

Isaiah Chapter 3:1-4:1, Hebrew Text with Translation and Footnotes
Incompetent Politicians with No Social Concern--
Accompanied by Women's Haughty Extravagance--
Leading to Ruin in Society

3:1¹ כִּי הִנֵּה הָאֲדֹנָי יְהוִה צְבָאוֹת

¹There is one end-note for **chapter 3**, entitled “Occurrences in the **Hebrew Bible** of the Ttitle, הָאֲדֹנָי, “the Lord.”

Ortlund entitles **3:1-4:1** “Judgment on Judah and Jerusalem.” He comments on **3:1-4:6** that “The false and sinful glories of men and women, which are—and deserve to be—vulnerable, are replaced by the glory of the Lord, ‘a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain’ (**4:6**).” (P. 1245)

He comments on **3:1-15** that the section is “Bracketed by ‘the Lord God of hosts’ (**verses 1, 15**)...and announces God’s intention fo deprive Jerusalem and Judah of human leadership in time of crisis.” (P. 1245)

Ortlund states that “God takes away whatever keeps His people from Him, but only in order that they might enjoy His glory (**4:2-6**).” (P. 1245)

Oswalt entitles **3:1-4:1** “The Folly of Human Dependence,” and **3:1-7** “Boys for men.”

He comments on the segment **3:1-4:1** that it “follows upon **2:6-22** by giving particulars of the general statements given there. It continues the contrast between the high and the lowly by depicting in concrete and graphic language the foolishness of depending upon human leadership and human glory. Such dependence must ultimately have disastrous effects. In place of the ‘great’ men which the nation had adulated [loved excessively], expecting them to do miracles on its behalf, it will be ruled by incompetents and wastrels [those who spend resources foolishly and self-indulgently]...The materials in **2:6-4:1** support a single point: dependence upon humanity will not lead to a realization of the destiny depicted in **2:1-5**. In fact, it leads in a diametrically opposite direction: to dissolution.” (P. 130)

Again, Oswalt states that “**3:1-15** is an oracle of judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem. The result of their misplaced dependence will be to be ruled by those who are, figuratively speaking, children...This was happening in Israel during the early years of Isaiah’s ministry; one weak leader followed upon another as the nation seemed bent upon devouring itself before Assyria could reach it.” (P. 131)

Motyer entitles **3:1-4:1** “The actual Jerusalem: its social condition,” and comments that “Just as in **2:2-4** true religion produced true society so the corrupt religion of the actual Jerusalem (**2:6-21**) has produced a corrupt society...In the way this

(continued...)

¹(...continued)

material swings vigorously from one topic to another, in its telling use of illustration and in its sense of Divine authority, we surely hear the authentic voice of Isaiah the preacher...[Is Motyer implying that elsewhere in the **book** we may not be hearing the authentic voice of Isaiah?]

“**3:16-4:1** has a double function. First, it shows how judgment will work out in Divine action, transforming luxuriousness into poverty and slavery, making use of enemy assault resulting in a casualty rate of six men in seven and Zion herself being brought to the dust. Secondly, they prepare for the vision of what the Lord will yet do (**4:2-6**), for just as the ‘daughters of Zion’ (**3:16-24**) encapsulated the spirit of their mother, so they will be the primary objects of Divine renewal (**4:4**).” (P. 59)

Alexander, in his comprehensive way, states that “This chapter continues the threatenings against Judah on account of the prevailing iniquities, with special reference to female pride and luxury.

“The Prophet first explains his exhortation at the close of the last chapter, by showing that God was about to take away the leading men of Judah, and to let it fall into a state of anarchy, **verses 1-7**. He then shows that this was the effect of sin, particularly that of wicked rulers, **verses 8-15**. He then exposes in detail the pride and luxury of the Jewish women, and threatens them not only with the loss of that in which they now delighted, but with widowhood, captivity, and degradation, **verses 16-4:1**.

“The first part opens with a general prediction of the loss of what they trusted in, beginning with the necessary means of subsistence, **verse 1**. We have then an enumeration of the public men who were about to be removed, including civil, military, and religious functionaries, with the practitioners of certain arts, **verses 2, 3**. As the effect of this removal, the government falls into incompetent hands, **verse 4**. This is followed by insubordination and confusion, **verse 5**. At length, no one is willing to accept public office, the people are wretched, and the commonwealth a ruin, **verses 6, 7**.

“This ruin is declared to be the consequence of sin, and the people represented as their own destroyers, **verses 8, 9**...The innocent shall not perish with the guilty, but the guilty must suffer, **verses 10, 11**. Incompetent and faithless rulers must especially be punished, who, instead of being the guardians, are the spoilers of the vineyard; instead of protectors, the oppressors of the poor, **verses 12-15**.

“As a principal cause of these prevailing evils, the Prophet now denounces female luxury, and threatens it with condign [deserved, adequate] punishment, privation, and disgrace, **verses 16, 17**. This general denunciation is then amplified at great length, in a detailed enumeration of the ornaments which were about to be taken from them, and succeeded by the badges of captivity and mourning, **verses 18-24**. The agency to be employed in this retribution is a disastrous war, by which the men are

(continued...)

¹(...continued)

to be swept off, and the country left desolate, **verses 25, 26**. The extent of this calamity is represented by a lively exhibition of the disproportion between the male survivors and the other sex, suggesting at the same time the forlorn condition of the widows of the slain, **chapter 4:1**.” (P. 108)

Watts states that the passage **3:1-12** “opens with **כִּי הִנֵּה** ‘for behold’ [our ‘because look–’], explaining the previous verse and calling attention to the subject at hand: Yahweh’s decisions and actions toward Jerusalem and Judah. The subject remains the same through **verse 12**: Yahweh’s decision to remove stable leadership from Jerusalem. **Verse 13** clearly begins a new paragraph.”

Watts comments that “Attention is drawn back to the subject of the day: the announcement that Yahweh is removing the support of strong leadership from Jerusalem. Heaven and Earth acknowledge that the step is justified as Yahweh laments over the people and their condition.”

Watts explains that “The judgment against Jerusalem deprives her of ‘support and supply.’ Food and water are in short supply, a basic problem of any siege or natural catastrophe. But this is expanded to speak of her leaders. **Chapter one** had placed Jerusalem’s guilt on her leaders. God’s peculiar gift to His people through history lay in furnishing inspired leaders. Now these will be withdrawn.

“Leaders of every sort are mentioned: military champions, wise administrator, skillful counselor. Immaturity and weakness will characterize rulers. Discipline and courtesy will vanish. No one will want to lead, which is the result of apostasy and injustice...”

“All society is held together by invisible bonds—common concerns that have a moral base. When these disappear the body politic disintegrates...Judgment on a people may be passive. It does not have to come by external invasion. It may, and often does, come through internal atrophy. The passage suggests that God is responsible for it. It is His judgment on those who forget that they are all ultimately dependent on Him.” (Pp. 40-41)

Gray entitles **3:1-12** “A Prophecy of Anarchy in Judah.” He comments that “The main theme...is as follows: Yahweh is on the point of removing from Judah all those who give stability to the state by the discharge of civil or military duties, or by advice. All effective administration will then come to an end, violence will prevail, age and character will no longer command respect, and, even if appealed to, men of standing and substance will refuse to act as leaders. This imminent and certain collapse of the state (**verses 1-7**) is Yahweh’s judgment on His people for evil ways and unblushing sins (**verses 8-12**).” (P. 62)

(continued...)

¹(...continued)

Kaiser comments on **verses 1-3** that “The people is stripped of its leaders. Underlining the power of the God of Israel quite emphatically with its use of the designations ‘the Lord’ and “Yahweh Sebaoth [our ‘YHWH of Armies’], the announcement of the fate of Jerusalem and Judah...begins by showing that although the God of Israel might seem long ago to have disappeared from the stage of world history, He is still, as before, Lord of all lords...and has the power to set in motion all the forces of earth and heaven. He will use them to remove all the men among the people who could give them support and stay...The impending judgment will again take the form of a complete military defeat, including the conquest of Jerusalem (**verses 25-26**).” (P. 70)

Kaiser also points out that in this list of Jerusalem’s leaders, there is no mention of “a king,” and he takes this as a “decisive indication” that this material in the **Book of Isaiah** has come from a post-exilic author, when there was no longer a king in Jerusalem. (P. 71)

We note that in all of these summaries of **chapter 3**, only Alexander mentions “oppression of the poor,” and it is obvious that he along with most other commentators take little notice of Isaiah’s passionate concern for social justice—and its failure as the primary cause of Jerusalem’s and Judah’s fall. We think the lengthy passage about the women and their devotion to finery of clothing and adornment is aimed at the fact that they are chiefly concerned about their looks, and care little or nothing for the poor people surrounding them.

Alexander comments on **verse 1** that “This verse assigns, as a reason for the exhortation in the one preceding [**2:22**], that God was about to take away from the people every ground of reliance, natural and moral...The terms are applicable either to a general famine produced by natural causes, or to a scarcity arising from invasion or blockade, such as actually took place when Judah was overrun by Nebuchadnezzar.” (P. 109) See:

Jeremiah 38:9, the Cushite, Ebed-Melech. says to the King of Judah,

My lord the King, these men did evil--
with all they did to Jeremiah the prophet,
with their throwing (him) into the cistern;
and he will die (in) its bottom from the famine--
because there is no longer bread in the city!

Jeremiah 52:4-6,

4 And it happened in the ninth year of his reign (Zedekiah’s),
in the tenth month,
on the tenth (day) of the month,

(continued...)

מִסִּיר מִירוּשָׁלַם וּמִיהוּדָה

מִשָּׁעַן וּמִשָּׁעֲנָה

כָּל מִשָּׁעַן-לֶחֶם

וְכָל מִשָּׁעַן-מַיִם:

Because look—the Lord,² ¹ YHWH of Armies³

¹(...continued)

- Nebuchadretsar, King of Babylon,
he and all his army, came against Jerusalem;
and they encamped against it,
and they built against it a siege-wall, all around.
5 And the city came into the siege,
until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah.
6 In the fourth month, on (the) ninth (day) of the month--
and the famine was heavy in the city,
and there was no bread for (the) people of the land.

Lamentations 4:4,

(The) tongue of (the) nursing child stuck to his jaw with the thirst;
children asked (for) bread;
there was no one spreading (a meal) for them.

Verse 1 of Isaiah 3 also states YHWH of Armies' intention to deprive Jerusalem and Judah of their daily necessities of food and water. See footnote 4.

²This title, הָאֲדֹנָי, "the Lord," or "the Master," though occurring thousands of times in English translations of the **Hebrew Bible**, is only found ten times in the Hebrew text, and five of those occurrences are in **Isaiah**. See end-note 1 for all of these occurrences.

Motyer states that הָאֲדֹנָי means "the Sovereign One," whereas the adjoining Divine title יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת, "YHWH of Armies" [Motyer translates by "the Lord Almighty of Hosts"] is "Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel." (P. 59)

We think it is misleading to assign such specific meanings to Divine titles, which then become the basis for theological conclusions concerning "universal sovereignty" that can be viewed as eliminating human freedom, or implying that YHWH of Armies is only the "covenant God of Israel," whereas this title is used for the God of all the earth,

(continued...)

²(...continued)

Who works in the midst of universal history, raising rulers to power, and deposing them from their thrones.

For example, Motyer goes on to state that “The sovereignty of God is not only the power which underwrites the end of history but also the power at work in the detailed ordering of earthly affairs in accordance with His immutable principles of righteousness.” (Pp. 59-60)

This sounds good, but will hardly stand in the light of the **Book of Job**, where Job’s three friends defend just such a view of God, demanding that Job’s suffering be judged in the light of God’s immutable principle of retribution. Both Job and YHWH reject that view, and YHWH insists that He is the God of not only human beings, but also the God of the wild animals of the jungle, where there is survival of the fittest and might makes right, and YHWH is too big, too mysterious, to be confined within human theologies or dogmatic views of what He can or cannot do.

Again, we disagree with Motyer when he states that YHWH means “the Covenant God of Israel.” Of course, YHWH is the God Who enters into covenant with Israel, but this is not what the name YHWH means or implies. It is a mysterious, “enigmatic” name, somehow connected to the verb “to be,” and apparently an imperfect form of that verb, meaning if spoken by YHWH, “I Will Be,” or “I Will Cause to Be”; and meaning, if spoken by others, “He Will Be,” or “He Will Cause to Be.” See our study of **Exodus 3:14**, where YHWH tells Moses His name is

אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה, “I Will Be What(ever) I Will Be,”

and then tells Moses to just use the shortened form,

אֶהְיֶה, “I Will Be.”

It is a mysterious phrase that calls for explanation—and when explained, still leaves God surrounded by mystery and awe. The one who comes to know this God, cannot “put God in a box,” pretending to know all about God and the Divine nature, since he or she knows the Divine name—rather, the believer must recognize God’s hidden, mysterious nature, which leaves the future open to surprise: God will be whatever He will be!

We take this mysterious “name” to mean that God is the God of the future; and that future cannot be limited or circumscribed by human limitations, or definitions, or dogmatic beliefs, or doubts. God will be what / whatever God will be, and the believer in God must be open to that constant element of uncertainty and expectancy. Human beings can only bow in awe, and worship, and obedience to the Divine call, as they await patiently the Self-revelation of God and the Divine

(continued...)

is removing from Jerusalem and from Judah,
male support and female support,
every support of food / bread,
and every support of water(s);⁴

²(...continued)

purpose in history, never pretending that they know exactly what the future holds, except that this God holds that future in His hands.

If spoken by others, it takes the form *hwhy*, YHWH (“He Will Be”) which occurs over 6,000 times in the Hebrew text, and which has been changed to ὁ κύριος, **ho kurios**, “the Lord” in the Greek translation of the **Hebrew Bible**. The Jewish Masoretes, in medieval times, pointed / spelled YHWH with the vowels for “Lord,” resulting in the monstrous pronunciation “Jehovah.” In its abbreviated form, Yah, or Yeho, it is present in the name of Jesus, **יְהוֹשֻׁעַ**, **Yehoshu(a)**, in Hebrew, which means “Yeho / YHWH (Is) Salvation.”

The longer form of the Divine name, **יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת**, “YHWH of Armies,” which occurs some 266 times in the **Hebrew Bible**, simply means YHWH is the “God of War,” Who has massive armies at His disposal. Of course that implies mighty power, but that is not the meaning of the name.

³Oswalt states that “The repetition of titles for God [see **1:24; 10:16, 33**], contributes to the atmosphere of judgment...God, not...man, holds their fate.” (Pp. 131-32)

We agree, but see the preceding footnote. Biblical teaching holds that humanity is certainly not equal to YHWH, but also holds that humanity has been made “in the Divine image and likeness,” and is responsible for making decisions that will be instrumental in determining its own fate, as well as the condition of the earth—since humanity has been charged with making the earth a “garden.”

⁴The two Hebrew words **מִשְׁעָן וּמִשְׁעֵנָה**, are the same word, only the first is masculine and the second is feminine. Translations vary:

King James, “the stay and the staff”

Tanakh, “Prop and stay”

New Revised Standard, “support and staff”

New International, “both supply and support”

New Jerusalem, “of resources and provisions”

Rahfs, “a man having strength and a woman having strength”

(continued...)

⁴(...continued)

Ortlund comments that “The combination suggests severe deprivation” (P. 1245) since both supports are being taken away. Motyer says that it is “an idiom of totality, meaning ‘every support without exception.’” (P. 60)

What Isaiah means becomes clear in the phrases that follow, which speak of the lack of bread and water. Motyer states that “Offence against the Creator results in the withholding of the blessings of creation.” (*Ibid.*)

What do you think? Do you want to make of this a universal law? What about the teaching attributed to Jesus in **Matthew 5:45** that God the heavenly Father, makes His sun to shine upon both the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust, and advises us to do likewise?

⁵Ortlund comments on **verses 2-5** that “God judges His people by removing the leaders who were considered indispensable and replacing them with irresponsible boys and infants.” (P. 1245)

Oswalt comments on **verses 2-3** that “The Lord will take away the great men, including the military leaders...political leaders...religious leaders...and skilled craftsmen. This is, of course, exactly what took place when Assyria, and later Babylon, conquered a city.” (P. 132) See:

2 Kings 24:14, speaking of the Babylonian invasion of Judah and Jerusalem”

And he (the Babylonian king) took captive all Jerusalem,
and all the princes,
and all (the) mighty men of the army,
ten thousands going into captivity;
and every one of the craftsmen and the workers in metal.

Oswalt states that “Those leaders who could foment rebellion after the conquering army had passed on were deported and replaced by more docile [submissive] peoples from some faraway region. Particularly prominent in Isaiah’s list are persons who could give guidance, who could tell someone what to do. Because Judah and Jerusalem had relied on human discernment rather than Divine, the day was coming when that support would be removed. Then perhaps, they would be forced to rely on God’s leadership again.” (P. 133)

Motyer comments that “Beginning with military leadership, *hero* and *warrior* (the supposed evidences of national security), Isaiah heaps up titles, moving broadly from the national (*judge* and *prophet*) to the local (*elder* [our ‘official’] and *craftsman*), and mixing the legitimate with the illegitimate (*counselor* and *enchanter*). This creates an impression of the total collapse of the command structure of society and the abandonment of true religion is always the signal for superstitions and an obsessive

(continued...)

שׁוֹפֵט וְנָבִיא

וְקָסָם וְזָקֵן:

mighty man⁶ and man of war,⁷
judge and spokesperson / prophet,
and one divining,⁸ and elderly official,

⁵(...continued)

interest in prognostication [foretelling the future], hence the reference to the *soothsayer* or ‘fortune-teller.’” (P. 60)

We are reminded of the story of King Saul’s going to the female medium of Endor when Samuel the judge / prophet had died, and he found no other religious leader able to communicate with YHWH for him—see **1 Samuel 28**.

⁶For the Hebrew גִּבּוֹר, “mighty man,” **Rahlfs** has “a giant and strong one.”

Alexander states that “The idea here expressed...is not simply that of personal strength and prowess...but the higher one of military eminence or heroism.” (P. 109)

⁷Alexander holds that “man of war” “may here denote either a warrior of high rank, as synonymous with גִּבּוֹר...or one of ordinary rank, as distinguished from it. (P. 110)

Compare **2 Samuel 23:8-13**, where names of David’s “mighty men” are given, with tales of their exploits.

⁸Gray comments that “the enumeration is of persons whom the prophet’s audience accounted sources of strength: ‘diviners’ and ‘charmners’ could never have appeared such to Isaiah himself, and indeed his fundamental thought here as in **chapter 2** is that Yahweh alone is the true Strength of Judah; in alienating Him and thus losing His support, the people work their own fall and ruin (**verse 8**)...The term קָסָם denotes a person who obtained information by divination, as, for example, by drawing lots with arrows.” (P. 63) See:

Ezekiel 21:26-27^{Heb} **21-22**^{Eng},

26/21 Because Babylon’s king stood at a mother of the way (where two ways part),
at (the) head of the two ways,
to divine divination (לְקָסָם-קָסָם):
he shook with the arrows;
he asked among the teraphim / idol-Gods;

(continued...)

⁸(...continued)

he looked at the liver (taken from a sacrificed animal);
 27/22 in his right hand was the [result of his] divination—Jerusalem—
 to place battering-rams,
 to open a mouth with murder,
 to raise high a voice with shouting,
 to place battering-rams against gates,
 to pour out a mount,
 to build a siege-wall / tower.

Gray states that the practice of divination “is directly or tacitly condemned whenever it is referred to in the **Old Testament**.” (P. 63) See especially **Deuteronomy 18:10-11**. But here in **Isaiah 3:2** a קִסֵּם, “one divining,” is mentioned as an official in Judah, and in **3:3** the phrase וְנִחְכֵם חֲרָשִׁים וְנִבּוֹן לַחַשׁ, “and one wise in magical arts and one discerning whispering / charm(s),” evidently depicts officials in Judah practicing magic and “charms,” with no direct or tacit condemnation.

Alexander, noting attempts to avoid the seeming incongruity of mentioning prophet and diviner side by side, states that “The people are threatened with the loss of all their ‘stays,’ good or bad, true or false.” (P. 110)

⁹Kaiser entitles **verses 3-5** “The rule of caprice.” He comments that “As a consequence of the stripping of the capital and the country of its leading class, which he expects, the poet foresees the anarchy which usually comes about in history, far from all utopian conceptions, as a...free-for-all war, and therefore a state of utter lawlessness...Caprice holds sway, the caprice of those who claim to themselves the right of the strong...Those who claim to be self-appointed authorities are simply bands of young men who act as they want in the cities.” (P. 71) Compare:

Ecclesiastes 10:16a,

Alas for you, land, when your king--a youth...

Ben Sirach 10:3,

An undisciplined king will destroy the people of his;
 and a city will be settled by understanding of rulers.
 (New Revised Standard has “but a city becomes fit to live in through the understanding of its rulers.” New Jerusalem has “a city owes its prosperity to the intelligence of its leading men.”)

Alexander comments on **verse 3** that “To persons of official rank and influence the Prophet adds, in order to complete his catalogue, practitioners of those arts upon

(continued...)

וְיִוְעֵץ וְיַחֲכֵם חֲרָשִׁים וְנִבּוֹן לְחַשׁ:

captain of fifty,¹⁰ and one lifted up in appearance,¹¹

and one counseling,¹² and wise person of magic arts,¹³

⁹(...continued)

which the people set most value.” (P. 110) Compare **verse 2**, where a similar combination is made.

¹⁰Watts translates by “company commander,” and states that the Masoretic pointing “fits the Assyrian military title *rab-shakeh*.” (P. 39)

¹¹Translations of פְּנִיָּא נְשׂוּאָה vary from “the honorable man,” to “Magnate,” to “dignitary,” to “man of rank,” to “favorite,” to **Rahlf’s** “marvelous counselor.”

Slotki translates by “men of rank,” and states that it is literally “raised of countenance,” meaning “men commanding respect.” (P. 16)

Alexander states that the phrase פְּנִיָּא נְשׂוּאָה signifies “lifted up in countenance ...and may here denote one highly favored by a sovereign...or respected, revered by the people (**Lamentations 4:16; Deuteronomy 18:50**).” (P. 110)

¹²Alexander holds that “the counselor here meant is not a private or professional adviser, but a public counselor or minister of state.” (P. 110)

Compare **Isaiah 9:5**^{Heb} / **6**^{Eng} where the name of the coming king is פְּלֵא יוְעֵץ, “Wonder of a Counselor,” translated by **Rahlf’s** as “Messenger / Angel of Great Counsel.”

See **2 Kings 24:14-16** for a historical description of the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon:

- 14 And he led into exile all Jerusalem,
and all the princes / rulers, and all the army’s mighty men—
ten thousand going into exile;
and every craftsman and metal-worker.
There was no one left remaining except poor people of the land.
- 15 And he led Jehoyachin into exile to Babylon,
and the King’s mother,
and the King’s wives,
and his eunuchs,
and the land’s leaders,
he led, going into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.

(continued...)

and one understanding (the art of magic) charms.¹⁴

3:4¹⁵ וְנִתְּתִי נְעָרִים שְׂרִיָּהֶם

¹²(...continued)

16 And all (the) men of the army, seven thousand;
and the craftsman and the metal-worker, a thousand;
the entirety of the mighty men making war.
And the king of Babylon brought them to Babylon, exiles.

¹³Translations of חֲרָשִׁים חָכָם vary from “the cunning artificer,” to “skilled artisan,” to “skillful magician,” to “skilled craftsman,” to “architect,” to **Rahlfs’** σοφὸν ἀρχιτέκτονα, literally “wise architect,” “wise master-builder.” Our translation is “wise person of magic arts.” We understand the text as stating that two of the officials in Judah (see the next footnote) were practicing the very things Isaiah is condemning.

¹⁴Translations of לְחַשׁ נְבוֹן vary from “the eloquent orator,” to “expert enchanter,” to “clever enchanter,” to “soothsayer,” to “intelligent hearer.” Our translation is “one understanding (the art of magic) charms.”

Alexander comments that לְחַשׁ has been understood as meaning a “whisper” or “the act of whispering,” but holds that it should be understood as referring to incantation [ritual recitation of verbal charms or spells to produce a magic effect], with the mutterings and whisperings which formed a part of magical ceremonies, especially the charming of serpents.” (P. 111) We agree.

¹⁵Oswalt comments on **verses 4-5** that “When a people commit themselves into the hands of human leaders, the result is disaster...More probably Isaiah is speaking figuratively: Judah will be ruled by incompetents...When a nation permits its rulers to believe that they rule in their own right and because of their own competence, that nation brings upon itself the official graft, self-serving, and irresponsibility which result... The result is not some sort of hierarchy but an anarchy where all devour each other alike.” (P. 133)

But we wonder what alternative Oswalt proposes. Experiments with seeking to make the state subject to the temple / church / mosque etc. have likewise led to disastrous consequences. We suggest that there is no alternative to human leaders, but citizens must seek out the most qualified leaders in their midst, those who are true to broad religious and ethical principles, but not narrow, sectarian dogmas, who will be willing to listen to the voice of the country’s wisest counselors and then lead with strength of conviction and bravery. What do you think?

Alexander comments on **verse 4** that “The natural consequence of the removal of the leading men must be the rise of incompetent successors, persons without

(continued...)

וְתַעֲלוּלִים יִמְשְׁלוּ-בָם:

And I will place youths¹⁶ (as) their princes,
and caprice / wantonness¹⁷ will rule over them!

3:5¹⁸ וַנִּגַּשׁ הָעָם

אִישׁ בְּאִישׁ

וְאִישׁ בְּרֵעֵהוּ

יִרְהָבוּ תִנְעָרִים בְּזִקְנָן

וְהִנְקְלָה בְּנִכְבָּד:

And the people will press hard—
man against man,
and a man against his neighbor;

¹⁵(...continued)

capacity, experience, or principle, a change which is here ascribed to God's retributive justice." (P. 111)

¹⁶Translations vary from "babes," to "mere children," to "raw lads," to "mockers." Oswalt translates by "tyrants." We translate by "youths."

Alexander comments that "The most probable opinion is that the incompetent rulers are called boys or children not in respect to age but character." (P. 111)

¹⁷Slotki holds that "The Hebrew word [תַּעֲלוּלִים] is an abstract noun, and should...be translated 'wantonness' [exciting or expressing sexual desire, or malicious, unjustifiable cruelty] or 'capriciousness' [impulsive, unpredictable]." (P. 16)

¹⁸Alexander comments on **verse 5** that "As the preceding verse describes bad government, so this describes anarchy, the suspension of all government, and a consequent disorder in the relations of society, betraying itself in mutual violence, and in the disregard of natural and artificial claims to deference." (P. 111)

The verse seems to depict the "caprice" (sudden and unaccountable change of mood or behavior) which has just been mentioned in the preceding verse as the mark of "bad government."

the youth will storm against the elder / official,¹⁹
and the dishonorable person against the honored person.²⁰

3:6²¹ כִּי־יִתְפֹּשׂ אִישׁ בְּאֶחָיו

¹⁹For this matter of youth “storming against the elder / official,” see:

Lamentations 4:16,

YHWH's face scattered them;
he will not again look at / regard them.
(The) face of priests, they did not lift up / respect;
and to elderly people / officials they showed no favor.

Deuteronomy 28:50,

a nation of fierce appearance
which will not discriminate for (the) old people,
and he will not show mercy (on a) young person.

²⁰Watts translates this last line of **verse 5** by “the commoner against the gentleman.” The two niph'al (passive) participles, הִנְקָלָה and הִנְכַבֵּד, are literally “the dishonored,” and “the honored.”

²¹Kaiser entitles **verses 6-7** “The hopelessness of the situation,” and comments that “no one is prepared to lead the people. No one will even allow himself to be forced to take office under pressure from his clan or his fellows...At that time possession of a mantle, i.e. sufficiently represent-ative clothing, will be regarded as adequate qualification. However, anyone who has this qualification will reject the doubtful honor of the ruler's insignia and deny outright that he has a mantle in order to evade the thankless task, so despoiled is the land.” (P. 72)

Oswalt comments on **verses 6-7** that “Isaiah brings this prophecy of a time when Judah will be ruled by nobodies to a climax with a concrete example. He foresees a time when the land will be so deprived of leadership and so poverty-stricken that possession of a coat will constitute grounds for election to rule. Kaiser believes that the reference is to the kind of sleeveless, fringed mantle which ancient Near Eastern rulers wore...As Young points out, however, שְׂמֹלֶה is the regular word for cloak or mantle and there is nothing in the context which automatically distinguishes this שְׂמֹלֶה from any other. It would be a time when possession of any kind of coat would set one above the common crowd.” (P. 133)

Verse 6 is given varying translations:

(continued...)

בֵּית אָבִיו

שְׂמֹלָה

לָכֵה קֶצֶין תִּהְיֶה-לָנוּ

וְהַמְכֹשֶׁלָה הַזֹּאת תַּחַת יָדָי:

Because a man will take hold on his brother,
(of / from) his father's house,

²¹(...continued)

King James, "When a man shall take hold of his brother of the house of his father, saying, Thou hast clothing, be thou our ruler, and *let* this ruin *be* under thy hand:"

Tanakh, "For should a man seize his brother, In whose father's house there is clothing: 'Come, be a chief over us, And let this ruin be under your care,'

New Revised Standard, "Someone will even seize a relative, a member of the clan, saying, "You have a cloak; you shall be our leader, and this heap of ruins shall be under your rule."

New International, "A man will seize one of his brothers in his father's house, and say, 'You have a cloak, you be our leader; take charge of this heap of ruins!'"

New Jerusalem, "When a man shall take hold of his brother of the house of his father, saying, Thou hast clothing, be thou our ruler, and *let* this ruin *be* under thy hand:"

Rahfs, ὅτι ἐπιλήμψεται ἄνθρωπος τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ ἢ τοῦ οἰκείου τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ λέγων ἱμάτιον ἔχεις ἀρχηγὸς ἡμῶν γενοῦ καὶ τὸ βρῶμα τὸ ἐμὸν ὑπὸ σὲ ἔστω, "Because a man will take hold of his brother, or (someone) from the household of his father, saying, A garment you have—become our leader! And let my food be under you!"

Alexander comments on **verse 6** that "Having predicted the removal of those qualified to govern, the rise of incompetent successors, and a consequent insubordination and confusion, the Prophet now describes this last as having reached such a height that no one is willing to hold office...The commonwealth is represented as a ruin, and the task of managing it pressed upon one living in retirement, on the ground that he still possesses decent raiment." (P. 112)

Slotki states that "The entire **verse [6]** is the protasis to **verse 7** which is the apodosis." (P. 16) **Wikipedia** states that "A full conditional sentence (one which expresses the condition as well as its consequences, contains two clauses: first the dependent clause expressing the condition, called the "protasis"; and the main clause expressing the consequence, called the "apodosis." An example of such a sentence is, "If it rains, the picnic will be cancelled." (6/12/14)

(saying,)²² You have a garment,²³

Come! You will be a ruler over us!

And this overthrown mass (will be) beneath your hand!²⁴

²²Alexander observes that “The word *saying*...is inserted by two manuscripts, and supplied by most versions, ancient and modern.” In addition, “Thirty-five [Hebrew] manuscripts and two editions [of the **Hebrew Bible**] read יָדַיִךְ in the plural”—that is, “your hands” instead of our Hebrew text’s יָדְךָ, “your hand.” (P. 113)

²³Somewhat strangely, the word hl’äm.fi, “garment” is followed by the phrase לְכֹהֵן, which we take to mean “a garment belongs to you,” or “you have a garment.” It is simply the fact that he still has a garment—at least some clothing—that qualifies him to become ruler of his city’s / country’s ruins!

Ortlund comments that “The mere appearance of qualified leadership [having a garment to wear] is seized upon by the leaderless people.” (P. 1246)

²⁴Where our Hebrew text has the phrase וְהַמִּכְשֶׁלָה הַזֶּאת תַּחַת יָדְךָ, “and this overthrown mass under your hand,” **Rahlf**s has “and the food of mine, let it be under you.”

But what does that mean? Does it mean “under your control”? Does the one making the offer have access to a supply of food, which he offers to give to the man with the garment, thereby enabling him as ruler to take care of some of the hungry people?

Oswalt translates by “*this ruin will be under your hand*, and comments that it seems to be a fine example of the prophet’s gift for irony...*Hand* is the expression of authority and power. But what is there left to rule? A ruin, nothing more [or, perhaps, the food that his relative is offering to put under his authority]...

“Yet even a heap of ruins is more that the chosen man cares to take on...As a leader, he could neither feed nor clothe his people and he will not accept the responsibility. How are the mighty fallen, Isaiah seems to say. Judah will go from a time when no mantle of glory was too great to assume to a time when even a dump heap constitutes more responsibility than a person would want.” (P. 134)

We suggest that the person being approached doesn’t want to be responsible for “a heap of ruins.” What honor is there in that? What good could he possibly do, with only the clothes on his back, and perhaps a small supply of his kinsman’s food?

3:7²⁵ יִשָּׂא בַיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר

לֹא־אֶהְיֶה חֹבֵשׁ

וּבְבֵיתִי אֵין לֶחֶם וְאֵין שְׂמֹלֶה

לֹא תִשְׂמְנֵנִי קֶצֶין עִם:

He will lift up (his voice)²⁶ in that day, saying:

I will not be one binding up (our wounds),²⁷

and in my house there is no bread, and there is no garment.²⁸

²⁵Alexander comments on **verse 7** that it “contains the refusal of the invitation given in [the preceding verse].” (P. 113)

²⁶Some translations interpolate “his hand” instead of our “his voice.”

²⁷Translations of this line vary:

King James, “I will not be an healer”; **New Revised Standard**, almost identical;

Tanakh, “I will not be a dresser of wounds”

New International, “I have no remedy”

New Jerusalem, “I am no healer”

Rahlf's, “I will not be your leader / chief.”

Alexander comments that “The meaning of the words seems to be either *I cannot*, as a confession of unfitness...or *I will not*, as an expression of invincible aversion.” (P. 114)

²⁸The person called upon to become Judah’s / Jerusalem’s leader responds by saying he has no resources with which to fix the problems they are facing.

Watts states, the phrase אֵין שְׂמֹלֶה, ‘no cloak’ denies what **verse 6** has affirmed, that he possesses a cloak.” (P. 39)

Alexander comments that “The whole connection seems to show that it is a profession of great poverty, which, if true, shows more clearly the condition of the people, and if false, the general aversion to office. The last clause does not simply mean *do not make me*, but *you must not*, or *you shall not make me* a ruler.” (P. 113)

Motyer comments that “In the political order there is a disinclination to treat leadership seriously and a breakdown in public spirit...[The response of the proposed leader,] ‘I have no remedy’ / ‘I will not be a healer / bandager’ is the same picture of the wounded body politic (and the same word) as in **1:6**...Behind this caricature lies the

(continued...)

You will not make me²⁹ a ruler of a people!

3:8³⁰ כִּי כַשְׂלָה יְרוּשָׁלַם

²⁸(...continued)

reality of unwillingness to accept responsibility and for reasons as frivolous as those put forward in his favor. Isaiah is in reality describing a breakdown in national character and seriousness; the spirit which treats national welfare, politics and leadership as a joke.” (P. 60)

Do you agree with Motyer? We think the response is not at all frivolous or joking –it is an honest confession of poverty, of total lack of resources to deal with the situation.

²⁹Where our Hebrew text has the phrase לֹא תִשְׂמַנֵּי, “you will not place / make me,” **Rahfs** has the phrase “I will not be.”

³⁰Oswalt entitles **3:8-15** “Rapine [Seizure / Robbery] for leadership.”

He comments that “**Verses 8-11** speak more generally of the people while **verses 12-15** focus upon the leadership of the people. If it is true that a day will come when there will be no one of the stature to lead God’s people, it will be so because the leadership in Isaiah’s own day was craven [very cowardly] and rapacious (**verses 14, 15**), leading the nation to its own destruction (**verses 9, 12**). How foolish of Judah to adulate [excessively love] those who were destroying them, while at the same time shaking off God’s easy yoke.” (P. 115)

Motyer entitles **3:8-9a** “The root cause of the collapse,” which he identifies as “speech and conduct contrary to the Lord.” (P. 61)

Translations of **verse 8** vary:

King James, “For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen: because their tongue and their doings *are* against the LORD, to provoke the eyes of his glory.”

Tanakh, “Ah, Jerusalem has stumbled, And Judah has fallen, Because by word and deed They insult the LORD, Defying His majestic glance.”

New Revised Standard, “For Jerusalem has stumbled and Judah has fallen, because their speech and their deeds are against the LORD, defying his glorious presence.”

New International, “Jerusalem staggers, Judah is falling; their words and deeds are against the LORD, defying his glorious presence.”

New Jerusalem, “For Jerusalem has collapsed and Judah has fallen, because their words and deeds affront Yahweh and insult his glorious gaze.”

(continued...)

וַיִּהְיֶה נִפְלָא
כִּי־לְשׁוֹנָם וּמַעַלְלֵיהֶם אֶל־יְהוָה
לְמַרְוֹת עֵינֵי כְבוֹדוֹ:

Because Jerusalem stumbled,
and Judah fell;³¹

because their tongue / speech and their deeds (are) against YHWH,³²

³⁰(...continued)

Rahfs, ὅτι ἀνεῖται Ἰερουσαλημ καὶ ἡ Ἰουδαία συμπέπτωκεν καὶ αἱ γλῶσσαι αὐτῶν μετὰ ἀνομίας τὰ πρὸς κύριον ἀπειθοῦντες διότι νῦν ἐταπεινώθη ἡ δόξα αὐτῶν, “Because Jerusalem is abandoned / given up, and the Judea has fallen; and their tongues with lawlessness—disobeying the things towards (the) Lord. For this reason now their glory was humbled.”

Slotki states that here in **verse 8** “The prophet resumes his exhortation. His use of the verbs in the perfect [‘past tense’] indicates certainty of fulfilment.” (P. 17)

Motyer comments that “It is not an occasional lapse nor a shameful secret but a public and unabashed way of life. They wear what they are on their faces and parade / ‘tell of’ their sin.” (P. 61)

Alexander comments on **verse 8** that “The Prophet here explains his use of the word *ruin* in reference to the commonwealth of Israel, by declaring that it had in fact destroyed itself by the offence which its iniquities had given to the holiness of God...Do not wonder at its being called a ruin, for Jerusalem totters and Judah falls (or Jerusalem is tottering and Judah falling), because their tongue and their doings (words and deeds being put for the whole conduct) are against [Yahweh].” (P. 114)

Kaiser states that “the cause of the catastrophe is to be sought in open rebellion to Yahweh which expresses itself in word and deed...Crisis in a society at the same time reflects a crisis in its relationship with God. It follows from this that the one cannot be resolved without the other, however much materialistic philosophy of history may protest against this and see spiritual upheavals as no more than a reflection of economic crises.” (Pp. 72-3)

³¹Where our Hebrew text reads the qal perfect, 3rd person masculine singular, נִפְלָא וַיִּהְיֶה 1QIs^a reads נִפְלָה וַיִּהְיֶה, changing to the qal perfect 3rd person feminine singular, treating the noun Judah as a feminine noun rather than masculine.

³²Oswalt comments that “*Their tongue* is the concrete equivalent of ‘words’ [our ‘speech’] and *their works* [our ‘deeds’] is a synecdoche [a figure of speech in which the

(continued...)

for rebelling (in) sight of His glory!³³

3:9³⁴ הַפְּרַת פְּנֵיהֶם עֲנֹתָהּ בָּם
וְחִטָּאתָם כְּסֹרֶם הַגִּידוּ
לֹא כִחְדוּ
אֹי לְנַפְשָׁם
כִּי־גִמְלוּ לָהֶם רְעָה:

A look / expression of their faces³⁵ testifies against them,³⁶

³²(...continued)

part is put for the whole] which includes the entire expression of their lives. All this is lived out directly in front of God and in defiance of Him...In the face of the God Whose glory is everywhere manifested, most of all in His Own faithfulness, the people of Israel persist in rebellion.” (Pp. 135-36)

³³Ortlund comments on **verse 8** that “The explanation for the nation’s social collapse lies in their hostility toward God...They obstinately disregard God’s presence in their midst...though His nearness is the hope they ought to cherish.” (P. 1246) See:

Exodus 40:38,

Because a cloud of YHWH over the movable sanctuary by day
and a fire will be by night in it,
in (the) sight of (the) whole house of Israel,
in all their journeys.

(Including, we presume at the end of their journeys, as the movable sanctuary was made permanent in Jerusalem)

³⁴Alexander comments on **verse 9** that “As they make no secret of their depravity, and as sin and suffering are inseparably connected, they must bear the blame of their own destruction.” (P. 114)

³⁵Proposed understandings of the feminine singular noun הַפְּרַת vary greatly:
“a look at their face witnesses against them (Latin Vulgate);
“the expression of their face”;
“their regarding of persons” (Syriac, Aramaic Targum;
“the impudence of their face.” Translations of the phrase הַפְּרַת פְּנֵיהֶם vary:

King James, “The shew of their countenance”;

(continued...)

and their sin³⁷ like Sodom they declared!³⁸

³⁵(...continued)

Tanakh, “Their partiality in judgment”;
New Revised Standard, “The look on their faces” **New International**, same;
New Jerusalem, “Their complacency”;
Rahfs, “and the shame of their face.”

Oswalt comments that “The phrase here translated *the expression of their faces* may be interpreted in two ways:...’their partiality’ [and] ‘the expression of their face’...It is brazenness [marked by flagrant and insolent audacity] which is being discussed in the context, not a particular sin like partiality...As opposed to the glorious face of God (**verse 8**), there are the brazen faces of His people, stubbornly and flagrantly pursuing their rebellion.” (P. 136)

Watts holds that the phrase **הַכָּרַת פְּנֵיהֶם**, “(the) look / expression of their faces,” means “show favoritism,” and concludes that the noun means “favoritism.” But this is only a guess as to the meaning of **הַכָּרַת**, **hakkarath** which occurs only here in the **Hebrew Bible**, and as a result there is no way to determine its meaning.

Watts is assuming that it comes from the root **נכר**, which means “to regard,” or “to recognize.” He refers to **Deuteronomy 1:17**; **Proverbs 24:23** and **28:21**, all of which use the verb in terms of “recognizing faces,” or “showing partiality / favoritism,” which they forbid. But to conclude from these passages that the noun **הַכָּרַת** means “favoritism” is only a guess.

Alexander notes that this clause “is applied to respect of persons or judicial partiality, by the Targum,” which reads **בְּרִינָא**, “in judgment.” But, Alexander adds, “the context seems to show that the Prophet has reference to general character and not to a specific sin, while the parallel expressions in this verse make it almost certain that the phrase relates to the expression of the countenance...The sense is not that their looks betray them, but that they make no effort at concealment, as appears from the reference to Sodom.” (P. 114)

³⁶We take Isaiah to mean that the facial expressions of the Judean authorities testifies against them in the heavenly court. Their feelings of superiority to the poor, the oppressed, the weak, the widow, the orphan and the landless foreigner can be seen by the expression on their faces. YHWH hates that attitude, and comes in judgment against it.

Do you agree with this? What about modern forms of favoritism, in which we feel superior to Mexican “wet-backs,” or to homosexuals, or to Muslims, etc.?

They did not hide (it)!

Woe to their innermost-being!

Because they have dealt out evil for themselves!³⁹

³⁷Where our Hebrew text reads the singular וְחַטָּאתָם, “and their sin,” both the Syriac translation and the Aramaic Targum read the plural, “and their sins.”

³⁸Translations of this line vary:

King James, “and they declare their sin as Sodom”

Tanakh, “They avow their sins like Sodom”

New Revised Standard, “they proclaim their sin like Sodom”

New International, “they parade their sin like Sodom” **New Jerusalem**, same

Rahifs, “but then the sin like Sodomites they proclaimed and made manifest.”

What do you think Isaiah means by comparing Jerusalem to Sodom? Does he have a similar view of Sodom’s sin to that of **Ezekiel 16:49-50**?

- 49 Look—this was Sodom, your sister’s iniquity:
exaltation, plenty of bread,
and there was quietness (with) ease
for her and for her daughters;
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.

Ezekiel does not concentrate on Sodom’s sexual immoralities (homosexual rape) so much as on her attitude to the poor in her midst, holding that Sodom failed to “take strong hold of the poor,” while she herself enjoyed plenty and ease. Sodom became haughty—and something similar to this has happened in Jerusalem / Judah—as Isaiah says, she shows favoritism to the wealthy and neglects the poor and the weak.

What do you think Jerusalem’s / Judah’s being “like Sodom” means? Some have jumped to the conclusion that this means the Jewish people had all become sexually immoral / homosexual. Do you agree?

³⁹Oswalt comments that “It is the people themselves who will suffer for their acts. In the words of the epigram [pointed saying, tersely expressed], ‘They have no one to blame but themselves.’” (P. 136)

Motyer describes this as demonstrating “the boomerang quality of sin,” and states that “the sinner is his own paymaster...Disaster / ‘evil’ is his wage.” (P. 61)

(continued...)

3:10⁴⁰ אָמְרוּ צְדִיק כִּי־טוֹב

כִּי־פְרִי מַעֲלֵי־יָהּ יֵאָכְלוּ:

Say⁴¹ (to) a rightly-related person, that (It is) good!

³⁹(...continued)

Slotki likewise states, “The evil they planned and executed recoiled on their own heads.” (P. 17)

Kaiser entitles this last line of **verse 9** through **verse 11** “The teaching of wisdom.”

He comments that “These verses express the certainty that every man forges his own destiny...**Verses 10-11**...take up the idea of the differing fortunes of the righteous and the Godless, as that is to be found in the terminology of wisdom and the individual lament which is partly influenced by its thought. Rooted in it, the speaker congratulates the righteous because he can count on having a long and happy life in accordance with his deeds...By contrast, the life of the Godless is lamentable because his own actions similarly come home to him, and he can be sure of a short unhappy life with a terrible end...

“[There is an] ever-present active judgment of Yahweh, Who gives every man his due at all times.” (P. 74) Compare:

Proverbs 11:30a, 31a,

30a Fruit of a rightly-related person—a tree of lives / life...

31a Look—a rightly-related person in the land will be at peace...

It is this kind of dogmatic wisdom theology that the **Book of Job** thoroughly debates and rejects as mistaken! And even if there are evidences of this kind of wisdom thinking in **Proverbs** and in the **Book of Isaiah**, it is certainly not the dogmatic expression of Job’s friends, or of Kaiser’s statement—but leaves great room for the suffering of the righteous servant of YHWH.

⁴⁰Alexander comments on **verse 10** that “The righteous are encouraged by the assurance that the judgments of God shall not be indiscriminate.” (P. 114)

But we ask, If the judgments of God are to be seen in the destruction of nations, as Isaiah teaches, is that destruction indiscriminate? Do only the wicked fall in battle, and not the righteous (as can be concluded from **Psalms 91**)?

⁴¹Where our Hebrew text says אָמְרוּ צְדִיק, literally, “Say (plural imperative) a rightly-related person,” where we interpolate the preposition “to,” **Rahlf**s has “Saying let

(continued...)

Because (the) fruit of their deeds they will eat!⁴²

3:11⁴³ אֵי לְרַשָׁע רַע
אֵי לְרַשָׁע רַע

⁴¹(...continued)

us bind the rightly-related person.”

⁴²**Verse 10** has a very different translation in **Rahlfs**, which refers to the wicked of **verse 9**, as “saying ‘Let us bind the rightly-related person, because he is annoying / inconvenient to us’; accordingly, they will eat the fruits of their works.”

Motyer comments that “*The righteous* as always, are those who are right with God and therefore committed to a life of righteousness. They are not promised immunity from earth’s troubles but that it *will be well*. Doubtless many of the righteous were among the six out of seven who fell in the predicted war (**3:25-4:1**) yet even the sword is not indiscriminate and **Old Testament** faith looks beyond earthly life (**Psalm 73:23-24**).” (P. 61)

We are puzzled by this comment. Sometimes in the **Hebrew Bible** the righteous are promised immunity from earth’s troubles—see for example, **Psalm 91**, and Isaiah’s statement here can be understood in this same sense.

And we ask, What does Motyer mean by “even the sword is not indiscriminate”? Does he mean that the sword in battle discriminates between righteous and unrighteous? Those who have seen the casualties of war first-hand know that this is hardly the case, as both the righteous and the unrighteous suffer casualties, regardless of their goodness or badness.

We agree with his statement that **Psalm 73** looks beyond earthly life (along with some other passages, see **Isaiah 25** and **26!**), but this is hardly uniform teaching in the **Hebrew Bible**. What do you think?

We think that Isaiah’s statement in **verse 10** can only be true if we take the “long view,” looking beyond earthly life—acknowledging that far too often the righteous suffer and die at the hands of the wicked. If this life is all that there is, Isaiah’s statement is not always the case. If there is life beyond this life—if there is such a thing as immortality, and life beyond the grave, we can say Isaiah’s words contain faithful counsel in the midst of life’s trials.

⁴³Alexander comments on **verse 11** that it is the converse of the preceding statement in **verse 10**, a threat corresponding to the promise of that verse. He translates by “Woe unto the wicked, (it shall be) ill (with him), for the thing done by his hands shall be done to him.”

Can this passage be the source of the statement attributed to Jesus that “those who take up the sword will perish by the sword” (**Matthew 26:52**)? See also:

(continued...)

כִּי־גְמוּל יָדָיו יַעֲשֶׂה לּוֹ:

Woe to an evil wicked person!

Because a recompense of his hands will be done to him!⁴⁴

⁴³(...continued)

Genesis 9:6,

שִׁפְךָ דָם הָאָדָם
בָּאָדָם דָּמוֹ יִשְׁפָּךְ
כִּי בְצַלְמֵ אֱלֹהִים
עָשָׂה אֶת־הָאָדָם:

One pouring out blood of the human being,
by the human being his blood will be poured out!
Because in God's image / likeness,
He made the human being!

Ezekiel 35:6,

לִכֵּן חִי־אֲנִי
נֶאֱמַר אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה
כִּי־לָדָם אֶעֱשֶׂךָ
וְדָם יִרְדְּפֶךָ
אִם־לֹא דָם שָׁנֵאת
וְדָם יִרְדְּפֶךָ:

Therefore, (as) I live—
(it is) a saying of my Lord YHWH—
that for blood I will make you (singular),
and blood will pursue you!
If you did not hate blood—
and blood will pursue you!
(The Greek for these last two lines is:
εἰ μὴ εἰς αἷμα ἥμαρτες
καὶ αἷμά σε διώξεται
If indeed you sinned against blood,
and blood will pursue you!)

⁴⁴Oswalt comments on **verses 10-11** that “These verses carry on the theme of retributive justice opened in **verse 9b**. In language reminiscent of the Wisdom

(continued...)

⁴⁴(...continued)

literature, the prophet asserts that those who do right will experience good while those who do wrong will experience evil. While we may wrestle, as did Job and the Preacher [meaning, Koheleth, in the **Book of Ecclesiastes**], with the short-term paradoxes which such a doctrine raises (compare also **Malachi 2:7; 3:13**), its ultimate truth must be the cornerstone of the whole biblical message. God is consistent and His ways are consistent. To live according to those ways is to reap blessing in part now, but especially ultimately. To live in defiance of those ways is to reap evil, if not now, then certainly ultimately. This sentiment could have been expressed at this point as a source of encouragement to those saints who were going to be swept into the maelstrom [a dangerous area of water that moves very fast in a circle] created by their wicked compatriots. The prophet assures them that, whatever the short-term effects, they would have no reason to regret their choice in the long term.” (Pp. 136-37)

Again, Oswalt argues like Job’s three friends in the **Book of Job**. For them, the doctrine of Divine retribution was the cornerstone of truth, which not only humanity is subject to, but to which God must likewise be subject. But YHWH revealed to Job the fact that He is free to do as He pleases, when and where He pleases, and is not subject to the doctrine of retribution, as can be seen in His created world, where “survival of the fittest,” and “might makes right” without Divine imposition of such a law of retribution or “justice” are the hall-marks.

Do you agree with Oswalt that the doctrine of retribution is “the cornerstone of the whole biblical message”? What about Jesus Christ as the “Cornerstone,” Who freely welcomes sinners and gives them total forgiveness, without demanding retribution, His “pound of flesh”?

We think that in fact, oftentimes righteousness is rewarded, and evil suffers its consequences—but certainly not without exception, as Job’s experience proves, along with the experiences of many other innocent sufferers. And the Divine law of retribution, rather than being “iron-clad,” and binding on God, both now and in the hereafter, is itself subject to the Divine freedom of love and grace, that can restore the fortunes of sinful Jerusalem and Samaria and Sodom (see **Ezekiel 16:53-55**) and that can go to those destroyed by Noah’s flood to preach good news to them (see **1 Peter 3:8-4:6**).

Where our Hebrew text reads כִּי־גִמּוּל יָדָיו יַעֲשֶׂה לּוֹ, “because a recompense of his hands will be done to him,” **Rahlfs** has “according to the works of his hands it will happen to him.” Instead of יַעֲשֶׂה, “it will be done,” the Qumran manuscript 1QIs^a reads יָשׁוּב, “it will return.”

Gray comments that “For the idea that as a man deals he is dealt with, see **Isaiah 33:1**.” (P. 66)

(continued...)

⁴⁴(...continued)

Woe (to) one despoiling / devastating,
 and you were not despoiled / devastated;
 and acting faithlessly,
 and they did not act faithlessly against him!
 When you are finished despoiling / devastating,
 you will be despoiled / devastated!
 When you have ceased to act faithlessly,
 they will act faithlessly against you!

⁴⁵Motyer entitles **3:12-4:1** “Retribution applied,” and comments that “The situation of oppressed (**12a**) and misgoverned (**12b**) people is brought to the bar of Divine justice and the rulers are arraigned before the Lord’s tribunal (**verses 13-15**). But then metaphor becomes history and judgment falls on an errant people through military overthrow (**3:16-4:1**).” P. 61)

Oswalt comments on **verses 12-15** that “In these verses Isaiah moves to an indictment of the leadership. They are acting irresponsibly and unjustly, destroying the very thing entrusted to them. This theme of foolish leadership, especially on the level of elders [our ‘officials’] and princes, recurs throughout the **book (7:1-17; 14:4-21; 22:15-25; 28; 29; 32:3-8)**, and it is against this backdrop that the longing for, and the promise of, one who will rule in justice and righteousness [the ‘Messiah’] stands out.” (P. 137)

Kaiser entitles **verses 12-15** “Yahweh’s Dispute.” He describes **verse 12** as “Yahweh’s lament,” and comments that “The God Whose inexorable resolve to judge is directed against His people is nevertheless not a God Who loves to punish and Who looks on His creation without mercy. So the poet makes Him utter a lament over His people...because He sees that they are led into disaster by their leaders, who simply seek their own advantage and suck the people dry...”

“To practice usury among one’s own people and to lend out against interest was prohibited according to **Exodus 22:24; Deuteronomy 23:20-21**. However, such practices had advanced to such a degree in the province of Judah in the fifth century that the governor Nehemiah felt obliged to intervene by enacting a general remission of debts in order to prevent the collapse of the people (compare **Nehemiah 5:1ff.**). At that time the rich and the officials so shamelessly exploited the distress of the poor that heavy indebtedness had arisen, leading to the loss of houses and land, the pledging of children and finally even the selling of them into slavery...”

“The lament of Yahweh over His people, misled by their leaders, includes both criticism of a people which allows itself to be led astray, although it could have made a better choice...and criticism of those who bear the greater responsibility as leaders because of their greater power.” (P. 76)

(continued...)

וְנָשִׁים מְשֻׁלוּ בּוֹ
עַמִּי מֵאֲשֵׁרֶיךָ מִתְּעִים
וְדַרְךְ אֲרַחֲתֶיךָ בְּלִעָוֹ:

My people—his oppressors, acting like a child!⁴⁶

⁴⁵(...continued)

Gray entitles **verse 12** “Misgoverned and misled.” He comments that the first two lines describe “the pitiable state of Yahweh’s people due to the cruelties of severe rulers and money-lenders (**Rahifs**), or to the caprice of incompetent rulers—boys (compare **verse 4**) and women...Here as in **verse 4**, Yahweh is the Speaker..Unlike **verse 4** which predicts, [these two lines describe] an existing state of things.” (P. 66)

Alexander states that in **verse 12** “The Prophet now recurs to the evil of unworthy and incapable rulers, and expresses, by an exclamation, wonder and concern at the result. My people! Their oppressors are childish, and women rule over them. My people! Thy leaders are seducers, and the way of thy paths (the way where thy path lies) they swallow up (cause to disappear, destroy).” (P. 115)

Slotki comments that “The prophet sees in his mind the inexorable fulfilment of **verse 4**, and in his compassion and sympathy with their sufferings utters the heart-rending cry my people!...my people!” (P. 17) He notes that the **American-Jewish Translation of the Scriptures** has a capital M—“My people!...My people!”, making it YHWH’s cry rather than Isaiah’s.

⁴⁶The piel participle מְעוֹלִל only occurs here in the **Hebrew Bible**. The noun עוֹלִל, “child,” is found a number of times in the **Hebrew Bible** (see **Isaiah 13:16**; **Jeremiah 6:11**; **19:20**, etc., and it may be that the piel verb has been formed from this noun, and means “acting like a child.”

Watts notes that the phrase נְגַשְׁיוּ מְעוֹלִל, our “his oppressors, acting like a child,” is “a problem because of the singular and plural forms.” (P. 40)

Motyer suggests that the plural form “oppressors / taskmasters” is “a plural participle, possibly a plural of majesty” and comments that “In other words, the Divine ideal of kingship has been corrupted and the holder of the office is an inadequate.” (P. 62)

Motyer also states that **verse 12** “consists of an outraged exclamation (literally ‘My people! Youths oppress them’)...The Lord’s people are precious to Him. No one

(continued...)

And women ruled over it!⁴⁷

My people—those guiding you are leading (you) astray;
and (the) way of your paths they swallowed!⁴⁸

3:13⁴⁹ נִצַּב לְרִיב יְהוָה

⁴⁶(...continued)

touches them with impunity.” (P. 62) We wonder what Job would respond to Motyer’s claim.

We can only agree with Motyer if we take the long view, believing in immortality and life beyond this life—which we do.

⁴⁷Where our Hebrew text reads וְנָשִׁים מְשָׁלוּ בּוֹ, “and women ruled over it / him,” **Rahlf**s has “and those demanding a return rule you.”

Oswalt comments that according to the Masoretic text, “the prophet is saying that in one sense Judah is already ruled by those incompetent to do so (**verses 4, 5**). Their incompetence is seen in their inability to lead aright.” (Pp. 137-38)

And we ask, does being young, or being female, make you automatically incompetent to rule?

Motyer thinks that “women” here “possibly refers to the royal harem. If the king was a spoiled brat then likely enough his wives were numerous and manipulative, fitting what we sense of the reign of Ahaz...The reference may be to dominant and demanding women, the ‘power behind the throne’ and not only in the palace.” (P. 62)

What do you think? Is Isaiah’s statement, as it stands, “male chauvinist”?

⁴⁸Motyer comments that Isaiah’s choice of words here “is heavily ironical. It expresses what is expected of a leader but the reality is the opposite; they lead you astray, i.e. they enact laws which misdirect...Also (literally) ‘they swallow up the way of your paths’; the old established signposts for right living are as completely obliterated as if someone had swallowed them!” (P. 62)

⁴⁹Gray entitles **3:13-15** “A Judgment Scene,” and comments that “The prophet sees Yahweh in the act [two present participles] of taking up His position as Judge (**verse 13**)...In **verse 14** the emphasis changes: it is on the Judge; it is none other than Yahweh Who comes, and He comes to call to account the rulers of His people...The very persons appointed to protect the poor—have robbed and wronged them.” (P. 68)

Oswalt comments on these **verses** that “God will not allow the practices of the leadership to go unchallenged. He calls them to account and testifies against them. Their sin is that they have abused the trust given them (**verse 14**).” (P. 138)

(continued...)

וְעָמַד לְדִין עַמִּים:

Taking a stand for the contention (is) YHWH,

⁴⁹(...continued)

Watts states that “The passage is framed by the formal announcement in **verses 13-14** and the ascription of **verse 16**. The importance of the words in **verses 14b-15** are thus made clear.

“This is the third time such a solemn introduction has preceded a statement [the first two are **1:24-26**, the second **2:1-4**]...The speech is formulated as a prosecution speech before a court [see the words **רִיב...דִּין...and מוֹשֵׁפֵט**...The judgment setting of **1:2-3** is continued.” (P. 42)

Slotki states on **verses 13-15** that “God, in judging the peoples, declares that the social and political leaders are responsible for the oppression and exploitation of the helpless poor. By closing their eyes to the evils which they could have prevented, they become accessories to the act.” (P. 18)

Alexander comments on **verse 13** that “Though human governments might be overthrown, God still remained a Sovereign and a Judge, and is here represented as appearing, coming forward, or assuming His position, not only as a Judge but as an Advocate, or rather an Accuser, in both which characters He acts at once, implying that He Who brings this charge against His people has at the same time power to condemn. [*Yahweh*] *standeth up to plead, and is standing to judge the nations.*” (P. 115)

Kaiser expresses his Christian faith as he states that “The violation of human solidarity is in any form and in any circumstances a sign of the forgetfulness of a humanity whose existence is meant to be co-existence; of one who receives himself not only physically, but also spiritually, from others; and is reminded of the fact that others accept him, work with him and for him, and support him. Anyone who refuses to accept others as human beings devalues them so that they become mere objects and thus violates their very persons...Thus movements are set in train the violence of which ultimately destroys the whole of society...

“Life in Jesus Christ consists in the strength to forgive one another...to accept one another, and thus to give everyone the chance of being what he or she really is. In this way a new path is continually opened up to life together. Taking God seriously at the same time means taking ourselves and our neighbors seriously. It opens up the possibility of overcoming failure in the power of the hope of God’s never-ending presence.” (Pp. 77-78)

Do you agree with Kaiser? Do you think his view is based on the teaching of **Isaiah 3**?

and standing for the contention (with) peoples.⁵⁰

3:14⁵¹ יהוה בְּמִשְׁפַּט יָבוֹא

עִם-זִקְנֵי עַמּוֹ וְשָׂרָיו

וְאַתֶּם בְּעֵרְתֶם תְּפֹרֵם

⁵⁰Where our Hebrew text reads עַמִּים, “peoples,” **Rahlfs** has “the people of His.”

Alexander translates by “nations,” and comments that [peoples] *nations* here, as often elsewhere, means the tribes of Israel. See **Genesis 49:10; Deuteronomy 32:8; 33:3, 19; 1 Kings 22:28; Micah 1:2.**” (P. 116)

We are not sure about all of these passages, but it is certainly the case in some of them. Slotki agrees with Alexander.

Oswalt comments that “The solemnity of the Lord’s judgment is underlined by the emphasis of the Masoretic text: literally, ‘Taking His stand for judgment is the Lord, standing to judge His people’...Sooner or later, they must run headlong into Him...

“When government becomes corrupt it is usually those who are helpless who are hurt first and most often, especially if the leaders think of the people as their own preserve which they can use to their own advantage. But God says that the people, especially the helpless, are His and asks with the burning eyes of **verse 8** how the rulers dare to treat His heritage as they do. Not only are the poor plundered, but they are devastated, broken into pieces, and then ground to powder.” (Pp. 138-29)

Motyer states that “This courtroom scene has theological importance. Plainly, in **verse 12** the Lord is passionately concerned about the situation but He does not rush into action. First, charges must be laid, the case must be proved. The Lord is just in all His ways (**Genesis 18:20-21**).” (P. 62)

The text does not say all of this, but this is Motyer’s conclusion from his view that YHWH is taking the matter to court, where such actions would have to be taken.

⁵¹Alexander translates / comments on **verse 14** that “This verse describes the parties more distinctly, and begins the accusation. [*Jehovah*] *will enter into judgment* (engage in litigation, both as a Party and a Judge) *with the elders of His people* (the heads of houses, families and tribes) *and the chiefs thereof* (the hereditary chiefs of Israel...) *And ye* (even ye) *have consumed the vineyard* (of [*Jehovah*], His church or chosen people), *the spoil of the poor* (that which is taken from him by violence) *is in your houses*”...The Prophet here uses the same metaphor which forms the basis of his parable in **chapter 5.**” (P. 116) For Alexander’s use of “Jehovah” see our footnote 2.

גִּזְלַת הָעֲנִי בְּבָתֵיכֶם:

YHWH will come / enter into judgment,

with (the) elders / officials of His people and its princes.⁵²

And you, you burned / consumed the vineyard;⁵³

⁵²Motyer holds that the elders and princes / leaders “are respectively the legislative and executive arms of government.” (P. 62) We doubt that such a modern distinction can be substantiated.

He goes on to say that the type of “courtroom scene” that is being imagined “should be compared with **Psalm 50**.” (P. 62) We say, also see **Psalm 82**.

⁵³Motyer comments that the verb used here in **verse 14**, בָּעַרְתֶּם, “you (plural) burned,” or “you consumed,” possibly means “to graze,” or “to strip bare.” On the possibility of Isaiah’s meaning they have stripped their fields bare, Motyer states, “The contravention of the law of **Leviticus 19:9-10** and **Deuteronomy 24:20-21** is precisely the charge the Lord lays against the rulers here...The leaders not only left no gleanings for the poor, they ‘plundered’ what meager possessions the poor had; giving nothing, taking everything.” (Pp. 62-3) For this matter of “gleaning,” see:

Leviticus 19:9-10,

- 9 And when you people harvest the harvest of your land,
you (individual) shall not finish harvesting your field’s corner.
And (the) gleaning / left-over produce of your harvest you (individual) shall not
gather up.
- 10 And your vineyard you (singular) shall not glean / go over a second time.
And that which has been broken off (in) your vineyard, you shall not
gather up.
For poor people, and for the temporary resident(s), you (singular) shall leave
them.
I--YHWH your God!

Deuteronomy 24:19-21,

- 19 When you reap your harvest in your field—
and you forgot a sheaf in the field,
you shall not return to get it.
It shall be for the temporary resident, for the orphan, and for the widow—
so that YHWH your God will bless you
in every work / deed of your hands!
- 20 When you beat (the olives) out of your olive tree(s),
you shall not go over the boughs (again) afterwards;
to the temporary resident, to the orphan, and to the widow it will be(long).

(continued...)

plunder / spoil of the poor (people⁵⁴ is) in your houses!

⁵³(...continued)

21 When you cut off (the grape clusters) of your vineyard,
you shall not gather the clusters left behind you;
to the temporary resident, to the orphan, and to the widow it will belong.

However, if this is what Isaiah means, it seems that he would have used much more specific language, such as the noun לֶקֶט, “gleaning,” or the piel verb from this root, “gather up.” We think Motyer is reading this matter of “gleaning” into the text, although it may have well been the case.

We agree with Motyer’s further statement, that “It was a mark of true Israelite social morality to copy the Lord in His concern for the poor...They had forsaken both the letter and the spirit of the law.” (P. 63)

Gray comments that the elders, the representatives of Israel’s families, “instead of tending the vineyard, as true guardians should have done, so that the shoots of the vines should not be eaten off by intruding animals, they have used it recklessly for their own immediate profit...by letting loose their own animals to eat it down.” (P. 69)

Slotki likewise states, “The leaders, who should have prevented others from trespassing, are charged with having themselves plundered the vineyard.” (P. 18)

⁵⁴Watts comments that Isaiah identifies the basic wrong of Israel’s officials and princes as the ‘plunder of the poor’ גְזֵלַת הָעֲנִי—it is understood as a crime against the poor, who are seen as virtually identical with God’s people. The accusations of exploiting the poor find parallels in **Micah 3**...as well as **Hosea** and **Amos**.” (P. 42)

Micah 3:1-4,

1 And I said, Listen now, heads of Jacob,
and chiefs of Israel’s household:
is it not for you (plural) to know the justice?
2 (you) who are hating good,
and loving evil;
tearing away their skin from upon them,
and their flesh from upon their bones!
3 And who ate My people’s flesh,
and their skin from upon them you stripped;
and their bones you broke in pieces;
and spread (them) out just like in the pot,
and like flesh in the midst of a cooking vessel!
4 Then they will cry out to YHWH,
and He will not answer them;

(continued...)

3:15⁵⁵ (מִלְכֶם) [מִה־לְכֶם] תִּדְבְּרוּ עִמִּי

וּפְנֵי עֲנִיִּים תִּטְחֲנוּ

נֶאֱמַר-אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה צְבָאוֹת:

What to you people⁵⁶—you will crush / crush My people?

And faces of poor people you will grind / grind?⁵⁷

(It is) a saying of my Lord YHWH of Armies!⁵⁸

⁵⁴(...continued)

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

⁵⁵Alexander comments on **verse 15** that “The Lord’s address [which he thinks begins in the preceding verse, without being made explicit] to the elders of Israel is continued in a tone of indignant expostulation [earnest reasoning].” (P. 116)

⁵⁶The phrase מִה־לְכֶם, literally “what to you (plural)?” is given varying translations: **King James**, “What mean ye *that*?”; **Tanakh**, “How dare you?”; **New Revised Standard** and **New International**, “What do you mean by?” and **New Jerusalem**, “By what right do you?” **Rahlfs** has “Why do you harm My people?”

⁵⁷Watts comments that “Oppression is called *crushing* and *grinding*. No one has found stronger language.” (P. 42)

Motyer states that crushing “denotes the severest maltreatment ...grinding...as in a mill...The former is a picture of the bare fact of hostility; the latter of the motive of gain, milling a crop from the poor.” (P. 63)

Gray translates by “grind the faces,” and comments that the verb טחן “is commonly used of grinding corn between the mill-stones.” (P. 69)

Alexander holds that the grinding of the faces of the poor would be accomplished by “trampling on their bodies”—“another strong figure for contemptuous and oppressive violence.” (P. 116)

⁵⁸The last line of **verse 15** is omitted by **Rahlfs**.

Watts explains that “The spotlight of formal introduction and signature falls on Yahweh. His formal role as Judge is announced. The accused are named: the elders [our ‘officials’] and princes of His people...

(continued...)

⁵⁸(...continued)

“The accused are indicted on two counts. That they ‘devour the vineyard’ means that they have exploited the agrarian economy for their own gain...The other half of the charges is that of extortion. The leaders have forced the poor to turn over their small share of the harvest to them. The second major charge is that of exploitation and oppression. The Lord identifies Himself with the poor. They are ‘My people.’ He demands to know by what right the leaders treat the people in this way. The economic oppression of the eighth century was notorious...The conditions of the times were blamed on economic or political circumstances. But God forces blame on the leaders...

“The judgment speech of **1:10, 17** is continued in this accusation. The fact that the accuser is also the judge, which was possible in Israelite jurisprudence, leaves no doubt about the result. The fact that the goods of the poor were actually to be found in the homes of the elders [our ‘officials’] could not be refuted.

“The basis for judgment lies in the law and its place in covenant structure. The crime in God’s eyes goes beyond the act against the poor. It is a breach of God’s Own claim on the people. The elders [‘officials’] are judged for crime against God.” (Pp. 42-43)

⁵⁹Gray entitles **3:16-4:1** “The Doom of the Ladies of Jerusalem.” He comments that “The ladies of Jerusalem, who now spend their days walking about the city, casting wanton looks, and calling attention to themselves, will be smitten with unclean disease and exposed to insult (**verses 16-17**); they will be deprived of all their choice clothing, perfumes, amulets, and knick-knacks (**verses 18-23**); instead they will become offensive, will receive coarse clothing and turn bald (**verse 24**): in the city, which will have lost its men in battle (**verse 25**) and be lying empty and desolate (**verse 26**), seven women will think themselves fortunate if they can find a single man to take them into his possession without providing them with either food or clothing.” (P. 70)

Oswalt comments on this passage that it is “a final particularization of the fate and folly of human glory. Through the use of imagery Isaiah makes the nature of human pride and the results of that pride vivid and palpable as no abstract argument could.” (P. 130)

He adds that here, “the prophet continues the contrast which has been central to his thought from **2:6** onward: the contrast between glory contrived by human means and the shame which results from that contrivance. In an extremely powerful figure Isaiah makes the whole argument very concrete: wealthy women, secure in their luxury and their allure, are reduced to scabrous hags [ugly old women with rough skin, especially vicious or malicious ones] begging to belong to someone. Almost all the commentators see the primary function of the passage to be an indictment of the women of Jerusalem in Isaiah’s day like those of **Amos 4:1-3**...In this sense, it would parallel the indictments of male pride found earlier in this section.” (P. 140) See:

(continued...)

⁵⁹(...continued)

Amos 4:1-3,

- 1 Hear this, the word, cows of the Bashan,
those in Mountain Samaria—
the ones oppressing weak poor people,
the ones crushing needy poor people,
the ones saying to their lords,
Bring, and we will drink!
- 2 My Lord YHWH swore by His set-apartness, that:
Look—days (are) coming upon you (2nd person masculine plural),
and He will lift you up with thorns / hooks,
and your rear-ends (2nd person feminine plural) with fishhooks!
- 3 And (through breaches in the wall) you will go forth,
one after another,
and you will be thrown to Mount Hermon!
A saying of YHWH.

Oswalt comments on **verses 16-17** that “As has been said from **2:6** onward, the effect of self-exaltation is a confrontation with the only truly self-sufficient Being in the universe, the only One Whose glory is not derived. The result of that confrontation is a humiliation, a stripping away of all false supports. The direct cause of the humiliation is the attempt to exalt ourselves. So the woman who depended for her identity upon her elegant neck, her fluttering eyes, and her dainty walk (produced by the hobbling effect of ankle chains) finds herself with a shaven head, the worldwide sign of female disgrace.” (P. 141)

Watts comments that “This is a *prophecy of disaster*...It is related to the ‘Day of Yahweh’ section by **בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא** ‘in that day’ [see our end-note 13 on chapter 2]...

“The entire chapter speaks of things which must be removed from Jerusalem. Because of the women’s pride (**verse 16**) the symbols of their pride must be removed (**verses 17-24**). The casualties of battle (**verse 25**) and the destruction of the occupation (**verse 26**) will leave surviving women in a humiliated and humiliating state (**4:1**).” (Pp. 44-45)

Motyer entitles **3:16-4:1** “Divine retribution on Zion, personified in her ‘daughters.’” He comments that “The whole section moves to this climax. The ‘woes’ of **verses 9b-11** proclaim coming judgment, the court scene (**verses 12-15**) establishes the justice of it, and **3:16-4:1** sees the sentence executed...

“The overall movement is now from the womenfolk of Zion (**16:25**) to Zion herself (**verse 26**), and back to the women again (**4:1**). What is true of them is true of their ‘mother’; they encapsulate the spirit of arrogant self-seeking which has already been judged (**verses 14-15**) and is the death-warrant of the city. The reference to

(continued...)

יַעַן כִּי גָבְהוּ בְנוֹת צִיּוֹן
 וַתִּלְכְּנָה (נְטוּוֹת) [נְטוּוֹת] גְּרוֹן
 וּמִשְׁקֵרוֹת עֵינַיִם
 הִלְוֶה וְטַפֵּף תִּלְכְּנָה
 וּבְרִגְלֵיהֶם תַּעֲכֹסְנָה:

And YHWH said:

⁵⁹(...continued)

domineering women (**verse 12**) is here taken up and brought to its sad conclusion. The passage is in three sections: two contrasts (**verses 16-17**, **verses 18-24**) and the grim final reality (**3:25-4:1**)." (P. 63)

Alexander states that here in **verses 16** and **17**, "The Prophet...resumes the thread which had been dropped or broken at the close of **verse 12**, and recurs to the undue predominance of female influence, but particularly to the prevalent excess of female luxury, not only as sinful in itself, but as a chief cause of the violence and social disorder previously mentioned, and therefore to be punished by disease, widowhood, and shameful exposure." (Pp. 116-17)

Slotki states, "The prophet condemns the extravagance of the fashionable women of Jerusalem. Such indulgence on the part of a woman not infrequently leads to the unjust treatment of the poor by her husband, of which the prophet spoke in **verses 13-15**." (P. 18)

Kaiser comments that "The theme of the humiliation of the haughty by Yahweh, which underlies the saying, had been presented quite generally in **1:10ff**. Its roots are to be found in the notion that Yahweh helps the poor while He brings down the eyes of the proud, a notion that has found classic formulation in **Psalms 18:28**, and also was common in Wisdom [Literature]...In **verse 16** it is applied to the women of Jerusalem." (P. 79) See:

Psalm 18:28^{Heb} / **27**^{Eng}

For You--poor people You deliver!
 And haughty-eyed people You humble!

Proverbs 21:4,

Haughtiness of eyes, and pride of heart--
 lamp of wicked people--sin.

Because Zion's daughters⁶⁰ were high / exalted / haughty,⁶¹
and they walk with out-stretched neck,
and stare seductively⁶² (with their) eyes,
walking and tripping⁶³ they walk,

⁶⁰Watts comments that "Zion is the place where Yahweh dwells and reveals Himself. The inhabitants of the city, including the women, must be persons fit for that privilege and responsibility. The entire **Book of Isaiah** reflects God's search for a people fit to live in His city in meekness and humility." (P. 45)

We agree with Watts—Isaiah returns to the theme again and again--YHWH is actively searching for the kind of people who can live with Him!

What do you think? Is that what Jesus was doing when He reached out to all sorts and conditions of people in His ministry, including notorious prostitutes, cleansing them, forgiving them, enabling them to become the kind of people fit for Divine fellowship?

⁶¹Gray comments that the Hebrew word גְּבוּהָ, "to be high," "acquired the meaning *to be proud, set up, stuck up, self-sufficient.*" (P. 71)

⁶²Alexander states that where our Hebrew text has מְשַׁקְּרוֹת, "ogling," "above forty editions [of the **Hebrew Bible**] and eight [Hebrew] manuscripts read מְשַׁקְּרוֹת, 'deceiving,' i.e. by a false expression of the eyes...or by disguising them with paint." (P. 117)

The piel verb שָׁקַר, "ogle" occurs only here in the **Hebrew Bible**, and therefore its meaning is difficult to determine. However, in Aramaic the similar sounding verb spelled שָׁקַר, "look at," "eye with envy," is found in the Aramaic Targum of **Job 20:9** and **28:7** in the form שָׁקַרְנִית "looking about, ogling." Here in **Isaiah 3:16**, the feminine plural participle in the phrase מְשַׁקְּרוֹת עֵינַיִם apparently means "ogling of eyes," "staring with a lecherous / lustful / depraved look," on the part of the women of Jerusalem. Or, can it mean "staring with envy" at the few surviving men, wishing they could have them for their husband?

⁶³Gray comments that the qal infinitive טַפְּפֵי "probably signifies the quick, tripping gait, making a patter on the ground, of the women whose legs were bound by ornamental chains (**verse 20**?); just as טַפְּפֵי denotes little children, probably on account of their pattering walk...The Latin Vulgate has *plaudabant ambulabant pedibus suis*, 'jingling with their feet,' so walking that the metal anklets, a favorite ornament with the

(continued...)

and with their feet they rattle their ornaments--⁶⁴

3:17 וְשִׁפְחַ אֲדָנִי קִדְקֹד בְּנֹת צִיּוֹן

וַיְהוּה פְּתָהֵן יַעֲרָה:

and my Lord will smite with scabs⁶⁵ (the) scalps of Zion's daughters;
and YHWH will lay bare their sockets / secret parts!⁶⁶

⁶³(...continued)

women of the East, striking against one another, make a jingling noise and attract attention. Compare Mohammad's prohibition—'Let them not strike with their feet, so that those ornaments of theirs that be hidden be made known' (**Koran 24:21**).” (Pp. 71-72)

As is typical of western / Christian references to the **Koran**, this one is mistaken. The passage in the Koran is **24:31**: “And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what must ordinarily appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or their slaves whom their right hands possess, or male servants free of physical needs, or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. And O ye believers! Turn ye all together towards God, that ye may attain bliss! (**The Qur'an** translated by Abdullah Yusuf Ali)

⁶⁴Motyer comments that “Everything is designed to attract attention—posture, demeanor, movement, ornament. The literal translation of women is ‘daughters’ (as in **verse 17**...) and is necessary to point up the ‘like mother, like daughter’ theme of the section. They are ‘haughty...arrogant’...True sisters of Zion's men! It is not their luxurious life-style that Isaiah condemns but the arrogant spirit which prompted it.” (P. 63)

⁶⁵The Latin Vulgate translates by *decalabit*, “will lay bare.”

⁶⁶Where our Hebrew text spells פְּתָהֵן oriental Hebrew manuscripts spell פְּתָהֵן. Gray notes that “in **1 Kings 7:50** פְּתוֹת denotes the sockets in the lintel and threshold in which the doors turned.” (P. 75) We assume that the word is being used as a metaphor for “vagina,” in which the male penis turns.

Ortlund comments that “The arrogant self-display of Jerusalem's women will be judged by humiliating exposure.” (P. 1246)

⁶⁷Watts comments on **verses 18-23** that “The threat is interrupted by a catalogue of the beauty which the Lord will remove from Jerusalem...(as) another essential obstacle to the unhindered presence and work of Yahweh is denounced...The list begins with jewelry, includes fine clothes, but also represents everything that human pride can hang on to...The list suggests that by this time Jerusalem was well aware of fashion in the world’s capitals and was able to avail itself of its expensive luxuries...”

“It is impossible now to gain a clear picture of the articles named...Fashion then as now changes rapidly and tends to name its articles in ways that defy rational definition...[The Greek translator] simply made a list of such articles from [the translator’s] own period to serve as a translation which many a translator has done in similar circumstances since then.” (Pp. 45-46)

Gray in like manner states that these verses contain “A catalogue of [twenty one] articles of women’s finery...Some of the terms are of uncertain meaning.” (P. 72)

In his translation, he has the following 21 items: the anklets, the net-bands (?), the moons, the ear-rings, the bracelets, the veils, the head-dresses, the armlets, the sashes, the perfume-boxes, the charms, the signet-rings, the nose-rings, the state-gowns, the mantles, the shawls, the satchels (?), the diaphanous garments [that can be seen through], the linen garments, the turbans and the large veils. (P. 70) See his discussion of these various items on pp. 72-74.

Motyer comments on **verses 18-24** that “In the second contrast life’s ease is lost in sorrow. Isaiah itemizes the luxury they now enjoy (**verses 18-23**) but, we note, does not condemn it as such. It is no sin to enjoy life’s good. Their sin is their arrogance and pride of spirit (**verse 16**). But *instead* (**verse 24**) sounds out five times, like a death knell; their ease will be exchanged for mourning.” (Pp. 63-64)

Kaiser comments on **verses 18-23** that “Puzzling though the meaning of some words still are, the catalogue...of everything that would make the heart of Hebrew woman beat faster is important evidence for cultural history...”

“We see Hebrew women tripping through the street wearing rings round their ankles, joined together and often one on top of the other; sewn and woven headbands, at their simplest made of wool, and at their most ornate, precious gold plates held on with bands...”

“In addition, there are amulets [objects alleged to have power to protect their owner from danger or harm; amulets include gems, especially engraved ones, statues, coins, drawings, pendants, rings—oftentimes having words in the form of a magical spell or incantation to repel evil or bad luck—**Wikipedia**, 6/15/14], crescents, worn on valuable necklaces or as individual items, which may have been hoped to provide protection from evil spirits as well as external adornment...”

(continued...)

וְהַשְׁבִּיטִים וְהַשְּׁהַרְנָיִם:

On that day my Lord will turn aside⁶⁸ (the) beauty of the ankle-ornaments,

⁶⁷(...continued)

“Earrings dangle from their ear-lobes, hanging on a chain, shaped like droplets or with several elements...Bronze bracelets shine on their arms, the open ends of which often had the shape of an animal head; some are even made of pure, heavy gold...

“Veils, supported by a turban, conceal their faces...Small chains restrict their walk and help the women to trip along in a flirtatious way...A girdle worn over the hips...and here perhaps even a breast-band...offer further opportunity for fashion...

“In addition, they may even carry flasks of perfume made of fine pottery or glass in their handbags...

“Israelite women were as fond as modern women of wearing rings on their fingers. In some instances a signet ring with a cylinder or stamp as a seal, or perhaps a scarab [Egyptian beetle], would testify to the the exalted status of the woman and her own personal rights at law. Even the nose might be adorned with an open ring, which might also be put in the ear...

“In addition, there would be a great variety of garments, from the cloak to the under-garment like a chemise [a woman’s garment, resembling a shirt, but more delicate and revealing; a loose-fitting, sleeveless undergarment or type of lingerie unfitted at the waist, **Wikipedia**, 6/15/2014], and also the various veils in bright colors.” (Pp. 80-81)

⁶⁸As Watts notes, the verb used by Isaiah here, **יָסַר**, our “turn aside,” or as Watts translates, “remove,” is “used elsewhere to speak of the removal of idols.” See:

Genesis 35:2,

And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him,
Turn aside / remove the foreign Gods which (are) in your midst!
And cleanse yourselves, and change your clothing!

Joshua 24:14,

And now, fear / reverence YHWH!
And serve Him with completeness and with true faithfulness!
And turn aside / remove Gods which your fathers served,
on the other side of the Jordan and in Egypt!
And serve YHWH!

Joshua 24:23,

(continued...)

and the head-bands and the crescent (jewelry);

3:19 הַנְּטִיפוֹת וְהַשִּׁירוֹת וְהַרְעָלוֹת:

the (neck) pendants, and the bracelets and the veils;⁶⁹

3:20 הַפְּאָרִים וְהַצְּעָדוֹת וְהַקְּשָׁרִים

וּבֵתֵי הַנֶּפֶשׁ וְהַלְּחָשִׁים:

the head-wraps / bandanas and the armlets and the sashes;

and (the) perfume boxes and the charms / amulets;

3:21 הַטְּבָעוֹת וְנִזְמֵי הָאָף:

the engraved rings and nose rings;

⁶⁸(...continued)

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

Judges 10:16, the Israelites respond to YHWH's reprimand:

And they turned aside / removed the foreign Gods from their midst;
and they served YHWH.

And His innermost-being was short / impatient over Israel's trouble.

1 Samuel 7:3-4,

- 3 And Samuel said to all Israel's household, saying,
If with all your (plural) heart you are returning to YHWH,
turn aside / remove the foreign Gods from your midst, and the Asherahs;
and establish your heart to YHWH, and serve Him alone,
and He will deliver you from (the) hand of the Philistines.
- 4 And Israel's children turned aside / removed the Baals and the Asherahs,
and they served YHWH alone.

Watts states that "A direct connection is drawn here between such luxury in ornament and dress and idolatry. Indeed many [of these] items listed originated in cult and in magic rituals." (P. 46)

⁶⁹Slotki states that the "Hebrew רְעָלוֹת, singular רְעָלָה, [probably meaning 'veil'] like the Arabic *ra'*; it consisted of two sections, one covering the head from above the eyes, the other hanging down over the face from below the eyes which alone remained uncovered." (P. 19)

3:22 הַמַּחְלָצוֹת וְהַמְעֻטּוֹת

וְהַמְטָחוֹת וְהַחֲרִיטִים:

the stately robes and the outer garments;
and the cloaks and the bags / purses;

3:23 וְהַגְּלִינִים וְהַסְּדִינִים

וְהַצְּנִיפּוֹת וְהַרְדִּידִים:

and the mirrors and the linen garments;
and the exquisite hats and the shawls / head-cloths.⁷⁰

⁷⁰Ortlund comments on **verses 18-23** that “This inventory of extravagant female wardrobes matches the list of hoped-for male leaders in **verses 2-3**. The Lord will take away both.” (P. 1247)

Oswalt states that “The piling up of details only adds weight to the figure, making it more impressive and expressing the depth of the prophet’s anger, not merely over feminine dress but also at the pretension of pride which these trappings symbolize...

“While many of the terms are now only generally understood, there is no reason to think them obscure in the prophet’s own time...Our understanding is limited only because these terms occur so infrequently in the **Bible** that we lack sufficient contexts to define them.”

Translations of **verses 18-23** vary:

King James, ¹⁸ In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of *their* tinkling ornaments about their feet, and *their* cauls, and *their* round tires like the moon, ¹⁹ The chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, ²⁰ The bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings, ²¹ The rings, and nose jewels, ²² The changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the cringing pins, ²³ The glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils.”

Tanakh, ¹⁸ In that day, my LORD will strip off the finery of the anklets, the fillets, and the crescents; ¹⁹ of the eardrops, the bracelets, and the veils; ²⁰ the turbans, the armllets, and the sashes; of the talismans and the amulets; ²¹ the signet rings and the nose rings; ²² of the festive robes, the mantles, and the shawls; the purses, ²³ the lace gowns, and the linen vests; and the kerchiefs and the capes.”

New Revised Standard, ¹⁸ In that day the Lord will take away the finery of the anklets, the headbands, and the crescents; ¹⁹ the pendants, the bracelets, and the scarfs; ²⁰ the headdresses, the armllets, the sashes, the perfume boxes, and the

(continued...)

⁷⁰(...continued)

amulets; ²¹ the signet rings and nose rings; ²² the festal robes, the mantles, the cloaks, and the handbags; ²³ the garments of gauze, the linen garments, the turbans, and the veils.”

New International, “¹⁸ In that day the Lord will snatch away their finery: the bangles and headbands and crescent necklaces, ¹⁹ the earrings and bracelets and veils, ²⁰ the headdresses and ankle chains and sashes, the perfume bottles and charms, ²¹ the signet rings and nose rings, ²² the fine robes and the capes and cloaks, the purses ²³ and mirrors, and the linen garments and tiaras and shawls.

New Jerusalem, “¹⁸ That day the Lord will take away the ornamental chains, medallions, crescents, ¹⁹ pendants, bracelets, trinkets, ²⁰ diadems, ankle-chains, necklaces, scent bottles, amulets, ²¹ finger-rings, nose-rings, ²² party dresses, cloaks, scarves, purses, ²³ mirrors, linen clothes, turbans and mantillas.

Rahfs, ¹⁸ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ καὶ ἀφελεῖ κύριος τὴν δόξαν τοῦ ἱματισμοῦ αὐτῶν καὶ τοὺς κόσμους αὐτῶν καὶ τὰ ἐμπλόκια καὶ τοὺς κοσύμβους καὶ τοὺς μηνίσκους ¹⁹ καὶ τὸ κάθεμα καὶ τὸν κόσμον τοῦ προσώπου αὐτῶν

²⁰ καὶ τὴν σύνθεσιν τοῦ κόσμου τῆς δόξης καὶ τοὺς χλιδῶνας καὶ τὰ ψέλια καὶ τὸ ἐμπλόκιον καὶ τὰ περιδέξια καὶ τοὺς δακτυλίους καὶ τὰ ἐνώτια ²¹ καὶ τὰ περιπόρφυρα καὶ τὰ μεσοπόρφυρα ²² καὶ τὰ ἐπιβλήματα τὰ κατὰ τὴν οἰκίαν καὶ τὰ διαφανῆ λακωνικὰ ²³ καὶ τὰ βύσσινα καὶ τὰ ὑακίνθινα καὶ τὰ κόκκινα καὶ τὴν βύσσινον σὺν χρυσίῳ καὶ ὑακίνθῳ συγκαθυφασμένα καὶ θέριστρα κατάκλιτα, ¹⁸ In that day Lord will also take away the glory of their clothing and their adornments and the hair-clasps and the fringes and the crescents; ¹⁹ and the collar(s) and the adornment of their face(s); ²⁰ and the combination of the(ir) glorious adornment, and the bracelets and the anklets and the hair-clasp(s) and the armllets and the finger-rings and the ear-rings; ²¹ and the purple-edged robes and the (garments) mixed with purple; ²² and the shawls to be worn in the house, and the Spartan transparent (dresses); ²³ and the fine linen (dresses), and the hyacinth-colored (dresses) and the scarlet-colored (dresses) and the fine linen interwoven with gold and purple, and flowing veils.”

⁷¹Oswalt comments on **verse 24** that Isaiah here sets out the conditions which will result when God has stripped away all the accoutrements [identifying and often superficial characteristics or devices] of human glory...He does so though five contrasting pairs, beginning in each case with the pretension and following with reality. The reality possibly refers to the conditions of exile: stench, rope, baldness, sackcloth, and shame.” (Pp. 142-43)

For an extreme example of such conditions in times of war, compare **Deuteronomy 28:56-57**,

56 The tender and the delicate woman among you
who would not attempt to place the sole of her foot upon the ground

(continued...)

וְתַחַת חֲגוּרָהּ נִקְפָּה

וְתַחַת מַעֲשֵׂה מִקְשָׁה קִרְחָהּ

וְתַחַת פְּתִיגִיל מִחֲנֹרֶת שֶׁק

כִּי־תַחַת יָפִי:

And it will happen, instead of sweet-smelling perfume, it will be rottenness / decay;

and instead of a (fancy) belt, a rope;

and instead of work⁷² of hairdo, baldness;

and instead of an expensive robe, a loin-cloth of sack-cloth!⁷³

⁷¹(...continued)

because of her delicacy and tenderness,
will begrudge to the husband of her embrace
and to her son and her daughter,

57 even the afterbirth that goes forth from between her legs;
and (she will begrudge) her children whom she will bear—
because in lacking everything, she will eat them in secret,
in (the) stress and in (the) siege,
with which your enemy will besiege you in your gates / cities.

Watts comments on **verse 24** that “The threat is picked up again with *and there shall be*. It contains its own list of cosmetics and ornaments. **בִּשְׁם** is the oil of the balsam tree...It is to be replaced by **זֶק**, which in **Psalms 39:6** is the smell of a festering wound. The items that follow continue a list that contrasts the abject poverty of war-prisoners or the survivors of destroyed cities with the previous luxuries of the well-to-do.” (P. 46)

Gray states that the “perfume” mentioned is “the smell of sweet aromatics used, for example, by women in purification (**Esther 2:12**), or at burial (**2 Chronicles 16:14**). The contrast is *rottenness* (**זֶק**), i.e., the smell of scabs or festers (**verse 17**).” (P. 74)

⁷²The Syriac translation omits the noun **מַעֲשֵׂה**, “work.”

⁷³Motyer comments that “Jerusalem’s girls had devoted themselves to beauty and now even that is gone. Life’s most cherished fulfillments are negated by sin.” (P. 64)

Because instead of⁷⁴ beauty...⁷⁵

3:25⁷⁶ מִתִּיךְ בַּחֶרֶב יִפְלוּ

⁷⁴This last line of **verse 24** is omitted by both **Rahlfs** and the Latin Vulgate.

1QIs^a interpolates the noun בִּשְׁתָּה, “shame,” followingg תַּחַת, i.e., “instead of shame.”

⁷⁵We take this line to be incomplete. Translations vary:

King James, “and burning instead of beauty”;
Tanakh, “A burn instead of beauty”;
New Revised Standard, “instead of beauty, shame”;
New International, “instead of beauty, branding”;
New Jerusalem, “and brand marks instead of beauty”
Rahlfs, omits this line.

Ortlund comments that in **verse 24**, “five times Isaiah asserts that God will replace the women’s self-indulgence with the tragedies of exile and abuse.” (P. 1247)

⁷⁶Ortlund comments on **verses 3:25-4:1** that “Isaiah summarizes by predicting the defeat of the men (**3:25**), the emptying of Jerusalem, personified as an abandoned woman (**3:26**), and the plight of the women begging for a man’s protection (**4:1**.” (P. 1247)

Motyer states that in **3:25-4:1** “All imagery is dropped at this point; here is the actuality of a city bereft [deprived or robbed of its possessions]. By this switch from ‘daughters’ to ‘mother’ Isaiah indicates that throughout he has seen the women as the incarnate spirit of the community...If **verses 16-17** reveal how sin blights the sinner and **verses 18-24** show how it blights life’s happinesses, **verse 25** descends to the pit of sorrow as sin ends in death.” (P. 64)

Oswalt states that **verses 25-26** “personify Jerusalem as a destitute woman... Stripped of her warriors the city is emptied out with no more going in or out at the gates. All that she has depended upon is taken away and she is left helpless.” (P. 143)

Gray states that in these two verses the pronouns “are feminine, and refer to the city (of Jerusalem). The *gates* (פְּתָחַיִם, **13:2**) *mourn* because people no longer pass through them. The empty city is pictured as one sunk to the ground and mourning.” (P. 75) See:

Lamentations 2:10,

They sat on the ground, they were silent,
Daughter of Zion’s elders / officials;
they brought up dust upon their head(s);
they dressed (in) sack-cloth;

(continued...)

וְגִבּוֹרֹתֶיךָ בַּמִּלְחָמָה:

Your men will fall by the sword,
and your strength / might in the war.

3:26⁷⁷ וְאֵנוּ וְאֵבְלוּ פִתְחֵיהֶּן

וְנִקְתָּה לְאָרֶץ תִּשָּׁב:

⁷⁶(...continued)

they brought their head(s) to the ground, virgins / young women of
Jerusalem!

Job 2:13, where it is said of Job's three friends who came to comfort him:

And they sat with him on the earth
seven days, and seven nights;
and no one was speaking to him a word,
because they saw the pain was exceedingly great.

Isaiah 47:1,

Go down, and sit upon dust, virgin daughter of Babylon!
Sit on the earth.
There is no throne, daughter of Chaldeans!
Because you (feminine singular) will not again (hear) them call out to you,
Tender, and Delicate!

Watts comments on **verse 25** that it “defines the picture of destruction by war... **גִּבּוֹרִים** ‘men’ is an infrequent word (compare also **5:13** [the noun occurs some 22 times in the **Hebrew Bible**]). But it is used regularly where the law of the ban is applied...The plural would simply mean ‘soldiers’ or ‘heroes.’” (P. 46)

⁷⁷Watts comments on **verse 26** that “The address changes, but the subject remains the same. The judgment of God levels the city. **פִּתְחוֹתֶיהָ** means ‘entrances’... There are no ‘gates’ left, only ‘openings’ or ‘entrances.’” (P. 46)

Alexander states that in **verse 26** “The effect of this slaughter on the community is here described, first by representing the places of chief concourse as vocal with distress, and then by personifying the state or nation as a desolate widow seated on the ground, a sign both of mourning and of degradation...as on one of Vespasian's [the Roman general who destroyed Jerusalem and its temple in 70 C.E.] coins a woman is represented, in a sitting position, leaning against a palm tree, with the legend, *Judaea Capta* [‘Captive Judah’].” (P. 120)

And your entrances shall mourn,⁷⁸

and cleaned out / empty,⁷⁹ she will sit on the land / earth.⁸⁰

⁷⁸Watts comments that “The ‘entrances,’ no longer proud gates, can mourn as the land is [oftentimes elsewhere] said to mourn.” (P. 46)

⁷⁹Watts comments that “נקרה” means ‘be empty.’ In niphal it means ‘be emptied.’ The city has been ‘emptied,’ ‘cleaned out,’ ‘purged’ of everything of value, of everything that one could be proud of: its children, its youth, its leadership, its furniture, its gates and walls.” (P. 46)

⁸⁰Kaiser observes some close resemblances of this language in **Isaiah** to the **Book of Lamentations**: “The proximity of the short poem [here in **Isaiah**] to **Lamentations** is unmistakable: as there, the lament is over the abandoned city, robbed of her sons...Jerusalem is said to sit abandoned on the ground, and...we are told that the gates lament and mourn.” (P. 83)

Lamentations 1:1,

How the city of many people sat alone / in isolation!
She became like a widow—(once) great among the nations!
Princess among the provinces, she became (destined) for the forced labor!

Lamentations 1:4,

Roads / ways to Zion are mourning
from lack of any festival pilgrims.
All her gates are desolate;
her priests are sighing;
her virgins / young women are grieving,
and it is bitter to her.

Lamentations 1:15,

My Lord treated all my mighty men lightly in my midst;
He proclaimed over me an appointed time to break my young men.
My Lord has trodden / trampled Judah’s virgin daughter (in a) winepress!

Lamentations 2:8,

YHWH determined to ruin (the) Daughter of Zion’s wall,
He stretched out a (measuring) line;
He did not turn back His hand from swallowing up--
And fortress and wall languished together.

Lamentations 2:10,

(continued...)

⁸⁰(...continued)

They sat on the ground, they were silent,
 Daughter of Zion's elders / officials;
 they brought up dust upon their head(s);
 they dressed (in) sack-cloth;
 they brought their head(s) to the ground,
 young women of Jerusalem!

¹We are uniting **4:1** with **3:26**, believing that the chapter division here is unfortunate and mistaken.

Slotki states that **4:1** "is parallel with **3:6** where, in the disturbed and anarchic state of the land, the men are content with the appointment of any sort of leader." (P. 20)

Gray comments on **verse 1** that "Women will not wait for men to ask them in marriage, but will press to be married, promising to forego the food and raiment which a husband should provide (**Exodus 21:10**), if only they may gain protection against insults by passing into a man's protection." (P. 75)

Exodus 21:10,

If (a husband) shall take another woman for himself--
 he shall not diminish her meat (allotment),
 her clothing, and her sexual privileges.

Oswalt comments on **verse 1** that "The prophet sums up the condition of the women and of Zion in one graphic verse. This verse makes even more concrete the picture drawn in **3:25, 26**. Warfare has always meant destruction of the male population (Germany and France are said to have lost 1,000,000 men each and Britain 500,000 in World War I). So it would be in the Jerusalem that Isaiah foresaw. The situation would become so desperate that the ratio of men to women would be one to seven. No longer would there be any dependence upon flirtation and allure to 'catch.' Now the women would not even ask for support if they could only have some legal and social identity...

Here is the final end of our desire to avoid dependence. We will become dependent in the most degrading and disadvantageous ways. Instead of the exaltation and building-up which comes from glad submission to God and one another (**60:1-62:12**), our drive to be sufficient in ourselves brings only humiliation, despair, and bondage." (P. 143)

Kaiser observes that "We may conclude from the fact that polygamy to this degree could be regarded as a sign of extreme need that it was no longer regarded as

(continued...)

לֵאמֹר לְחַמְנוּ נֹאכֵל וְשִׁמְלֹתֵנוּ נִלְבָּשׁ
 בְּרַק יִקְרָא שְׁמֵךְ עָלֵינוּ
 אִסְףְּ חַרְפֹּתֵנוּ:

And seven women will seize / take hold of one man on that day,²
 saying, We will eat our bread / food, and will dress in our clothes;
 only let us call your name upon ourselves;
 gather up our reproach!³

¹(...continued)

the normal form of marriage for the Judaism of the Persian period, though it need not therefore have been thought offensive.” (P. 83) Compare **Deuteronomy 21:15**,

If / when there shall be two wives to a man,
 the one beloved, and the one hated;
 and they bear sons for him, the beloved and the hated;
 and it will happen, the firstborn by the hated woman...

(The passage goes on to discuss the rights of the firstborn by the hated woman, which shall not be eliminated by giving preference to the son of the beloved woman.)

What do you think? Do you agree with Kaiser that polygamy was considered a normal form of marriage prior to the Persian period (don't forget the many wives of Kings David and Solomon!)? What do you think this passage in **Isaiah** means with relationship to polygamy, to the marriage of one man to seven wives? Is the proposal of the women illegal in Israel?

²Motyer comments that “In **3:6** the men ‘take hold of...a man,’ seeking a ruler; in **4:1**, the women ‘take hold of...a man,’ seeking a husband.” (P. 64)

³Watts comments that “The precarious situation makes it especially difficult for the woman who has no man to protect her, be he father, brother, or husband. The war has significantly reduced the number of men. Of course this verse presumes the possibility of multiple wives where a married man may add other wives to his household...”

“According to **Deuteronomy 22:29**, a bride price **גִּדְוֶה**, of fifty shekels of silver must be paid. The husband must provide food and clothes for his wives and not withhold their marital [sexual] rights (**Exodus 21:10**). The precarious and extraordinary conditions following the war mean that such rules will be gladly set aside. A bride price is out of the question. Women will even waive their rights to food and clothing, if only

(continued...)

³(...continued)

they can have the man's name called out over them...[Such a practice, of 'calling a name over'], when it was used in marriage...confirmed the marriage contract. This would 'take away the shame.'" (P. 47)

Watts explains that "The entire passage [3:16-4:1] speaks about the women of Jerusalem as an example of the pride that makes destruction necessary and of the sad result of the judgment. The context will show that God can build His city with people in the latter condition, but not with those in the former." (P. 47)

Alexander mentions how some Christian interpreters of **Isaiah** (he mentions no names) "severed this verse from its natural connection in accordance with an ancient notion that the one man was Christ, and the seven women souls believing on Him. This view of the passage may indeed have been either the cause or the effect of the usual division and arrangement of the text" [that is, dividing 4:1 from its obvious position as the last verse of **chapter 3.**] (P. 121)

As quickly becomes obvious from Alexander's comments on 4:2-6, he genuinely believes that the **Book of Isaiah** predicts the coming of Jesus Christ; but he rejects attempts to "read Christ into the text" where he is not genuinely found—as is obviously the case here. We believe the **Book of Isaiah** looks forward to the coming of the Branch / Messiah, but also think many Christian interpreters of **Isaiah** read Jesus Christ into the text in places where he is not genuinely found.

1. **Occurrences in the Hebrew Bible of the Title, יהוה אלהינו, “the Lord”**

Exodus 23:17,

Three times in the year,
each one of your male(s) will be seen / appear
before the Lord YHWH.

Exodus 34:23,

Three times in the year,
each one of your male(s) will be seen / appear
before the Lord YHWH,
God of Israel!
(Exactly the same as **Exodus 23:17**, except for the addition of the last line.)

Deuteronomy 10:17

Because YHWH (is) your (plural) God,
He (is) God of the Gods,
and Lord of the Lords
the great El,
the mighty Man
and the fearsome One,
Who will not show partiality,
and will not take a bribe.

Isaiah 1:24,

Therefore, it is a saying of the Lord YHWH of Armies,
Mighty One of Israel,
Alas, I will be comforted from My opponents,
and I will be avenged from My enemies!

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 / masters,
and a strong / fierce king will rule over them--
a saying of the Lord YHWH of Armies!

Malachi 3:1,

Look at Me--sending My messenger / angel [Malachi];
and he will clear a way before Me.
And suddenly He will come to His temple,
the Lord whom you (plural) are seeking,
and (the) messenger of the covenant (in) whom you are delighting.
Look--(He is) coming--said YHWH of Armies!

Daniel 9:4-19, Daniel's Prayer of Confession in the Exile

And I prayed to the YHWH, my God,
and I confessed;
and I was saying, Ah now,
the El / God the great One and the fearsome One,
Who keeps the covenant and the steadfast love for the ones loving Him,
and for those keeping His commandments--
We missed-the-mark, and we did wrong;
we were wicked, and we rebelled;
and turning away from Your commandments and from Your judicial decisions!
6 And we did not listen to Your servants the spokespersons / prophets,
who spoke in Your name
to our kings, our princes / officials and our fathers,
and to every people of the land.
7 To You, my Lord, belongs the right-relationship,
and to us, shame of face,
like (it is) this day--
for (every) man of Judah, and for inhabitants of Jerusalem, and for all
Israel--
those near and those far away,
in all the lands where You banished them
for their faithless acts with which they acted faithlessly against You.

8 YHWH, shame of face belongs to us,
 to our kings, to our princes / officials, and to our fathers,
 who missed-the-mark / sinned against You.

9 The compassions and the forgivenesses belong to the Lord of mine, our God—
 because we rebelled against Him.

10 And we did not listen to YHWH our God's voice,
 to walk by His teachings,
 which He gave before us,
 by (the) hand of His servants the spokespersons / prophets.

11 And all Israel passed over Your teaching,
 and turned aside so as to not listen to Your voice;
 and the curse and the sworn oath was poured out upon us
 which is written in Moses, the servant of God's teaching / law—
 because we missed-the-mark against Him.

12 And He caused his word to stand
 which he spoke against us,
 and against our judges who judged us--
 to bring upon us great evil,
 which was not done beneath all the heavens,
 just as was done in Jerusalem.

13 Just as it has been written in Moses' teaching / law,
 all this evil came against us,
 and we did not entreat YHWH our God's face,
 to turn from our our iniquities,
 and to be made wise by your true faithfulness.

14 And YHWH watched over the evil,
 and He brought it against us;
 because YHWH our God (is) rightly-related,
 in all his deeds which He did—
 and we did not listen to His voice.

15 And now, my Lord, our God,
 Who brought Your people
 out from Egypt-land with a mighty hand,
 and You made for Yourself a name, like (it is) this day--
 We missed-the-mark / sinned; we did evil.

16 My Lord, according to all Your right-relationship,
 turn now Your anger and Your rage
 from Your city Jerusalem, Mountain of Your set-apartness;
 because by our missings-of-the-mark and by our fathers' iniquities,
 Jerusalem and Your people (are) for reproach to all surrounding us.

17 And now, listen our God to Your servant's prayer
 and to his pleas for mercy!
 And cause Your face to shine upon your set-apart-place, the devastated one,
 for the sake of my Lord!

18 Incline, my God, Your ear, and hear;
 open Your eyes, and see our desolations,
 and the City which called Your name upon itself;
 because not over our right-relationships (are) we laying down our

supplications for favor before You,
but because of Your many compassions.
19 My Lord, Hear!
 My Lord, forgive!
My Lord, give attention!
 And act!
Do not delay for Your sake
Look at Me—sending My messenger / angel;
 and He will prepare a way before Me.
And suddenly the Lord will come to His temple
 (the) One Whom you people are seeking,
and (the) messenger / angel of the covenant,
 whom you are desiring.
Look—he is coming!
 Said YHWH of Armies!

Psalm 136:3,

Give praise (plural imperative) to the Lord of the Lords,
 because His steadfast-love (is) to long-lasting-time!

