to affirm that it is Job’s evil that causes the Divine judgment.)

Job 23:7, Job responds—he wants to come face to face with God.

There an upright person will be reproved by Him;
and I would deliver for perpetuity my justice.”

(נוכח_{ִּ} is a niph'al participle.)

Job 32:12, Elihu says

And I gave attention to you people,
and look—there is not one of you reproving Job, answering his words!

Job 33:19, Elihu argues that men hear God speaking through dreams in the night,

And he is reproved by pain upon his bed,
and abundance (of) continuing (pain) in his bones.

Job 40:2, YHWH asks Job,

Shall a fault-finder contend with Shaddai?

One reproving Eloah? Let him answer it!

(We think that YHWH, in **Isaiah 1:18**, is inviting His sinful people to enter into just the kind of encounter with Himself that Job longs and asks for in the **Book of Job**. What do you think?)

Proverbs 3:12,

Because one whom He loves, YHWH will reprove;
and like a father, a son He is pleased (with).

Proverbs 9:7,

One disciplining a scorner—
one taking / receiving for himself dishonor;
and one reproving a wicked person,
his blemish / defect.

(This proverb is more of a riddle than a clear statement.)

Proverbs 9:8,

You shall not reprove a scorner,
so that he will not hate you;
reprove a wise person,
and he will love you!

Proverbs 15:12,

A scorner will not love to be reproved;
to wise people he will not go.

Proverbs 19:25,

A scorner you will reprove,
and a simple-minded person will become shrewd;
and to reprove an intelligent person—
he will understand knowledge.

Proverbs 24:25, in contrast to those who approve of wrong-doers,

and to the ones reproving, it will be pleasant;
and upon them will come a good blessing!

Proverbs 25:12,

a gold ring, and an ornament of gold (synonym)—
one reproving a wise person, upon a listening ear.

Proverbs 28:23,

One reproving a human being,
afterwards will find favor,
more than one who flatters (with his) tongue.

Proverbs 30:6, Agur warns,

You shall not add upon...His (Eloah's) words,
so that He will not reprove you,
and you be found a liar!

1 Chronicles 12:18b^{Heb} / 17b^{Eng}, If the men coming to David have wrong motivation, then:

God of our fathers will see,
and He will reprove (you).

Isaiah 43:25-26: which we believe is the best parallel to **Isaiah 1:18**, and its invitation to Judah to enter into mutual reproof with YHWH:

25 I, I (am) He
Who wipes out your transgressions for My sake;
and your missings-of-the-mark I will not remember!
26 Cause Me to remember!
Let us enter into judgment / have controversy together!
You recount (your case),
so that you may be rightly-related!

(Compare a similar invitation in **Isaiah 41:1**:

Be silent for Me, islands;
 and peoples, renew strength!
Let them draw near,
 then let them speak together for the justice;
let us draw near!
 Then they will speak together.
For the justice let us draw near!

17.

The Noun שָׁנִי, “Scarlet” in the Hebrew Bible:

Genesis 38:28, 30,

When Tamar’s twin boys, Perez and Terah, sons of her father-in-law Judah, were being given birth, the baby boy Zerah’s hand came out from Tamar’s womb first, and the midwife tied “a scarlet” (the simple noun שָׁנִי, perhaps meaning a scarlet piece of cloth, or scarlet-colored thread) upon his hand, which he immediately withdrew, and his brother Perez came out of the womb first. The boy with the scarlet tied on his hand was given the name זֶרַח, which in Hebrew sounds like “shining,” “dawning,” and may be related to the beautiful deep red color of the dawning sun.

Exodus 25:4; 35:6, 23-25, 35; 36:8, offerings to be made for the construction of the Israelite moveable sanctuary included cloth made of this color, and which used for:

Exodus 26:1, the ten innermost curtains forming the roof / ceiling of the moveable sanctuary;

Exodus 26:31, the curtain dividing the set-apart place from the most set-apart place;

Exodus 26:36, the curtain for the entrance to the moveable sanctuary;

Exodus 27:16, the curtain for the entrance to the outer-courtyard of the moveable sanctuary:

Exodus 28:5-8, the priestly garments;

Exodus 28:15, the breast-piece of the high-priest;

Exodus 28:33, the robe of the high-priest’s ephod;

Exodus 36:35-37; 38:18, 23; 39:1-8, 24, 29, the work was carried out with the materials named;

Leviticus 14:4, 6; 49-52, cloth / thread of this color to be used in priestly ritual for cleansing from infectious skin disease, and for cleansing mildew from houses.

Numbers 4:8, the color of a cloth to cover the sanctuary table when being moved.

Numbers 19:6, along with the ashes of a red heifer, cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet wool are to be burned, and used in making the special water to be used in rituals of cleansing in Israel.

Joshua 2:18-21, a scarlet cord (חֵטָה שָׁנִי) tied in the prostitute Rahab’s window, signifying that she and her family were not to be destroyed in the Israelite invasion of Jericho.

2 Samuel 1:24, scarlet material used in the clothing of the young women of Jerusalem.

Isaiah 1:18b, אִם־יִהְיוּ חַטֹּאתֵיכֶם כַּשָּׁנִים, “if your missings-of-the-mark / sins will be like the scarlets...”

Jeremiah 4:30, characterizing Jerusalem as a devastated woman, YHWH asks,

And you (feminine singular), destroyed one, what will you do that you will dress (in) scarlet,
adorn (with) gold ornaments,
that you will tear / rend you eyes with black powder,
that for the vanity you beautify yourself?
They rejected you, those lusting;
your innermost-being / life they are seeking!”

Proverbs 31:21, all of the woman of strength’s household is clothed in scarlets—expensive clothing.

Song of Solomon 4:3, the male lover describes his beloved’s lips as a “scarlet cord,” using the same language as that of **Joshua 2**, כְּחֹטֶטֶת הַשָּׁנִי, “like the scarlet cord.”

18. **The Noun שֶׁלֶג, “Snow,” in the Hebrew Bible:**

Exodus 4:6, Moses’ hand, turned “leprous,” becomes white כַּשֶּׁלֶג, “like the snow.”

Numbers 12:10, as a rebuke for her and Aaron’s insubordination to Moses, Miriam becomes “leprous,” כַּשֶּׁלֶג, “like the snow.”

2 Samuel 23:20, Benaiah killed a lion הַשֶּׁלֶג בַּיּוֹם, “on a day of the snow.” **1 Chronicles 11:22**, same.

2 Kings 5:27, Elisha’s servant, Gehazi, contracts “leprosy” כַּשֶּׁלֶג, “like the snow.”

Isaiah 1:18,

If your missings-of-the-mark will be like the scarlets,
like the snow they will become white!”
(What a powerful promise of full forgiveness!)

Isaiah 55:10,

Because just as the rain comes down,
and the snow from the heavens,
and there, it will not return,
unless it saturated the earth,
and causes it to give birth,
and causes it to sprout,
and it will give seed for the one sowing,
and bread / food for one eating--
(so, the next verse explains, is the word of YHWH that accomplishes the task for which it is sent.)

Jeremiah 18:14,

Will (the) snow of (Mount) Lebanon leave (its) rock(y) fields?
Or will (the) cool, flowing foreign water(s) be rooted up?

Psalms 51:9,

Purify / de-sin me with hyssop (small plant used for sprinkling liquids), and I will be clean;
wash me and I will be white, more than snow!”

Psalms 147:16, YHWH is

The One Who gives snow like the wool;
He scatters frost like the ashes.

Psalms 148:8, among the creatures called to worship YHWH are:

Fire and hail, snow and thick smoke,
wind of a storm, doing His word.

Job 6:16, Job claims that his so-called “friends” are like the wadis, which in rainy season flow with water,

The ones being dark by reason of ice;
upon them snow hides itself.

Job 9:30-31, where Job states:

30 If I washed myself in waters of snow,
and will cleanse my hands with lye (soap),
31 then You will dip me into the pit;
and my clothes will abhor me!

Job 24:19,

Drought, also heat, will tear away / rob snow-waters;
grave / underworld—they missed-the-mark.

King James has “Drought and heat consume the snow waters: *so doth* the grave *those which* have sinned.” (Note the words in italics, which are not in the Hebrew text.)

Tanakh has “May drought and heat snatch away their snow waters, And Sheol, those who have sinned.”

Job 37:6a, Elihu states,

Because to the snow He says,
Fall (to) earth!

Job 38:22, YHWH asks Job,

Have you entered into storehouses of snow?
And storehouses of hail, will you see?

Proverbs 25:13,

Like cold of snow on a day of harvest—
a faithful messenger for one sending him forth;
and his master’s innermost-being he causes to return.

Proverbs 26:1,

Like the snow in the summer,
and like rain in the harvest,
so honor is not fitting for a foolish person!

Proverbs 31:21, the woman / wife of strength will not be afraid for her household because of snow, since she has clothed them in fine scarlet clothing.

Lamentations 4:7, “Her (Jerusalem’s) consecrated ones were purer than snow.”

19. **The Verb אָבָה, “To Be Willing,” in the Hebrew Bible**

Genesis 24:5-8, Abraham’s servant asks what he should do if the woman is not willing to accept his offer to come with him and marry Isaac.

Exodus 10:27, with his heart hardened by YHWH, Pharaoh is not willing to let the Israelites go.

Leviticus 26:21, If Israel is not willing to listen to YHWH, He will continue to punish them.

Deuteronomy 1:26, the Israelites, having heard the report of the spies, were not willing to go up and take the land.

Deuteronomy 2:30, Sihon, king of Heshbon, was not willing to let Israel pass through his land.

Judges 11:17, the same thing is said of the king of Moab.

Deuteronomy 10:10, having listened to Moses’ intercession, YHWH was not willing to destroy the Israelites.

Deuteronomy 13:9, the Israelites must not be willing—to listen to the voice calling them to serve other Gods.

Deuteronomy 23:6, YHWH was not willing to listen to Balaam. **Joshua 24:10**, same.

Deuteronomy 25:7, an Israelite widow reports in the city gate that her brother-in-law is not willing to enable her to become pregnant, raising up a descendant for his dead brother.

Deuteronomy 29:19, YHWH will not be willing to forgive someone who turns Israel away, to serve other Gods.

Judges 19:10, a man is not willing to spend the night in Bethlehem.

Judges 19:25, at Gibeah, the men of the city are not willing to listen to the owner of the house.

Judges 20:13, the Benjaminites are not willing to listen to the voice of the tribes of Israel demanding justice.

1 Samuel 15:9, Saul and the people were not willing to utterly destroy all the Amalekites.

1 Samuel 22:17, Saul’s servants are not willing to put the priests to death.

1 Samuel 26:23, David was not willing to put Saul, YHWH’s anointed one, to death.

1 Samuel 31:4, Saul’s armor-bearer is not willing to obey Saul’s order, and put him to death. **1 Chronicles 10:4**, same.

2 Samuel 2:21, Asahel is not willing to turn aside from following Abner.

2 Samuel 6:10, David is not willing to take the chest of the covenant into Jerusalem.

2 Samuel 12:17, Israeli officials try to raise David from mourning, but he is not willing.

2 Samuel 13:14-16, Amnon is not willing to listen to Tamar.

2 Samuel 13:25, King David is not willing to go with Absalom to his feast.

2 Samuel 14:29, Joab is not willing to come to Absalom.

2 Samuel 23:16-17, King David is not willing to drink the water brought from Bethlehem by three of his mighty men. **1 Chronicles 11:18, 19**, same.

1 Kings 20:8, The officials of Northern Israel tell King Ahab to not be willing to obey Ben-Hadad.

1 Kings 22:50, Jehoshaphat of Judah is not willing to follow the advice of Ahaziah of Northern Israel.

2 Kings 8:19, In spite of Jehoram's failures, YHWH was not willing to destroy Judah, remembering his ancestor, King David.

2 Kings 13:23, YHWH is not willing to destroy Northern Israel because of His covenant with the patriarchs. **2 Chronicles 21:7**, similar.

2 Kings 24:4, YHWH was not willing to pardon Judah, because of the failures of Manasseh.

Isaiah 1:19, If Judah is willing (and obedient), they will eat the fruit of the land.

Isaiah 28:12, YHWH has offered rest to His people Judah, but they were not willing to listen. **30:15**, similar.

Isaiah 30:9, the people of Judah are unwilling to listen to YHWH's *torah*. **42:24**, similar.

Ezekiel 3:7, the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to Ezekiel or to YHWH. **20:8, Psalm 81:12**, similar.

Job 39:9, YHWH asks Job if the wild ox is willing to serve him.

Proverbs 1:10, the wise father instructs his son to not accept the invitation of evil-doers.

Proverbs 1:25, the foolish are not willing to accept Lady Wisdom's advice. **1:30**, similar.

Proverbs 6:35, the jealous husband is unwilling to accept bribes / gifts.

1 Chronicles 19:19, the Syrians were not willing to go to the defense of the Ammonites again.

20. The Interjection אֵיכָּהּ “How?”, “Where?” in the Hebrew Bible.

Deuteronomy 1:12, where Moses asks:

How shall I bear, I alone,
your burden and your load, and dispute?

Deuteronomy 7:17,

When / if you say in your heart,
these nations are more numerous than us;
how will I be able to dispossess them?

Deuteronomy 12:30,

Guard yourself, so that you will not be ensnared (into) following after them,
after their being exterminated from before you;
and so that you will not seek their Gods, saying,
In what manner do these nations serve their Gods?
And I will do likewise, also !!

Deuteronomy 18:21,

And if you (singular) shall say in your heart,
How shall we know the word which YHWH did not speak?

Deuteronomy 32:30,

How one would pursue a thousand!
And two would run after ten thousand!
If not, that their Rock sold them--
And YHWH delivered them up (to an enemy)!

Judges 20:3,

And (the) children of Benjamin heard that (the) children of Israel went up to Mizpah;
and the children of Israel said,
Tell how this evil happened!

2 Kings 6:15,

And (the) servant of (the) man of the God was early to get up;
and he went out, and look—an army surrounding the city,
and horse(s) and chariot(s);
and the young man said to him,

Isaiah 1:21,
Alas, my lord, What shall we do?

How, has a faithful city become a prostitute?
I filled (her with) justice;

right-relationship would spent the night in her--
and now those committing murder!

Jeremiah 8:8,

How will you people say,
We are wise people,
and YHWH's Torah / teaching is with us?
Surely, look at the falsehood he made--
(the) pen of falsehood of (the) writers!

Jeremiah 48:17,

Lament for him (Moab) everyone around him;
and everyone who knows his name.
Say, How the staff of strength was broken,
(the) beautiful rod!

Psalms 73:11,

And they (the arrogant) say, How did El know?
And is there knowledge in (the) Most High?

Song of Solomon 1:7, twice,

Declare to me, you whom my innermost-being loved,
where you pasture,
where you cause (your flock) to lie down at mid-day--
for what reason should I be like one veiling herself,
beside flocks of your companions?

Lamentations 1:1,

How the city sat in isolation!
(Once) great with people, she became like a widow!
Great among the nations, a princess among provinces,
she became (a source) for the forced laborers!

Lamentations 2:1,

How my Lord caused clouds with His anger (to overshadow) Daughter Zion!
He cast out from (the) heavens Israel's beautiful land!
And He did not remember His feet's footstool, on a day of His anger!

Lamentations 4:1,

How (her) gold was dimmed,

the good gold (synonym) changes!
(Her) stones of set-apartness were poured out
at (the) head of all (the) streets!

Lamentations 4:2,

Sons / children of Zion, the precious ones,
the ones weighed down with fine gold—
how they were considered as earthen-ware pots,
a product of a potter's hands!

21. **The Qal Active Feminine Participle זֹנֶה “Prostitute” in the Hebrew Bible**

Genesis 34:31,

And they (the sons of Jacob) said,
Shall he make our sister like the prostitute?

Genesis 38:15,

And Judah saw her (his widowed daughter-in-law)
and he considered her to be a prostitute,
because she covered her face.

Leviticus 21:7, the sons of Aaron, priests, are forbidden to marry certain women:

A woman, a prostitute and one defiled, they shall not take;
and a woman driven out / expelled by her husband, they shall not take;
because he (the priest) is set-apart to his God!

Leviticus 21:14, the high priest who takes the place of Aaron, is likewise forbidden to marry certain women:

A widow, and a woman driven out / expelled, and one defiled, a prostitute
these he shall not take;
only a virgin from among his peoples, he shall take a woman / wife!

Deuteronomy 23:19,

You (singular) shall not bring a prostitute's payment, and a dog's (male prostitute's ?) fee
(Into) YHWH your God's house / temple (as payment) for any vow,
because both of the two are an abomination (to) YHWH!

Joshua 2:1; 6:17, 22, 25, all with reference to

a woman, a prostitute, and her name Rachab

Judges 11:1,

And Jephthah the Gileadite has a mighty man of war;
and he (was the) son of a woman, a prostitute;
and Gilead gave birth to Jephthah.

Judges 16:1,

And Samson went to Gaza;
and he saw there a woman, a prostitute.
And he came to her.

1 Kings 3:16, a story praising Solomon's wisdom begins by saying,

Then two women, prostitutes, came to the King,
and they stood before him.

1 Kings 22:38, following the death of Ahab while in his chariot,

And he washed the chariot at Samaria's pool;
and the dogs licked his blood,
and the prostitutes washed—
according to YHWH's word which He spoke.

Isaiah 1:21,

How a faithful city became a prostitute!,
I filled (her with) justice;
right-relationship would spent the night in her--
and now those committing murder!

Isaiah 23:15,

And it will happen in that day,
and Tyre will be forgotten (for) seventy year(s),
like (the) days of one king.
At (the) end of seventy year(s),
it will be to Tyre like a song for the prostitute:

Isaiah 23:16,

Take up a harp!
Go around a city,
forgotten prostitute!
Be good at playing stringed instruments!
Make many a song--
so that you will be remembered!

Jeremiah 2:20,

Because a long-time ago I broke your yoke,
and tore apart your bonds.
And you said, I will not serve--
because upon every high hill,
and beneath every luxuriant tree,
you are bowing, a prostitute!

Jeremiah 3:3,

And abundant showers were withheld,
and there was not latter / spring rain;
and you had a forehead of a woman, a prostitute.
You refused to be ashamed!

Jeremiah 5:7,

Where / how will I forgive you for this?
Your sons / children forsook Me,
and they swore by non-Gods!
And I satisfied them (with food)--
and they were sexually immoral,
and they thronged (to the) house of a prostitute!

Ezekiel 6:9,

And your escapees will remember Me among the nations where they were taken captive,
whose prostituting heart I broke
which turned aside from Me.
And their prostituting eyes (went) after their idols,
and they they will be loathsome in their own eyes,
over the evils which they did,
(and) for all their abominations.

Ezekiel 16:30,

How enfeebled (is) your heart--
a saying of my Lord YHWH--
in your doing all these things--
(the) work of a domineering woman, a prostitute!

Ezekiel 16:31, YHWH speaks to His prostitute daughter and wife, Jerusalem:

In your building you mound / brothel at (the) head of every way,
and your high place you made on every plaza;
and you were not like the prostitute,
to scoff (at your) pay!

Ezekiel 16:33,

To all prostitutes they give / pay a gift;
and you gave your gifts to all your lovers!
And you bribed them to come to you from all around with your prostitutions!
And you were not like the prostitute,

Ezekiel 16:35,

Therefore, prostitute, hear YHWH's word!

Ezekiel 16:41,

And they will burn your houses with the fire,
and they will execute judgments against you,
in (the) eyes of many women.

And I will cause you to cease from (being a) prostitute,
and also, you will not give pay again!

Ezekiel 23:44,

And he came to her like coming to a woman, a prostitute;
in this way they came to Oholah and to Oholibah,
a woman of the wickedness!

Hosea 4:14,

I will not visit (to punish) upon their daughters because they prostitute themselves,
and upon their daughters-in-law because they are sexually immoral.
Because they themselves turn aside with the prostitutes,
and with the sacred prostitutes they slaughter for sacrifices.
And a people (that) will not understand, will be thrown down!

Joel 4:3, speaking about what the nations have done

and over My people they cast a lot;
and they gave / bought the boy for the prostitute,
and the girl, the sold for the wine,
and they drank (it).

Micah 1:7, twice,

and all her images will be beaten to pieces;
and all her wages will be burned with the fire;
and all her idols, I will make a waste!
Because from a prostitute's wage she gathered (them),
and to (the) wage of a prostitute they will return!

Nahum 3:4, YHWH is against the City of Nineveh, because she...

from (the) many prostitutions of a prostitute,
(with) goodly grace
mistress of sorceries,
the one selling nations with her prostitutions,
and clans by her sorceries.

Proverbs 6:26

Because the price of a woman, a prostitute—
as much as a loaf of bread;
and (the) wife of a man / husband,
hunts for a precious innermost-being!

Proverbs 7:10,

and look— a woman, (there) to meet him--
(in the) dress of a prostitute,
and guarded of heart.

Proverbs 23:27,

For a deep pit—a prostitute,
and a narrow well—a foreign woman.

Proverbs 29:3,

A man loving wisdom
will make his father rejoice;
and one associating with prostitutes
will destroy wealth!

22. Isaiah's Use of "My Hand" with Reference to YHWH in the Book of Isaiah:

Isaiah 1:25,

And I will cause My hand to return against you,
and I will refine your worthless dreggs with lye,
and I will remove all your alloys!

Isaiah 10:10,

Just as my hand found for kingdoms of the worthlessness,
and their idols from Jerusalem and from Samaria.

Isaiah 10:13,

Because he said, With strength of my hand I did (it);
and by my wisdom, because I was discerning!
And I turned aside boundaries of peoples,
and their preparations I plundered.
And I will bring down those sitting (enthroned) like a mighty man.

Isaiah 10:14,

And my hand found like the nest–
(the) wealth of the peoples;
and like gathering eggs left behind,
all the land / earth I, I gathered;
and there was no one fluttering a wing
and opening a mouth and chirping!

Isaiah 19:25, speaking of Israel, Egypt and Assyria:

which YHWH of Armies will bless, saying
Blessed (is) My people Egypt,
and product of My hands, Assyria,
and My inheritance, Israel!

Isaiah 29:23,

Because when he (Jacob) sees his children,
(the) work of My hands in his midst,
they will set-apart My name;
and they will make (the) Set-apart One of Jacob set-apart / special,
and they will reverence / stand in awe of Israel's God!

Isaiah 36:19, Rab-Shakeh, the Assyrian commander, is speaking for Sennacherib, the Assyrian King:

Where (are) Chamath's Gods, and Arpad's?
Where (are the) Gods of Sepharwaim?
And that delivered Samaria from my hand?

Isaiah 36:20, twice,

Who among all (the) Gods of these lands
that delivered their land from my hand,
that YHWH will deliver Jerusalem from my hand?

Isaiah 43:13,

Also from today I (am) He,
and there is no one delivering from My hand!
I will make / act,
and who will turn it back?

Isaiah 45:11,

In this way YHWH spoke,
Set-apart One of Israel, and its Fashioner,
The things to come—ask Me!
Concerning my children,
and concerning (the) work of my hands,
will you command Me?

Isaiah 45:12,

I, I made (the) earth,
and humanity upon it, I created;
I, My hands stretched out (the) heavens
and all its (heavenly) army I commanded.

Isaiah 48:13,

Also My hand established earth,
and My right hand spread out heavens;
I (am) calling to them—
they stand up together!

Isaiah 49:22,

In this way my Lord YHWH spoke:
Look—I will lift up My hand to (the) nations,
and to peoples I will raise My signal;

and they will bring your sons in (their) embrace,
and your daughters they will carry upon their shoulder.

Isaiah 50:2,

For what reason did I come, and there was not a man?
I called, and there was no one answering?
Was My hand indeed shortened so as not to be able to ransom?
And was there not in Me strength to deliver?
Look—by My rebuke I will dry up a sea,
I will make rivers a desert;
their fish will stink from lack of water,
and will die from thirst!

Isaiah 50:11,

Look—all of you people kindling a fire,
equipping yourselves with torches—
Walk in the light of your fire,
and with torches you lit!
This has happened to you from My hand,
to / in a place of pain you will lie down!

Isaiah 51:16,

And I placed My words in your mouth,
and with My hand's shadow I covered you--
to establish heavens,
and to found earth;
and saying to Zion,
You (singular) (are) My people!

Isaiah 60:21,

And your people, all of them, (will be) rightly-related;
for long-lasting time they will inherit earth—
a sprout of My planting,
a work of My hands,
to make itself beautiful.

Isaiah 65:2, twice,

I spread out My hands all day-long
to a people being stubborn,
the ones walking (in) the way not good
—after their imaginations—

Isaiah 66:2,

And all of these—My hands made!
and all these became
—a saying of YHWH!
And to this (person) I will look—
to a poor person,
and one contrite of spirit,
and trembling before My word.

