

## Chapter Thirty-One

**31-Vs. 1: Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the Lord!**

*Hoy* or “woe” begins this new chapter as it does with the previous one thereby setting the tone for what is to follow. The Lord speaks through Isaiah about the Israelites returning to Egypt (cf. 30.2) which is a sore point for him, given the fact that he had sent considerable energy saving Israel from Egypt under the guidance of Moses and Aaron. There’s a certain irony with mention of horses and chariots, that is, Pharaoh’s army which had been swallowed up in the Red Sea in pursuit of the Israelites.

The woe which opens this verse has as its direction a lack of the following two: 1) *shahah* or “look to” (cf. 22.4) which suggests a constancy or steadiness of gaze, here with respect to *Qedosh*, “Holy One;” cf. 41.14. 2) *darash* (cf. 19.3) suggests treading or trampling and thus making haste.

**31-Vs. 2: And yet he is wise and brings disaster, he does not call back his words but will arise against the house of the evildoers and against the helpers of those who work iniquity.**

This verse is an observation about the Lord by his prophet Isaiah, for right after this chapter gets off on a wrong note, as it were, the Lord decides to modify his stance. Note the contrast between “wise” and “disaster” or *chakam* (cf. 29.14) and *rah* (13.11), the latter more applicable to evil.

The Lord finds it impossible to retract or “call back,” *sur* (cf. 30.11), which connotes a turning aside with respect to his *davar* or “words” (cf. 30.21). Though possible, the Lord will not do it. Instead, he will “arise against” those who oppose him, the verb being *qum* (cf. 29.3) with the preposition *hal-* (upon). Nothing is said as to the exact nature of this *qum* but given the context of Israel going to Egypt...a reverse Exodus...we can consider elements of that event for parallels to it.

“Evildoers” and iniquity” or *rahah* (cf. 24.19 for another meaning, to shake) and *’aven* (cf. 29.20). The former is the verbal root for *rah* or “disaster.” Note the distinction with regards to the two: to the former belongs a “house” and the latter, “helpers.” House suggests a long line of people who are related and helpers as those who do not directly engage in iniquity but assist persons engaged in it.

**31-Vs. 3: The Egyptians are men and not God; and their horses are flesh and not spirit. When the Lord stretches out his hand, the helper will stumble, and he who is helped will fall, and they will all perish together.**

In their desperation the Israelites have confused the Egyptians with God whose horses are not “spirit” or *ruach* (cf. 30.33). Clearly they have forgotten how the Lord drowned Pharaoh’s chariots: “the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea” [Ex 15.1].

The Lord’s stretching forth (*natah* (cf. 30.11) of his hand brings up the image of Moses

just before crossing the Red Sea: “Lift up your rod and stretch out (*natah*) your hand over the sea and divide it” [Ex 14.16].

**31-Vs. 4: For thus the Lord said to me, As a lion or a young lion growls over his prey, and when a band of shepherds is called forth against him is not terrified by their shouting or daunted at their noise, so the Lord of hosts will come down to fight upon Mount Zion and upon its hill.**

Although Isaiah has been speaking as a prophet, here he is more specific as to words addressed to him. Perhaps the reference to Egypt and its association with Israel’s departure he considered himself to be in a role paralleling that of Moses.

This verse is divided into to parts, if you will, as by the words “as” (*ky-*; cf. 30.19) and “thus” (*ken*). In other words, *ky-/ken* set up the image of the Lord as both a lion and a young lion descending upon Zion to “fight” or *tsava’* (cf. 29.7) there on Israel’s behalf. *Tsava’* is the verbal root for “host” (same spelling) and its association with the “Lord of hosts.”

**31-Vs. 5: Like birds hovering, so the Lord of hosts will protect Jerusalem; he will protect and deliver it, he will spare and rescue it.**

*Huph* is the verb for “hovering” and pertains more to the flying of birds (cf. 11.14). Here it is akin to the coming down of the lion or young lion in the previous verse, that is, ready to pounce. Both the force of *huph* and the attack of lions are equated with five actions the Lord will take:

1 &2) *Ganan* which implies a covering over. “For I will defend this city to save it” [37.35].

3) *Natsal* or delivering (cf. 19.20) which connotes a drawing or pulling out.

4) *Pasach* or “spare” which also means to pass over (the verbal root for Passover). “And when I see the blood, I will pass over” [Ex 12.13].

5) *Malat* or “rescue” which implies escape. “Before her pain came upon her she was delivered of a son” [66.7].

**31-Vs. 6: Turn to him from whom you have deeply revolted, O people of Israel.**

So once Israel has fled to Egypt, her inverse Exodus if you will, the Lord summons his people to “turn” to him, *shuv* (cf. 30.15). This verb is the opposite of *sarah* (cf. 14.6) and intensified by another for the English adverb “deeply,” *hamaq* (cf. 7.11). This could read literally as “have deeply revolted.”

**31-Vs. 7: For in that day every one shall cast away his idols of silver and his idols of gold which your hands have sinfully made for you.**

“In that day” is used last in 30.22 and can be taken in the general context of the chapter at hand or more specifically, Israel’s rejection of “idols” or *‘elyl* (cf. 10.11). In the verse at hand these idols are fashioned in a sinful manner, *chet’* (cf. 1.18) being a noun. The preposition *l-* reads literally “to you” which is more direct and therefore shows responsibility.

**31-Vs. 8: "And the Assyrian shall fall by a sword, not of man; and a sword not of man shall**

**devour him; and he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall be put to forced labor.**

The proper name Assyria is used here, *'Ashur*. It will be slain by a sword not from man which implies that the Lord will be responsible. After all, it was Israel which fled to Egypt for assistance, that country facing the Lord's wrath as well. As for Assyria, some of its young men will escape being slain and put into "forced labor" or *mas* which fundamentally means tribute. "Therefore they set taskmasters over them (the Israelites) to afflict them with heavy burdens" [Ex 1.11].

**31-Vs. 9: His rock shall pass away in terror, and his officers desert the standard in panic," says the Lord whose fire is in Zion and whose furnace is in Jerusalem.**

Compare "rock" or *selah* which connotes a crag or a sharp, detached fragment of a rock with "Rock (*tsur*) of Israel in 30.29.

*Magor* or "terror" connotes dread as well. "Terror on every side" [Ps 31.13]!

*Nes* or "standard:" cf. 30.17 as signal.

*'Ur* and *tanur* or "fire and furnace," two similar sounding words. The former is within the city as a whole whereas the latter can refer to the temple. "You will make them as a blazing oven when you appear" [Ps 21.9].

## Chapter Thirty-Two

**32-Vs. 1: Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule in justice.**

*Hen* (cf. 41.11) or "behold" is akin to *hineh* (cf. 30.27) and serves to grab one's attention as to what is about to be said or happen with regard to an anonymous king and princes. Note the difference between "righteousness and justice," *tsedeq* and *misphat* as first found in 1.21. In the short verse at hand, the preposition *l-* (to) is prefaced to *tsedeq, sar* ('princes,' cf. 30.4) and *misphat*, indicative of urgency and directness.

**32-Vs. 2: Each will be like a hiding place from the wind, a covert from the tempest, like streams of water in a dry place, like the shade of a great rock in a weary land.**

The anonymous king and princes will work together to protect the people which will assume four types of shelter from four types of affliction:

1) "Hiding place" or *machave'*, the only use of this term in the Bible; from the verbal root *chava'* (cf. 26.20). This is from the "wind" or *ruach* (cf. 31.3). Note that all three examples lack the preposition "from." For example, this reads as "hiding place wind."

2) "Covert" or *seter* (cf. 28.17) is from the *zerem* (cf. 28.2).

3) "Streams" or *peleg* found last in 30.25 but not noted there and refers to a small river or a channel. This is in a "dry place" or *tsayon* which has one other biblical reference, 25.5.

4) "Shade" *tsel* (cf. 16.3) come from a "rock," the noun being *selah* (cf. 31.9) which is "great" or *kaved* (cf. 6.10) and connotes heaviness. It is in a "land" (*'erets*, cf. 29.4) which is "weary" or *hayeph* (cf. 28.12).

**32-Vs. 3: Then the eyes of those who see will not be closed, and the ears of those who hear will hearken.**

Both the anonymous king and princes will have a role in opening the eyes of the people as well as their ears, that is, to see and to listen. *Shahah* (cf. 29.9) is the verb for “(not) closed.” Note the difference between “hear and hearken,” *shamah* (cf. 30.30) and *qashav* (cf. 28.23).

**32-Vs. 4: The mind of the rash will have good judgment, and the tongue of the stammerers will speak readily and distinctly.**

Note the two pairs:

1) “Mind” or *levav* (cf. 20.29) with respect to the “rash” or *mahar* (cf. 16.5) which connotes being swift in the negative sense. Such persons will have (literally) “to understand to knowledge,” *byn* (cf. 29.16) to (*l-*) *dahath* (cf. 28.9).

2) Tongue belonging to “stammerers” or *hileg*, the only use of this adjective in the Bible. They will be able to “speak” (*davar*, cf. 29.4) “readily and distinctly” which has the verb *mahar*, the same as the participle translated as “rash.”

**32-Vs. 5: The fool will no more be called noble nor the knave said to be honorable.**

“Fool and knave” or *naval* and *kylay* (also as *kelay*): the former is found in the next verse; the latter is the only use of this term in the Bible.

“Noble and honorable” or *nadyv* (cf. 13.2) and *shoah*, the second having three other biblical references, one of which is 22.5 with the alternate meaning of “shouting.”

**32-Vs. 6: For the fool speaks folly, and his mind plots iniquity: to practice unGodliness, to utter error concerning the Lord, to leave the craving of the hungry unsatisfied and to deprive the thirsty of drink.**

This verse continues with the “fool” or *naval* whereas the next with the “knave.” *Lev* is the noun for “mind” (cf. 19.1), similar to *levav* of vs. 4. *Aven* (cf. 31.2) means “iniquity” while the common verb *hasah* (to do, to make, cf. 27.11) translates as “plots.” This consists of four parts:

1) “Practice (*hasah* again) “unGodliness” or *choneph*, the only biblical term which is derived from a verbal root meaning to defile, to pollute (*chanaph*, cf. 24.5).

2) “Utter” (*davar*, cf. vs. 4) “error” or *tohah* which has one other biblical reference, Neh 4.8: “to fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it.” In the verse at hand, *tohah* is with regard to the Lord.

3) *Nephesh* (‘soul,’ cf. 26.9) is not translated and literally reads “to make empty of soul,” the verb being *ruq* which generally means to draw out. “Draw the spear and javelin against my pursuers” [Ps 35.3]!

4) “Deprive” or *chaser* which means to be devoid, to be wanting. “Neither shall his bread fail” [51.14].

**32-Vs. 7: The knaveries of the knave are evil; he devises wicked devices to ruin the poor with lying words even when the plea of the needy is right.**

*Kelay* as “knave” is noted in vs. 5 whose actions are “evil,” *rah* (cf. 31.2). Compare *rah* with those “wicked devices” or *zimah* which usually apply to sins of uncleanness. “Men in whose hands are evil devices” [Ps 26.10]. In the verse at hand, the knave “devises” them or *yahats* (cf. 23.9) which means to give counsel meaning that this person not only does evil but advises others to follow his example.

“Poor and needy” or *hany* and *‘evyon*, both of which are found in 29.19. To the former belongs the pair *‘emer* (verbal root is *‘amar*) and the noun *sheqer* (cf. 9.15) or “lying.” To the latter belong *davar* (cf. 31.2) as “plea” and the noun *mishpat* (cf. 30.18) or “right” which usually translates as justice.

### **32-Vs. 8: But he who is noble devises noble things, and by noble things he stands.**

Here the conjunctive *v-* which usually translates as “and” comes across as “but” in contrast to the last two verses. Note the very different use of the verb *yahats* (‘devises’) which applies to giving counsel with regard to “noble things” or *nadyv* (cf. vs. 5). This type of counsel is the support, if you will, by which the noble person “stands” or *qum* (cf. 31.2) or in which he is rooted.

### **32-Vs. 9: Rise up, you women who are at ease, hear my voice; you complacent daughters, give ear to my speech.**

As in the previous verse, the verb *qum* is a kind of rootedness which pertains to a divine command issued through Isaiah to rise up in the sense of to ascend. These women, most likely wives of the rulers in Jerusalem and other centers of authority, could be just as guilty as the fools and knaves against whom Isaiah rails. Perhaps he has in mind the example of Abigail, wife of Nabal described as being “churlish” (1Sam 25.3] and whose names derives from the verbal root *naval* noted in vs. 6. Abigail is one who is not “at ease” or *sha’anan* which can have a either a favorable or unfavorable meaning. It occurs next in vs. 11.

Another way of addressing these women is by calling them daughters which roots them in complicity with their husbands. In addition to being at ease, they are “complacent” or *batach* (cf. 30.12; participle) which means to trust. By so addressing them here and in the following verses, Isaiah hopes to rouse them by his “speech” or *‘emer* (cf. vs. 7). He doesn’t say simply “listen” but the more forceful “give ear” or *‘azan* (cf. 28.23).

Key words of vss. 10-14 are outlined after the verses are presented.

10: In little more than a year you will shudder, you complacent women; for the vintage will fail, the fruit harvest will not come. 11: Tremble, you women who are at ease, shudder, you complacent ones; strip, and make yourselves bare, and gird sackcloth upon your loins. 12: Beat upon your breasts for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine, 13: for the soil of my people growing up in thorns and briars; yea, for all the joyous houses in the joyful city. 14: For the palace will be forsaken, the populous city deserted; the hill and the watchtower will become dens forever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks;

Vs. 10: Reference to the time span of little over a year means that Isaiah knows

something that the women and their husbands do not yet will offer a chance of repentance not just for themselves but for the nation. Apparently some kind of famine and drought will occur when the women will “shudder” or *ragaz* (cf. 23.11).

Vs. 11: This is the second time Isaiah addresses the women who are *sha’anan* along with those who are *batach* (both in vs. 9). The first “tremble” and the second “shudder” or *charad* (cf. 19.16) and *ragaz* (cf. vs. 10). The act of stripping, becoming bare and putting on sackcloth, results from these two verbs.

Vs. 12: *Saphad* is the verb (participle) for “beat” which is a sign of grief. “The mourners go about the streets” [Eccl 12.5].

Vs. 13: *Adamah* (cf. 26.21) refers to the ground as a place for cultivation. Two words for “joyful:” *masus* (cf. 24.11) and *halyz* (cf. 13.3).

Vs 14: “Forsaken and deserted” or *natash* (cf. 2.6) and *hazav* (cf. 27.10).

### **32-Vs. 15: until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field and the fruitful field is deemed a forest.**

The key word here is *had* or “until” which represents an unspecified period of time or when the “Spirit” (*Ruach*, cf. vs. 2) is “poured” upon those who had suffered at the hand of the various deviant people Isaiah had listed thus far since Chapter Thirty-Two. *Harah* is the verb which also means to make naked found last in 22.6 but not noted there. Because *Ruach* is a breath (air) and not water (liquid), such pouring will be in the form of a forceful wind blowing in a vertical direction or from top to bottom.

The verb *chashav* (cf. 29.17) for “deemed” implies making an estimation where here applies to the transition from a field to a forest.

### **32-Vs. 16: Then justice will dwell in the wilderness and righteousness abide in the fruitful field.**

Note that everything stated from this verse to the end of the chapter are in the future tense awaiting fulfillment.

“Justice and righteousness” or *mishpat* (cf. vs. 7) and *tsedaqah* (cf. 10.22). The verbs associated with each are *shakan* and *yashav*; cf. 18.3 where the two are distinguished. The places of residency for both: “wilderness and field” or *midbar* (cf. 27.10) and *karmel* (cf. 29.17).

### **32-Vs. 17: And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.**

Compare the two: “effect and result” or *mahaseh* and *havodah*, both being noted and distinguished in cf. 28.21. With regard to the former, “righteousness” or *tsedaqah* (cf. vs. 16) and *shalom* (cf. 27.5) are associated with it. With regard to the latter, again *tsedaqah* results in “quietness and trust” or *shaqat* (cf. 30.15) and *betach* (cf. 14.30).

### **32-Vs. 18: My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings and in quiet resting places.**

*Yashav* or “abide” is associated with the Lord’s people and ties in with the righteousness of vs. 16 also is associated with this verb. This *yashav* will take place in three places:

- 1) A “habitation or *naveh* (cf. 27.10) which is “peaceful” or the noun *shalom* (cf. vs. 17).
- 2) “Dwellings” or *mishkan* (cf. 22.16) which is “secure” or *mivtah*, a noun which means trust or confidence. “Blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust” [Ps 40.4].
- 3) “Resting places” or *menuchah* (cf. 28.12) which are “quiet” or *sha’anan* which is used in quite a different sense in vss. 9 and 11.

**32-Vs. 19: And the forest will utterly go down, and the city will be utterly laid low.**

Two contrasts: forest and city; the former will “go down” or *yarad* (cf. 15.3 for alternate meaning of to melt). “Utterly” is expressed by a double use of the same verb. The same expression applies to the latter, *shaphel* or “laid low” (cf. 29.4).

**32-Vs. 20: Happy are you who sow beside all waters, who let the feet of the ox and the ass range free.**

*Ashrey* (cf. 30.18) or “happy” connotes being blessed, an upbeat way to conclude this chapter. It pertains to sowing next to “all waters” which could imply that previous sources of water had been brackish and therefore undrinkable. It is reminiscent of Ps 23.2: “He leads me beside still waters (literally, waters of rest); he restores my soul.”

### Chapter Thirty-Three

**33-Vs. 1: Woe to you, destroyer, who yourself have not been destroyed; you treacherous one, with whom none has dealt treacherously! When you have ceased to destroy, you will be destroyed; and when you have made an end of dealing treacherously, you will be dealt with treacherously.**

This new chapter commences with the familiar *hoy* or “woe” which also begins Chapter Thirty-One and sets the tone for the following twenty-four verses. Actually it is the fifth and final *hoy* in a series which begins with Chapter Twenty-Eight. Here it applies directly to the “destroyer and “treacherous one” who aren’t identified specifically but presumably is Assyria. Then again, *hoy* can be a summary of the previous ones as well as referring those within Israel who are disloyal to the Lord. By way of this summary, Chapter Twenty-Eight deals with Ephraim, Chapter Twenty-Nine with Ariel, Chapter Thirty with “obstinate children” seeking Egypt’s protection and Chapter Thirty-One again with those going down to Egypt.

*Shadad* is the verb for “destroyed,” the root for the noun “destroyer” and is noted last in 23.1 as “laid waste.” *Bagad* (cf. 24.16) is the root for “treacherous one” who, along with the destroyer, will end up as *shadad*...laid waste.

Note two verb pertaining to cessation of this destructive activity: “cease and have made an end:” *tamam* (cf. 16.4) and *nalah*. The former refers to *shadad* whereas the latter connotes leaving off with regard to *bagad* and is the only use of this verb in the Bible.

**33-Vs. 2: O Lord, be gracious to us; we wait for you. Be our arm every morning, our salvation in the time of trouble.**

Almost in the next breath after *hoy* Isaiah makes direct appeal to the Lord. *Chanan* is the verb for “be gracious (cf. 30.19) and *qavah* the verb for “wait” (cf. 26.8). Such waiting can extend all the way back to the first *hoy* of Chapter Twenty-Eight until the present when Isaiah feels it is about to be fulfilled though in a way the people may not expect.

“Every morning” literally translates as “to the mornings.”

*Yeshuhah* (cf. 26.18) is the noun for “salvation when “trouble” arises, *tsarah* (cf. 30.6). Thus the divine arm is present day after day whereas his salvation...his “Jesus” (the proper name comes from it)...is available only in times (*heth*, cf. 18.7) of trouble.

### **33-Vs. 3: At the thunderous noise peoples flee, at the lifting up of yourself nations are scattered;**

This verse is reminiscent of 30.30-31 as the Lord takes vengeance upon Assyria. *Hamon* is the noun for “thunderous” (cf. 29.7) which connotes a tumult. This verse intimates the Lord’s appearance on Mount Sinai: “On the morning of the third day there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast so that all the people who were in the camp trembled” [Ex 19.16].

The “lifting up” or *romemuth* (only use of this term in the Bible) brings to mind Ps 68.1: “Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered.” The noun for “lifting up” derives from the verbal root *rum* (cf. 30.18) whereas the verb for “arise” is *qum*. The former is more suggestive of exultation whereas the latter of being established or confirmed.

*Naphats* is the verb for “scattered” (cf. 11.12).

### **33-Vs. 4: and spoil is gathered as the caterpillar gathers; as locusts leap, men leap upon it.**

Nothing specific is said as to whom gathers (*asaph*, cf. 10.14) the spoil but is likened to a caterpillar which presumably first does the gathering after which it devours that which has been gathered.

Two verbs for leaping: *mashaq* (only use of this verb in the Bible which connotes a running about) and *shaqaq* which suggests the same thing but with a hint of greediness. It is found in 29.8 but not noted there. Both verbs applied to locusts refer not so much as to their hopping but sudden, darting motion.

### **33-Vs. 5: The Lord is exalted, for he dwells on high; he will fill Zion with justice and righteousness;**

*Sagav* (cf. 26.5) is the verb for “exalted,” a more poetic term compared with *rum* of vs. 3 which is the verbal root for “on high” or *marom* (cf. 24.18). It is there that the Lord “dwells” or *shakan* (cf. 32.16). From that position the Lord will fill Zion with “justice and righteousness” or *mishpat* and *tsedaqah*, both found in 32.16.

### **33-Vs. 6: and he will be the stability of your times, abundance of salvation, wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the Lord is his treasure.**

This verse contains the following four elements with regard to the Lord:

1) *Emunah* (cf. 25.1) or “stability” often refers to faith and refers to “times” or *heth* (cf. vs. 2) where it is associated with trouble.

2) *Chosen* or “abundance” connotes strength and has four other biblical references, one of which is Ezk 22.25: “They (princes) have taken treasure and precious things.” In the verse at hand, it refers to “salvation” or *yeshuhah* (cf. vs. 2).

3 &4) *Chakmah* (cf. 29.14) and *dahath* (cf. 32.4) or “wisdom and knowledge” which here are taken as a single unit, if you will.

*Yir’ah* (cf. 29.13) is presented as belonging to the Lord alone as his “treasure” or *’otsar* (2.7) which seems to belong to someone the Lord has chosen but has not yet revealed.

### **33-Vs. 7: Behold, the valiant ones cry without; the envoys of peace weep bitterly.**

Apparently the first group are the men or warriors or *’er’el*, the only use of this word in the Bible who cry “without” or *chuts*, a noun which can be taken as an adverb such as in this verse. It refers to outside a house, city or in the street (cf. 24.11 but not noted there).

*Mal’ak* or “envoys” (cf. 30.4) fundamentally means a messenger which here pertains to “peace,” *shalom* (cf. 32.18).

To the first belongs crying and to the second, weeping: *tsahaq* (cf. 19.20 but not noted there) and *bakah* (cf. 30.19).

### **33-Vs. 8: The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceases. Covenants are broken, witnesses are despised, there is no regard for man.**

*Mislah* is the noun for “highways” found last in 19.23 but not noted there. They are laid waste or *shamam* which connotes being desolate (it also means to be astonished). “I will lay waste mountains and hills” [42.15]. “Wayfaring man” is rendered literally as “passing by the path” or *’orach* [cf. 30.11].

Two verbs for a similar situation: *parar* (cf. 24.19) as “broken” and *chashav* (cf. 32.15) with the negative.

### **33-Vs. 9: The land mourns and languishes; Lebanon is confounded and withers away; Sharon is like a desert; and Bashan and Carmel shake off their leaves.**

Four verbs evocative of sorrow and desolation: “mourns, languishes, confounded and withers” or *’aval* (cf. 24.4), *’amal* (cf. 24.3), *chapher* (also as to shame; cf. 24.23) and *qamal*. This last verb has one other biblical reference in 19.6 but not noted there.

### **33-Vs. 10: "Now I will arise," says the Lord, "now I will lift myself up; now I will be exalted.**

The Lord himself speaks directly and not through his prophet Isaiah, continuing through what seems to be vs. 20 though the RSV has closing quotes after vs. 12 and 14.

Three uses of *hatah* or “now:” “arise, lift up and exalted” or *qum, rum* and *nasa’*. The first two are noted in vs. 3, and the third verb in 30.6 connotes a bearing or carrying.

Vs. 11 has the Lord speaking of attempts to give birth which does not come to fruition. Even their own “breath” or *ruach* (cf. 32.15) will eat them up.

Vs. 12 again has the Lord speaking with regard to the “peoples” (*ham*, cf. 25.8) which is plural and can pertain not just to Israel but to other nations in the vicinity who participate in her less than desirable behavior.

**33-Vs. 13: Hear, you who are far off, what I have done; and you who are near, acknowledge my might.**

“Hear and acknowledge” or *shamah* (cf. 32.3) and *yadah* (cf. 29.24) which relate to being *rachaq* (cf. 25.1 but not noted there) and *qarov* (cf. 13.22). The former verb applies to what the Lord has done (*hasah*, cf. 32.6) and the latter, to his “might” or *gevurah* (cf. 30.15).

**33-Vs. 14: The sinners in Zion are afraid; trembling has seized the Godless: "Who among us can dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?"**

By speaking of sinners located in Zion, perhaps the Lord has in mind priests associated with the temple and the corrupt way it has been cared for. Such people are “afraid” or *pachad* (cf. 12.2). As for the “Godless” or *chaneph* (cf. 10.6), refer to 32.6 where the noun *choneph* is used for “unGodliness,” the same verbal root.

Reference to the two types of fires could apply to sacrifices in the temple and hearken back to Ex 24.17: “Now the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people Israel.”

**33-Vs. 15: He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, who despises the gain of oppressions, who shakes his hands, lest they hold a bribe, who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed and shuts his eyes from looking upon evil,**

A singular person is spoken of as an example for the nation of Israel in contrast to the plural sinners in Zion. The following six ways of proper behavior pertain to bodily functions (walking, speaking, shaking hands, hearing and seeing; #3 has no such reference):

- 1) *Tsedaqah* (cf. vs. 5) or “righteously;” literally, “in righteousness.”
- 2) *Mesharym* (cf. 26.7 but not noted there) or “uprightly” and connotes equity.
- 3) *Ma’as* (cf. 30.12) or “despises.”
- 4) *Nahar* (cf. vs. 9) or “shakes.”
- 5) *’Atam* or “stops.” “Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent” [Prov 17.28].
- 6) *Hatsam* (cf. 29.10 but not noted there) or “shuts.”

**33-Vs. 16: he will dwell on the heights; his place of defense will be the fortresses of rocks; his bread will be given him, his water will be sure.**

Compare this dwelling or *shakan* on the “heights” or *marom* with vs. 5: “The Lord is exalted, for he dwells on high.”

“Defense and fortresses” or *metsad* and *misgav* (cf. 25.12). An example of the former may be found in 1Sam 23.14: “And David remained in the strongholds in the wilderness.” Both terms are reminiscent of Moses whom the Lord put in a cleft of rock while his glory passed by: “And while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by” [Ex 22,22].

Mention of bread and water bring to mind Elijah the prophet: “You shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there” [1Kg 17.4].

**33-Vs. 17: Your eyes will see the king in his beauty; they will behold a land that stretches afar.**

*Chazah* (cf. 30.10) is the verb for “see” and is more an intense beholding with regard to the yet to be identified king’s “beauty” or *yophy* found in 3.24 but not noted there and connotes splendor as well as brightness. “The king greatly desires your beauty” [Ps 45.11].

*Ra’ah* (cf. 30.30) is the common verb to see and used for “behold.” Compared with the second person plural regarding *chazah*, it is the third person plural; i.e., “you” and “they.” The object of this *ra’ah* is a “land” or *’erets* (cf. 32.2) which is not unlike Moses seeing the *’erets* “before you, but you shall not go there, into the land which I give to the people of Israel.”

**33-Vs. 18: Your mind will muse on the terror: "Where is he who counted, where is he who weighed the tribute? Where is he who counted the towers?"**

The RSV says of this verse: “the unpleasant past (28.11-123) will become a memory in the peaceful reign of the Messianic king.”

*Lev* (cf. 32.6) is the noun for “mind” which, as noted several times earlier, more properly refers to the heart. Here it will “muse” or *hagah* (a verb which connotes murmuring; cf. 8.19) on the “terror” or *’eymah* which is put in terms of a person (the Assyrians) who once had collected tribute by counting and weighing. “My heart is in anguish within me, the terrors of death have fallen upon me” [Ps 55.4].

**33-Vs. 19: You will see no more the insolent people, the people of an obscure speech which you cannot comprehend, stammering in a tongue which you cannot understand.**

*Yahaz* or “insolent” is the only biblical reference (a verb) and connotes being strong.

*Shamah* (cf. Vs. 13) and *byn* (cf. 32.4): “comprehend and understand,” the former meaning more properly to hear or to listen. They are in reference to the adjectives “obscure and “stammering” or *hameq* (more properly, deep) and *lahag* (cf. 28.11 as ‘strange’).

**33-Vs. 20: Look upon Zion, the city of our appointed feasts! Your eyes will see Jerusalem, a quiet habitation, an immovable tent, whose stakes will never be plucked up, nor will any of its cords be broken.**

Compare “look” or *chazah* (cf. vs. 17) with *ra’ah* or “see” of the previous verse, two different situations. *Ra’ah* is used with regard to Jerusalem. The former refers to Mount Zion or site of the Jerusalem temple where the “appointed feasts” are celebrated *mohed* often applied to an assembly as in 14.13.

“Quiet habitation:” compare with “peaceful habitation” where *naveh* is used. The former is modified by the adjective *sha’anan* (cf. 32.18) and the latter by *shalom* or the noun for peace. The former is presented as a tent which is in accord with the tent of meeting of Exodus which now becomes “immovable” or *tsahan*, the only use of this word in the Bible and used with the negative.

**33-Vs. 21: But there the Lord in majesty will be for us a place of broad rivers and streams where no galley with oars can go nor stately ship can pass.**

*ʿAdyr* is the adjective for “majesty” (cf. 10.34) which connotes being mighty and therefore a *maqom* (cf. 26.21) or a “place” consisting of waters to prevent assaults by a navy. The same adjective translates here as “stately.”

**33-Vs. 22: For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our ruler, the Lord is our king; he will save us.**

The verb *shaphat* (cf. 26.12) translates as the noun “judge,” and the verb *chaqaq* (cf. 20.8) translates as the noun “ruler.” The Lord as assuming the three roles here will “save” (*yashah*, cf. 30.15) us, the first person plural being used as a kind of response or refrain to the previous few verses.

**33-Vs. 23: Your tackle hangs loose; it cannot hold the mast firm in its place, or keep the sail spread out. Then prey and spoil in abundance will be divided; even the lame will take the prey.**

The city of Jerusalem is compared to a ship that is unprepared against the Assyrian army. See the other comparison, that is, with the galley and stately ship of vs. 21. Despite this unpreparedness, the Lord will provide “spoil and prey” or *shalal* and *baz*; cf. 10.2 where both are used.

**33-Vs. 24: And no inhabitant will say, “I am sick;” the people who dwell there will be forgiven their iniquity.**

Here being “sick” and “iniquity” are the same, that is, physical illness and spiritual wickedness feed into each other. *Chalah* is the verb for the former (cf. 17.11) and *havan* is the noun for the latter (cf. 27.9).

*Shaken* is an adjective used for “inhabitant” (*shakan* being the verbal root, cf. 33.16) and *yashav* is the verb for “dwell” (cf. 32.18). *Yashav* means to sit down whereas *shakan* is more along the lines of settling down.

## Chapter Thirty-Four

Because some parts of Isaiah consist of an extended list of curses, woes and oracles of condemnation, key words are picked out instead of going verse by verse. Such is the case with the chapter at hand. This is a process begun with Chapter Nineteen.

1. Draw near, O nations, to hear and hearken, O peoples! Let the earth listen, and all that fills it; the world, and all that comes from it. 2. For the Lord is enraged against all the nations and furious against all their host, he has doomed them, has given them over for slaughter. 3. Their slain shall be cast out, and the stench of their corpses shall rise; the mountains shall flow with their blood. 4. All the host of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll. All their host shall fall as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from the fig tree. 5. For my sword has drunk its fill in the heavens; behold, it descends for judgment upon Edom, upon the people I have doomed. 6. The Lord has a sword; it is sated with blood, it is gorged with fat, with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams. For the Lord has a sacrifice in Bozrah, a great slaughter in the land of Edom. 7. Wild oxen shall fall with them, and young

steers with the mighty bulls. Their land shall be soaked with blood, and their soil made rich with fat. 8. For the Lord has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion. 9. And the streams of Edom shall be turned into pitch, and her soil into brimstone; her land shall become burning pitch. 10. Night and day it shall not be quenched; its smoke shall go up for ever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever. 11. But the hawk and the porcupine shall possess it, the owl and the raven shall dwell in it. He shall stretch the line of confusion over it, and the plummet of chaos over its nobles. 12. They shall name it No Kingdom There, and all its princes shall be nothing. 13. Thorns shall grow over its strongholds, nettles and thistles in its fortresses. It shall be the haunt of jackals, an abode for ostriches. 14. And wild beasts shall meet with hyenas, the satyr shall cry to his fellow; yea, there shall the night hag alight, and find for herself a resting place. 15. There shall the owl nest and lay and hatch and gather her young in her shadow; yea, there shall the kites be gathered, each one with her mate. 16. Seek and read from the book of the Lord: Not one of these shall be missing; none shall be without her mate. For the mouth of the Lord has commanded, and his Spirit has gathered them. 17. He has cast the lot for them, his hand has portioned it out to them with the line; they shall possess it forever, from generation to generation they shall dwell in it.

This new chapter begins with the command to “draw near” (*qarav*, cf. 5.19) with respect to “nations” or *goy* (cf. 29.7). It is followed another command, “hear” or *shamah* (cf. 33.19) with respect to “people” (*ham*, cf. 33.12). Both have been some distance from the Lord though within reach of his voice which cannot be measured by time nor distance but by a refusal to pay attention. *Goy* often is used over against the nation of Israel whereas *ham* is a more generic term.

The verb *shamah* is prefaced with the preposition *l-* or “to” whereas the noun *ham* has this preposition, not the verb *qashav*. Thus the text reads literally, “Draw near nations to hear and to peoples hearken.”

The entire “earth” or *‘erets* (cf. 33.17) and that which fills it as well as that comes from it—in other words, everything animate and inanimate—is to “listen” or *shamah*, the same verb applied to the *goy*. When the Lord has the attention of all peoples and the earth, complete silence will pervade both as they await what the Lord will say. Such a command as presented in this opening verse almost always is unfavorable which those to whom it is addressed pick up instinctively before the Lord utters anything else.

Vs. 2 opens up the floodgates, if you will, of what the Lord is about to do. Although Bozrah and Edom are singled out in vs. 6 for special condemnation, everyone else is subject to divine fury and wrath. More specifically, the Lord is “enraged and furious” or *qetseph* and *chemah* (cf. 27.40), both nouns. As for the former (it connotes breaking), see 54.8: “In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you.” In the verse at hand, “hosts” or *tsava’* (cf. 31.4), is an obvious military connotation. *Qetseph* is followed with the preposition *l-* (‘to’) prefaced to the “Lord” or literally “rage (i.e., the noun) to the Lord.” It as well as *chemah* are literally “upon” (*hal-*) the “nations” (*goy*, cf. vs. 1) and hosts.

*Charam* (cf. 11.15) or “doomed” can be used in a religious or sacrificial sense whereas *tevach* or “slaughter” (cf. 30.25) often applies to an execution.

Vs. 3 presumes the slaying has taken place, that is, at the hand of the Lord as recounted in the previous verse. However, no details are given as to how the Lord brings about this slaughter. Just speaking of it in a general way is enough to cause dismay.

Vs. 4 mirrors what has happened in the previous verse and is reminiscent of Rev 6.14: “the sky vanished like a scroll that is rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.” *Tsava’* or “host” mirrors that of nations in vs. 2, that is, armies drawn up in battle array against the Lord.

Vss. 5-7 speak directly of the Lord effecting vengeance by means of a sword first in the heavens and then upon Edom followed by people whom he has “doomed” or *cherem* (cf. 43.28) to “judgment” or *mishpat* (cf. 33.5).

Vs. 8 continues speaking about this slaughter by the Lord by putting it in terms of a “day of vengeance” or a *yom* (cf. 28.5)—a *kairos* event, if you will—of *naqam* (cf. 1.24). Compare this *yom* with a year of “recompense” or *shilum* (related to *shalom*) which has two other biblical references, Hos 9.7 and Mic 7.3, the former being cited here: “The days of punishment have come, the days of recompense have come; Israel shall know it.” The span of a year is more in line with temporal measurement whereas that of day is indeterminate and not as much subject to the limitations of time and space.

Vss. 9 and 10 are reminiscent of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah as well as the fall of a city as in Chapter Eighteen or Revelation, presumably Rome: “And the kings of the earth...will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning” [vs. 9].

Vss. 10, 13-15 speak of eleven types of undesirable animals which will inhabit the lands which had waged war against Israel, notably Bozrah and Edom (cs. 6): hawk, porcupine, raven, jackals, ostriches, wild beasts (in general), hyenas, satyr, night hag, owl and kites.

Vs. 12 sums all this up by calling Edom “No Kingdom There” or literally “there is not there kingdom.”

With regard to the eleven types of animals, Israel counsels the people in vs. 16 to “seek and read” or literally “seek from on the book of the Lord, *darash* (cf. 31.1) being the verb. As for this book, refer to 4.3: “And he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem.” Apparently the animals at hand are found in that book, but the people ignored them deliberately. The “spirit” of the Lord or his *ruach* (cf. 33.10) has gathered all these animals, blowing them, if you will, to the one place of Edom.

Vs. 17 concludes Chapter Thirty-Four with the Lord portioning out Edom among the eleven animals. *Goral* is the verb for “cast the lot” (cf. 17.14) and *chalaq* the verb for “portioned” found last in 33.23 but not noted there. Compare “generation to generation” with the same phrase in vs. 10 as to Edom’s desolation.

## Chapter Thirty-Five

### **35-Vs. 1: The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus**

This verse continues into the next one. The three words “wilderness, dry land and desert” contrast with the devastation recounted in the previous chapter which is destined to remain forever. The words are *midbar* (cf. 32.16), *tsyah* and *haravah*. The second is found next in 41.18: “I will make the wilderness (*tsyah*) a pool of water and the dry land springs of water.” The third connotes sterility and is found in 33.9 but not noted there.

The verb *sus* is akin to *sus* (the letter *samech*) connoting a leaping up and down and

pertains to the first two words. The verb *gyl* (cf. 29.19) suggests dancing as in a circle and applies to the third noun. In addition to this *gyl*, the desert will “blossom” or *parach* (cf. 27.6) like the “crocus” or *chavatseleth* which has one other biblical reference, Sg 2.1: “I am a rose of Sharon.

**35-Vs. 2: it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God.**

This verse flows seamlessly from the previous one.

*Parach* is used a second time with respect to the crocus of the previous verse, the English adverb “abundantly” being rendered in Hebrew as a second use of the verb and reads literally something like “blossoming will blossom.” Not only this, the desert will “rejoice” or *gyl*, the second use of this verb as with *parach*. Such *gyl* will take the form of “joy and singing,” *gylah* and *ranan*. The former is derived from *gyl* and has one other biblical reference, 65.18: “But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create.” The latter is a verb (infinitive) noted last in 26.19.

Lebanon is renowned for cedars (cf. 14.8) which went into the construction of Solomon’s temple, hence the essence of its “glory” or *kavod* (cf. 24.16). To Carmel and Sharon belong “majesty” or *hadar* found last in 5.14 as “nobility” but not noted there. In other words, these three places endowed with natural beauty and resources will fill the wilderness, dry land and desert. Once established, they will see the divine “glory and majesty,” *kavod* and *hadar*.

**35-Vs. 3: Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees.**

Reference to weak hands and feeble knees concerns the returning exiles and is reminiscent of Heb 12.12: “Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees.” The two verbs in the verse at hand are *chazaq* (cf. 28.2) and *‘amats*. The latter suggests being alert as well as hardened and found next in 40.26.

**35-Vs. 4: Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you."**

*Mahar* is the participle for “fearful” and fundamentally means to be hasty or rash as in 32.4. Instead of this attitude the Lord bids the exiles to be “strong” and not to “fear,” *chazaq* (cf. vs. 3) and *yare’* (cf. 25.3).

The Lord will come with “vengeance” or *naqam* (cf. 34.8) as well as “recompense” or *gemul* (cf. 3.11).

*Yashah* is the verb for “save” noted last in 33.22. Note that all three are to happen in the indeterminate future as with all the promises in this chapter.

**35-Vs. 5: Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped;**

Note the similarity of the two verbs, “opened and unstopped” or *paqach* and *patach*. The former more specifically refers to eyes as is the case at hand and found next in 37.17: “Open your eyes, O Lord, and see.” The latter is more suggestive of loosening and found last in 26.2

but not noted there.

**35-Vs. 6: then shall the lame man leap like a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert;**

Three words of special force: 1) *dalag* or “leap” as in Sg 2.8: “Behold, he comes, leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills,” 2) *ranan* or “sing for joy” (cf. vs. 2) and 3) *baqah* (cf. 7.6). With respect to #3, *midbar* and *haravah* are mentioned (cf. vs. 1).

**35-Vs. 7: the burning sand shall become a pool and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.**

A similarity between “pool and “springs” or *‘agam* (cf. 19.10) and *mabuah*, the latter having two other biblical references one of which is 49.10 but not noted there: “by springs of water will guide them.” Jackals are mentioned last in 34.23.

**35-Vs. 8: And a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not pass over it, and fools shall not err therein.**

*Maslul* is the noun for “highway,” the only biblical reference but close to *mislah* as in 33.8. It refers to a road which is raised or embanked compared with the common word for “way” found here, *derek* (cf. 30.21). It will be called “holy” or *qodesh* (cf. 23.18).

This special raised highway will be off limits to those who are “unclean and “fools,” *tame’* (cf. 30.22) and *‘evyl* (cf. 19.13). The verb *tahah* (cf. 30.28) means to “err” and applies to the fools who will be compelled to remain on the Holy Way. As for this road, it passes through the former wilderness, dry land and desert (cf. vs. 1) which has been transformed into a marvelous garden not unlike Eden. However, a road is meant for passage, not for staying in one place, suggesting that the Lord has something better in store at the end of this special type of highway.

**35-Vs. 9: No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there.**

This Holy Way will be free from attack by wild animals. The unclean are forbidden to walk on it as well as the fools because it is reserved primarily for the “redeemed” or *ga’al* which implies a buying back. “Was it not you who dried up the sea...for the redeemed to pass over” [51.10]?

**35-Vs. 10: And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.**

*Padah* is the verb for “ransomed” (cf. 29.22) who here belong to the Lord implying that he had paid a price for these people. In other words, the Lord had engaged in negotiations with the Lord’s enemies enabling his people to return and then come to Zion with singing, *rinah* (cf. 14.7). The route they will follow is that Holy Way in vs. 8. Because Zion (Jerusalem is in an

elevated position), people will have to go up there which means this *rinah* consisted of those “songs of ascents” or Psalms 120-134.

The “joy” or *simchah* (cf. 30.29) which is everlasting will act as a crown, the result of singing in common these songs of ascent.

“Joy and gladness” or *sason* and *simchah* are both found together in 22.13. Their exact opposite are “sorrow and sighing” or *yagon* and *‘anachah*. The former is found next in 51.11: “and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” The latter is found last in 21.2 but not noted there.

## Chapter Thirty-Six

Because this chapter is more historical by nature, an outline of each verse will be given. A footnote in the Oxford **RSV** says that this “historical appendix is duplicated in 2Kg 18.-13-20.19 except for 38.9-20.”

1. In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them. 2. And the king of Assyria sent the Rabshakeh from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem, with a great army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller's Field. 3. And there came out to him Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, who was over the household, and Shebna the secretary, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder. 4. And the Rabshakeh said to them, "Say to Hezekiah, 'Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria: On what do you rest this confidence of yours? 5. Do you think that mere words are strategy and power for war? On whom do you now rely, that you have rebelled against me? 6. Behold, you are relying on Egypt, that broken reed of a staff, which will pierce the hand of any man who leans on it. Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who rely on him. 7. But if you say to me, "We rely on the Lord our God," is it not he whose high places and altars Hezekiah has removed, saying to Judah and to Jerusalem, "You shall worship before this altar"? 8. Come now, make a wager with my master the king of Assyria: I will give you two thousand horses, if you are able on your part to set riders upon them. 9. How then can you repulse a single captain among the least of my master's servants, when you rely on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? 10. Moreover, is it without the Lord that I have come up against this land to destroy it? The Lord said to me, Go up against this land, and destroy it.'" 11. Then Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah said to the Rabshakeh, "Pray, speak to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand it; do not speak to us in the language of Judah within the hearing of the people who are on the wall." 12. But the Rabshakeh said, "Has my master sent me to speak these words to your master and to you, and not to the men sitting on the wall, who are doomed with you to eat their own dung and drink their own urine?" 13. Then the Rabshakeh stood and called out in a loud voice in the language of Judah: "Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria! 14. Thus says the king: 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you. 15. Do not let Hezekiah make you rely on the Lord by saying, "The Lord will surely deliver us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.'" 16. Do not listen to Hezekiah; for thus says the king of Assyria: Make your peace with me and come out to me; then every one of you will eat of his own vine, and every one of his own fig tree, and every one of you will drink the water of his own cistern; 17. until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and wine, a land of bread and vineyards. 18. Beware lest Hezekiah mislead you by saying, "The Lord will deliver us." Has any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of

the hand of the king of Assyria? 19. Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? 20. Who among all the gods of these countries have delivered their countries out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?" 21. But they were silent and answered him not a word, for the king's command was, "Do not answer him." 22. Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, and Shebna the secretary, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came to Hezekiah with their clothes rent, and told him the words of the Rabshakeh.

Vs. 1 has the preposition *hal-* or "upon" with regard to the cities of Judah which are "fortified" or *batsar* (cf. 27.10), a verb fundamentally meaning to cut off or to restrain. *Taphas* is the verb for "took" noted in 3.6 but not noted there.

Vs. 2 speaks of a "great" army, *kaved* (cf. 32.2) meaning to be heavy which gives the sense that this army had been weighing mightily against or upon Jerusalem. This is re-enforced, if you will, by the Rabshakeh (Assyrian for chief steward) standing (*hamad*, cf. 21.9) by the conduit. In other words, this official has taken up a position by the city's water supply confident he can cut it off.

Vs. 3 has three officials from the city: one over the king's household, secretary and recorder. The second and third words are *saphar* (cf. 29.12) which means to read and the participle *zakar* (cf. 26.13) which means to remember. Actually both pertain to the keeping of records, the latter perhaps more concerned with those which are oral compared to those which are written down.

In vs. 4 the Rabshakeh speaks in the name of his king by the familiar "thus" as well as in vs. 14. The three representatives knew this was to be the approach taken and were prepared first to get down accurately the words and then convey them to King Hezekiah. The verb *batach* which means to trust is the verbal root for *bitachon* or "confidence" having two other biblical references, 2Kg 18.19 and Eccl 9.4, the former being the same as the verse at hand. *Batach* is also the verb for "rest" (cf. 32.11).

The "mere words" of vs. 5 reads literally "word (*davar*, cf. 32.7) of lips." To the Assyrian delegate they represent "strategy and power" or *hetsah* (cf. 30.1) and *gevurah* (cf. 33.13), the latter generally used as might or power. The verb *marad* for "rebelled" is used with the preposition *b-*, literally, "rebelled in me."

Vs. 6 contains another use of the verb *batach* for "relying" and "rely" with respect to Egypt and Pharaoh. The same taunt is contained in vs. 9. Compare this verse with 31.-3 with reliance upon Egypt.

Reference to Hezekiah's destruction of pagan sacred places in vs. 7 are recounted in 2Chron 31.1: "Now when all this was finished, all Israel who were present went out to the cities of Judah and broke in pieces the pillars and hewed down the Asherim and broke down the high places and the altars throughout all Judah and Benjamin." When the Assyrian Rabshakeh speaks of "this altar" obviously he was referring to the one in the Jerusalem temple which his army has surrounded. Thus the Assyrians are threatening any residual worship in the high places as well as the impending destruction of the temple.

*Harav* is the verb for "make a wager" in vs. 8 and connotes the making of a pledge with which the Rabshakeh is taunting the three representatives. "O Lord, I am oppressed; be my security" [38.14]!

Israel had suffered at the hand of other invaders due to having disobeyed the Lord. The Assyrian representative is conscious of this and uses guilt as a ploy in vs. 10. That is to say, he

is designated by the Lord to destroy Israel and Jerusalem.

In vs. 11 the three representatives ask the Assyrian to speak in Aramaic, the diplomatic language of the time, so that the people on the city walls wouldn't understand the conversation, for practically everyone in the city had lined these walls trying to listen in. Surely the Rabshakeh was conscious of this and did his best to threaten not just Eliakim, Shebna and Joah but the city's population. He declines to speak in Aramaic in order to bring home the futility of resistance to the Assyrian army.

*Nasha'* is the verb for "deceive" in vs. 14 and is commonly used as to lift up or take away. In other words, the Assyrian is trying to turn the people against their king. *Natsal* means "deliver" (cf. 31.5) and connotes a pulling out and therefore is not dissimilar to the basic sense of *nasha'*. It is found in the next verse (15).

*Berakah* (cf. 19.24) in vs. 16 means "peace" or more specifically, a blessing. This blessing, if you will, is not to be in the people's native land but most likely in Assyria which will resemble it (cf. vs. 17).

The verb for "beware" in vs. 18 is *suth* which fundamentally means to stir up or to incite. "He (Job) still holds fast his integrity although you moved me against him, to destroy him without cause" [Job 2.3]. As in vs. 14, the verb *natsal* is used twice with regard to "deliver."

In vs. 19 Hamath is mentioned last in 11.11 and Arpad in 10.9. The gods of both cannot effect *natsal*, this verb being found in the next verse. The frequency of *natsal* with its sense of snatching away is dominant here, the Assyrian Rabshakeh using it to the max in order to effect a peaceful surrender of Jerusalem.

King Hezekiah had ordered the people beforehand to be "silent" before any such threats which had been expected, *charash* being the verb in vs. 21 which also means to devise as well as to plow. "For a long time I have held my peace, I have kept still and restrained myself" [42.14].

Chapter Thirty-Six concludes with the three representatives who had met the Assyrian Rabshakeh to return within the city and give a report. Although many had taken their position on the city walls, they could only get a few words of the dealings going on below, not a full, detailed report. The three were distraught and had torn their clothes though not in the sight of the Assyrian. As he left and returned to his army no one said a word knowing full well that disaster was about to overtake the city.

## Chapter Thirty-Seven

This Chapter continues the historical nature of the previous one which means that the verses are presented first and are followed by notations.

1. When King Hezekiah heard it, he rent his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth and went into the house of the Lord. 2. And he sent Eliakim, who was over the household, and Shebna the secretary, and the senior priests, clothed with sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz. 3. They said to him, "Thus says Hezekiah, 'This day is a day of distress, of rebuke and of disgrace; children have come to the birth, and there is no strength to bring them forth. 4. It may be that the Lord your God heard the words of the Rabshakeh whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to mock the living God and will rebuke the words which the Lord your God has heard; therefore lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left.'" 5. When the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah, 6. Isaiah said to them, "Say to your master, 'Thus says the Lord: Do

not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have reviled me. 7. Behold, I will put a spirit in him so that he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land; and I will make him fall by the sword in his own land." 8. The Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah; for he had heard that the king had left Lachish. 9. Now the king heard concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, "He has set out to fight against you." And when he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, 10. "Thus shall you speak to Hezekiah king of Judah: 'Do not let your God on whom you rely deceive you by promising that Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. 11. Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, destroying them utterly. And shall you be delivered? 12. Have the gods of the nations delivered them, the nations which my fathers destroyed, Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and the people of Eden who were in Tel-assar? 13. Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, the king of Hena, or the king of Ivvah?'" 14. Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord. 15. And Hezekiah prayed to the Lord: 16. "O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, who art enthroned above the cherubim, you art the God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth. 17. Incline your ear, O Lord, and hear; open your eyes, O Lord, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God. 18. Of a truth, O Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands, 19. and have cast their gods into the fire; for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone; therefore they were destroyed. 20. So now, O Lord our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone art the Lord." 21. Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Because you have prayed to me concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria, 22. this is the word that the Lord has spoken concerning him: 'She despises you, she scorns you—the virgin daughter of Zion; she wags her head behind you—the daughter of Jerusalem. 23. 'Whom have you mocked and reviled? Against whom have you raised your voice and haughtily lifted your eyes? Against the Holy One of Israel! 24. By your servants you have mocked the Lord, and you have said, With my many chariots I have gone up the heights of the mountains, to the far recesses of Lebanon; I felled its tallest cedars, its choicest cypresses; I came to its remotest height, its densest forest. 25. I dug wells and drank waters, and I dried up with the sole of my foot all the streams of Egypt. 26. 'Have you not heard that I determined it long ago? I planned from days of old what now I bring to pass, that you should make fortified cities crash into heaps of ruins, 27. while their inhabitants, shorn of strength, are dismayed and confounded, and have become like plants of the field and like tender grass, like grass on the housetops, blighted before it is grown. 28. 'I know your sitting down and your going out and coming in, and your raging against me. 29. Because you have raged against me and your arrogance has come to my ears, I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth, and I will turn you back on the way by which you came.' 30. "And this shall be the sign for you: this year eat what grows of itself and in the second year what springs of the same; then in the third year sow and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat their fruit. 31. And the surviving remnant of the house of Judah shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward; 32. for out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this. 33. "Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the king of Assyria: He shall not come into this city or shoot an arrow there or come before it with a shield or cast up a siege mound against it. 34. By the way that he came, by the same he shall return, and he shall not come into this city, says

the Lord. 35. For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David." 36. And the angel of the Lord went forth and slew a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians; and when men arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. 37. Then Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went home and dwelt at Nineveh. 38. And as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his God, Adrammelech and Sharezer, his sons, slew him with the sword, and escaped into the land of Arrat. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.

The first verse continues directly from the last verse of the previous chapter as though there was no distinction between the two. This is brought out by use of the conjunctive *v-* which usually translates as "and" but here is rendered as "when." The Hebrew text lacks "into" and reads literally "entering the house of the Lord," the verb containing the preposition, if you will, and intimating the urgency of the situation.

Vs. 2 mentions Eliakim and Shebna as in 36.3 but not Joah the recorder in whose stead are the senior priests. Their approaching Isaiah in sackcloth is not unlike approaching the Lord himself because of the close association between the Lord and the prophet.

Vs. 3 has Eliakim, Shebna and the senior priests speaking as King Hezekiah to Isaiah in familiar terms, that is, as he would speak to them in the name of the Lord: "thus says Hezekiah." These men say that the events consist of a day of "distress, rebuke and disgrace." The first word is *tsarah* (cf. 33.2), the second is *tokechah* which also means punishment or reproof and has three other biblical references, one of which is Ps 149.7: "to wreak vengeance on the nations and chastisement on the peoples." The third is *ne'atsah* which has one other biblical reference, 2Kg 19.3: "This is a day of distress, of rebuke and of disgrace." Actually this third reference contains all three words.

Vs. 4 has the three representatives speaking of the Lord as "your God" (used twice here) almost as though the Lord and Isaiah were working on behalf of the Assyrians through the Rabshakeh who are conspiring against Israel. They are careful, however, in couching their language: "it may be" or *'ulay* which also means "perhaps." *Charaph* is the verb for "mock" noted last in 18.6 whose object is not just God but the "living" (*chay*) God." *Yakach* is the verb for "rebuke" whose object is *davar*, the "words" of God (cf. 36.5), or more accurately, those *davar* which the Lord himself has heard. Out of desperation, the king's representatives ask Isaiah not so much to pray for them but to lift it up, *nasa'* being the verb (cf. 33.10). This "prayer" or *tephilah* (cf. 1.15) is for those behind the walls of Jerusalem presented as a "remnant" or *she'eryth* (cf. 14.30).

The words of vs. 3 from King Hezekiah can be taken as uttered before his representatives meet Isaiah, a kind of rehearsal, because vs. 5 has them coming first to Isaiah followed by vs. 6 when Isaiah speaks on behalf of the Lord or prior to the representatives addressing him. Isaiah is speaking just as the Lord does through the familiar "Thus says the Lord." This identity of speech between the Lord and Isaiah begins by acknowledging that the king of Assyria has "reviled" him, *gadaph* meaning to blaspheme. "Whom have you mocked and reviled" [vs. 23]?

In vs. 7 the Lord, through the medium of Isaiah, will put a "spirit" or *ruach* (cf. 34.16) which here is not specified, a kind of inspiration enabling the king of Assyria to be susceptible to a "rumor" or *shemuhah*. In 28.19 it translates as "message" or more specifically, something that has been heard. Its verbal root is *shamah* (to hear) can be rendered literally as "heard something heard." The source of this rumor is not specified; perhaps it comes from contacts

back home which the Assyrian army was in the habit of maintaining as with all its military expeditions.

Vs. 8 shifts action from the Rabshakeh being with King Hezekiah's representatives to back in the Assyrian camp where his master, the king, was absent. In other words, during the short duration of the confrontation outside the walls of Jerusalem the Assyrian king is off fighting against Libnah which is near Lachish. This means that the Assyrian army is spreading its resources thin which now are divided between Libnah and Jerusalem.

Apparently while off on this military venture the king of Assyria got word of Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, whom Hezekiah contacted in a bid for military assistance. And so the words of the Assyrian king in vs. 10 are ones of bravado, if you will, he being distracted by that sudden confrontation with Libnah and the threat of an army coming up from the south or from Ethiopia. True, the king of Assyria had laid waste other lands which vss. 11-13 recount, but again, this is more a sign of desperation on his part and perhaps part of that rumor which the divine *ruach* put in him caused his eventual downfall.

Eliakim, Shebna and the senior priests didn't dare approach King Hezekiah in person but decided upon a "letter" or *sepher* (cf. 20.8) which more accurately consists of a scroll to communicate what the king of the Assyrians had said through his Rabshakeh. Not only that, they sent it through messengers to avoid being victims of his wrath. We don't have Hezekiah's response, but immediately went to the Lord's house or temple and spread it upon the floor. Chances are he was alone there, not wanting to be interfered by anyone else in case the Lord decided to speak.

Vss. 15 through 20 recount the prayer (*palal* is the verb, cf. 37.15 but not noted there) of Hezekiah in his greatest need. First he acknowledges the Lord as above the cherubim and kings of the earth, obviously having in mind Assyria). This *palal* which fundamentally means to judge is not unlike Hezekiah spreading the scroll on the temple floor.

In vs. 17 Hezekiah bids the Lord to incline (ear), hear, open (eyes) to see and hear with respect to the "words" (*davar*, cf. vs. 4) of King Sennacherib which were mocking the Lord, *charaph* being the verb as noted in vs. 4. He gets to the heart of the matter, that is, the gods made by human hands which Sennacherib had destroyed. Unknown to Hezekiah, that was beneficial because it got ride of those gods as well as paving the way for recognition by the nations of Israel's God. That's why in vs. 20 Hezekiah bids the Lord not just to "save" (*yashah*, cf. 35.4) Israel but that all nations may "know" (*yadah*, cf. 33.13) the Lord as supreme God.

Apparently Isaiah had accompanied King Hezekiah to the temple, following behind discreetly in case he was needed for consultation. He observed the king spreading the scroll on the ground and perhaps laying prostrate after which he returned to his quarters. Vs. 21 says that Isaiah "sent to Hezekiah, saying" which perhaps was a scroll, certainly not a face-to-face contact, for the king was too upset for that. And so this message which wasn't delivered in person continues for almost the rest of Chapter Thirty-Seven, that is, through vs. 35.

Vs. 22 has the Lord speaking a "word" or *davar* a *davar* about Sennacherib with regard to the "virgin" daughter Jerusalem, *betulah* being found last in 23.12 but not noted there. Jerusalem is also called "daughter," daughter, of course, as belonging to the Lord. For Jerusalem to be such means that she has not consorted with any foreign nation or better, has not worshiped false gods. *Bazah* is the verb for "scorns" as in 53.3: "He was despised and rejected by men."

Vs. 23 has the Lord saying that King Sennacherib had both "mocked and reviled" the Lord, *charaph* (cf. vs. 17) and *gadaph* (cf. vs. 5), two words which sound similar. The

preposition for “against” is *‘el-* which usually translates as “to.”

Reference to servants in vs. 24 are the Rabshakeh who spoke with Eliakim, Shebna and the senior priests. They are the ones who “mocked” (*charaph*, vs. 23) the Lord on behalf of Sennacherib. It is as though this king’s conquest of Lebanon and Egypt recounted in vss. 24-25 were a sufficient threat not so much against Jerusalem but against the Lord although in Isaiah’s eyes the two are practically interchangeable.

Vs. 26 has a rhetorical question directed against Sennacherib, asking him about having “determined” against him which reads literally “have you not heard from afar?” The Lord has “planned” (*hasah*, the common verb for to do, to make; cf. 33.13) a long time ago what he is bringing “to pass” or *yatsar* (cf. 27.11) which fundamentally means to fashion something. This *yatsar* pertains to the ruin of cities and their inhabitants reduced to nothing as recounted in vss. 26-27,

In vs. 28 the verb *yadah* (‘know,’ cf. vs. 20) occurs after sitting down, going out and coming in. Perhaps the first refers to Sennacherib’s plotting not just against Israel but against the other nations whereas the other two intimate his military ventures against them. *Ragaz* is the verb for “raging” (cf. 32.10) with the preposition *‘el* or literally “to me.”

Vs. 29 continues with the *ragaz* of the Assyrian king (again, *‘el* or ‘to me’) along with his “arrogance” or *sha’anan* (cf. 33.20 which fundamentally means a tumult. This commotion, if you will, on Sennacherib’s part ascends literally “in” (*b-*) the Lord’s ears. The image of putting a hook in his nose and bit in his mouth is like that of a cow and horse or similar animal.

In vs. 30 the Lord turns attention to King Hezekiah giving him a “sign” or *‘oth* (cf. 20.3) which has the preposition *l-*, literally “to you.” The *‘oth* is extended over three years of prosperity which under the current circumstances seems impossible.

The improbable prosperity which the Lord mentions in vs. 30 extends to the “surviving remnant” of vs. 31. This phrase reads literally as “and adds (*yasaph*, cf. 30.1) deliverance” or *peleytah* (cf. 10.20).

Vs. 32 also speaks of a “remnant” but as pertaining to Jerusalem, the noun *she’eryth* (cf. vs. 4) being used which differs from *peleytah* of the previous verse, that is, deliverance. In addition to this *she’eryth* will be a “band of survivors” or *peleytah* which has just been noted. *Qin’ah* (cf. 26.11) is the noun for “zeal” which also means jealousy and pertains here to the “Lord of hosts,” “hosts” (*tsava’*, cf. 34.4) being a military term pertinent to the situation at hand.

Although the Lord is very clear to Hezekiah about his deliverance, in vs. 33 he speaks in terms of “Therefore thus says the Lord” in order to reassure him. *Laken* and *koh* are similar and used for emphasis in this verse.

Vs. 34 mentions the “way” or *derek* which refers back to the same word but not noted in vs. 29.

*Ganan* is the verb for “defend” in vs. 35 and as noted in 31.5, implies a covering over. Bound up with this divine covering is Jerusalem’s salvation, *yashah* being the verb used (cf. vs. 20). It comes as no surprise to King Hezekiah that the Lord refers to his favorite king, David. “Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end upon the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.” [9.7].

In vs. 36 the angel of the Lord slew what seems to be the bulk of Sennacherib’s army though spared the king who promptly left his siege of Jerusalem and hastened home to Nineveh. We have no reaction from the king, Hezekiah nor the inhabitants of Jerusalem who possibly didn’t see the angel taking divine vengeance upon the Assyrians. However, they must have

heard the screams of the dying soldiers who couldn't escape the angel's sword. Some time later word got back to the Israelites that Sennacherib's sons slew their father while worshiping in the temple of his god. This must have been especially pleasing, Israel's arch-enemy being slain in the temple of a pagan god which stands in sharp contrast with the temple in Jerusalem.

## Chapter Thirty-Eight

**38-Vs. 1: In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him and said to him, "Thus says the Lord: set your house in order; for you shall die, you shall not recover."**

The phrase "in those days" sets this personal drama concerning King Hezekiah apart from the recent events of the previous chapter. Hezekiah may have contracted his illness from having almost lost Jerusalem to Sennacherib's invading army or if not, that event certainly aggravated his condition. The phrase "at the point of death" reads literally "sick to death."

Isaiah got word of the king's condition and hastened to visit him although they must have gotten together before this illness to discuss the recent dramatic turn of events. In other words, what comes next? Here Isaiah is called by his formal title, if you will, a prophet and son of Amoz as though to emphasize his newly found status as essential to Jerusalem's delivery from the Assyrian army. Isaiah gets right to the point, unabashedly addressing the king as the Lord, if you will, a method which Hezekiah must have been familiar with by now.

Apparently Hezekiah had a number of loose ends to take care of both personally and as king. *Tsavah* or "set in order" pertains to both and more fundamentally means to order, to order that these affairs be arranged. It is first found in 5.6 but not noted there. The verb for "recover" is "live."

**38-Vs. 2: Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, and prayed to the Lord,**

The king had been in bed when Isaiah approached him and bluntly told him about his impending death. Isaiah may have considered holding his tongue but figured it was in everyone's best interest to get down to the task at hand by speaking in the Lord's name. That is what made Hezekiah turn to the wall. Is this the way the Lord is treating him after so great a victory against Sennacherib's forces? *Palal* is the verb for "prayed" noted last in 37.15.

**38-Vs. 3: and said, "Remember now, O Lord, I beseech you, how I have walked before you in faithfulness and with a whole heart and have done what is good in your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly.**

Already it had been pointed out that when Isaiah speaks with Hezekiah he does so as the Lord ("Thus says the Lord"). Compare this directness with Hezekiah facing away from the Lord, if you will, face to the wall. *Zakar* is the verb for "remember" noted last in 36.3 and here in immediate conjunction with 'ana', "I beseech." an interjection of entreaty. "Forgive, I pray, the transgression of your brothers" [Gn 50.17].

At first glance Hezekiah's statement about his conduct seems presumptuous, but he is king and aware of the example he has to give to the people. *Emeth* is the noun for

“faithfulness” (cf. 10.20) and *lev* for “heart” (cf. 33.18) which here is “whole” or *shalem*, an adjective related to *shalom* and connotes wholeness. “And a full reward be given to you by the Lord, the God of Israel” [Rt 2.12].

*Gadol* is the common adjective for “bitterly” and fundamentally means great or large. It is used with the verb *bakah* (cf. 33.7) meaning to weep which occurs twice reading literally, “wept a great weeping.” This is a short sentence but obviously one of considerable poignance.

#### **38-Vs. 4: Then the word of the Lord came to Isaiah:**

A short sentence but one that follows quickly on the heels of the Lord speaking through Isaiah in vs. 1. *Davar* is the noun for “word” noted last in 37.22. This *davar* had been absent or suspended, if you will, by Hezekiah’s response to the Lord speaking to him.

#### **38-Vs. 5: "Go and say to Hezekiah, Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will add fifteen years to your life.**

In vs. 1 Isaiah has visited Hezekiah and communicated to him words directly from the Lord about his impending death. He listened to his desperation in vs. 3, begging for a longer life, which prompted the Lord in vs. 4 to have Isaiah speak so more. The Lord was so moved that he changed his mind on the spot. It’s questionable whether this would have happened if Isaiah weren’t present. Chances are the king would have died.

The Lord takes pains to call himself “the God of David” who isn’t Hezekiah’s father directly but Israel’s celebrated king after whom all other kings would be judged. The Lord had heard the king’s “prayer” or *tephilah* (cf. 37.4) or more specifically, his *palal* in vs. 2. Furthermore, he saw his tears which made him increase his life. Obviously Hezekiah was delighted and must have wondered why the Lord chose the number fifteen. Then and there he determined to make the best of that relatively short time.

#### **38-Vs. 6: I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria and defend this city.**

The previous chapter dealt with the siege of Jerusalem in very dramatic form, King Sennacherib withdrawing and eventually being slain by his own sons. Judging by these words, the threat wasn’t over; perhaps in the more immediate sense but not in the long term, for some future king of Assyria would pick up where Sennacherib left off. *Natsal* (cf. 36.19) is the verb for “deliver” which means more precisely to snatch away quickly. *Ganan* is the verb for “defend” noted last in 37.35. Would it be the same as with Sennacherib where the angel of the Lord slew so many of the Assyrian soldiers or be otherwise?

#### **38-Vs. 7: "This is the sign to you from the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing that he has promised:**

The “sign” or *’oth* (cf. 37.30) and *davar* is the noun for “thing” which fundamentally means a word as in vs. 4. It’s as though this doing from the Lord is he speaking; also, the verb *davar* translates here as “promised” or “has spoken.”

The sign just promised and spelled out in vs. 8 is an astronomical one. That means it

could be seen beyond Israel's borders.

**38-Vs. 9: A writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, after he had been sick and had recovered from his sickness:**

*Miktav* is the noun for "writing" which could either be on a wax tablet or scroll. "And the writing was the writing of God" [Ex 32.16]. Most likely Hezekiah didn't do the actual writing but dictated to a scribe in Isaiah's presence. He didn't do this immediately but after a period of recovery during which he had time to collect his thoughts for posterity, focusing upon the distress he had experienced. This *miktav* continues through vs. 20, almost the end of the current chapter.

**38-Vs. 10: I said, In the noontide of my days I must depart; I am consigned to the gates of Sheol for the rest of my years.**

"I said" makes this written record very personal as Hezekiah speaks of himself at the prime of life symbolized by noontide. *Paqad* is the verb for "consigned" (cf. 29.6) and often has military connotations. Sheol, of course, is the underworld (cf. 28.18) which Hezekiah puts in terms of the rest of his years. This implies that as soon as he got word of his impending death through Isaiah, essentially he was already there.

**38-Vs. 11: I said, I shall not see the Lord in the land of the living; I shall look upon man no more among the inhabitants of the world.**

This verse also begins with "I said" as though to emphasize Hezekiah's plight. *Ra'ah* is the common for verb to see whose object is the "Lord" or *Yah* which is mentioned twice for emphasis. Actually Hezekiah doesn't see the Lord but hears him, chiefly through the medium of the prophet Isaiah. *'Erets* or "land" (of the living) noted last in 34.1 contrasts sharply with the depths of Sheol.

*Navat* (cf. 22.11) is the verb for "look upon" which is more along the lines of beholding, of examining something for an extended period of time. The object is men who dwell in the "world" or *chevel* which means a tract of land compared with *'eret*, place of residence for a given people. It is noted last in 26.17 with its alternate meaning of pain or suffering.

**38-Vs. 12: My dwelling is plucked up and removed from me like a shepherd's tent; like a weaver I have rolled up my life; he cuts me off from the loom; from day to night you bring me to an end;**

*Dor* is the noun for "dwelling" but more fundamentally means a generation as first noted in 13.20. Hezekiah laments not just for his own life but is concerned about his legacy, especially in light of King David, Israel's model for all future kings. In other words, his *dor* is both "plucked up and removed" or *nasah* and *galah*. The former is noted last in 37.37 (not noted there) with respect to King Sennacherib leaving the siege of Jerusalem and the latter in 24.11 where the meaning is more along the lines of going into exile.

Automatically there comes to Hezekiah's mind the images of a shepherd's tent being struck as *nasah* and *galah* as well as thread on a loom. Both represent the Lord's intent, if you

will, to bring him to an end or *shalam* which is the verbal root for *shalom* and implies completion. “And performs the counsel of his messengers” [44.26].

The passage from day to night is the normal course of the sun going from dawn to sunset. Perhaps Hezekiah mentions this in light of the recent miracle of the sun’s reversal of passage in vs. 8.

**38-Vs. 13: I cry for help until morning; like a lion he breaks all my bones; from day to night you bring me to an end.**

In the previous verse Hezekiah laments that his illness is drawn out “from day to night.” This is representative of the endless, painful passage of time when he cries out for help, the verb being *shavah* meaning to compare or make equal. It is found last in 28.25 but not noted there.

Hezekiah refers to a lion breaking his bones which could mean an intense fever and making the his impending end all the more fearful. The verb *shalam* is used again for this which can apply to a constant death-like way of living.

**38-Vs. 14: Like a swallow or a crane I clamor, I moan like a dove. My eyes are weary with looking upward. O Lord, I am oppressed; be you my security!**

Throughout the just mentioned cycle of day to night Hezekiah compares himself to three birds which he must have been hearing outside his window: a swallow, crane and dove. The first two are found in Jer 8.7: “the turtledove, swallow and crane keep the time of their coming.” As for the third, cf. 59.11: “We all growl like bears, we moan and moan like doves.”

While listening to these three birds, especially the mournfulness of the doves, Hezekiah finds it difficult to keep his eyes raised, that is, toward heaven. *Dalal* is the verb for “weary” (cf. 19.6 but not noted there) which basically means to hang down and contrasts with *marom*, “upward” (cf. 33.16).

*Hashqah* is the noun for “oppressed,” the only use of the word in the Bible and contrasts with the Lord as “security” or *harav* (cf. 36.8).

**38-Vs. 15: But what can I say? For he has spoken to me, and he himself has done it. All my sleep has fled because of the bitterness of my soul.**

*Davar* for “say” and *amar* for “spoken. The first is reflexive or reflective and the second has the Lord communicating through the prophet Isaiah.

*Dadah* is the verb for “has fled” and more specifically means to go slowly or to totter while walking. It has one other biblical reference, Ps 42.4: “and led them in procession to the house of God.” Hezekiah’s “bitterness” or *mar* is an adjective found last in 33.7 but not noted there. In the verse at hand, *mar* modifies or more precisely, is *hal-* (‘on’) *nepshesh* or “soul” (cf. 32.6).

**38-Vs. 16: O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these is the life of my spirit. Oh, restore me to health and make me live!**

At this point or midway through his “writing” or *miktav* begun in vs. 9 Hezekiah must have thought how he as king of Israel had to set a standard for others to follow and not despair

which is why he spells out his woes so clearly. In this way people of all stripes could identify with them and hence their king.

“These things” are not specified but perhaps refer to the miraculous cure King Hezekiah had undergone. All, however, are life of his “spirit” or *ruach* (cf. 37.7).

*Chalam* is the verb for “restore” and has one other biblical reference, Job 39.4: “Their young ones become strong, they grow up in the open.”

**38-Vs. 17: Lo, it was for my welfare that I had great bitterness; but you have held back my life from the pit of destruction, for you have cast all my sins behind your back.**

*Hineh* or “lo” is equivalent to “behold” as in 30.27 which here serves to turn the *miktav* or “writing” in a different direction after Hezekiah had gone on for some verses with his lamentations. Now he equates “bitterness” or the *mar* of vs. 15 with “welfare” or *shalom* (cf. 33.21) which is quite accurate, for welfare is a kind of wholeness. These first words read literally, “lo, to welfare bitterness to me bitterness.”

*Chashaq* is the verb for “withheld” which fundamentally means to join together or cleave to someone. “Because he cleaves to me in love I will deliver him” [Ps 91.14]. One could say that the Lord cleaved to the life of Hezekiah, thereby preventing him from slipping into the “pit of destruction.” This phrase consists of *shachath* and *bely*. A reference to the former is 51.14: “he shall not die and go down to the pit.” The latter is suggestive of the negative and can be read literally as “pit of nothingness.” It is found in 14.6 but not noted there: “that smote the peoples in wrath with unceasing blows, that ruled the nations in anger with unrelenting persecution.”

Perhaps more important than healing Hezekiah and adding fifteen years to his life is the Lord getting rid of Hezekiah’s sins.

**38-Vs. 18: For Sheol cannot thank you, death cannot praise you; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for your faithfulness.**

Sheol is mentioned last in vs. 10 to which Hezekiah is assigned but does not go. It is more or less equivalent to the “pit” or *bor* (cf. 24.22). Compare with *shachath* of the previous verse which derives from a verbal root meaning to corrupt.

All three—Sheol, death and the pit—are completely shut off from the Lord. That is to say, they cannot thank, praise nor hope in him.

**38-Vs. 19: The living, the living, he thanks you as I do this day; the father makes known to the children your faithfulness.**

Hezekiah could be speaking of himself as “living” or *chay* (cf. 37.4) which stands in sharp contrast with Sheol, death and the pit of the previous verse. Such a *chay* has the ability to thank the Lord, *yadah* being mentioned in vs. 18.

More to the point, such giving thanks happens “today” (*yom*, cf. 34.8), not tomorrow nor yesterday. Emphasis upon the present is why Hezekiah speaks of a father making “known” to his children divine “faithfulness” (*emeth*, cf. 38.3). In this way his descendants will continue what had begun in the present into the future with the intent of building up memories rooted in the past.

Note the similarity of spelling for “thanks and known;” the former has the last letter as

he and the latter as *hayin*. In other words, a kind of play on words.

**38-Vs. 20: The Lord will save me, and we will sing to stringed instruments all the days of our life, at the house of the Lord.**

As a result of the giving of thanks to the Lord Hezekiah concludes his lengthy prayer with confidence that the same Lord will “save” him, *yashah* (cf. 37.35). He expresses this even though the Lord is explicit in meting out fifteen more years of life.

Apparently Hezekiah’s prayer is a hymn or song to be accompanied by stringed instruments and singing. Addition of the first person plural here at the end is more an overflow of joy and thanksgiving, with the noun “house” referring to the Jerusalem temple. During the recent Assyrian siege the temple was filled with virtually the entire population praying for delivery, taking turns as they alternated between praying in the temple and defending the city walls.

**38-Vs. 21: Now Isaiah had said, "Let them take a cake of figs and apply it to the boil that he may recover."**

This verse suggests that Isaiah had been present with Hezekiah as he composed his prayer. He did it quickly since it was an expression of gratitude that came right from the heart. Once done, Isaiah orders a remedy after giving a proper diagnosis of what was ailing the king. Perhaps the boil, an external affliction, initially was of no great concern but grew worse as a result of the tension of the recent siege.

**38-Vs. 22: Hezekiah also had said, "What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord?"**

The RSV says vss. 21-22 belong between vss. 6 and 7 where Isaiah speaks of a “sign” or *’oth* (cf. vs. 7) relative to Hezekiah’s recovery. It has nothing to do with his illness but concerns his going to the Lord’s house or the temple. After all, Hezekiah was king and obliged to go there to offer thanksgiving when the angel of the Lord slew the Assyrian army. Vs. 7 gives the sign which consists of the sun turning back on its course.

## Chapter Thirty-Nine

This chapter is more historical in nature, so all the verses are presented followed by notations.

1. At that time Merodach-baladan the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent envoys with letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that he had been sick and had recovered. 2. And Hezekiah welcomed them; and he showed them his treasure house, the silver, the gold, the spices, the precious oil, his whole armory, all that was found in his storehouses. There was nothing in his house or in all his realm that Hezekiah did not show them. 3. Then Isaiah the prophet came to King Hezekiah, and said to him, "What did these men say? And from where did they come to you?" Hezekiah said, "They have come to me from a far country, from Babylon." 4. He said, "What have they seen in your house?" Hezekiah answered, "They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing in my storehouses that I did not show them." 5.

Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the Lord of hosts: 6. Behold, the days are coming, when all that is in your house, and that which your fathers have stored up till this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left, says the Lord. 7. And some of your own sons, who are born to you, shall be taken away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." 8. Then said Hezekiah to Isaiah, "The word of the Lord which you have spoken is good." For he thought, "There will be peace and security in my days."

This new chapter begins with the words "at that time" or when King Hezekiah became ill. Quickly word got out about this among Israel's enemies, making them perk their ears and ready to pounce if the occasion presented itself. The word "envoys" is lacking in the Hebrew text. As for the gift, we have no information, but Hezekiah must have stored it away in the treasure house of the next verse.

In vs. 2 the verb for "welcomed" is *samach* (cf. 25.9) which means to rejoice and here is coupled with the preposition *hal-*, literally as "rejoiced upon them." While Hezekiah showed off everything in his armory, storehouses, house and realm. Isaiah had been absent, for shortly he comes on the scene. Perhaps in his enthusiasm at his recovery and the recent defeat of the Assyrian army Hezekiah felt secure, naively so, to reveal all his resources. The words "there was nothing" use *davar* (cf. 38.8).

In vs. 3 Isaiah got wind of Hezekiah's grand tour of the realm, if you will, knowing that he also was speaking far too freely, even boasting about what he had at his disposal. Hezekiah answers Isaiah with almost giddy confidence ('far country'), a mistakenly dismissive attitude as to the envoys...spies...right beside him.

Isaiah presses the king further in vs. 4 as to what these envoys had seen which puts him in his prophetic mode, if you will (cf. vs. 5). Paying attention to such incidents as these are helpful to see how and when Isaiah speaks on behalf of the Lord as well as when he does not. When he does speak for the Lord, he does it automatically and without reflection.

In vs. 5 when King Hezekiah hears Isaiah say "Hear the word (*davar*, cf. vs. 2) of the Lord," he knew he had gotten himself into big trouble.

Vss. 6 and 7 spell out the *davar* of the Lord with respect to "days that are coming" or when all that Hezekiah had shown the Babylonian envoys will be taken away. Not only that, his own sons will be taken to Babylon, castrated and made into eunuchs. In other words, there will be no succession of the kingship begun with David, or so it seems.

Vs. 8 reveals the selfishness and naivete of Hezekiah who only thought of himself. The words for "peace and security" are *shalom* (cf. 38.17) and *'emeth* (cf. 38.19), the second also meaning "faith." Such are the "days" of King Hezekiah which contrast with the "days are coming" of vs. 6.

## Chapter Forty

### 40-Vs. 1: Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

This chapter marks a radical break as well as a welcome change from the last two which dealt with the Assyrian invasion and the naivete of King Hezekiah concerning Israel's resources. Here the Lord is addressing his people Israel in the aftermath of what had transpired, not wishing them to rely on human events, however terrifying and dramatic they appear. The Lord

uses the verb *nacham* twice for emphasis (cf. 22.4) which also means to take vengeance as well as to grieve. The implementation of this *nacham* will be spelled out not only in this chapter but for the rest of the Book of Isaiah.

**40-Vs. 2: Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.**

The *nacham* of vs. 1 begins to be fleshed out by the command to speak “tenderly” to Jerusalem. Actually the Lord has no particular person he is addressing but proclaims through Isaiah the intent he has for his people. “Tenderly” is rendered literally as “upon heart” (*Iev*, cf. 28.3) with the verb *davar* (cf. 38.15) followed by the more forceful crying out or *qara'* (cf. 21.8) that her warfare has “ended,” *mala.* This verb suggests being fulfilled or coming to completion (cf. 8.8). Reference, of course, is to the recent invasion by the Assyrians and their dramatic defeat. However, the people were unaware of the Babylon envoys who saw every resource at the disposal of King Hezekiah, a fact which intimates future conflict.

*Havon* (cf. 33.24) is the noun for “iniquity” which the Lord has “pardoned” or *ratsah*, a verb which means to delight, to be pleased. “My chosen in whom my soul delight” [42.1].

*Kephel* is the noun for “double” which has two other references, Job 11.6 and 41.13, the former being cited here: “for he is manifold in understanding” (NB: the RSV has a footnote saying that this passage is ‘obscure’).

**40-Vs. 3: A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make in the desert a highway for our God.**

There is no specific identity as to this “voice” (*qol*, cf. 30.31) which could be Isaiah himself and is used with *qara'* noted in the previous verse. Actually the two words sound the same, *qol qore'*. This passage is famously associated with John the Baptist as in Mt 3.3 which differs somewhat: “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths .”

*Midbar* is the noun for “wilderness” (cf. 35.6) and derives from the verbal root *davar*. With this in mind and in the context of the verse, *midbar* could be taken something as “place of speaking.” In this special type of place the voice bids to “prepare” or *panah* which fundamentally means to turn and thus intimates repentance. It’s mentioned last in 13.14 but not noted there.

In addition to the *midbar* is the *haravah* (cf. 35.6) which connotes a sterile, arid region. That is to be “made ” or *yashar*. “I will go before you and level the mountains” [45.2]. Note the two words for a road, *derek* and *mislah*. The latter as noted in 35.8 suggests a raised embankment and is used with the preposition *L*, literally as “to our God.”

**40-Vs. 4: Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level and the rough places a plain.**

A contrast between two extremes, if you will: valley and mountain (and hill). In between lay the “uneven ground and rough places.” The first word is *haqov*, an adjective which means crooked as well as deceitful. It has two other biblical references, Jer 17.9 and Hos 6.8, the former being cited here: “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately corrupt.” The

second is *rekasym*, the only use of this term in the Bible. The first will “become level” or *myshor*, a noun referring to a plain. The second will become a “plain” or *biqhah*. Note that 41.18 has this noun as a “valley” which translates as: “I will open rivers on the bare heights and fountains in the midst of the valleys.”

**40-Vs. 5: And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."**

The *nasa'* (cf. 37.4) and *shaphel* (cf. 32.19) or lifting u and making low of the previous verse are necessary before the Lord reveals (*galah*; cf. 38.12 as 'removed') his “glory” or *kavod*, (cf. 35.2). In other words, a certain flatness, if you will, is a prerequisite for this. It comes about by the Lord speaking (*davar*; cf. vs. 2) which causes all flesh to see it, this word pertaining not just to people but to all animate beings.

**40-Vs. 6: A voice says, "Cry!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.**

The “voice” cries a second time, *qol* and *qara'* being found in vs. 3 though in both instances there is no direct identity as to the voice’s source. Perhaps its an angel speaking on behalf of the Lord. However, as observed in vs. 3 the *qol* can be Isaiah who continues to cry out through the remainder of this chapter. He doesn’t know what to *qara'* and asks a question to which comes a response whose source isn’t given but presumably from the Lord.

*Chatsyr* is the noun for “grass” which also pertains to leeks and is found last in 37.27 but not noted there. Such grass resembles the “beauty” of flowers in the field, *chesed* (cf. 16.5) being the noun which refers to mercy or loving kindness or here as its inherent goodness. *Tsyts* means “flower” and can refer to a shining plate as in Ex 28.36: “And you shall make a plate of pure gold.” It is found last in 28.1.

**40-Vs. 7: The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people is grass.**

“Withers and fades” or *yavesh* and *navel*. The former is found last in 19.5 but not noted there; the latter in 28.4. Both happen when the Lord’s “breath” or *ruach* (cf. 38.16) “blows” upon it or literally, “in (*b-*) it,” the verb being *nashav*. It has two other references, Gn 15.11 and Ps 147.18, the latter being cited here: “He makes is wind blow, and the waters flow.”

**40-Vs. 8: The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.**

This verse is a repeat of sorts of the previous one or better, it emphasizes the fleeting nature of the people compared with God’s “word” or *davar* (cf. 39.5). This *davar* is not presented as giving voice but as standing forever, *qum* (cf. 33.10), suggestive of rising in a given place.

**40-Vs. 9: Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!"**

Mount Zion is located within the city of Jerusalem yet bidden by the voice of vs. 6 to ascent a mountain higher than the one on which it is founded. That means Zion will have to do some searching for this place which isn't specified. The purpose is to act as a "herald of good tidings," *basar* being noted next in 41.27: "and I give to Jerusalem a herald of good tidings." Note that the noun "flesh" mentioned in several verses above is *basar*. It is as though this word used to describe human frailty becomes the means by which the divine voice is transmitted and then received. Jerusalem is bidden to do the same as Zion, also designated as a *basar* but one endowed with a "voice" (*qol*, cf. vs. 6) of "strength" or *koach* (cf. 10.13).

Compare the two verbs *halah* and *rum* (both noted last in 14.13) or "get up" and "lift up." The former pertains to Zion and the latter to Jerusalem's voice. From this yet to be determined lofty position to which Zion is bidden to go...not specifically Jerusalem though most likely...is to exclaim *hineh* or "behold" (cf. 38.17) the presence of God. What this might be is left to our imagination.

**40-Vs. 10: Behold, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him and his recompense before him.**

A second and third use in rapid succession of the exclamation *hineh* or "behold" with regard not so much to God being present already as in the previous verse but as coming or more specifically coming with "might" or *chazaq*, an adjective (cf. 35.4) used with the preposition *b-* which reads literally "in strong."

The divine arm does the ruling or *mashal* (cf. 14.10) by manifesting strength which can take the form of natural phenomena.

The second *hineh* is used with respect to divine "reward and recompense" or *sakar* and *pehulah*, the same phraseology being found in 62.11. Note that the first is with the Lord whereas the second is before him.

**40-Vs. 11: He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arms, he will carry them in his bosom and gently lead those that are with young.**

The noun "shepherd" is derived from the same verbal root as "feed," *yarah* as in 31.4 which is translated there as a noun, "shepherd."

*Qavats* (cf. 13.14) means "will carry" and more fundamentally, to take by the hand which is the way the Lord will do the feeding.

Because the lambs are weaker, the Lord as shepherd will "gather" them in his arms, perhaps the same arm mentioned in vs. 10. The verb *nasa'* (cf. vs. 5) suggests more a lifting up after which comes a leading or *nahal* as in 49.10: "by springs of water will guide them." This verb also is found in the famous words of Ps 23.2: "He leads me beside still waters."

**40-Vs. 12: Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?**

Action shifts now to a series of rapid-fire questions through vs. 14 which are reminiscent of the two discourses of the Lord in Job 38-41 where he presents a whole series of questions

which neither Job nor his friends can answer.

Three verbs which concern measuring out: “measured, marked off and enclosed” or *madad*, *kun* and *shaqal*. A reference for the first is 65.7: “I will measure into their bosom payment for their former doings.” For the second, cf. 30.33. For the third, cf. 33.18. The six days of creation are intimated by these verbs.

#### **40-Vs. 13: Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord or as his counselor has instructed him?**

Note the two verbs: *kun* (cf. vs. 12) and *yadah* (cf. 38.19). The former connotes establishing or setting up and the latter is the common verb “to know” and refers to intimate knowledge, especially between persons. *Kun* pertains to the divine *ruach* (cf. vs. 7) and *yadah* as being “counselor” to the Lord, *hetsah* (cf. 36.5).

#### **40-Vs. 14: Whom did he consult for his enlightenment, and who taught him the path of justice and taught him knowledge and showed him the way of understanding?**

Four pairs:

1: “Consult and enlightenment” or *yahats* (cf. 32.8). Refer to *hetsah* or “counselor” of the previous verse. *Byn* (cf. 33.19) is a verb used for “enlightenment” or more properly, understanding.

2: “Taught and justice” or *lamad* (cf. 29.24) and *mishpat* (cf. 34.5) or better, with respect to the “path” or *’orach* of justice (cf. 33.8), this being a more poetical term compared with *derek* just below.

3) “Taught and knowledge” or *lamad* and *dahath* (cf. 33.6).

4) “Way and showed” or *derek* (cf. vs. 3) and *yadah* (cf. vs. 13). “Understanding” or *tevunah* (derived from the verbal root *byn*): “his understanding is unsearchable” [vs. 28].

#### **40-Vs. 15: Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket and are accounted as the dust on the scales; behold, he takes up the isles like fine dust.**

Two instances of *hineh* or “behold” as in vs. 10 in order to sustain the attention of those listening to these words. *Chashav* is the verb for “accounted” (cf. 33.8). Note the two types of dust, *shachaq* and *daq* (cf. 29.5). The former can also mean a cloud: “and let the skies pour down rain” [45.8]. The latter is an adjective and can also apply to anything thin or slender. *Natal* is the verb for “takes up” which has three other biblical references, one of which is 63.9.

#### **40-Vs. 16: Lebanon would not suffice for fuel, nor are its beasts enough for a burnt offering.**

Earlier in several places it was pointed out that Lebanon was noted for its cedars which went into the construction of Solomon’s temple, and the same can be intimated here. Along with its cedars are beasts for sacrifices, references to which are not given in other places. In other words, Lebanon provides both construction and sacrificial material for the Jerusalem temple.

#### **40-Vs. 17: All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness.**

*Chashav* is the verb for “accounted” (cf. vs, 15) which has as its objects “nations” or *goy* (cf. 34.2). In other words, they are “less than nothing and emptiness” or *‘ephes* and *tohu*. The former suggests an extremity beyond which you can go no further and is found last in 34.12 but not noted there. It is prefaced with the preposition *min* (*m-*) meaning literally “from.” The latter is famously associated with chaos as in the second verse of the opening words of Genesis and found last in 29.22.

#### **40-Vs. 18: To whom then will you liken God or what likeness compare with him?**

Note the play on words: “to whom” and “God” or *‘el-my* and *‘El* which are similar in sound and separated by the verb *damah* which is noted last in 15.1 but with accent on its other meaning, to be silent. Another reference in line with the sense at hand is 6.5: “For I am lost.”

The noun “likeness” or *demuth* is derived from the verbal root *damah* and found last in 13.4 but not noted there. *Harak* (cf. 30.33) means “compare” and suggests arranging in order.

#### **40-Vs. 19: The idol! A workman casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and casts for it silver chains.**

*Pesel* is the noun for “idol” and connotes a graven or molten image found in the next verse as “image.” In the verse at hand it is a kind of exclamation connoting some horror and disgust. The two verbs “casts and “overlays” are *raqah* and *tsaraph* (cf. 1.25). The former suggests a beating or spreading out as in Ex 39.3: “And gold leaf was hammered out and cut into threads to work into the blue and purple and scarlet stuff.”

#### **40-Vs. 20: He who is impoverished chooses for an offering wood that will not rot; he seeks out a skillful craftsman to set up an image that will not move.**

The verb for “impoverished” is *sakan* has one other biblical reference, Eccl 10.9: “and he who splits logs is endangered by them.” The RSV has a footnote saying “uncertain.” *Terumah* is the noun for “offering” or more precisely what’s known as a “heave offering” as in Ex 25.2: “Speak to the people of Israel, that they take for me an offering.” *Chakam* (cf. 31.2) is the adjective for “skilled” and also applies to one who is wise.

#### **40-Vs. 21: Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?**

The Lord presents four rapid-fire sentences not unlike he did with Job towards the end of that book. The verbs are as follows: “known, heard, told and understood” or *yadah* (cf. vs. 14), *shamah* (cf. 37.7), *nagad* (cf. 21.6) and *byn* (cf. vs. 14).

Both the “beginning and foundations” suggest the opening verses of Genesis or the creation of the earth in six days, that is, *r’osh* (cf. 9.14) and *mosadoth* (cf. 24.18).

#### **40-Vs. 22: It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them like a tent to dwell in;**

*Yashav* (cf. 33.24) means “sits” and connotes dwelling, the location being above the earth’s “circle” or *chug* which applies to the arch or vault of the sky. It has two other biblical references, Job 22.14 and Prov 8.27, the latter being cited here: “When he established the heavens, I was there, when he drew a circle on the face of the deep.” Contrast the divine *yashav* with the earth’s “inhabitants” which derives from this verbal root yet means the exact opposite in the context at hand. *Yashav* occurs a third time in this verse, “dwell” in.

*Natah* is the verb for “stretches out” (cf. 31.3) used with respect to the heavens above or within the just mentioned *chug*. The image here resembles the sudden expansion of a “curtain” or *doq*, the only use of this word in the Bible. That is to say, this expansion is a spreading as a tent, *matah* being the verb and only use of this term in the Bible.

**40-Vs. 23: who brings princes to nought, and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.**

“Nought and nothing” or *‘ayn* and *tohu*. Compare with vs. 17 or “nothing and emptiness,” the latter term being found there. The former is found next in 44.12: “and his strength fails.” Both are in reference to those in position of political authority.

**40-Vs. 24: Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows upon them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble.**

The three verbs of being planted, sown and taking root contrast with the divine blowing upon them, *nashaph* having one other biblical reference which is Ex 15.10: “You did blow with your wind” which takes place in the context of the Exodus. *Seharah* (cf. 29.6) connotes a violent shaking. Apparently this blowing and carrying off (*nasa’*, cf. vs. 11) pertains to the fragile rootedness of the princes and rulers of the previous verse.

**40-Vs. 25: To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him?, says the Holy One.**

This verse is similar to vs. 18 which uses *damah* for “liken” and *harak* for “be like.” In the verse at hand, the latter verb is *shavah* (cf. 38.18) which implies making equal. The very fact that the Lord is speaking of himself as the Holy One...the one set apart which is what “holy” fundamentally means...that no human being is capable of this.

**40-Vs. 26: Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power not one is missing.**

This verse is reminiscent of Bar 3.34: “The stars shone in their watches and were glad; he called them, and they said ‘Here we are!’ They shone with gladness for him who made them.”

*Nasa’* (cf. vs. 24) is the verb for “lift up,” that is, not only look at the heavens but above the vault in which they are situated for the Lord who resides there as stated in vs. 22. Within the vault dwell the “host” or *tsava’* (cf. 37.32) which are likened to an army poised battle under the Lord’s command.

'*On* is the noun for "might" and often applies to virility (cf. vs. 29).

'*Amats* (cf. 35.3) is the verb for "strong." All these hosts are present, not "missing" or *hadar*, a verb found in 34.16 but not noted.

**40-Vs. 27: Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hid from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God?"**

Here the Lord is referring to past prayers and petitions which for those making them seem to have gone unanswered. He addresses the people collectively as Jacob and Israel who in his old age had suffered the loss of his beloved son, Joseph, and had to live for many years thinking he was dead. The two words '*amar* and *davar* are used for "say and speak" both noted in 38.15.

*Derek* (cf. vs. 14) is the noun for "way" which is "hid" from the Lord, *satar* (cf. 29.15) as well as "right" or *misphat* (cf. 32.1) which fundamentally means justice. Both Jacob and Israel claim this justice, if you will, along with "way" is "disregarded" by the Lord, the verb being *havar* which means to pass over or beyond (cf. 29.5).

**40-Vs. 28: Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary, his understanding is unsearchable.**

Two rhetorical questions, if you will, which the Lord puts to Jacob/Israel in terms in knowing and hearing, *yadah* and *shamah*, both found together in vs. 21. Jewish tradition has spoken of the Lord as both everlasting and as creator, but the people have lost awareness of this fact.

'Faint and weary" or *yahaph* and *yagah*, both being found next in vs. 30. Divine *tevunah* (cf. vs. 14) is "unsearchable" or *cheqer*, a noun suggesting exploration or finding out. "Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable" [Ps 145.3].

**40-Vs. 29: He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength.**

"Power and might" or *koach* and *hatsmah*. The former is noted last in vs. 9 and the latter has two other references, Dt 8.17 and Ps 139.15, the second being cited here: "my frame (*hatsmah*) was not hidden from you."

*Koach* is to be imparted to the "faint" or those who are *yaheph*, this adjective being found next in 50.4: "that I may know how to sustain with a word him that is weary." Those who lack "might" or '*on* will receive divine strength (cf. 26).

**40-Vs. 30: Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted;**

"Faint and be weary" or *yahaph* and *yagah*, both found together in vs. 28. *Kashal* is the verb for "fall" (cf. 28.13) as well as "exhausted" and reads literally as "falling shall fall.

**40-Vs. 31: but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.**

*Qavah* (cf. 33.2) is the verb for “wait” and contrasts with the youths and young men of the previous verse, synonyms for human strength. Such waiting or being in expectation has for qualities:

1) “Renew” or *chalaph* (cf. 8.8) which implies passing on or coming against with respect to *koach* or “strength” noted last in vs. 29.

2) “Mount up” or *halah* (cf. vs. 9) with the powerful wings of eagles.

3) “Run” or *ruts* found next in 55.5: “and nations that knew you not shall run to you.” Such persons will lack weariness, *yagah* being the verb as in the previous verse.

4) “Walk” or the common verb *halak* (cf. 30.29) without being “faint” or *yahaph*, the verb found in the previous verse.

## Chapter Forty-One

**41-Vs. 1: Listen to me in silence, O coastlands; let the peoples renew their strength; let them approach, then let them speak; let us together draw near for judgment.**

According to a footnote in the RSV, “the historical background consists in the victories of Cyrus of Persia.”

This chapter begins with the Lord addressing the “coastlands” or *y* (cf. 40.15 but not noted) or the Mediterranean coast. The people living there were the furthest away from Cyrus whom the Lord had chosen (cf. 44.28, ‘my shepherd’) and hence were among the last to have received word as to his divine mission. The Lord bids them not just to listen but to do so in silence or *charash* (cf. 36.21) which fundamentally means to plow. It’s as though the Lord had to plow his words into the people’s understanding as to his choice of Cyrus.

By being so forcefully “plowed,” the people who had crowded up against the Mediterranean coast would be in a position to “renew their strength,” the verb and noun being *chalaph* and *koach* used much as in 40.31.

The Lord gently bids the coastlands first to “approach” or *nagash* (cf. 29.13) which implies a drawing near and in this context, warily but steadily withdrawing from the sea. After all, only a few could escape that way, given that few boats must have been available. Only “then” (*‘az*) could the people speak. What they would say is up to them alone, for the Lord isn’t forcing anything into their mouths. However, when they do speak—and this isn’t recorded, perhaps out of discreetness—it’s full of shame and regret for literally having backed themselves into a corner from which there was no escape.

The Lord proposes a compromise put as such: “Let us draw together” or *qarav* pretty much as in 34.1 from which is derived *qerev* or the interior or midst of a thing. Although the people may have let down their guard, immediately they put it up again when they heard the word “judgment” or *mishpat* (cf. 40.14). They knew what that entails and at this point can’t escape it.

**41-Vs. 2: Who stirred up one from the east whom victory meets at every step? He gives up nations before him so that he tramples kings under foot; he makes them like dust with his sword, like driven stubble with his bow.**

We don’t have any details as to that *mishpat* mentioned in the previous verse, but it could be the collective conscience of those who had found their backs up against the

Mediterranean sea with nowhere further west to flee. The Lord is discreet here, for he doesn't pursue the matter of *mishpat* (the people's conscience already having brought it upon themselves, if you will) but continues with words about his divine power and majesty.

*Hur* is the verb for "stirred up" (cf. 14.9) which connotes waking from sleep or better, inattention. Reference, of course, is to Cyrus of Persia whom the people at the coastlands feared. The Lord acknowledges that this non-Israelite achieved "victory" after victory, *tsedeq* (cf. 32.1) being the noun which more accurately means righteousness. What really terrifies the people is that Cyrus had both trampled kings, made them as dust before the wind and stubble with his bow and arrow. Would the same fate await them at the coastlands? To them the same fate seemed to be in store.

#### **41-Vs. 3: He pursues them and passes on safely, by paths his feet have not trod.**

*Shalom* (cf. 39.8) is the word for "safely" which means this, of course, but has the broader context of peace and wholeness. The image here is that King Cyrus "pursues" or *radaph* some kings, perhaps lesser ones, but as the last reference of 14.6 intimates, he does so with vehemence. The "paths" (*orach*, cf. 40.14) can refer to inaccessible places to which kings have fled for refuge but ultimately in vain. The message is that while King Cyrus is on unfamiliar ground, he is confident of achieving total victory.

#### **41-Vs. 4: Who has performed and done this, calling the generations from the beginning? I, the Lord, the first and with the last; I am He.**

Clearly a rhetorical question not meant to be answered whether by the Lord or by the people he is addressing. Note the two verbs for "performed and done" or *pahal* (26.12) and *hasah* (cf. 37.26). The former connotes anything fabricated or created as well as prepared whereas the latter is more common and simply means to do or to make.

The "generations" at hand or *dor* (cf. 38.12) are multiple which seem to refer to all peoples, not just Israel. The Lord calls (*qara'*, cf. 40.6) them from the "beginning" or *ro'sh* (cf. 9.15), that is to say, from the beginning of creation as surmised in the opening words of Genesis, "In the beginning" or *re'shyth*, kindred to *ro'sh* which applies more to a head, physical or otherwise.

The Lord claims himself to be both "first and last" or *ri'shon*, two adjectives, (cf. 1.26) and *'acharon* (cf. 30.8 but not noted there). While both are vital, the Lord stands apart from them being outside space and time: "I am He." Such words are reminiscent of Rev 22.13: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." *Ri'shon* and *'acharon* are included seminally, if you will, in Gen 1.1: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Though not present in the English, the Hebrew has the particle *'eth* inserted after the verb which, like the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, is comprised of the first and last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It is as though in an infinitesimally small duration between "In the beginning" and "created" the Lord had inserted all creation from its beginning to its end.

#### **41-Vs. 5: The coastlands have seen and are afraid, the ends of the earth tremble; they have drawn near and come.**

Now the Lord directs attention back to the coastlands to which the Israelites had fled in their fear of Cyrus' advancing armies. What they have seen and caused them fear isn't mentioned but doesn't seem linked directly to this military threat. Perhaps it is a collective guilt at not having trusted the Lord nor his choice of Cyrus as future protector.

"Ends" of the earth or *qatsah* is found in 40.28 but not noted there and is suggested of an edge beyond which one cannot advance. Actually *qatsah* pertains to the firmament in which are situated the heavenly bodies and reaches down to the earth like a circular dome. So if all the *qatsah* (actually being circular, it's more one) "tremble" or *charad* (cf. 32.11), the entire earth itself, regardless where one might be on it, trembles.

#### **41-Vs. 6: Every one helps his neighbor and says to his brother, "Take courage!"**

Although this verse is inspiring, it is to a limited degree, given what the next verse says. The mutual help (*hazar*, cf. 30.7) offered in this situation with so many people backed up against the ocean is one of desperation. *Chazaq* is the verb for "take courage" (cf. 35.4) and connotes a tying or fastening much as a girdle.

#### **41-Vs. 7: The craftsman encourages the goldsmith, and he who smooths with the hammer him who strikes the anvil, saying of the soldering, "It is good;" and they fasten it with nails so that it cannot be moved.**

The the exhortation to take courage in the previous verse shifts to desperate measures instead of relying upon the Lord who knows the people's desperation. *Charash* as "craftsman" is noted last in 40.20 in a similar situation and comes from the verbal root used in vs. 1 as "listen (to me) in silence." In other words, *charash* is the exact opposite of being attentive to the Lord. In their desperation the people shifted, if you will the *charash* relative to the Lord to a *charash* pertaining to the fashioning of idols. The object of this *charash* isn't mentioned here but certainly implied.

*Chazaq* means "encourages" as in the previous verse and serves to play out the just mentioned desperation. In other words the *chazaq* of vs. 6 transfers itself into the *chazaq* of the present verse.

The fastening of the supposed idol presented in terms of soldering—and soldering itself is a weak point in the construction—is nailed down so as not to be moved. Such is the futile attempt by the people in their desperate hope to have this idol stand between them with their backs up against the sea and King Cyrus.

#### **41-Vs. 8: But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend;**

The connective *w-* as "but" is the most important word thus far in Chapter Forty-One. As soon as those who found themselves pressed together in the coastlands heard it, they dropped what they were doing and exchanged the *charash* of vs. 7 for the *charash* of vs. 1. In other words, they became completely silent, for *w-* could go two ways, either in their favor or against them. So the time between when the Lord uttered it and the next word (Israel) seemed an eternity.

There must have been a collective sigh of relief when the Lord spoke of Jacob as "my

servant,” for they knew full well his role in their history. Not only that, it gets better. The Lord speaks of his relationship with Abraham, not just as “friend” but as “my friend.” The verb *’ahav* is used, this being the first occurrence in the Book of Isaiah which means to desire or better, to breathe after. It is found next in 56.10 in a negative sense, “loving to slumber.”

If we look at the history of Abraham, that is, his long, unfulfilled wanderings in Canaan, chances are he wouldn’t attribute friendship to the Lord. The only explicit mention of friendship is found in Ex 33.11 where the term *rehev* is used, derived from a verbal root meaning to pasture.

**41-Vs. 9: you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, "You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off;"**

*Chazaq* as “took” is found in vs. 7 but in a completely different context which must have embarrassed the craftsman who had encouraged the goldsmith to fashion the idol. Here the verb is used in connection with the earth’s “ends” or *qets* (cf. 9.7) and implies an extremity. *Qets* has greater significance here than in other places because the Israelites had found themselves up against the sea as already mentioned and are now at a *qets* beyond which they cannot go.

*Qets* is intensified, if you will, by *’atsylym* or “farthest corners” which seems to apply to a joining or joint and has one other reference, Ex 24.11: “And he did not lay his hand on the chief men (*’atsylym*) of the people of Israel.” And so by mentioning these two corners of the earth, the Lord implies that his people should bring to mind their father Abraham (noted, of course, in the previous verse) who left his native land and wandered for many years in Canaan. In subsequent years the Israelites had been taken captive, Babylon and Egypt being the most notable examples. Now they find themselves pressed up against the ocean in the coastlands.

The people also must have been delighted to be called a servant which the Lord just did in reference to Jacob meaning that they are on the same level as that patriarch. This choice is ratified further by the Lord saying that he hasn’t “cast off” the people, *ma’as* implying rejection as well as condemning (cf. 33.15).

**41-Vs. 10: fear not, for I am with you, be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.**

Although the Lord began with encouraging words, he needs to assure the people that they neither fear nor suffer dismay. The first is the common verb *yare’* (cf. 35.4) and the second is *shahah* (cf. 32.3) which implies not being considered or looked at. *Yare’* has the words “I am with you” whereas *shahah* has the words “I am your God.”

The Lord proceeds to speak of his right hand which is “victorious” or *tsedeq*, the noun for righteousness as noted last in vs. 2. This hand of *tsedeq* has three functions: “strengthen, help and uphold” or *’amats* (cf. 40.26), *hazar* (cf. vs. 6) and *tamak* (cf. 33.15 but not noted there).

**41-Vs. 11: Behold, all who are incensed against you shall be put to shame and confounded; those who strive against you shall be as nothing and shall perish.**

*Hen* (cf. 32.1) as “behold” is similar to *hineh* which here the Lord deems necessary to say

by way of continued support of his people who found themselves in the coastlands pressed up against the sea with no way to escape. *Charah* is the verb for “incensed” and as noted in 24.6, implies being scorched. In the verse at hand *charah* is used with the preposition *b-*, literally “incensed in you.” So despite the heat blasted against Israel, those who remain unidentified but certainly known to the Israelites are both shamed and “confounded” or *bosh* (cf. 29.22) and *kalam*, the latter also meaning to be treated shamefully or reproached. “You shall not be put to shame (*bosh*) or confounded to all eternity” [45.17].

*Ryv* (cf. 27.) means “strive against” in the sense of pleading a cause. First these accusers will “be as nothing” or *’ayn* and then shall “perish, *’avad* (cf. 26.14). You’d think that *’avad* would come first followed by *’ayn* since the latter implies the state after *’avad*. However, the Lord has in mind for such people who oppose Israel that first they experience nothingness...no existence...while remaining alive after which they shall perish.

**41-Vs. 12: You shall seek those who contend with you but you shall not find them; those who war against you shall be as nothing at all.**

In light of the encouraging words Lord had communicated to his people boxed up in the coastlands, they will “seek” or *baqash* (cf. 40.20 but not noted there) those who had contended with them, *matsuth* being a noun and the only use of this word in the Bible. The primary idea of *baqash* is touching or feeling and implies that a more intimate type of knowledge will be found.

*Ephes* is the word for “nothing” and connotes being at an end and found last in 40.17.

**41-Vs. 13: For I, the Lord your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, "Fear not, I will help you."**

While speaking these words of encouragement and attempting to win over his people, the Lord knows full well that he has to repeat himself constantly. In vs. 10 he speaks of his victorious right hand and here of Israel’s collective right hand, hoping that the people will see the connection and thus extend it. *Chazaq* is the verb for “hold” noted last in vs. 9. *Hazar* or “help” is found last in vs. 10. One can just imagine the entire nation of Israel crowded up against the sea listening to these words through the prophet Isaiah who either was present or heard about it later on. Although they hesitate, they know full well there’s no option but to give in.

**41-Vs. 14: Fear not, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel! I will help you, says the Lord; your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.**

The Lord repeats “fear not” for the second consecutive time, losing patience, if you will, by calling Jacob a “worm” or *toleah* noted last in 14.11. Nevertheless, he is persistent in helping, *hazar*, as has been mentioned frequently thus far.

Perhaps by calling himself “Redeemer” or *Ga’al* (cf. 35.9) the Lord will make progress in winning over the people. After all, he the “Holy One” or *Qedosh* (cf. 31.1) of Israel, a title already familiar to the people.

**41-Vs. 15: Behold, I will make of you a threshing sledge, new, sharp and having teeth; you shall**

**thresh the mountains and crush them, and you shall make the hills like chaff;**

Now the Lord compares Israel to something not unlike a weapon, a threshing sledge with sharp teeth not just to crush enemies but to level mountains and hills. This word—in English, not Hebrew—is mentioned in 28.27. Such words can be taken as an encouragement to face King Cyrus, but the people have not yet been told the Lord favors him and the benefit he will give to the Israelites. Also the mountains and hills may be taken as representative of all Israel's enemies.

**41-Vs. 16: you shall winnow them and the wind shall carry them away, and the tempest shall scatter them. And you shall rejoice in the Lord; in the Holy One of Israel you shall glory.**

*Zarah* is the verb for “winnow” noted last in 30.22 and is done by the “wind” or *ruach* (cf. 40.13). Not only that, the same *ruach* will “take (them) away, *nasa'* (cf. 40.26) suggesting of lifting up as off the ground.

In addition to this *ruach* we have a “tempest” or *seharah* noted last in 40.24 as a violent shaking which causes scattering or *puts* (cf. 24.1).

While this twofold destruction is taking place the Lord counters it with a twofold action of his own. He says that his people will “rejoice” in him, *gyl*, noted last in 35.2 and connotes something like dancing in a circle. Also the people will “glory” in him, *halal* being the verb found last in 38.18 as “thank” but not noted there. As noted elsewhere, the verbal root *qadash* fundamentally means to separate and referring to the Lord means that he is wholly other than human experience and the like.

**41-Vs. 17: When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst, I the Lord will answer them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.**

Two groups of people which could include those who rejoice and glory in the Lord of the previous verse, the “poor and needy” or *hany* and *'evyon*, this pair occurring in 32.7. Note that the former is derived from the verbal root for “answer” or *hanah* (cf. 30.19).

*Hazav* is the verb for “forsake” noted last in 32.14.

**41-Vs. 18: I will open rivers on the bare heights and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water and the dry land springs of water.**

Two pairs of opposites, if you will:

1) “Bare heights and valleys” or *shephy* and *biqyah*, a verse not unlike 40.4 where the latter is found: “Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level and the rough places a plain.” As for *sephy*, cf. 49.9: “on all bare heights shall be their pasture.” Fountains are expected to be found in valleys, but rivers are unheard of on the bare heights of mountains.

2) “Wilderness and dry land” or *midbar* (cf. 40.3) and the noun *tsyah* (cf. 35.1) which renders the phrase literally as “land of drought or dryness.” Note two similar words, “pool and springs” or the stationary *'agam* (cf. 35.7) and bubbly *motsa'*, the latter being found next in 58.11: “and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water whose waters fail not.”

**41-Vs. 19: I will put in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia, the myrtle and the olive; I will set in the desert the cypress, the plane and the pine together;**

Another pair as in the previous verse, “wilderness and desert” or *midbar* and *haravah*, and found in 40.3. *Haravah* connotes a place of sterility compared with the more inviting *midbar*. Compare with *tsyah* of the previous verse which emphasizes dryness.

**41-Vs. 20: that men may see and know, may consider and understand together, that the hand of the Lord has done this, the Holy One of Israel has created it.**

*Lemahan* or “that,” an important word in the context of the past few verses pertaining essentially to those who had found themselves in the coastlands pressed up against the sea with no where to go while King Cyrus was advancing westward.

What follows from *lemahan* are four elements of recognition: “see (*ra’ah*, cf. 38.11), know” (*yadah*, cf. 40.28), *sum* (cf. 21.4) which means a placing and *sakal*. The last verb occurs next in 44.18: “for he has shut their eyes...so that they cannot understand.” *Sakal* involves a looking in the sense of beholding and also means to be prudent.

All four verbs have as their object not just the Lord nor the Holy One of Israel but his hand (cf. vs. 13). To the former is attributed the verb *hasah* (‘has done,’ cf. vs. 4) and to the latter, *bara’* (‘created,’ cf. 40.26 but not noted there) which is more active, if you will.

**41-Vs. 21: Set forth your case, says the Lord; bring your proofs, says the King of Jacob.**

A footnote in the RSV says that this verse (through vs. 24) pertains to the pagan nations although the same could be applied to Israel. Anyway, the Lord offers a challenge in two parts:

1) *Qarav* (means to draw near) is the verb for “set forth” and is similar to the context of vs. 1 where it is used. In the verse at hand, *qarav* pertains to “case” or *ryv* (cf. vs. 11).

2) *Nagash* or “bring” and pretty much the same context as vs. 1 where it is found. *Nagash* suggests a coming near and although *qarav* is similar, it seems to imply coming closer. *Nagash* has as its object *hatsumoth* or “proofs” which is the only use of this term in the Bible and derived from the verbal root *hatsam* found last in 33.15.

“King of Jacob” is a rather unusual title the Lord gives himself, probably having in mind his favoring King Cyrus whom he had endowed with favor and authority on behalf of Israel.

**41-Vs. 22: Let them bring them and tell us what is to happen. Tell us the former things, what they are, that we may consider them, that we may know their outcome; or declare to us the things to come.**

The first sentence refers to both the case and proofs of the previous verse, *nagash* being the verb for “bring.” Here the Lord speaks in the first person plural which is more an expression of some spontaneity as well as authority. Often such is the context of “let us” expressions.

With regard to “former things” or *ri’shon* (cf. vs. 4 as ‘first’), the Lord challenges the nations to speak of them that he may do the following: “consider, know and declare.” That is to say, the verbs *sum* (cf. vs. 20) along with the noun *lev* or “heart” (literally, ‘that we may place to our heart’), *yadah* (cf. vs. 20 with regard to ‘acharyth, cf. 2.2; in contrast to *ri’shon*) and *shamah*

(cf. 40.28) which can be rendered as “cause to hear.”

**41-Vs. 23: Tell us what is to come hereafter that we may know that you are gods; do good or do harm that we may be dismayed and terrified.**

This verse continues what amounts to a fairly intense questioning by the Lord to the nations (according to the RSV footnote, vs. 21). Here the Lord presses the same subject concerning knowledge of future events which, if the peoples could do this, would make them equivalent to God.

The second taunt is for the peoples to do either good or harm that we “may be both dismayed and terrified,” *shahah* and *yare'*, echoing vs. 10.

**41-Vs. 24: Behold, you are nothing and your work is nought; an abomination is he who chooses you.**

The rebukes begin in vs. 21 conclude here with “behold” or *hen* (cf. vs. 11) which introduces the Lord’s conclusion about the nations: “nothing and nought” or *'ayn* (cf. vs. 11) and *'ephah* (only use of this term in the Bible).

*Tohevah* or “abomination” (cf. 1.13) often is associated with idol worship.

**41-Vs. 25: I stirred up one from the north, and he has come from the rising of the sun, and he shall call on my name; he shall trample on rulers as on mortar as the potter treads clay.**

Reference is to King Cyrus of Persia whom the Lord doesn’t have to name since the Israelites were well familiar with him though not yet as object of divine favor. Cyrus will “call” (*qara'*, cf. vs. 4) literally “in” (*b-*) the divine name with the result that he will receive favor to conquer. *Ramas* is the verb for “trample” noted last in 28.18, and that’s exactly what Israel fears.

**41-Vs. 26: Who declared it from the beginning that we might know and beforetime that we might say, "He is right"? There was none who declared it, none who proclaimed, none who heard your words.**

The Lord continues to speak in a rhetorical fashion which is not unlike him using the first person plural in vss. 22-23. Given the context of Israel jammed in the coastlands out of fear of King Cyrus, no one—neither Israel nor the nations—is in a position to question the Lord’s choice nor his actions. *R'osh* as “beginning” is used as in 40.21, the first principle of something which sets it in motion and continues to guide it. Compare its use with *milpanym* or “beforehand” which by looking at it more closely, suggests the idea of a face and hence being in the presence of.

*Tsadyq* or “right” is noted last in 29.21 and here pertains to the Lord’s choice of Cyrus which the people were questioning.

**41-Vs. 27: I first have declared it to Zion, and I give to Jerusalem a herald of good tidings.**

The verb “declared” is rendered in Hebrew as *hineh hineh* or literally, “behold, behold.” This double use shows that the Lord is serious in his intent and refers to Zion. The verb *basar*

(cf. 40.9) pertains to Jerusalem or the city as a whole compared with the more specified Mount Zion and hence the temple. “First” is *ri’shon* noted last in vs. 22.

**41-Vs. 28: But when I look there is no one; among these there is no counselor who, when I ask, gives an answer.**

Despite the Lord’s best efforts, he finds no one and no “counselor” who will respond, *yahats*, a verb noted last in 40.14. The way of expressing “gives an answer” is the verb *shuv* which fundamentally means to return (cf. 30.6) and here is used with the noun *davar* (word as expression, cf. 40.8).

**41-Vs. 29: Behold, they are all a delusion; their works are nothing; their molten images are empty wind.**

Chapter Forty-One began with the Lord offering hope to his people in the coastlands but ends on a sad note. *Hen* (cf. vs. 24 and the double *hineh* of vs. 27) reflects this sadness, calling the people a “delusion” or *aven* noted last in 32.6 where it means “iniquity.”

*Ephes* is the word for “nothing” and connotes being at an end and found last in vs. 12.

*Nesek* or “molten images” also means a libation or drink-offering. “Lest you should say...my graven image and my molten image commanded them” [48.5]. In the verse at hand, such *nesk* is considered as “empty wind” or a *ruach* (cf. vs. 1) which is *tohu* (cf. 40.23) and therefore not unlike the *tohu* of Genesis’ opening words, “The earth was without form and void” [vs. 2].

## Chapter Forty-Two

**42-Vs. 1: Behold my servant whom I uphold, my chosen in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him, he will bring forth justice to the nations.**

Vss. 1-4 parallel Mt 12.18-21 which varies in certain places: “Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles. He will not wrangle or cry aloud nor will any one hear his voice in the streets; he will not break a bruised reed or quench a smoldering wick till he brings justice to victory; and in his name will the Gentiles hope.”

The previous chapter is set against the background of victories by King Cyrus of Persia whom the Lord has chosen (cf. 44.28). Perhaps those whom the Lord addressed there eventually came around to consider the servant (this being the first of four servant songs) as he. The Lord introduces this *heved* (cf. 41.9 but not mentioned there) with the expected *hineh* or “behold” (cf. 41.27) without giving his name which makes him all the more mysterious and perhaps confused with Cyrus.

The Lord both upholds and delights in his *heved*, *tamak* (cf. 41.10) and *ratsah* (cf. 40.2). With regard to the latter, the Lord specifically mentions his “soul” or *nepshesh* (cf. 38.15), that is, his inmost being.

*Ruach* or “spirit” (cf. 41.29) is the direct result of this taking delight and has a special purpose, namely, “justice” (*mishpat*, cf. 41.2), not just for Israel but for all nations. The verb

*yatsa'* occurs last in 28.29 where it's suggestive of issuing forth, not just simply bestowing. In other words, it is a fitting verb to show the relationship between *ruach* and *mishpat* as a flowing-forth.

**42-Vs. 2: He will not cry or lift up his voice or make it heard in the street;**

These words and the following with regard to the unnamed *heved* are not what anyone would expect. Compare with the personification of wisdom in Prov 9.14-16: "She sits at the door of her house, she takes a seat on the high places of the town, calling to those who pass by...Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!" Note that wisdom does not leave her house but bids passers-by to turn in which parallels the *heved* in his activity.

**42-Vs. 3: a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.**

The two examples of dying or near death with regard to a bruised reed and wick echo strongly among the people listening here, especially in light of the meekness of the servant presented at the outset of this new chapter.

This is the second time the Lord is mentioned as bringing forth justice (*yatsa'* and *mishpat* in vs. 1) but with the added feature of doing it "faithfully" or '*emeth* (cf. 39.8), literally "to (*-*) justice."

**42-Vs. 4: He will not fail or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.**

*Kahah* and *ratsats* or "(not) fail and be discouraged." The former suggests being feeble as well as dim: "Let his right eye be utterly blinded" [Zech 11.17]! The latter suggests being oppressed and is found last in 36.6 but not noted there. Both will not stop in the Lord's way to "establish" (*sum*, to place or set up, cf. 41.22) "justice" or *mishpat* (cf. vs. 3).

This verse has the first reference to coastlands since 41.1, the place to which the Israelites had fled before the advance of King Cyrus. Now that that crisis is over, people there are waiting for the Lord's "law" or *torah* (cf. 30.9), the verb being *yachal* which connotes trust and found next in 51.5, a similar context though the verb is different: "the coastlands wait for me, and for my arm they hope."

**42-Vs. 5: Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread forth the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it:**

After having spoken of his servant, the Lord turns attention to himself as indicated by *koah-* or "thus" which is relative to four powers belonging to him alone: "created, stretched, spread forth and gives breath." The first or *bara'* (cf. 41.20) hearkens back to the first act in Genesis. The second or *natah* is similar to 40.22. The third or *raqah* (cf. 40.19) is the verbal root for "firmament," *raqyah* as in Gen 1.6. The fourth or *neshamah* (cf. 30.33) intimates the mortality of a living creature compared with the more spiritual nature of *ruach* or spirit.

**42-Vs. 6: "I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations,**

After the brief introduction of the previous verse where the Lord refreshes the memory of his people as to his role in their lives, he says simply, '*any YHWH* or "I am the Lord." Such words should suffice to get and keep anyone's attention.

This verse consists of three five parts which, of course, are connected: "righteousness, taken, kept, covenant and light" or *tsedeq* (cf. 41.10), *chazaq* (cf. 41.13 with reference to right hand), *natsar* (cf. 27.3), covenant (*beryth*, cf. 28.15) and '*or* (cf. 30.26).

**42-Vs. 7: to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.**

This verse continues with three more actions after the five of the previous verse with a distinction between those in a "dungeon" and in "darkness," *masger* (cf. 24.22 but not noted there) and *beyth kele'* which literally reads "house of detention" (cf. vs. 22). The latter is more confining in that it is associated with "darkness," *choshek* (cf. 29.18).

**42-Vs. 8: I am the Lord, that is my name; my glory I give to no other nor my praise to graven images.**

This is the second time for '*any YHWH*, "I am the Lord" (cf. vs. 6), only here he states it as his name.

Apparently while the people had been confined in the coastlands they had sacrificed to idols in their desperation. They did it not just then but in numerous instances throughout their history. *Pesylym* is the noun for "grave images" noted last in 30.22.

**42-Vs. 9: Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them."**

"Former things" or *ri'shon* is found in vs. 27 as "first." The Hebrew text has *hineh* (cf. vs. 1) after *ri'shon* rendering it literally as "the former things behold."

"New things" or *chadash* (cf. 41.15 but not noted there), this adjective connoting something that has been polished or sharpened. *Nagad* is the verb for "declare" (cf. 40.21). Conjoined with this divine coming to pass and declaring is their springing forth or *tsamach*. "Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it" [43.19]? However, the Lord makes the people hear...such is the literally meaning of "tell," *shamah* (cf. 41.22)...before this *tsamach* so they will be ready to perceive its quick, almost lightning action. What the *chadash* consist of isn't revealed; emphasis is more upon the ability to *shamah*.

**42-Vs. 10: Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise from the end of the earth! Let the sea roar and all that fills it, the coastlands and their inhabitants.**

*Shyr* (cf. 5.1 but not noted there) is the verb for "sing" from which "song" is derived, same spelling (cf. 26.1). The newness (*chadash*) of this song is related closely to the "new things" in the previous verse.

The “ends” of the earth or *qatseh* (cf. 13.5) can pertain to the edge of the firmament (cf. vs. 5) placed over the earth like a huge circular dome. In other words, the “praise” or *tehilah* (cf. vs. 8 but not mentioned there) is to be sung by anyone located at that edge, not unlike a circular chorus where the dome meets the earth at the *qatseh*.

The Hebrew text lacks the verb “roar” but instead has *yarad* (to go down, cf. 32.19) reading literally as “going down to the sea and its fullness.”

‘Y or “coastlands” (cf. 41.1) is where the Israelites had found themselves pressed up against the sea as has been noted often.

**42-Vs. 11: Let the desert and its cities lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar inhabits; let the inhabitants of Sela sing for joy, let them shout from the top of the mountains.**

*Midbar* or “desert” (cf. 41.19), along with people living there, echo the *shyr* or singing of the previous verse. The verb *nasa’* or “lift up” (cf. 41.16) lacks “voice” in the Hebrew text, so the desert and its cities are lifting themselves up, not their voices.

Kedar is mentioned last in 21.17 in reference to archers, *chatser* or “villages” also meaning a court as in 1.12.

Sela is mentioned last in 16.1 and means “rock” as found in 31.9, that is, *selah*. Those there are to “sing for joy,” *ranan* (cf. 35.6) as well as “shout” or *tsavach*, the only use of the verb in the Bible which also means to exclaim.

**42-Vs. 12: Let them give glory to the Lord and declare his praise in the coastlands.**

“Them” refers to those addressed in the last two verses and sums up two things the Lord expects of them: 1) to give him “glory” or *kavod* (cf. 40.5) which is used with the verb *sum* or “give” (cf. vs. 4). 2) To “declare” or *nagad* (cf. vs. 9) the Lord’s “praise” (*tehilah*, cf. vs. 10) in the coastlands or the extreme place to which Israel had fled from King Cyrus not knowing that the Lord had favored him.

**42-Vs. 13: The Lord goes forth like a mighty man, like a man of war he stirs up his fury; he cries out, he shouts aloud, he shows himself mighty against his foes.**

The Lord “goes forth” (*yatsa’*, cf. vs. 3) under the guise of a “mighty man and man of war” or *gibor* (cf. 13.3) and *ysh milchamah*, the latter reading literally as “man of wars.” The verb *gabbar* (‘shows...himself...mighty’) connotes the act of prevailing and is the root of *gibor*: “and bids defiance to the Almighty” [Job 15.25].

*Hur* or “stirs up” is found last in 41.2 and here in conjunction with “fury,” *qin’ah* suggestive of zeal as well as jealousy (cf. 37.32).

*Ruah* and *tsarach* or “cries out and shouts aloud:” the former also means to be evil as noted in 15.4 and the latter has one other biblical reference, Zeph 1.14: “the mighty man shall cry.”

**42-Vs. 14: For a long time I have held my peace, I have kept still and restrained myself; now I will cry out like a woman in travail, I will gasp and pant.**

According to a footnote in the RSV, “long time” commences at the beginning of creation

as stated in vs. 5 up and continues into the present. Throughout that time the Lord remained patient as indicated by the following three verbs:

1) *Chashah* being the verb for “held peace” and generally means to be silent. “Have I not held my peace, even for a long time, and so you do not fear me” [57.11]?

3) *Charash* or “kept still” (cf. 41.1) which as noted there also means to plow, as though silence had to be plowed into the people by force.

3) *Aphaq* or “restrained” as in 64.12: “Will you restrain yourself at these things, O Lord?”

The tone of this divine restraint, apparently operative from the beginning of creation, now shifts to the Lord who bursts out like a woman about to give birth, that is, gasping and panting. The former verb is *nasham* (*neshamah* derives from it, cf. vs. 5), only found here. The latter is *sha'aph* which fundamentally means to swallow. “With open mouth I pant because I long for your commandments” [Ps 119.131].

**42-Vs. 15: I will lay waste mountains and hills and dry up all their herbage; I will turn the rivers into islands and dry up the pools.**

The verb *charav* (‘lay waste’) fundamentally means to dry up and is the verbal root for “sword.” Compare *charav* with *yavesh* (‘dry up’) and also means to put to shame (cf. 40.7).

**42-Vs. 16: And I will lead the blind in a way that they know not, in paths that they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I will do, and I will not forsake them.**

Here the Lord shows his tender side, if you will, favoring the blind which includes those who aren’t necessarily those afflicted in the physical sense. Note the two similar words, “way and paths” or *derek* (cf. 40.27) and *netyvah*. The former can be used in a spiritual or moral sense whereas the latter is less common and more associated with being trodden. Both are found in 43.16: “Thus says the Lord who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters.” The verb *darak* (*derek* is derived from it) means “guide” and is found last in 16.10 but not noted there.

*Sum* (cf. vs. 12) is the verb for “turn” and means more a setting or placing, here with regard to darkness into light.

*Mahaqoshym* or “rough places” is the only use of this term in the Bible whose verbal root means to be crooked or perverse. *Myshor* or “level ground” is found last in 40.4.

*Davar* (cf. 41.28) is a noun which fundamentally means word as expression, so the “things” here are physical results which have been uttered. *Hazav* is the verb for “forsake” (cf. 41.17).

**42-Vs. 17: They shall be turned back and utterly put to shame, who trust in graven images, who say to molten images, "You are our Gods."**

*Sug* (cf. 50.5) is the verb for “turned back” which can be taken as withdrawing from the shame at having forsaken worship of the Lord. “Our heart has not turned back” [Ps 44.18]. The verb *yavesh* (cf. vs. 15) is used twice to convey the idea of being thoroughly shamed. Such shame comes from reliance upon “graven images” or *pesel* (cf. 40.19). These *pesel* are fashioned from wood or some precious metal whereas *masekah* applies more to precious metal that has

been melted down (cf. 30.22 with the plural form of *pesel*).

**42-Vs. 18: Hear, you deaf; and look, you blind, that you may see!**

Two verbs pertaining to sight, “look and see” or *navat* (cf. 38.11) and *ra’ah* (cf. 41.20). The former is more along the lines of beholding, of taking a long, hard look. The latter is the common verb.

**42-Vs. 19: Who is blind but my servant or deaf as my messenger whom I send? Who is blind as my dedicated one or blind as the servant of the Lord?**

When the people hear the Lord (through Isaiah) speaking of “my servant,” automatically they hearken back to vs. 1 at the beginning of this chapter, that is, to someone whom the Lord has yet to make known. However, when they heard blindness and deafness associated with this person, they wonder about the connection. Besides, this servant is called the Lord’s own “dedicated one” or *shalam* (cf. 38.13) and connotes someone who will bring things to an end or completion, perhaps even Israel’s existence.

**42-Vs. 20: He sees many things but does not observe them; his ears are open, but he does not hear.**

Vs. 18 speaks of two types of seeing, *navat* and *ra’ah* whereas the verse at hand has the latter for “sees” and *shamar* for “observe” (cf. 26.3) which does not necessarily apply to sight but the attentiveness one brings to a task or observance. Again, such words confuse the people since they tend to associate them to the servant of vs. 1.

**42-Vs. 21: The Lord was pleased for his righteousness' sake to magnify his law and make it glorious.**

*Chaphets* is a dynamic, intense verb (cf. 1.11) meaning to take delight as dependent upon divine “righteousness” or *tsedeq* (cf. vs. 6). Such *tsedeq* will first “magnify” or *gadal* (connotes becoming great or increasing, cf. 28.29) with regard to *torah*, ‘law’ (cf. vs. 4).

‘*Adar* is the verb for “make glorious” and connotes honor. It has one other biblical reference, Ex 15.6 and 11; the former is cited here: “Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power.”

**42-Vs. 22: But this is a people robbed and plundered, they are all of them trapped in holes and hidden in prisons; they have become a prey with none to rescue, a spoil with none to say, "Restore!"**

The conjunctive *v-* as “but” (often it’s rendered as ‘and’) is important here since it hasn’t been found at the beginning of more recent verses and thus has an ominous air about it because it puts into immediate contact the prophet Isaiah and those listening to him. What the people believed as perhaps applicable to either another individual or nation hits home because they realize the Lord is speaking of them.

No details are given as to whom brought the people to this dire situation, *bazaz* (cf. 24.3) and *shasas* (cf. 13.16) as “robbed and plundered.”

*Natsal* is the verb for “rescue” and implies a sudden snatching (cf. 38.6). *Shuv* is the

verb for “restore” (cf. 41.28) and means to return as to a former condition.

**42-Vs. 23: Who among you will give ear to this, will attend and listen for the time to come?**

Immediately after the shocking words of the previous verse the Lord asks a rhetorical question “among you” or literally, “in you,” where the preposition *b-* is used for “among.”

“Give ear, attend and listen” or *‘azan* (cf. 32.9), *qashav* (cf. 34.1 as draw near) and *shamah* (cf. vs. 9). All are to be direction to a future time or literally “to what is after” or *‘achor* (cf. 9.12) which is not specified but presented like this to keep the people in suspense.

**42-Vs. 24: Who gave up Jacob to the spoiler and Israel to the robbers? Was it not the Lord against whom we have sinned, in whose ways they would not walk, and whose law they would not obey?**

*Mashusah* and *bazaz* or “spoiler and robbers:” the former is the only use of this term in the Bible and the later is found last in vs. 22.

*Zu* is the word for “this one” though not translated.

The verb *shamah* or to hear (cf. previous verse) translates as “obey” with respect to *torah* or “law” (cf. vs. 21).

**42-Vs. 25: So he poured upon him the heat of his anger and the might of battle; it set him on fire round about, but he did not understand; it burned him, but he did not take it to heart.**

Chapter Forty-Two concludes with an observation, if you will, by Isaiah upon what had just transpired, “him” referring to the nation of Israel. Note three images relative to fire: “heat, set on fire and burned” or *chemah* (cf. 34.2), *lahat* and *bahar* (cf. 30.33). As for *lahat*, cf. Ps 97.3: “Fire goes before him and burns up his adversaries round about.” Despite the Lord’s best efforts, the people did not respond or literally, “did not place on heart” or *lev* (cf. 41.22).