

Expansions on the Book of Isaiah

Introduction

The document at hand retains the same format as others concerning biblical texts which are posted on this lectio divina home page. That is to say, notations of varying length and detail follow each verse of the Book of Isaiah. The word “expansions” in the title is deliberate. The sense of the text is broadened out...expanded...while at the same time sticking to the original intent. At the same time, the notations are done in accord with the practice of *lectio divina* as opposed to a traditional scholarly fashion.

As described elsewhere, *lectio divina* has a certain freedom with the sacred text while being faithful to its own discipline of reading a given verse or two, usually not more. After lingering a while—and the time for this is open-ended, depending up the inspiration of each person—you put down the text and rest in God. And that rest is traditionally called contemplative prayer. In fact, the time factor is irrelevant. Then you can pick up the text again and continue on which often means staying with the same verses. The whole idea, of course, is not to “get through” material but to linger among the words and allow them do their work on you.

In sum, what sets *lectio divina* apart from other disciplines is the slowness of reading involved, more difficult than at first glance. Because of this it can't be termed “scholarly.” That doesn't mean reading the text in a mood of *lectio* is inferior which can be mistaken as such. In actuality it belongs to a higher plane, if you will, one that is spiritual and therefore not easily quantified. And so *lectio* may seem foreign to a modern reader which is completely understandable, hence the limited appeal of this approach.

The intent of **Expansions** is not a commentary aimed at adding new information, let alone rehashing old information. Neither is it presented for devotional purposes, fine as that may be. It is strictly a companion, a *vade mecum* of sorts, for a person wishing to pray in the spirit of *lectio divina* with the Book of Isaiah. Apart from this purpose, the text at hand has no value, simple as that.

The Book of Isaiah is quite long, sixty-six chapters. Portions of it contain oracles against such unfamiliar kingdoms as Edom and Midian as well as against obscure kings of Israel and other nations. That means the continuous series of curses and laments associated with these oracles can get boring and seem meaningless. Still, they are treated because the closer you look at them in the original text, the more you're able to unearth in the light of contemplative prayer. This doesn't meant twisting the text to suit your own purpose but as always, to allow it to guide you in the practice of contemplative prayer. In those instances where the oracles are extended, key words and ideas are singled out instead of going through them verse by verse. The first example of this is Chapter Nineteen, vss. 16-25. In other instances whole chapters follow this more abbreviated mode.

One observation came to the fore in the process of going through the Book of Isaiah. While this

is perhaps among the most beautiful expression of the Hebrew Bible, it lacks a certain flexibility. In other words, these exceptionally inspiring verses are narrow in focus from the point of view of being able to expand them. It's a paradox of sorts: on the one hand the material is rich while on the other hand, it's pretty much straight forward. Not only that, this inability to maneuver goes on verse after verse with many familiar words repeating themselves.

An added dimension is that as you work your way well into the second half of a long document as this, already you've encountered many words, concepts and expressions which have become familiar and have been noted. Therefore they require little or no explanation...expansion...unless the situation is quite different. Also wording such as "mentioned last in such-and such-a verse but not noted there" become more frequent which can make for boring reading. Then again, the purpose of this document is to assist in doing *lectio divina* one verse at a time.

References to transliterated Hebrew words are at the heart of **Expansions**. They are either forward or backward, depending on the circumstance and stick with the Book of Isaiah as much as possible. Even more particularly, references pertaining to verbs will stick with the particular form of a given verb because in Hebrew the variations can be considerable. In other words, even if the same form under consideration is close by, it won't necessarily be singled out by reason of this difference. The second choice of references is from the Psalter because of that book's primacy throughout the centuries. Given the wide variety of meanings from a single verbal root, some references are quite different in meaning.

The number of a given chapter is followed by a dash mark in conjunction with each verse. For example, verse five of Chapter Twenty-Six is rendered as 26-Vs.5. This enables the reader to find quickly the chapter reference instead of scrolling up and down for its location. It also makes for an easier identification of a particular verse within a given chapter. The entire document is divided into eight sections, the reason being for easier downloading and maneuverability for those with a slower Internet connection.

Biblical passages are from two sources: 1) the **RSV** or more specifically, **The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha** (New York, 1973). 2) **The Zondervan NIV Study Bible** (Grand Rapids, 2002). While the passages from Isaiah themselves presented in bold are from the **RSV**, some verses which are cited as relative to them come from the **NIV**.

Chapter One

1-Vs. 1: The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

Isaiah gets right down to business when speaking of his "vision" or *chazon* which also can apply to a dream, both definitions being important insofar as they often refer to future events. When you think of a dream, you associate it with the night hours. By contrast, a vision can occur day or night or in any situation. The importance of *chazon* is intimated by being the first word of the book. You'd think it would be found frequently in Isaiah, but there's just one other reference which conveys this two-fold sense: "all that fight against her (Ariel)...shall be like

a dream, a vision of the night" [29.7]. Because Isaiah speaks of his *chazon* in an objective, almost matter-of-fact way, it gives the impression of being the account of another person such as a scribe or trusted friend. Regardless, Isaiah wants to get this *chazon* out into the open for all to acknowledge, the reasons which will become clearer as the text moves on. It should be noted that the word "oracle" or *masa'* is more frequent and also translates as "burden" as in 22.25.

Isaiah identifies himself as "son of Amoz" six other times in this book while a few other biblical references contain the same words. Such indirectness, of not speaking of himself up front, has a subtle purpose, if you will. Because the Book of Isaiah begins immediately with a vision from the Lord, it must have practical application, namely, the future of Israel. Thus any reference to self would be out of place, even tasteless. Yet Isaiah feels obliged to give some identification of himself though with this intent in mind. He follows the traditional way of effecting this by giving his paternal lineage and letting it go at that.

As for the *chazon*, it is seen (i.e., 'saw') or *chazah*, the verbal root for the noun which is more a beholding or a taking in of the vision which is passing before the eyes of Isaiah with the purpose of registering upon his memory. Compare *chazon* and *chazah* with *davar* and *chazah*, *davar* being the common term for word as expression and akin to *logos*: "the *davar* which Isaiah, the son of Amoz, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem." A *davar* is spoken and therefore not generally tied in with the idea of seeing, so this must be a special type of word which has substance.

Isaiah's *chazon* is quite specific and had two parts introduced by the preposition *hal-* which literally means "upon" and translates here as "concerning." The first applies to Judah and Jerusalem and the second to four rulers over them. The term "days" (*yom*) is more poetic than giving the precise length of each king's rule and thereby fits in better with the structure of *chazon* which continues for the length of Chapter One.

For detailed information as to the four sets of "days" at hand, refer to Second Chronicles where the kings associated with these days are mentioned, the order in vs. 1 being different from the chronological one of Chronicles: Ahaz, Uzziah, Jotham and Hezekiah. These and all other kings are put in the specific context of how they behaved "in the eyes of the Lord." The first (Ahaz, again, chronologically speaking) in 28.1 is described as "he did not do what was right" or *yashar*, an adjective which fundamentally means to be straight. This attribute of straightness relative to a king is key to a successful reign. As for the other three kings, all did what was *yashah*: Uzziah in 26.4, Jotham in 27.2 and Hezekiah in 29.2. Note that both Ahaz and Hezekiah have the specific reference to King David although the same can be argued for the other two kings.

All in all, the list of reigns covers a fairly lengthy period of time, actually one hundred and thirteen years: Uzziah for fifty-two years (26.3), Jotham (27.1) for sixteen years, Ahaz for sixteen years (cf. 28.1) and Hezekiah for twenty-nine years (cf. 29.1). Thus Isaiah's vision is spread out over two generations more or less favorable with the exception of King Ahaz. Did he have this vision uninterruptedly? That's irrelevant because a *chazon* transcends the limits of space and time. Also, did Isaiah live this long, 113 years? Yes, insofar as Isaiah was a prophet and shared in that extended time of life found among some of Adam's descendants after his expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Also, *chazon* is a kind a reflection of what that first man had enjoyed in Eden, part of being made in the divine image and likeness.

1-Vs. 2: Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord has spoken: "Sons have I reared and

brought up, but they have rebelled against me.

Isaiah doesn't start unfolding his vision by an address to the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem as one might expect. Instead, he summons the heavens above and earth below as witnesses. In other words, he is not unlike a lawyer preparing his case. Note the similarity between "hear" and "heavens," *shimhu shamaym*, *shamah* being the common verb to hear. Here is where God and his angels dwell, so Isaiah is quite bold by presenting himself as the Lord's representative, if you will, by having the heavens pay attention to him. Only in a *chazon* could he do this, for otherwise it would be beyond human capacity.

As for the "earth" (*'erets*), it too must pay attention. The verb *'azan* for "give ear" is more intense or directed, for that is the place where human beings dwell. "Give ear to the teaching of our God" [vs. 10]. Implied here is not so much human inhabitants but the ground itself, *'erets* also being the place of residence for a given people which, of course, is Judah and Jerusalem. Thus the people and land are pretty much one and the same. Not mentioned but certainly implied is the space in between heaven and earth where many angelic and demonic beings reside. Also it's the medium through which angels as messengers ascend and descend.

So once Isaiah has gotten the heavens to hear and the earth to listen—there's no response but certainly both realms dropped everything they were doing and paid rapt attention—he continues with a familiar prophetic utterance, "the Lord has spoken." *Davar* is the verb as in vs. 1 and will occur very frequently throughout this book. Although we have no precise details as exactly how Isaiah communicated this divine *davar*, he was both passive and active. And so the *davar* done by the Lord is communicated within the context of a *chazon*, a speaking Isaiah hears within the context of a seeing, if it may be put that way.

If the Lord himself is doing this *davar*, the hearing by the heavens echos down through the air until it reaches the earth or *'erets*. Thus the *davar* resounds as in an enormous echo chamber, *shamaym* usually taken as a vault which curves from one end of the earth to the other reaching its peak over the land of Israel and more specifically, Jerusalem. Neither man nor beast can resist hearing the Lord speak or communicate his *davar* which meant that all sentient beings were perfectly still and silent. They had no choice but to be this way, being caught within that echo chamber. A more terrifying experience which also intimates the nature of this dome-echo chamber happened when the sixth seal was open: "calling to the mountains and to the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb'" [Rev 6.16].

The Lord speaks of sons whom he has both "reared and brought up," *gadal* and *rum*. The former means to be great or large usually in the physical sense; the latter means to lift up or raise. Both are found in 23.4: "I have neither reared young men nor brought up virgins." So despite this tender loving care from birth, the sons (presumably of Judah and Jerusalem) have "rebelled" or *pashah* which fundamentally means to fall away or to break away. Here it has the preposition *b-* (in), "rebelled in me" which indicates the gravity of the situation, that the Lord's sons—the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem—have made a frontal assault against the Lord. One can only imagine what the heavens and the earth felt, too appalling to record here. "Your first father sinned, and your mediators transgressed against me" [43.27].

1-Vs. 3: The ox knows its owner and the ass its master's crib; but Israel does not know, my people does not understand."

The Lord now speaks of both an ox and ass knowing to whom they belong, the verb *yadah* meaning acquaintance in the intimate sense. “And all the people will know” [9.9]. This is the first use of *yadah*, the positive sense. *Qanah* is a participle for “owner” which more specifically means to purchase, to acquire. “As with the buyer, so with the seller” [24.2]. *Evus* is the noun for “crib” or more commonly a stable which has just two other biblical references, Job 39.9 and Prov 14.4. Both ox and ass belong to someone, that is, an owner and a master which serves to heighten the pitiable contrast between these domestic animals and Israel which has the Lord and is free under him, not his possession.

The second use of *yadah* is in the negative sense, of Israel not having this knowledge of acquaintance. However, it’s not specified but certainly intimated. Here Israel is addressed compared with Judah of vs. 1. In brief, Israel was one nation until Solomon's death at which time the kingdom divided. The northern kingdom retained the name of Israel and the capital was in Samaria; the southern kingdom took the name of Judah and the capital was in Jerusalem. With this in mind, it seems that there’s no real distinction between Judah and Israel when it comes to this special *yadah* by the Lord’s own “people,” *ham*.

1-Vs. 4: Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, sons who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the Lord, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged.

Isaiah exclaims spontaneously *hoy* or “ah,” indicative of being overwhelmed at what he beholds in his vision. Actually this *chazon* is more vivid than if he beheld the evil with his physical eyes because now he is looking at it with penetrating vision. While undergoing this experience, Isaiah knows instinctively that he must live with the memory of his *chazon*. That will be the most difficult challenge in his life, and right now he’s wondering if he is up to it and what it will mean for his relationship with the people among whom he lives.

Isaiah divides those whom he beholds into four categories, if you will, and their wickedness:

- 1) “Nation” or *goy* which refers to nations other than Israel (cf. *ham* in the previous verse and in #2). Often *goy* is found in the plural or *goyim*. It is “sinful,” the verb *chata’* being use. “And the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed” [65.20].
- 2) “People” or *ham* which is “laden” with iniquity, *kaved* being the adjective which connotes heaviness and found net in 32.2: “like the shade of a great rock.” In the verse at hand, this burden is “iniquity” or *havon* which connotes depravity. “Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of falsehood” [5.18].
- 3) “Offspring” or *zera’h* which fundamentally means seed. “And an homer of seed shall yield but an ephah” [5.10]. In the verse at hand, such seed, if you will, is that of “evildoers” or the verb *raha’h* which originally means to make a loud noise. “For everyone is godless and an evildoer” [9.17].
- 4) Sons who “deal corruptly” or *shachat* which also means to destroy. “I have also created the ravager to destroy” [54.16].

Now when Isaiah says “they,” he means all four proper to these groups which is quite overwhelming. All have in common the following:

- 1) Their abandonment of the Lord, *hazav* being the first of two verbs related to this tragedy. “The deserted places...which they deserted because of the children of Israel” [17.9].
- 2) Their contempt or *na’ats* (‘despised’) which is more tragic insofar as it refers to a fuller title

of the just mentioned Lord, namely, “the Holy One of Israel.” “For they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts” [5.24].

3) Their being estranged or *zur* which means to turn aside or to depart. “And set out slips of an alien god” [17.10]. Not only are they estranged but “utterly” so or *’achor* which literally means backward.

1-Vs. 5: Why will you still be smitten that you continue to rebel? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

While the Lord himself is asking this question more or less in a rhetorical fashion, Isaiah is present with him through the mediation of that *chazon* or vision, obviously in agreement but can’t help but be bothered by feelings of impatience. This question hinges upon the small word *had* or “still,” indicative of persistence in light of perverse behavior which despite its persistence, seems unable to be cured. Actually this persistence is emphasized by *yasaph* or “continue,” the common verb meaning to increase.

Note the correspondence between *nakah* and *sarah* (‘smitten and rebel’). “And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth” [11.4]. “That smote the peoples in wrath with unceasing (*sarah*) blows” [14.6].

The Lord, of course, isn’t expecting an answer to his question which is followed by an observation made pretty much in disgust. Reference to the “head” or *r’osh* (vs. 6) can be taken as Jerusalem which is “sick” or *choly* (noun). Thus it reads literally as “all head to sickness,” a vivid way of putting it. In addition to this, the “heart” or *levav* in its entirety can be taken as Jerusalem. “And understand with their heart” [6.10]. NB: in the verse at hand *levav* is used; there’s an alternate spelling, *lev*, which is listed separately.

Davay is the adjective for “faint” which has two other biblical references, Jer 8.18 and Lam 1.22, the former being cited here: “my heart is sick within me.” This adjective connotes something that is unclean as well as languishing. Chances are that the people knew their condition but were afraid to admit it to themselves, certainly not to a prophet like Isaiah.

1-Vs. 6: From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it but bruises and sores and bleeding wounds; they are not pressed out or bound up or softened with oil.

In the last verse the Lord speaks of both head and heart whereas now he focuses upon the former or more accurately, the entire body starting from the foot and working upward. Not just that but the sole of the foot, the very bottom or where the body makes contact with the earth as in standing or walking. Implied here is that this body can’t move but is stuck in one place, paralyzed.

So from bottom to top Israel has “bruises, sores and bleeding wounds:” *petsah* (cf. Gn 4.23), *chaburah* (cf. 53.5) and *tary* (cf. Jud 15.15, the only other biblical reference). All three are the exact opposite of “soundness” or *metom* which has two other references, Jdg 20.48 and Ps 38.3 & 7, the second (first vs.) being cited here: “There is no soundness in my flesh.”

Apparently the three types of afflictions can be cured rather quickly and easily, that is, by three corresponding remedies:

1) “Pressed out” or *zur* (NB: a different verb from *zur* in vs. 4), this word having two other biblical references, Jud 6.38 and Job 39.15. The former runs as follows: “When he rose early next morning and squeezed the fleece.”

- 2) “Bound up” or *chavats* as in 3:7: “I will not be a healer,” that is, as one who binds up.
- 3) “Softened” or *rakak*, making tender. “Do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands” [7.4]. This softening or making tender is effected literally as “in” (*b-*) oil. Clearly Israel is in need of that “oil” or *shemen* (cf. 5.1) belonging to the bridegroom’s name: “your name is oil poured out” [Sg 1.3]. In fact, Israel has a pressing need to hear the Song of Songs read aloud in its entirety.

1-Vs. 7: Your country lies desolate, your cities are burned with fire; in your very presence aliens devour your land; it is desolate as overthrown by aliens.

Now the Lord moves out or away from the capitol Jerusalem, as it were, extending to the “country” (*‘erets*, cf. vs. 2), cities and “land” (*‘adamah*). In this instance, *‘erets* suggests the national identity of a people whereas *‘adamah* applies to the earth as something to be cultivated.

Shemamah (used twice) means “desolate” or laid waste as after an invasion. “And the land is utterly desolate” [6.11]. *‘Akal* is the verb for “devour” and commonly used as to eat or consume food. This is done “in your presence” or *neged* which suggests a being before, that is, while this devouring is actually taking place by *zur* noted last in vs. 4. Not only do these aliens engage in such destruction, they make the *‘adamah* not capable of bearing produce, that is, they make it “desolate” and overthrow it. The first word is a noun, *mahpekah*, which makes the text read literally “as the overthrowing of aliens.” “Like Sodom and Gomorrah when God overthrew them” [13.19]. In the verse at hand, these aliens are not identified and are unaware of being instruments of the Lord.

1-Vs. 8: And the daughter of Zion is left like a booth in a vineyard, like a lodge in a cucumber field, like a besieged city.

All the while Isaiah has been witness to the Lord’s woeful complaints, moving from one dire condition to another and now groping, as it were, for a way to describe Israel’s plight. One has to give him credit for putting up with this unbroken string of woes even though as we move through this chapter we see that he is growing impatient. At this juncture there is no indication of the Lord having chosen Isaiah (this will come later, 6.8, ‘Here am I! Send me’), just that he is privy to such calamity more or less against his will.

Now the Lord gets more personal, that is, using words of affection such as “daughter of Zion,” a phrase which occurs frequently throughout scripture. This daughter or Jerusalem is likened to the following three:

- 1) “Booth” or *sukah* which intimates a temporary dwelling made of branches or something similar, not unlike a tent. “It will be for a shade by day from the heat and for a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain” [4.6]. The location of this *sukah* in a vineyard can imply Israel as a place where tender grapes are cultivated but are now destroyed.
- 2) “Lodge” or *melunah* (similar to *malon*, 10.29) which is more permanent than a *sukah* and here in a field of cucumbers or *miqshah*, the only use of this term in the Bible. NB: this word also means an artwork made of something (metal) that has been beaten (cf. Ex 25.18).
- 3) A city that is “besieged” or *natsar*, the verb meaning to keep or preserve but here, of course, in a negative sense as surrounded by foes. “Hidden (*natsar*) things which you have not known” [48.6].

1-Vs. 9: If the Lord of hosts had not left us a few survivors, we should have been like Sodom and become like Gomorrah.

The Lord is putting words in the mouths of people he is addressing in an attempt to wean Israel away from her evil ways. In other words, he is bending over backwards, and you wonder how far that will go. Note the familiar “Lord of hosts” or lord of armies which means that God is supreme with regard to any temporal or spiritual forces. Despite being all-powerful, the Lord did leave a few “survivors” or *saryd* which intimates a remnant of the catastrophe just described. “The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness” [Jer 31.2]. The number of such persons is not given but must be tiny. Actually the theme of a remnant is fairly common in the Bible as when a city such as Jerusalem had been destroyed, and the conquering king leaves this *saryd* behind to mind the land. Such persons have lived on the edge even in prosperity but were denied any benefits by the city. Thus for the most part they lived just outside the city walls where they tended animals and cultivated vines.

By putting reference to Sodom and Gomorrah in the people’s mouths the Lord is showing the extreme nature of their depravity. Associated with these two cities, of course, is the worst type of immoral behavior. Since repentance was out of the question, the Lord “rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire” [Gn 19.24]. First comes the brimstone or *gaphryth*, a thick, goeey substance which clung to the people. Then the fire came which sent this *gaphryth* ablaze while the people run about trying to extinguish the inextinguishable flames. And so memory of these two cities had sunken deep within the collective memory of Israel, a fate they hoped would never happen to them.

1-Vs. 10: Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom! Give ear to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah!

Now the action shifts from a temporary hiatus where Israel had the opportunity to express herself. In this verse the Lord can speak of Sodom and Gomorrah as existing in the present because from his point of view, there is neither past nor future. Israel is painfully aware of her identity with both cities. Thus to save her from being overcome with grief and shame the Lord not only speaks but asks Israel to hear his *davar*. Vs. 10 is the first instance of this noun which will occur frequently, the next reference being 2.1: “The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.” In the verse at hand, this *davar* which belongs to the Lord is addressed to the “rulers” of Sodom compared with the people of Gomorrah. *Qatsyn* is the noun and often applies to a prince. “You shall be our leader” [3.6].

With respect to Gomorrah, the Lord bids the people to “give ear” or *‘azan*. In vs. 2 where it is mentioned last the distinction is made between it and the common *shamah* used for “hear,” that is, the former is a more intense form of the latter. This more intense listening is directed to God’s “teaching” or *torah*, a freighted word which occurs next in 2.3: “for out of Zion shall go forth the law.” Inhabitants of the historical two cities did not hear the divine *davar* nor give ear to the Torah. For Israel to be in their place prior to the destruction about to come from above, if you will, is deeply embarrassing yet an occasion for repentance. However, as the story unfolds, there is no indication that such will happen, and that serves to intensify the drama.

1-Vs. 11: "What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the Lord; I have had enough of

burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls or of lambs or of he-goats.

Even the opening words *lamah-ly*, “What to me?” are distressing for Isaiah to hear. Automatically it makes him think of the very human way the Lord has been responding, that is, gracious but with the awareness that his patience is wearing thin.

The Lord has been watching the Israelites offer “sacrifices” and “burnt offerings” for a very long time, *zevach* (cf. 19.21) and *holah* (cf. 40.16). The former is a more general term whereas the latter applies to a whole animal laid upon the altar. The Lord more specifically is referring to the sacrifices offered in Jerusalem since the daily ritual had been inaugurated by David when he brought the ark of the Lord to Jerusalem (cf. 2Sam 6.18). Then, of course, there were all the other sacrifices since the time of Noah after the flood (cf. Gn 8.20).

The desire to offering sacrifice started off well-intentioned but quickly devolved into a rote practice allowing for all sorts of abuses, the classical case being the two sons of Eli (cf. 1Sam 2.12.17). So when the Lord “had enough” (*savah*, cf. 9.20), he really meant it in light of these countless offerings. No small wonder the Lord adds that he takes no “delight” in blood of the three types of animals mentioned here. The verb is *chaphets* as in 42.21: “The Lord was pleased...to magnify his law and make it glorious.”

1-Vs. 12: "When you come to appear before me, who requires of you this trampling of my courts?"

The verb *ra'ah* for “appear” is commonly translated as to see and here refers to the people who had entered the temple for offering sacrifices or more specifically, when handed over their offerings to priests usually with a monetary gift or even a bribe slipped in. This verse reflects the sentiment of Jesus in Mt 21.13: “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.” Such was the throng of vendors of animals for sacrifice and the like in the “courts,” *chatser* referring to that enclosed yet open area before the temple and part of the temple complex. This noun can also refer to a village: “Let the desert and its cities lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar inhabits” [42.11].

The words “of you” are rendered literally as “from your hands” and get right to the point, given the words of the last paragraph. Certainly both pilgrims and vendors were “trampling” this outer but sacred area, *ramas*. So while Jesus was angry at the commercial activity which filled the courts, the noise of this *ramas* or running around in all directions really got to him. Surely the same *ramas* echoed up to heaven which triggered the Lord to condemn the “multitude of sacrifices” in the previous verse. “When the oppressor (*ramas*) is no more” [16.4].

1-Vs. 13: Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and sabbath and the calling of assemblies—I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly.

Now the Lord is really angry or to put it more pointedly, distressed as a lover would be with his beloved who had caused irreparable harm. You can pick up on his growing frustration while at the same time he continues to offer hope.

The words “no more” are rendered by the common verb *yasaph* which means to increase and concern “offerings” or *minchah* which are “vain,” *shav'* (cf. 5.18). The general idea behind

this noun is that of a gift or tribute and can include the sacrifices already mentioned. “And worship with sacrifice and burnt offerings” [19.21]. *Shave’* is a noun and found next in 5.18: “woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of falsehood.”

The Lord singles out incense with the strong word “abomination” or *tohevah* which in the context of sacrifice as here connotes both ritual and inner impurity as well as defilement. “An abomination is he who chooses you” [41.24].

Moving away from sacrifices *per se*, the Lord brings up three types of assemblies:

- 1) New moon as in 47.13: “who at the new moons predict what shall befall you.”
- 2) Sabbath or the principle religious observance to commemorate the seventh day or when the Lord rested from creation. “Who keeps the Sabbath, not profaning it” [56.2]. NB: throughout most of this document the lower case “s” is used which is in conformity with the **RSV**.
- 3) Calling of assemblies which consists of the common verb *qara’* and the noun derived from it, *miqra’*. “Then the Lord will create...over her assemblies a cloud by day and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night” [4.5].

After these the Lord singles out the “iniquity” or *aven* found next in 10.1: “Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees.” This is bad enough but made worse by reason of association with a “solemn assembly” or *hatsarah* which seems to apply to the Passover and Feast of Tabernacles. It has three other biblical references, 2Kg 10.20 and Jl 1.14 & 2.15, the first being cited: “Proclaim a solemn assembly.”

The verb *yakal* means “endure” and connotes prevailing or being powerful. “When he (Moab) comes to his sanctuary to pray, he will not prevail” [16.12].

1-Vs. 14: Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me, I am weary of bearing them.

Indeed, the Lord is covering every aspect of Israel’s religious observances which must have caught the people off guard. Condemnation of this or that practice would be acceptable, but the whole lot?

By mentioning “soul” or *nepshesh*, the Lord is speaking of his very self that was grieved; not only that, it must have saddened Isaiah as he participated in this *chazon* or vision. “Woe to them (i.e., their *nepshesh*)” [3.9].

Now when the Lord starts speaking of Israel as having become a “burden” or *torach*, he is getting ready to take decisive action which Israel will soon regret. This noun has one other biblical reference, Dt 1.12: “How can I alone bear the weight and burden of you and your strife?” Such a weight naturally wearies the Lord, *la’ah*. “When he (Moab) wearies himself upon the high place” [16.12].

Mohed is the noun for “appointed feasts” found next in 14.13 as assembly.

Note the similarity of sound between “hates” and “weary,” *san’ah* and *sane’* which fits in well with the sense of this verse.

1-Vs. 15: When you spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood.

Like the previous verses related to sacrifice, this one doesn’t give the place-where from which the Lord is beholding all this perverted activity. However, his dwelling can be two places at once: in heaven and in the Jerusalem temple. Both are interchangeable as when the Lord

decides not just to not look but to “hide” his eyes, *halam* being the verb which suggests covering over of his eyes. “And not to hide yourself from your own flesh” [58.7]. This hiding, of course, takes place as soon as the supplicants raise their hands. Although they are acting properly in accord with liturgical custom, they realize their actions are defective but can’t bring themselves to admit it.

Tephilah is the noun for “prayers,” almost always public or liturgical compared with being private, this being indicated by the words “make many.” “Therefore lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left” [37.4].

Finally the Lord observes that the hand which are raised in prayer are full of blood and not from the blood of any sacrificial victims.

1-Vs. 16: Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil,

Much to Isaiah’s relief, the Lord seems to have finished his condemnatory remarks about Israel and now changes his tone of speech for something more conciliatory though he intends to keep a sharp eye on Israel to see if she will carry through. First he bids Judah and Jerusalem (note that the Lord doesn’t call them as such but Isaiah does back in vs. 1 with regard to his vision) to “wash and make clean,” *rachats* and *zakah*. While both pertain to physical cleanliness, past sins and defilements are what the Lord wants removed. The people realize this, embarrassingly so, because they’ve been engaged in ritual purification on a daily basis when offering sacrifice and so forth, knowing full well that it was a sham. “When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Jerusalem” [4.4]. “And blameless in your judgement” [Ps 51.4].

A third gesture not unlike these two is removing “evil” (*rah*; used twice) from the people’s “doing” or *mahalal* which derives from a verbal root with several various meanings, among them to glean, to vex and to satisfy thirst. As for the former, “for they have brought evil upon themselves” [3.9]. As for the latter, “because their speech and their deeds are against the Lord” [3.8]. Chances are that anyone hearing this must have thought about being identified with Sodom and Gomorrah as existing in the present despite having been obliterated.

Note only is “evil” (*rah*) to be removed as manifested through deeds, the people are to “cease” from it, *chadal*. “Turn away from man” [2.22].

1-Vs. 17: learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow.

A short verse but loaded with five commands: “learn, seek, correct, defend and plead” (*lamad, darash, ‘ashar, shaphat* and *ryv*). All are common verbs found throughout Isaiah, but *‘ashar* stands out, if you will. It is the verbal root (to be) for “blessed” as well as the relative pronouns “who, which, that.” In other words, *‘ashar* suggests forward unceasing movement. “O my people, your leaders mislead you” [3.12].

The nouns associated with these five verbs: “do good” (verb), justice, oppression, fatherless and widow.” The Hebrew runs as follows: *yatav, misphat, chamots* (connotes ‘sharp’ violence), *yatom* and *‘almanah*. Note that the last two pertain to actual categories of persons who are the most helpless.

1-Vs. 18: "Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.

We can imagine the people at some distance, if you will, listening to these words of invitation after being accused harshly. This distance is why the Lord says "come now" (*leku-na*), *na-* indicative of a modest request or desire but without imposition.

Yakah as "reason together" means to argue or to confute, so it had this double-edge of which the people are aware. So while the invitation is offered, they have some reluctance to take it up. However, this verse, like all the rest, meets with no response so we don't know what in actuality happened. That leaves the whole enterprise tinged with a certain mystery and open-endedness.

The double-edgedness of *yahah* is found in 2.4: "and shall decide for many people." Of course, Judah and Jerusalem knew that was the ultimate end of the Lord's intervention and shied away from it. Compare this invitation with the Lord's words in the Garden of Eden: "Where are you" [Gn 3.9]? The response, of course, is the same as in the verse at hand.

Now the Lord offers a "half" solution. In other words, he speaks of "sins" (*chet*; cf. 31.7, this form relative to the more common one of *chata'oth*) with a "scarlet" color, *shany*. "Your lips are a thread of scarlet" [Sg 4.3]. However, they will assume the whiteness of snow which means that the essence of the sins won't change, just their color. This change of appearance with the essence remaining the same can't be eradicated, even by the Lord, which is why he hastens to say by way of comfort that their "crimson" color (that's even worse) will be like wool. The noun for "crimson" is *tolah* and has two other biblical references, Ex 16.20 and Lam 4.5, the former being cited here with its alternate meaning: "and it (manna) bred worms and became foul." In other words, *tolah* are not just the color red but crimson red.

1-Vs. 19: If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land;

"Willing and obedient" or *'avah* and *shamah*. The former seems to be a condition or precondition of the latter which fundamentally means to hear or to listen. In other words, one have to be inclined to hear which means that this hearing has, if you will, already entered the heart and mind of a person and is rummaging around in there.

'Erets or "land (cf. vs. 7) would, in normal circumstances, be *'adamah* (also vs. 7) or arable land. However, here the eating of produce from *'erets* suggests being grounded in a place central to one's national identity compared with *'adamah* used for the purpose of cultivation, etc.

1-Vs. 20: But if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

Like the previous verse, this one begins with *'im* or "if" which sets up a condition for what is about to follow. As soon as the people heard the Lord utter *'im*, they were on edge and rightly so. In other words, "if" is not unlike a cause which with the potential of creating an effect.

In this verse "if" involves possible refusal and rebellion, the verbs being *ma'en* and *marah*: "The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious"[50.5]. "Because I have called, and you refused to listen" [Prov 1.24]. The option presented is being "devoured" by the sword, *'akal*

(cf. vs. 7). The Lord decided not let the people know who would do this, leaving it vague so as to make them entertain all sorts of scenarios. Eventually trying to figure it out would be fruitless and make them return to the Lord.

The Lord closes this short verse with reference to his mouth having “spoken,” of having given his *davar*. It’s an authoritative way of letting the people know who is in charge, not so much a threat. To perceive it as a threat, however, reflects the innate shame and guilt of the people. After these words the Lord resumes his condemnatory remarks about Judah and Jerusalem.

1-Vs. 21: How the faithful city has become a harlot, she that was full of justice! Righteousness lodged in her but now murderers.

Now the Lord turns attention to the “city” which is “faithful,” *qiryah* being a more poetic term than the common *hyr* and is found next in vs. 26 (‘city of righteousness’). The verb *‘aman* (to believe) is used for “faithful;” also cf. vs. 26 as “the faithful city.” Most likely the Lord is referring to Jerusalem and more so, its temple. In the sharpest of all possible contrasts, the city marked by *‘aman* has become a “harlot” or the verb *zanah* which is prefaced with the preposition *l-*, making it more dramatic, literally as “has become to a harlot.” “It will happen to Tyre as in the song of the harlot” [23.15]. The exact opposite of selling herself as a prostitute is being full of “justice” or *misphat* which she was told to pursue in vs. 17.

Tsedeq or “righteousness” is not unlike *mishpat*; in fact, the two work hand-in-hand which had been the case until recently. Cf. vs. 26, “city of righteousness.”

Ratsach is a participle for “murderers” meaning to break in the sense of dash into pieces. “Do you see how this murderer has sent to take off my head” [2Kg 6.32]? The verb “lodged” (*lun*) means to pass the night but connotes a longer period of dwelling, albeit temporary. It’s more significant than at first glance because murderers have taken up their residence in Jerusalem for a time, that is, until they kill off all true worshipers of the Lord and then move on. “In the thickets in Arabia you will lodge, O caravans of Dedanites” [21.13].

1-Vs. 22: Your silver has become dross, your wine mixed with water.

Although mention of silver suggests currency and therefore any monetary exchange, it has turned into “dross” or *syg* (cf. vs. 25). Easily this can apply to the sacred vessels in the Jerusalem temple. Dross, by reason of its heaviness compared with the metal in which it is present, weighs down the metal and prevents any lifting up of worship as through sacrifice, etc.

Sova’ is the noun for “wine,” an uncommon word from a verbal root meaning to suck up and has two other biblical references, Hos 4.18 and Nah 1.10, the former being cited here: “A band of drunkards, they give themselves to harlotry” (NB: the RSV has a footnote for ‘drunkards’ as ‘uncertain’). This wine, too, can apply to liturgical celebrations as well as used both on a daily and festive basis.

1-Vs. 23: Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Every one loves a bribe and runs after gifts. They do not defend the fatherless, and the widow's cause does not come to them.

This verse hearkens back to vs. 17 where both *shaphat* and *ryv* (‘defend’ and ‘cause’) are mentioned. They are the exact opposite of rebels and thieves. *Sar* is the noun for “princes” and

can apply to a military leader. “The captain of fifty and the man of rank” [3.3]. Despite this injustice, the Lord is expecting the people to rectify it which doesn’t seem to be the case.

1-Vs. 24: Therefore the Lord says, the Lord of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel: "Ah, I will vent my wrath on my enemies and avenge myself on my foes.

Chapter One begins with a vision of Isaiah where he speaks in the name of the Lord. This identity is so close and remarkable that it can be overlooked and under-appreciated. So while moving through the current chapter, close attention is to paid as to whom is speaking. You can get an idea of this by the quotation marks in the **RSV**. For example, here we have the Lord clearly speaking as he calls himself both “Lord of hosts” (cf. vs. 9) and “Mighty One of Israel,” *‘Avyr* connoting nobility as belonging to a prince or *sar* in the previous verse. “Then all flesh shall know that I am...your Redeemer, the Might One of Jacob” [49.26].

As soon as the people hear the Lord saying “ah” or *huy*, they’re stunned because they know what is to follow (in two parts, if you will) certainly will be painful for them. *Nacham* is the verb for “vent wrath” which fundamentally means to pant and has two other opposite meanings, to take vengeance and to comfort. “Shall I be appeased for these things” [57.6]? *Naqam* as “avenge” as in Ex 21.20: “When a man strikes his slave...he shall be punished.” The two words “enemies and foes” are prefaced with the preposition *m-* or “from” as if to say that the Lord will suck wrath and vengeance from them. So now the “ah” which begins this sentence is realized by the people and turns out to be worse than expected, for they are the ones so identified.

1-Vs. 25: I will turn my hand against you and will smelt away your dross as with lye and remove all your alloy.

As in the previous verse, the words here and continuing to the end of Chapter One are in the future tense, deliberately so, because the Lord doesn’t wish to carry out what he proposes but has as his intent to scare the people into repentance. The turning of hand is “against” you or literally, “upon” (*hal-*) you.

Tsaraph means “smelt” and connotes purification with respect to dross noted last in vs. 22 as it relates to silver. “And a goldsmith overlays it (idol) with gold” 40.19]. Lye suggests a slow, unabated burning from the skin into the bone, a long and painful ordeal.

Bedyl means “alloy” which is removed by melting when the refuse is separated from the precious metal. “The house of Israel has become dross to me; all of them silver and bronze and tin (*bedyl*) and iron and lead in the furnace” [Ezk 22.17]. And so when the Lord makes this threat, it must have frightened the people like nothing else. As the Book of Isaiah develops with all its prophecies, we witness a constant back and forth with regard to the people’s relationship with the Lord.

1-Vs. 26: And I will restore your judges as at the first and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city."

This verse is a stunning turn-around from the past few with seemingly no connection but certainly is to the relief of those listening to the Lord speaking...again, either himself or through Isaiah. *Shuv* is the verb for “restore” (cf. vs. 25 as ‘turn’) and in the next verse; in sum,

three different uses of the same word. The judges and counselors will perform their duties as at the “beginning” or *ri’shon* or when they had been first constituted. “In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali” [9.1]. The word “afterward” begins a new sentence and does not necessarily mean a long extension of time. The word “counselors” is the participle *yahats* found next in 3.3.

Within this “afterward”–intimated but not given the exact time–Jerusalem will regain its former glory as city of “righteousness” and as being “faithful,” *tsedeq* and *’aman* found last in vs. 21. Note the two uses of “city,” *hyr* referring to the first and *qiryah* to the second, this distinction being noted in vs. 21.

1-Vs. 27: Zion shall be redeemed by justice and those in her who repent, by righteousness.

Even this early on into the Book of Isaiah the importance of “justice and righteousness” emerge quickly, *mishpat* (cf. vs. 21) and *tsedaqah* (slightly different spelling than *tsedeq* in vs. 26). If the people were really paying attention, they would repent much sooner, and so the Book of Isaiah would be relatively short. “And he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold a cry” [5.7]!

This is the first mention of Zion although vs. 8 has “daughter of Zion.” Zion as a whole will be “redeemed” or *padah*, a verb suggestive of letting go from captivity. “The Lord who redeemed Abraham” [29.22]. Next comes the third consecutive use of *shuv*, here as “repent.” Note that both nouns, justice and righteousness, are prefaced with the preposition *b-*, “in.”

1-Vs. 28: But rebels and sinners shall be destroyed together, and those who forsake the Lord shall be consumed.

Here the Lord returns to a fairly threatening tone of language. The people know that the Lord will carry through on his word, but as noted earlier, both threats and promises lay in the future and are therefore subject to change. Gradually yet right at the start of his prophecy the Lord is training his people in ways they had never anticipated except, perhaps, in the golden days of King David’s reign as well as his son, King Solomon.

Pashah is a participle for “rebels” noted last in vs. 2 and *chata’* is the noun for “sinners.” And to destroy its sinners from it” [13.9]. The former is more specific and the latter can pertain to violation of the Torah. Regardless, both will be “destroyed” or *shever*, a noun intimating breaking or fracturing found next in 15.5: “on the road to Horonaim they raise a cry of destruction.”

The verb “forsake” equals consuming or *hazav* (cf. vs. 4) and *kalah*, the latter suggestive of coming to an end which remains unspecified. “And they will all perish together” [31.3]. The details as to all this aren’t spelled out; they don’t have to be because the people know fully well what is involved.

1-Vs. 29: For you shall be ashamed of the oaks in which you delighted; and you shall blush for the gardens which you have chosen.

Two opposites which will occur in the future although the people may not realize it now: shame and delight or *bosh* and *chamad*. “Then the moon will be confounded, and the sun ashamed” [24.23]. “And the things they delight in do not profit” [44.9]. The object, of course,

consists of “oaks” or *‘ely* (it also means mighty) which has five other biblical references. The following shows the transformation of these oaks, commonly associated with worship of gods: “That they may be called oaks of righteousness” [61.3].

As for the gardens, most likely they were used for the same purpose of the oaks, special places tucked away from sight for idol worship and even sexual orgies. One can’t help but think of the Garden of Eden of which this verse shows its perversion while at the same time holding out hope. The verb for “blush” is *chapher* which means to be ashamed and found next in 24.23: “Then the moon will be confounded and the sun ashamed.”

1-Vs. 30: For you shall be like an oak whose leaf withers, and like a garden without water.

Here the Lord takes the oaks one step further, of the people actually being identified with them and whose fruit withers away. The garden again is reminiscent of Eden which was nourished by four rivers: Pishon, Gihon, Tigris and Euphrates (cf. Gn 2.10-14). As for the text at hand, literally it says “there was no water to it” which is more telling with regard to its destitution. As for this worship of trees and the implication of sexual activity, consider Jer 2.27-8.

1-Vs. 31: And the strong shall become tow and his work a spark, and both of them shall burn together with none to quench them.

Chason is the noun for “strong” and connotes a heaping up. It has one other reference which ties into the present context, Am 2.9: “Yes I destroyed the Amorite before them...who was as strong as the oak.”

Nehoreth means “tow” or that which has been shaken out from winnowing flax. It has one other biblical reference, Jud 16.9: “But he (Samson) snapped the bowstrings as a string of tow snaps when it touches the fire.” Such light, combustible material will be set ablaze instantly along with “his work.” Note the third person singular which seems to be referring to a specific person though chances are the Lord has in mind Jerusalem as a whole.

Kavah means “quench” as in putting out a fire. “Night and day it (streams of Edom) shall not be quenched” [34.10].

Thus the first vision of Isaiah ends on a mixed note, that is, a combination of promises and threats. Those listening to these words can take a break, if you will, though they are set on edge because they don’t know what will follow. At least they can take comfort that what they hear comes from the Lord and no one else.

Chapter Two

2-Vs. 1: The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

Compare this verse with 1.1: “The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem (etc.).” In both instances emphasis is upon seeing or *chazah*; in the verse at hand, *chazah* concerns the “word” or *davar*. Physically speaking, you don’t see a word but hear it. That means the *davar* has some kind of perceptible form though the specifics aren’t given. Emphasis upon *davar* in the opening of two chapters of Isaiah obviously elicits

reflection upon St. John's Gospel concerning Jesus Christ as *Logos*.

As in 1.1, the preposition *hal-* is used, literally as "upon Judah and Jerusalem." It is as though the divine *davar* were weighing upon them both which is true both spiritually and physically.

2-Vs. 2: It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains and shall be raised above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it,

"It shall come to pass" is rendered by the verb "it shall be."

The "latter days" or *'acharyth* are not specified but imply an indefinite span of days which comes before the ones at hand or the present time. Nevertheless, emphasis is upon the future. Those whom the Lord is addressing through the mediation of Isaiah haven't a clue as to the exact time, but it's a relief after hearing the condemnatory words of the last chapter. Now the listeners are held in suspense as to the nature of these "latter days" which they await eagerly to have spelled out. "That we may know their outcome" [41.22].

The mountain at hand is not specified but almost certainly Zion, that is, concerning its establishment, the verb *kun* (cf. 9.7) being used. Without a doubt, Zion is the highest spiritual mountain on earth which acts as a beacon—more specifically, the temple on Zion—once it is set as literally "in the head" (*r'osh*) of them. "For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin" [7.8]. Note the sequence of this constitution: first it shall be established and then raised, the two being effected at once.

Upon completion of this double establishment, nations "shall flow" to Zion, *nahar* being the verb which has a connotation of shining. "Then you shall see and be radiant" [60.5]. It seems that once the nations catch a glimpse of Zion as the highest point on earth, a light will be their guide not unlike the Magi: "for we have seen his star in the east and have come to worship him" [Mt 2.2].

2-Vs. 3: and many peoples shall come and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Note the two "comes," the common *halak*. The first one consists of that flowing...being illumined...which leads to the second, an exhortation to those who haven't been so enlightened or *nahar*, that they may ascend the Lord's mountain or Zion which is also the house of Jacob. Chances are that en route to this highest point on the face of the earth they were singing Songs of Ascents, that is Psalms 120 through 134. "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord'" [Ps 122.1]!

The *nahar* spoken of in vs. 1 and continued into the present verse comes with the realization that the Lord will "teach" his ways or *yarah* which fundamentally means to cast. "Whom will he teach knowledge and to whom will he explain the message" [28.9]? That which is cast, of course, consist of the Lord's "ways" or *derek* found next in 3.12: "and confuse the course of your paths." Compare *derek* with *'orach* (cf. 3.12) or the Lord's "ways" after having been taught them which is a more poetical form.

So once in Jerusalem or more specifically, on Mount Zion, those present will be able to see the entire earth in one glance or in a "moment of time" [Lk 4.12]. Having attained this

exalted place, there is no need to go anywhere else. Everywhere else is literally downhill, to a lower level of existence. From this place and time the people will witness both the “law” and the “word” of the Lord going forth, that is, the *Torah* and the *davar* (cf. vs. 1). Although the means by which both descend from this highest spot on earth isn’t spelled out, chances are those who have come to Zion and have been instructed will be the instruments of its going forth. After all, *Torah* is derived from *yarah*, to cast. The destination of this going forth isn’t given. That will be up to the people who have been *yarah* in *Torah*. Note that the *Torah* goes from Zion whereas the *davar* goes from Jerusalem, both leaving the same gate by which the people had entered.

2-Vs. 4: He shall judge between the nations and shall decide for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Shaphat means “shall judge” (cf. 1.17) which can be taken as a result of the divine *Torah* and *davar* exiting Zion and Jerusalem in the person of those who have been so *yarah*. In other words, *shaphat* is a natural outcome of having been on Mount Zion, highest point on the earth. Although judgement is done through the medium of those who had come to Jerusalem, the Lord himself will carry it out. Nothing is said as to how long the people will reside on Zion, although they have as a historical precedent the sacred time span of forty days and forty nights after the pattern of Moses on Mount Sinai. Of course, on Zion the *Torah* in its fulness had been given to Moses, so it is natural for the people to imitate him.

Note use of the word “between” (*beyn*), suggestive of the Lord’s presence (i.e., by those *yarah* in *Torah*) not above the peoples but smack in their midst or the normal place of action for this between-ness. The first part of this verse speaks of “nations” or *goy* which often apply to those who are not Israelites. The second part speaks of “people,” *ham* being a more generic term.

Not only will the Lord judge between nations, he “shall decide” for many peoples, *yakach* which connotes confuting or convicting. “And decide with equity for the meek of the earth” [11.4].

So once this judging and deciding takes place, both nations and peoples will undergo a conversion. The implication is that they have been at war either with each other or with external enemies. As a result of the Lord’s intervention, spontaneously they will convert their weapons of war into means of cultivating the earth. Most likely the plowshares and pruning hooks had been turned into swords and spears, only now the order is reversed.

Lamad is the verb for “learn” (cf. 1.17) used with respect to war. To learn war means that someone must have been teaching the people. It’s implied that such persons are no more or have left the Israelites since their martial skills is no long required.

2-Vs. 5: O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.

After the invitation in vs. 3 to come and ascend the mountain of the Lord, the house of Jacob is invited, not compelled, to walk in the light of the Lord. That is to say, this walking consists in accompanying the *Torah* and *davar*, also in vs. 3.

2-Vs. 6: For you have rejected your people, the house of Jacob, because they are full of diviners

from the east and of soothsayers like the Philistines, and they strike hands with foreigners.

Here Isaiah addresses the Lord directly in a rather sudden dramatic change of tone which continues through the remainder of Chapter Two. Such alteration between consolation and rebuke is part and parcel of Isaiah's prophecy, more like someone in love quarreling with his beloved. *Natash* is the verb for "rejected" often is used by the Lord with regard to his people. For another use, cf. 16.8: "the lords of the nations have struck down its branches." The reason for such rejection is that Jacob has taken in "diviners," a noun not in the Hebrew text which reads literally as "they are full from the east." Perhaps Isaiah was too incensed to add the word, the east signifying a place of mystery and intrigue where strange religions have filtered in over time to corrupt worship of the Lord.

"Soothsayers" is the verb *hanan* (not to be confused with the common verb *hanan*, the second 'a' being short) meaning to cover or to practice something in a covert fashion. "But you, draw near hither, sons of the sorceress" [57.3]. This practice, strictly forbidden originally is laid out in Lev 19.26: "you shall not practice augury or witchcraft." What makes this all the more threatening is that soothsaying is associated with the Philistines or those who inhabited the same land as the Israelites. Thus their practice of witchcraft is more pernicious than any military assault since it's a home-grown threat. The Book of Isaiah has only two other mentions of the Philistines, 9.12 and 11.14.

The "foreigner" or *nakry* can apply to those allied with the Philistines against Israel who remain unspecified. Just the mention of this word is sufficient to rouse suspicion and fear. To "strike" hands means to form an association with them. The only other biblical reference to this verb (*saphaq*) is Job 27.23: "It (the east wind) claps its hands at hand and hisses at him from its place."

2-Vs. 7: Their land is filled with silver and gold, and there is no end to their treasures; their land is filled with horses, and there is no end to their chariots.

Mention of "land" (*'erets*, cf. 1.19) as being filled with these two most precious commodities suggests that the house of Jacob in the last verse has been hoarding riches instead of sharing them for the common good. *'Otsar* or "treasures" can also refer to storehouses as for grain, etc. "They carry their riches on the backs of asses and their treasures on the humps of camels" [30.6]. Just as abundant as these riches are horses and chariots, both suggestive of military prowess.

2-Vs. 8: Their land is filled with idols; they bow down to the work of their hands, to what their own fingers have made.

Even worse than riches and military might is that the *'erets* of the house of Jacob is filled with "idols" or *'elyl* which connote emptiness as well as vanity. "And the idols shall utterly pass away" [2.18]. Perhaps when speaking of silver and gold as in vs. 7 Isaiah has in mind the multitude of gods and goddesses made from these precious materials. They had been in competition with worship of the Lord in the temple at Jerusalem, a sight that must have alarmed Isaiah. Although the word "filled" in this verse and the previous one is used to describe the situation, easily it can be overlooked as an exaggeration which is not true, given the prophecy Isaiah is attempting to communicate to his people.

The verb *shachah* as “bow down” conjures up an image of the entire land with people having their heads down on the ground before these images of silver and gold, all preoccupied with worshiping what amounts to themselves and their prosperity instead of the Lord in the Jerusalem temple. “You shall worship before this altar” [36.7].

2-Vs. 9: So man is humbled, and men are brought low—forgive them not!

A brief sentence uttered from the heart, pretty much in despair, as Isaiah looks out through the whole land of Judah and beyond, for it is no different from her neighbors. Isaiah uses the word “man” or *‘adam* which suggests his origin as from *‘adamah* or the earth and here can be taken in the collective sense. So when he speaks of him being “humbled” and “brought low,” already they are in that condition by reason of their *shachah* or bowing down with respect to their worship of idols.

Shachach is the verb for “humbled” (similar in sound and form to *shachah* of vs. 8), and *shaphel* is the verb for “brought low.” Both are found in 5.15: “Man is bowed down, and men are brought low.”

Despite this, Isaiah asks the Lord not to “forgive” the people, *nasa’* also meaning to bear or to lift up and found last in 2.4 though not noted there: “nation shall not lift up sword against nation.” In other words, the people are not to be lifted up from their near prone position of worship but are to remain that way permanently.

2-Vs. 10: Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust from before the terror of the Lord and from the glory of his majesty.

Tsur means “rock” which has frequent associations as a divine refuge as when Moses seeks the “back” of the Lord: “and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock” [Ex 33.22]. The next usage in Isaiah is vs. 19: “and men shall enter the caves of the rocks and the holes in the ground from before the terror of the Lord.”

Even more extreme than this *tsur* is hiding in the “dust” or *haphar* which also applies to a clod of earth as in vs. 19 just cited. Isaiah bids the people to enter it compared with the subsequent hiding in the dust. As for the verb “hide,” the primary idea behind *taman* seems to be immersing, of becoming one with that in which you are hiding, often in a negative or shameful manner. “In the net which they hid has their own foot been caught” [Ps 9.18].

Both the rock and dust are mentioned because they’re the closest source of refuge around, the *haphar* possibly being a camouflage of sorts. Supposedly they will offer protection first against divine “terror” or *pachad*: “from before the terror of the Lord and from the glory of his majesty” [vs. 19]. The second protection is not simply against divine “glory” or *hadar* but one belonging to his “majesty” (*ga’on*). Both terms mean ornament or decoration, the latter also suggestive of arrogance cited next in vs. 19. This verse is reminiscent of Rev 6.15: “Then the kings of the earth...and everyone, slave and free, hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains.”

2-Vs. 11: The haughty looks of man shall be brought low, and the pride of men shall be humbled; and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day.

Vs. 8 speaks of bowing down to worship idols, a voluntary prostration before them.

Compare with *shaphel* and *shachah*, the verbs for “shall be brought low” and “shall be humbled,” both found in vs. 9. The first applies to appearance (‘looks’) or *hayn* which fundamentally means eyes. “Defying his glorious presence (i.e., eyes; 3.8).” Such looks...eyes...are “haughty” or *gavhoth*, a noun: “eyes of haughtiness.” The only other biblical reference is vs. 17: “and the haughtiness of man shall be humbled.” The second (*shachah*) applies to human “pride,” *rum* being a verb noted last in 1.2 meaning “brought up.”

In sharp contrast to this false human exaltation is the one belonging to the Lord, the verb being *sagav* which connotes a lifting up in order to reach safety and is found next in vs. 17. However, at the present the Lord is not lifted up and hence remains un-revealed. That will become manifest in that “day” mentioned in the next verse.

The phrase “in that day” occurs two other times in Chapter Two, vss. 17 and 20, *yom* being similar to the Greek *kairos* which suggests an occasion, not so much day in the conventional sense (cf. 4.2).

2-Vs. 12: For the Lord of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty, against all that is lifted up and high;

The first part of this verse runs literally and quite to the point as “for day (*yom*, cf. 1.1) to the Lord of hosts.” This *yom* seems to be the same one as in the previous verse when the Lord will be exalted although it is not specified. It’s intentional in order to shock people out of their lethargy and immoral behavior. “But of that day and hour no one knows” [Mt 24.36].

Note the use of the preposition *hal-*, here as “against” and connotes being-upon as it relates to this particular day: *ge’eh* or “proud,” that which is lifted up in the negative sense (‘my proudly exalting ones,’ 13.3), *rum* (verb; cf. vs. 11) or “lofty” (cf. previous verse), *nasa’* or “lifted up” (cf. vs. 9) and *shaphel* found last in vs. 11 as brought low as opposed to “high” in the English translation. And so this *hal-*ness with respect to the divine *yom* will include all four, not so much destroying them but flattening them all out.

2-Vs. 13: against all the cedars of Lebanon, lofty and lifted up; and against all the oaks of Bashan;

What happens on that *yom* of the previous verse continues through vs. 16 and covers a whole gamut of human attitudes which the Lord must level out, for they had caused consternation among the people who most likely failed to see the healing side of this action. Both Lebanon and Bashan are found together in Ezk 27.5-6: “They (Tyre) took a cedar from Lebanon to make a mast for you. Of oaks of Bashan they made your oars.” The verbs *rum* and *nasa’*, both noted in vs. 12, are applied to Lebanon; Bashan is east of the Sea of Galilee. Both cedars and oaks from these two places are considered the finest construction material and hence used without consideration of the Lord.

2-Vs. 14: against all the high mountains, and against all the lofty hills;

The “on-ness” or *hal-* begun in vs. 12 continues here, the two verbs *rum* and *nasa’* being used yet again. Chances are the Lord has in mind worship of local gods on these high places.

2-Vs. 15: against every high tower, and against every fortified wall;

Now the Lord turns attention to buildings which reflect the pride and arrogance of those who constructed them. The *migdal* is a reminder of the tower of Babel: “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens” [Gn 11.4]. The next reference in Isaiah is 5.2: “he built a watchtower in the midst of it (vineyard).” As for the “wall” or *chomah*, cf. 22.10: “and you broke down the houses to fortify the wall.” Although such a wall is fortified and the city’s inhabitants take pride in it, nevertheless, such fortifications represent fear of people whom they had defrauded or maltreated and who may attempt to capture the city.

2-Vs. 16: against all the ships of Tarshish, and against all the beautiful craft.

This is the last of the “*hal-* verses” and pertains to modes of transportation as well as trade. Tarshish refers to Spain, the other end of the Mediterranean Sea and implies all the ports of call between there and Israel. “Wail, O ships of Tarshish, for Tyre is laid waste, without house or haven” [23.1]!

Sekyah is the noun for “craft,” the only biblical use of this term which means a form or appearance. Perhaps Isaiah is referring to images of both cargo and military vessels depicted on the walls of wealthy merchants. In other words, such depictions represent the far-flung activities of their trading activity. Their possessors consider them “beautiful” or *chemdah* which applies to something desirable. “And give you a pleasant land” [Jer 3.19].

2-Vs. 17: And the haughtiness of man shall be humbled, and the pride of men shall be brought low; and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day.

Gavhoth and *rum* (cf. vs. 14) or “haughtiness and pride:” cf. vs. 11 and vs. 14 which stand in contrast to the Lord’ being “exalted” or *sagav* (cf. vs. 11), again, “in that day” (cf. vs. 11). The two verbs associated with this frequent mention of arrogance are *shachah* and *shaphel* (cf. vss. 11 and 12).

2-Vs. 18: And the idols shall utterly pass away.

The noun for “idols” is *elyl* noted last in vs. 8 where the land was full of them, but “in that day” (vs. 17) they will “pass away” or *chalaph* which connotes a slipping away more or less discreetly and unnoticed yet at the same time in an instant. “And it (Euphrates River) will sweep on into Judah” [8.8]. Not only will this happen, but it will disappear totally or “utterly,” *kalyl* (adjective). “For it (your beauty) was perfect through the splendor which I had bestowed upon you” [Ezk 6.14].

2-Vs. 19: And men shall enter the caves of the rocks and the holes of the ground from before the terror of the Lord and from the glory of his majesty when he rises to terrify the earth.

This verse is similar to vss. 10 and 21 as well as Rev 6.15 cited in the former verse: “Then the kings of the earth...and everyone, slave and free, hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains.” *Pachad* or “terror” is found in vs. 10 along with “glory of his majesty.” It seems that the Lord is not in heaven above but on earth below or more specifically, under it, because he will rise (*qum*) to “terrify” the “earth” or *erets* (cf. vs. 8). The verb here is *harats* which connotes trembling as though the earth itself were undergoing an earthquake. “Do not fear

what they fear, nor be in dread" [8.12]. Note the similarity of sound, *harats* and *'erets*. In other words, the Lord is in hiding, all the while watching what is transpiring and awaiting "that day" when he will rise up and make himself known.

2-Vs. 20: In that day men will cast forth their idols of silver and their idols of gold which they made for themselves to worship, to the moles and to the bats,

The Lord keeps stressing the importance of "that day," especially as we come to the conclusion of Chapter Two and get ready to advance further into the Book of Isaiah. It will take a full twenty-four hour cycle or day and night to do this because of the multitude of idols the people had fashioned over the years.

Compare this getting rid of idols with their passing or slipping away in vs. 18 which seems to be done on their own accord. In other words, the people don't destroy them which means the possibility of their recovery later on.

Vs. 20 contains the only biblical reference to moles; bats has three other references. Such animals live in caves or under the earth.

2-Vs. 21: to enter the caverns of the rocks and the clefts of the cliffs from before the terror of the Lord and from the glory of his majesty when he rises to terrify the earth.

It seems that Isaiah can't help but give enough references to the people's tendency to hide in the earth. If they had enough courage to remain on the surface, things just might go better or not as harshly.

2-Vs. 22: Turn away from man in whose nostrils is breath, for of what account is he?

Chadal is the verb for "turn away" (cf. 1.16) and means more a ceasing. "Man" (*'adam*) here is not so much the human sense of the word but synonymous with vanity and all the violence that Chapter Two has recounted thus far. *Neshamah* means "breath" and can intimate the mortality of a living creature compared with the more spiritual nature of *ruach* or spirit. "The breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone kindles it" [30.33]. *Chashav* means "account" and refers to thinking or reckoning which here is used as a kind of rhetorical question. "But he does not so intend, and his mind does not so think" [10.7].

Chapter Three

3-Vs. 1: For, behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, is taking away from Jerusalem and from Judah stay and staff, the whole stay of bread and the whole stay of water;

Hineh or "behold" is a good way to start a new chapter because it serves to grab one's attention for what is about to transpire. "And he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed" [5.7]. Attention is directed not just to the Lord but to the Lord of hosts mentioned last in 2.12.

The "taking away" or *sur* suggests something that will be ongoing. Because bread and water are at issue, perhaps Isaiah has in mind a famine brought on by a siege of Jerusalem. "I

will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured" [5.5].

The two words *mashhen* and *mishhan* ('stay and staff') derive from a verbal root meaning to lean upon, to recline, thus intimating support at the most basic or important level of existence, bread and water. The first is the only use of this term in the Bible whereas the second has two others, 2Sam 22.19 and Ps 18.18, the latter being cited here: "They came upon me in the day of my calamity; but the Lord was my stay."

3-Vs. 2: the mighty man and the soldier, the judge and the prophet, the diviner and the elder,

The *sur* begun in the previous verse continues here as well as into vs. 3. In the verse at hand *sur* applies to notable persons in society. If they are taken away, much of the basis of society will suffer collapse. Those subject to this divine action are divided into three pairs:

- 1) "Mighty man and soldier:" *gibor* and *'ysh milchamah*. The first often applies to a warrior who is a hero marked by a certain impetuosity. "Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine and valiant men in mixing strong drink" [5.22]. The second is a phrase translated literally and vividly as "man war."
- 2) "Judge and prophet:" *shaphat* and *navy'*. "And I will restore your judges as at the first" [1.22, a verb]. "And the prophet who teaches lies is the tail" [9.15].
- 3) "Diviner and elder:" *qesem* and *zaqen*. The former is a verb (participle) and found next in 44.25: "who frustrates the omens of liars, and makes fools of diviners." "The youth will be insolent to the elder" [vs. 5].

3-Vs. 3: the captain of fifty and the man of rank, the counselor and the skillful magician and the expert in charms.

At last the divine *sur* which begins this new chapter runs its course, continuing with those who are notable in society. As with the three pairs in vs. 2, here we have two of them, the second pair containing three groups:

- 1) "Captain of fifty" and "men of rank:" *sar* obviously pertains to soldiers and especially to a royal body guard. *Sar* is found last in 1.23 and the association with fifty soldiers in 2Kg 1.9: "Then the king sent to him (Elijah) a captain of fifty men with his fifty." *Nasa' panyim* is the second category, the only use of this phrase in the Bible which has the verb *nasa'* meaning to lift up (cf. 2.12) and the noun for "faces."
- 2) "Counselor, skillful magician, expert in charms:" 1) *yahats*; cf. 1.26; 2) *cheresh* or literally a craftsman or one who does inscribing. It has three other biblical references, one of which being Neh 11.35: "Lod and Ono, the valley of craftsmen." In the verse at hand, such a person is "skillful" or *chakam*, an adjective commonly meaning wise. "Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine and valiant men in mixing strong drink" [5.22]. 3) *Byn* is a verb meaning to understand as in 5.21: "woes to those who are wise in their own eyes and shrewd in their own sight!" In the verse at hand, such understanding applies to "charms" or *lachash* which derives from a verbal root meaning to whisper. "The perfume boxes and the amulets" [3.20].

3-Vs. 4: And I will make boys their princes, and babes shall rule over them.

At first glance this appears to substitute the traditional elite mentioned in the last three verses—those who are object of that divine *sur* or taking away—for the innocence of youth.

However, this is not borne out by the verses that follow.

Tahalulym is the word for “boys,” the only other reference being 66.4 as “afflictions.”

Sar is the noun for “princes” as in the previous verse. *Mashal* or “rule” as in 19.4: “and a fierce king will rule over them.” In the verse at hand, *mashal* takes the preposition *b-* (in) reading literally, “rule in them.”

3-Vs. 5: And the people will oppress one another, every man his fellow and every man his neighbor; the youth will be insolent to the elder, and the base fellow to the honorable.

This verse testifies sadly to what will happen when youths are in charge either figuratively or literally. *Nagas* means “oppress” which fundamentally means to urge or impel, the cause of which isn’t given but connected with the fact that boys and babes will be in charge. With this in mind, the *nagas* will be marked by immature, unreflective behavior. “The rod of his oppressor” [9.4]. The intensity of such *nagas* is highlighted by use of the preposition *b-* (in) prefaced to “man” and “neighbor.”

Nahar is the noun for “youth” as with “boys” in the previous verse, and such a person (remember, he is in charge along with babes) will be “insolent” or *rahav* to the “elder” (*zaqen*, cf. vs. 2). This is a strong verb meaning to rage, to fear, and has three other biblical references as in Sg 6.5: “Turn away your eyes from me, for they disturb me.”

Note the contrast between the “base fellow” and the “honorable” person, *qalah* and *kavad* (the verb to honor and fundamentally as to be heavy). “The glory of Moab will be brought into contempt” [16.14]. “Whose traders were the honored of the earth” [23.8].

3-Vs. 6: When a man takes hold of his brother in the house of his father, saying: "You have a mantle; you shall be our leader, and this heap of ruins shall be under your rule;"

This verse reflects the fact that incompetent men will be thrust into a leadership position much as in vs. 4. In desperation someone will say to a member of his household that he has rightful place as “leader” or *qatsyn* (cf. 1.10). This choice doesn’t rest upon merit or virtue but simply by having possession of a “mantle” or *simlah*. This is an outer garment proper to both men and women and seems to be the first thing someone in the house of his father lays his eyes upon. *Simlah* is found in the next verse.

The prospect of rule certainly is not flattering, a “heap of ruins” which isn’t in the Hebrew text...fortunately, it may be added, for the person so hastily chosen.

3-Vs. 7: in that day he will speak out, saying: "I will not be a healer; in my house there is neither bread nor mantle; you shall not make me leader of the people."

Here the prophet Isaiah quotes the Lord directly. The phrase “in that day” is found in 2.11, 17 and 20, the last one in reference to casting idols to moles and bats. Despite the several different locations and contexts (more are to come, vs. 18), all may be taken as one and the same. In other words, “day” or *yom* does not belong to our familiar twenty-four hour cycle consisting of day and night. Within this period of time the Lord will “speak up” or *nasa’* noted last in vs. 3 as to lift up. What the Lord will lift up isn’t specified nor is directly related to speaking though the common verb *amar* follows. That which the Lord lifts up, if you will, is far from being positive as the rest of the verse and Chapter Three recount.

Chavash is a participle for “healer,” more fundamentally as to bind fast. “In the day when the Lord binds up the hurt of his people” [30.26].

Interestingly, the Lord refers to his house, the Jerusalem temple, especially after mention of *simplah* (‘mantle’) in vs. 6, “in the house of his father.” The same can be said with regard to *qatsyn* or “leader.” In other words, the Lord refuses to govern his people despite their dire predicament. This must have taken them by surprise, thinking that automatically he would respond.

3-Vs. 8: For Jerusalem has stumbled, and Judah has fallen; because their speech and their deeds are against the Lord, defying his glorious presence.

After a direct quote from the Lord, Isaiah continues his condemnation against Jerusalem and Judah. The former has “stumbled” and the latter has “fallen,” *kashal* and *naphal*. Both are found in 8.15: “And many shall stumble thereon; they shall fall and be broken.” The reason is that both has spoken and acted not in accord with the Lord’s wishes. *Lashon* as “speech” more specifically refers to the tongue as in 5.24: “therefore, as the tongue of fire devours the stubble.” *Mahalal* as “deeds” is noted last in 1.16. The preposition *’el-* (to) is used for “against (the Lord).”

The last part of this verse reads literally “to provoke the eyes of his glory,” the verb being *marah* which implies being rebellious (cf. 1.20). The next reference to *kavod* or “glory” is 4.2: “the fruit of the land shall be the pride and glory of the survivors of Israel.”

3-Vs. 9: Their partiality witnesses against them; they proclaim their sin like Sodom, they do not hide it. Woe to them! For they have brought evil upon themselves.

“Partiality” is rendered as *hakarith penehem* or literally the “cutting (*karath*) of their faces,” the noun indicative of a part which can be detrimental to the whole. The verb *hanah* or “witnesses” is used which fundamentally means to answer. “Hyenas will cry in its towers and jackals in the pleasant palaces” [13.22].

This is the second mention of Sodom (cf. 1.10) which for the Israelites is the most shameful comparison that can be made. The brief but poignant *’ovy* (‘woe’) cuts to the quick and is used with the singular *nephesh* (cf. 1.14) or soul (i.e., ‘to them’).

Nagad means “proclaim” which has the idea of manifesting, almost of parading about. “What I have heard from the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, I announce to you” [21.10]. There is no direct mention of this in the Genesis account; perhaps Isaiah has in mind memories which have accumulated over the years concerning Sodom’s destruction which continues to make a profound impact on Israel. Yet Israel resembles Sodom in that the people failed to hide their sin, the nature of which isn’t spelled out but intimated by association with that town.

Gamal means “brought” as well as to give, to repay, here with respect to *rah* (‘evil,’ cf. 1.16). “According to all that the Lord has granted us” [63.7]. So if this is true, the same fate that befell Sodom (and Gomorrah) awaits Israel.

3-Vs. 10: Tell the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their deeds.

If Sodom (and by implication, Gomorrah) were mentioned in the previous verse, shift in attention to the “righteous” or *tsadyq* (cf. 5.23) can intimate or at least trigger in the minds of

Isaiah's listeners the few survivors of those two cities, that is to say, Lot and his family. The common adjective *tov* (i.e., good) is used for "well."

Mahalal is the noun for "deeds" (cf. vs. 8). And so this righteousness which had been accumulated gradually in a hostile environment represented by Sodom becomes something resembling the quail and manna which had nourished Israel in the Sinai wilderness.

3-Vs. 11: Woe to the wicked! It shall be ill with him, for what his hands have done shall be done to him.

Ovy (cf. vs. 9) or "woe" applies here to the "wicked" or *rashah*, most likely the recipients of *rah* (cf. vs. 9). "Who acquit the guilty for a bribe" [5.23].

Gemul as "shall be done" connotes repayment as noted in vs. 9. Such *gemul* from one's own hands is the exact opposite of eating the fruit of one's deeds in the previous verse.

3-Vs. 12: My people—children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, your leaders mislead you, and confuse the course of your paths.

Hamy or "my people" is used twice in poignant fashion, the Lord being pretty much on the verge of dismay. This verse hearkens back to vs. 4, "boys their princes, and babes shall rule over them." *Halal* is a participle with multiple meanings such as to defile, to glean, and here translates as "children." "In company with men who work iniquity" [Ps 141.4]. In the verse at hand, these children are "oppressors," the participle *nagas* being used (cf. vs. 5). As for the women...usually considered unfit for governance...they will "rule" (*mashal*, cf. vs. 4) literally "in (*b-*) them" or in the people.

Ashar is a participle for "leaders" (cf. 1.17) who instead of leading, "mislead" or *tahah* which means to err or wander. "For those who lead this people lead them astray" [9.16]. They also cause confusion, *balah* or fundamentally to swallow down or consume. "And he will destroy on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples" [25.7]. Such *balah* is done not just with regard to "paths" (*orach*, 2.3) but their "course" or *derek* (cf. 2.3), the former being a more poetical term and here as governing the various directions of *derek*.

3-Vs. 13: The Lord has taken his place to contend, he stands to judge his people.

Natsav means "taken (his) place" which connotes being ready to do something and can refer to the temple at Jerusalem. "And at my post I am stationed whole nights" [21.8]. From this position of permanence the Lord is prepared both to "contend" or *ryv* (cf. 1.23) and to "judge," the verb *dyn* also referring to the exercise of authority or rule. "That he may judge his people" [Ps 50.4].

3-Vs. 14: The Lord enters into judgment with the elders and princes of his people: "It is you who have devoured the vineyard, the spoil of the poor is in your houses.

The previous verse has the Lord standing to judge his people, that is, taking a position visible to all. Here he enters "judgment" or *mishpat* (cf. 1.27) with the preposition *b-* (in) prefaced to it. This noun's verbal root is *shaphat* (cf. 3.2) which differs from *dyn* whose definition is given in the previous verse. Entry isn't in the literal sense of walking in but

intimates beginning to effect *mishpat*. The Lord is about to do this with the leaders or “elders and princes,” *zaqen*, cf. vs. 5 and *sar*, cf. vs. 4. Both groups have taken over the property of people unjustly, vineyard suggestive of grapes and therefore wine.

Hany is the noun for “poor” found in the next verse. The Lord calls stealing what little they possess as “spoil” or *gezelah*. To store up such meager possessions can suggest that the elders and princes are holding them as a kind of ransom or intimidation. “He does not oppress anyone but returns what he took in pledge for a loan” [Ezk 18.7].

3-Vs. 15: What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor?" says the Lord God of hosts.

This is more a rhetorical question put in the Lord’s mouth by Isaiah and receives no response nor is any expected under the circumstances. Just posing it causes shame. The verb “mean” isn’t in the Hebrew text. *Daka’* is the verb for “crushing” and found next in 53.10: “Yet it was the Lord’s will to crush him.” Even worse than this crushing is *tachan* or “grinding” not just the poor but their faces not unlike in a mill as 47.2 illustrates: “Take millstones and grind flour; take off your veil.”

3-Vs. 16: The Lord said: Because the daughters of Zion are haughty and walk with outstretched necks, glancing wantonly with their eyes, mincing along as they go, inkling with their feet;

While the elders and princes are brought before the Lord for their abuses, “daughters of Zion” could apply to either their wives or daughters or both who reaped the fruit of these unjust benefits. Here through vs. 25 the Lord goes after them with a special vengeance, almost unjustly, since their husbands seem to be the perpetrators. And so he vents his anger at their public display so well depicted by the four words “haughty, walking, glancing, mincing and inkling:” *gavah* (cf. 52.13: ‘he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted’), *halak* (the common verb to walk but with necks outstretched), *saqar* (only use of this verb in the Bible), *taphaph* (only use of this verb in the Bible) and *hakas* (a tinkling sound with one other biblical reference, Prov 7.22: ‘like a deer stepping into a noose.’

3-Vs. 17: the Lord will smite with a scab the heads of the daughters of Zion, and the Lord will lay bare their secret parts.

Saphach is the verb for “smite with a scab,” the only use of this word in the Bible. Its visibility on the head will make the women especially shameful by reason of not being attractive. *Poth* as “secret parts” is the only use of this verb in the Bible.

NB: Verses 18 through 24 contain 18 items of luxury which the Lord will remove from the daughters of Zion will dismay their husbands as well, making them completely unattractive. There is no time limit mentioned here but one thing is for certain. Vs. 25 says that their “men” and “mighty men” will perish in battle. While this is transpiring, the daughters of Zion will be looking on completely abandoned by everyone.

3-Vs. 26: And her gates shall lament and mourn; ravaged, she shall sit upon the ground.

While vs. 17 speaks of the daughters of Zion or wives and daughters of those who had

abused the people and especially the poor, attention here is more towards the city, that is, Jerusalem. The gates stand midway between safety and danger, inside and outside. Because of this unique position to see both ways at one time, in a special way they will feel the affect of what had been described. Chances are that many of the people who had been recently disenfranchised will have taken up their positions at these gates, reduced to begging alms from both natives and foreign visitors alike. So in the long run, they will manage to survive even though no one wants them.

Naqah is the verb for “ravaged” which has the alternate meaning of to be pure as well as to be empty. And so the idea contained in the last definition is the essence of this ravaging. “You say, ‘I am innocent; he is not angry with me’” [Jer 2.35]. While those who had been abused are at the city gates, they will be joined by these daughter of Zion sitting there along with them in total revilement and without means to care for themselves.

Chapter Four

4-Vs. 1: And seven women shall take hold of one man in that day saying, "We will eat our own bread and wear our own clothes, only let us be called by your name; take away our reproach."

Compare this verse with 3.6: “When a man takes hold of his brother in the house of his father, saying: “You have a mantle; you shall be our leader, and this heap of ruins shall be under your rule.” Both verses are words of desperation, a sign that either war or famine or both has decimated the nation.

Chazaq is the verb for “take hold” which connotes making firm or strong. In other words, these seven women will not let a man go until he relieves their desperate situation. It seems they were wandering about and grabbed the first man they came across. “I took you from the ends of the earth” [41.9]. The women hope to protect or hide their identity perhaps being of prominent families but requiring protection “in that day” mentioned last in 3.7.

Mention of the man’s name is a way of associating with him and even could involve marriage, a kind of marriage of convenience during a time of unspecified civil strife.

Cherpah means “reproach” and is found next in 25.8: “he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth.”

4-Vs. 2: In that day the branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and glory of the survivors of Israel.

The second use of the phrase “in that day” which seems to differ from the desperation of vs. 1. However, that desperation is an occasion, that is, “day” as a *kairos* where the Lord steps in. Two events will take place “in that day:”

1) The Lord’s “branch” or *tsemach* will become known, most likely a descendant of King David. This doesn’t mean a king hadn’t been on the throne; rather, one is destined to replace an apparently long string of corrupt ones. The only other use of *tsemach* in Isaiah is 61.11: “For as the soil makes the sprout come up...so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations.” Compare with the “shoot” and “branch” of 11.1 which will come from the stump of Jesse, two different words most likely applying to the same future king. In the verse at hand, this branch will be both “beautiful and glorious,” *tsevy* and *kavod*. These are

two nouns, the first meaning splendor as well as a gazelle. The second is noted last in 3.8.

2) The land's fruit will pertain to the "survivors" of Israel, *peleytah* or those who have escaped. "The survivors of the house of Jacob will no longer rely on him who struck them down" [10.20]. *Peleytah* suggests some type of calamity as depicted in the last chapter, those who perhaps did not suffer directly but found themselves on the sidelines while the destruction was transpiring. These rejects, as it were, will inherit the fruit of the land which for them will be their "pride and glory" or *ga'on* (cf. 2.10) and *tiph'arah* found last in 3.18 but not mentioned there, a noun which can apply to an ornament. The seven women and man of vs. 1 will be part of those looking on at this sight while having no part in the survivors' spoils.

4-Vs. 3: And he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, every one who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem,

Those left in Zion will remain in Jerusalem and seem to be a more specific group than the just mentioned survivors. These persons will take refuge in the Temple on Mount Zion and take over Jerusalem once judgement has been pronounced by the Lord. Nothing is said about what they will be doing there; most likely they are in hiding while worshiping the Lord. By reason of this waiting they will be called "holy" or *qadosh* which is applied to the Lord as in 1.4.

The verb for "recorded" with respect to life is the common verb to write, *katav*. Such writing is reminiscent of Rev 21.27: "whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life." Chances are angels are the ones who will act as scribes for this purposes.

4-Vs. 4: when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning.

In the previous verse Zion is intimated as a place of refuge while here it is daughters, and perhaps the seven women of vs. 2 just might be among them. They are covered in "filth" or *tso'ah* (i.e., excrement) which has three other biblical references, two of which are in Isaiah, the first being 28.8: "All the tables are covered with vomit, and there is not a spot without filth."

Applicable to Jerusalem are "bloodstains" or *dam* which refers simply to blood (cf. 1.15 but not mentioned there). This blood, not simply stains of it, is located in Jerusalem's very "midst" or *qerev* meaning that it permeates all quarters of the city minus, of course, the temple. Two cleansing agents are used by means of "spirit" or *ruach* (cf. 2.22): "judgment" (*mishpat*, cf. 3.14) and "burning" (*bahar*; found first in 1.31 and as 'devoured' in 3.14). In other words, both judgment and this burning or devouring will act as a breath or strong wind to blow the blood out from Jerusalem starting in its very center.

4-Vs. 5: Then the Lord will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory there will be a canopy and a pavilion.

The imagery here immediately brings to mind the Lord's guiding presence for the Israelites when they departed Egypt: "By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light so that they could travel by night." Both then and later on Mount Sinai the cloud, smoke and fire are the Lord's preferred methods of being present among his people. This same manifestation will be used at

the final destination, as it were, Mount Zion. Zion is not just a replica of the previous two but their fulfillment.

Note that the text uses the word “site” or *makon*, a place or better, a foundation with respect to Mount Zion. “I will remain quiet and will look on from my dwelling place” [18.4]. Along with this *makon* are the “assembles” of Zion or *miqra’* which literally means people who have been called (*qara’*) together and noted last in 1.13. Such *miqra’* might be considered as the survivors of vs. 2 and those left in Zion of vs. 3.

The flaming fire is intensified by being called one which has a “shining” or *nogah* (cf. 50.10) which connotes splendor. “Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the Lord” [50.10].

It seems that a “canopy and pavilion” will be higher than the divine “glory” or *kavod* (cf. vs. 2), pretty much as an added protection. *Chuphah* is the noun for the former which has two other biblical references, Ps 19.5 and Jl 2.16, the former being cited here: “Like a bridegroom coming forth from his tent.” The Hebrew text doesn’t have “pavilion;” that is in the next verse.

4-Vs. 6: It will be for a shade by day from the heat, and for a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain.

As just noted, the Hebrew noun “pavilion” isn’t present in the previous verse but here the word *sukah* is “lodge” (cf. 1.8). In a way, this *sukah* is moveable in that it can be unfurled when the sun is burning and when the weather is foul. Those living under it will experience a shade and will be able to go about their lives unimpeded. The pegs to support this device are located on the walls of Jerusalem meaning that even just outside the city this protection will not be offered but certainly visible by reason of its great height. The next reference in Isaiah for “shade” or *tsef* is 16.3: “make your shadow like night.”

Chapter Five

5-Vs. 1: Let me sing for my beloved a love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill.

The particle *na’* is an interjection indicative of desire and spontaneity coming from deep within a person as is the case here, “Let me sing.” Presumably it is a continuation of Isaiah’s vision where he participates in the ups and downs relative to God’s dealing with his people. *Dod* means “beloved” as well as “love” and sometimes is translated as “uncle,” this being the only use of the noun in Isaiah. “For your love is better than wine” [Sg 1.2].

Kerem means “vineyard” and is found last in 3.14 but not noted there as an image of the Lord’s people as is the case at hand. It is reminiscent of the parable of the tenants in Mt 21.33-39. Part of the second sentence translates literally as “in the horn of the son of oil.” Such oil (presumably from olives in the vineyard) is the delight of the Lord.

5-Vs. 2: He dug it and cleared it of stones and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it and hewed out a wine vat in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes.

The digging and clearing of stones hearkens back to much of Chapters Two and Three, the wickedness and unfaithfulness there now being replaced with “choice vines” or *soreq* which derives from a verbal root meaning to intertwine or to clean out by combing. It has one other reference, Jer 2:11: “I had planted you like a choice vine of sound and reliable stock.”

The presence of a watchtower (same in the parable mentioned in vs. 1) suggests that what is being cultivated is extremely valuable and requires protection, that is, grapes for the best wine. Despite the effort put into this project, the vineyard produced “wild grapes” or *be’ushym* which has one other biblical reference, vs. 4. Nothing to avert this could be done until harvest, all the more tragic because it applies to the entire crop. On a positive note, the Lord viewed the maturation of the vines over a period of time by ascending his tower and having his workers check on them. He allowed the wild grapes to grow despite protestations by those who worked for him. In other words, they were frustrated and tried in vain to understand why their lord allowed this, not knowing that he had in mind a larger picture. At the same time they feared their master and did not contradict him. “Let both (wheat and weeds) grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, ‘Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn’” [Mt 13:30].

5-Vs. 3: And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard.

“And now” (*vehatah*) are ominous words, ones to whom they are directed would rather not hear especially with this new chapter getting off to a good start. Note the plural “inhabitants” (*yoshev*) regarding Jerusalem and singular “man” (*ysh*) for Judah. They must have been very familiar with the Lord’s vineyard, the effort he had put into it, as well as the unfortunate yield of wild grapes. In other words, they ridiculed him and held him up to scorn behind his back. But now they are caught off guard suddenly and asked to “judge” (*shaphat*, cf. 3:14) between the Lord and his vineyard, the very last thing they wanted but couldn’t escape.

“I pray you” is another example of *na’* noted in vs. 1 but said here with force. While they must have done this and failed miserably, the succeeding verses don’t record it.

5-Vs. 4: What more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it? When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes?

Obviously the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah could not respond to these two embarrassing questions. All they could do is stand there with heads cast down. *Qavah* is the verb “looked for” which essentially means to wait, to expect, just like the Lord had done during the grape growing season until harvest. “And he looked for justice but saw bloodshed” [vs. 7].

5-Vs. 5: And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down.

This verse begins with another “and now” or *vehatah*, the last one being in vs. 3, which yet another indication that something ominous about to happen literally to the (plural) inhabitants of Jerusalem and the (singular) man of Judah. The verb for “will tell” is *yadah* (cf. 1:3), more commonly as to know in an intimate sense. *Mesukah* is the noun for “hedge,” the

other biblical reference being Prov 15:19: “The way of the sluggard is blocked with (a hedge of) thorns.” The hedge was designed not just keep out trespassers but animals, an uncultivated boarder area which acts as a natural barrier. It seems to form the first of two barriers, the outer one, the second being a wall. The result is *bahar* or “devoured,” noted last in 4.4 as its alternate of “burning.”

Gader means “wall” or more properly hedge but hedge as fence to distinguish it from *mesukah*. “How long will you assault a man?...this leaning wall, this tottering fence” [Ps 62.3]? *Parats* is the verb used with *gader*, more to scatter as though the hedge will be smashed to smithereens. “For you will spread out to the right” [54.3]. Immediately after this comes a trampling which is passive, not directly from the Lord as with *parats*. *Ramas* means “trampled down” and noted last in 1.12. Perhaps the Lord has a hand in all this, allowing the enemies of Judah and Jerusalem to swarm in and do the trampling at will.

5-Vs. 6: I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and briers and thorns shall grow up; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.

Shyth is the verb for “make waste” which connotes a putting or appointing. “Dimon’s waters are full of blood, but I will bring still more upon Dimon” [15.9]. This verb is similar in form and pronunciation to *shayth* or “thorns” which has six references, all in Isaiah, the next being 7.23: “there will be only briers and thorns.” This same verse contains the word for “briers” or *shamyr*.

“Pruned and hoed” or *zamar* and *hadar*: the former primarily means to sing praises as in 12.5: “Sing to the Lord, for he has done glorious things.” *Hadar* connotes a setting in order and has three other biblical references, one of which is 7.25 (not noted there): “as for all the hills once cultivated by the hoe.” So without this breaking up of the soil within the vineyard and no rain falling upon the grapes, it will take no time for it to become useless.

5-Vs. 7: For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant planting; and he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, a cry!

The house of Israel got wind of where things are going simply by the way Chapter Five began. There seems to be a distinction between Israel and Judah: to the former belongs the Lord’s vineyard and to the latter (note again singular ‘man’), his planting which is “pleasant” or *shahshuhym*. This is a noun which means delight...“his vineyard of delight.” “Your statues are my delight; they are my counselors” [Ps 119.24].

A juxtaposition of two opposites, each with similar sounding words to make this juxtaposition all the more dramatic. Both are in connection with the Lord looking for or expecting them, *qavah* as in vs. 4:

) “Justice and bloodshed,” *mishpat* (cf. 4.4) and *mispach*. The latter is the only biblical use of this term.

2) “Righteousness and cry,” *tsedaqah* (cf. 1.27) and *tshaqah*. For the latter, cf. Ps 9.12: “He does not ignore the cry of the afflicted.”

5-Vs. 8: Woe to those who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is no more room, and you are made to dwell alone in the midst of the land.

When the Lord speaks of a vineyard, he intends Judah and Israel to reconcile with the center of worship in Jerusalem which is open to all. With this in mind, he rails against those who go against this desire for unity by engaging in divisive activity: house to house, field to field.

The preposition “in the midst of” (*qerev*) is derived from the verb *qarav* (‘add’).

5-Vs. 9: The Lord of hosts has sworn in my hearing: "Surely many houses shall be desolate, large and beautiful houses, without inhabitant.

Ozen is the noun for “hearing” which fundamentally means ear. In other words, the Lord is coming close to Isaiah, about to whisper in his ears. The words “has sworn” are not in the Hebrew; it reads literally, “in my ears the Lord of Hosts,” a close contact if there ever was one. It’s as though the Lord doesn’t want the people to hear what is about to happen despite having some intimation.

Shamah is a noun for “desolate” prefaced with the preposition *L*, literally as “to desolation.” The idea is that these houses are sliding inexorably to this *shamah* from which there will be no return.

5-Vs. 10: For ten acres of vineyard shall yield but one bath, and a homer of seed shall yield but an ephah."

The two measures are meager which implies that the people are approaching the level of starvation brought on by their own misdeeds.

5-Vs. 11: Woe to those who rise early in the morning that they may run after strong drink, who tarry late into the evening till wine inflames them!

When the Lord says “woe” (*hoy*, cf. 1.4), it’s very serious, for the listeners know that harsh words are coming. Note the play on words: *shakam* and *shakar* (cf. 5.22), “rise early” and “strong drink.”

Nesheph is the noun for “evening” which connotes twilight. “The twilight I longer for has become a horror to me” [21.4].

Dalaq is the verb for “inflames” and also can refer to persecution in the sense of pursuing hotly after some one. “In his arrogance the wicked man hunts down the weak” [Ps 10.2].

5-Vs. 12: They have lyre and harp, timbrel and flute and wine at their feasts; but they do not regard the deeds of the Lord or see the work of his hands.

Mishteh is the word for “feasts” and fundamentally means drinking. “On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples” [25.6]. In the verse at hand these feasts aren’t specified but perhaps refer to celebrations not related to worship of the Lord but in honor of local deities. Such can be intimated by the people’s failure to turn their attention elsewhere as indicated by two verbs:

1) “Regard” the Lord’s deeds. The verb is *navat* which connotes a beholding and having respect, certainly true here. “Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness

and fearful gloom” [10.22]. That which the people should respect are divine “deeds” or *pohal* found in 1.31 but not noted there.

2) “See” or the common verb *ra’ah* (cf. 1.12) with regard to divine “work” or *mahaseh* found last in 3.24 but not noted there. The former (*pohal*) applies to the making of something whereas the latter (*mahaseh*) to anything produced by labor and specified by reference to the Lord’s hands. Thus the four musical instruments provide sound which prevents the people from hearing; i.e., no hearing = no seeing.

5-Vs. 13: Therefore my people go into exile for want of knowledge; their honored men are dying of hunger, and their multitude is parched with thirst.

This going into “exile” or *galah* is a direct result of the people not having regard for the Lord’s deeds or work of his hands, that is to say, by reason of not having that *navat* in the previous verse which consists in beholding or having respect. Nothing is said as to where the people will go, but they taken false comfort in not having been wiped out completely. *Galal* fundamentally means to be or to make naked intimating that they are marched off naked. Also the land from which people are banished becomes naked or devoid of them. “All gaiety is banished from the earth” [24.11]. In the verse at hand, *galah* is related to a lack of “knowledge” or *dahath*. “The spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord” [11.2]. So if the people had this *dahath*...and it’s related directly to *navat*...they would be in their own homes and going about their own business.

Both those in honorable places and the people are reduced to famine. Here they are called *hamon* (cf. next verse) or “multitude” which connotes a noise and the state of the people as they leave their native land to places unknown.

5-Vs. 14: Therefore Sheol has enlarged its appetite and opened its mouth beyond measure, and the nobility of Jerusalem and her multitude go down, her throng and he who exults in her.

Could Sheol be the destination for the exiles just noted, the harshest of all punishments for “want of knowledge?” “The grave below is all astir to meet you at your coming” [14.9]. *Nephesh* (cf. 3.9) is the noun commonly used for soul which makes the text read literally, “Sheol has enlarged its soul” or its very self, including its mouth “beyond measure” or *choq*. This noun refers to anything that is established or made definite. “They have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant” [24.5].

Compare *rachav* and *pahar* or “enlarged” and “opened.” The former implies expansion and the latter, gasping. “Its (Topheth) fire pit has been made deep and wide” [30.33]. “I opened my mouth and pant, longing for your commands” [Ps 119.131].

This verse contains the second consecutive use of the noun *hamon*. Compare it with *sha’on* or “throng” which also means a loud, rushing noise. “Listen, a noise on the mountains, like that of a great multitude” [13.4]! Those belonging to this group have exulted in Jerusalem, *halez* being an adjective (only use in the Bible) referring to leaping as in a dance. And so the exiles won’t have to go far from Jerusalem. As soon as they exit the gates, the gapping jaws of Sheol will be present to greet them.

5-Vs. 15: Man is bowed down, and men are brought low, and the eyes of the haughty are humbled.

Three verbs with regard to being humiliated: *shachach* (cf. 2.9) and *shaphel* (cf. 2.17) being used twice.

Two nouns regarding “man:” *‘adam* and *‘ysth*. The former includes both sexes and shows their derivation, that is from *‘adamah* or the earth. The latter is the generic definition. Cf. 3.16 for *gavah* or “haughty.”

5-Vs. 16: But the Lord of hosts is exalted in justice, and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness.

Contrast the two verbs in the previous verse (*shachach* and *shaphel*) with the exultation of the Lord of hosts here, *gavah* being the verb translated in vs. 15 as “haughty.” This divine haughtiness, if you will, is radically different from the human one because it is done in “justice” or *mishpat* (cf. 5.7).

The verb *qadash* is used for “shows (himself) holy” but more specifically, in the context of “righteousness” or *tsedaqah* (cf. vs. 7). For the verb, refer to 8.13: “The Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy.”

5-Vs. 17: Then shall the lambs graze as in their pasture, fatlings and kids shall feed among the ruins.

A contrast between “pasture and “ruins” or *dover* and *charbah*. The former has one other biblical reference, Mic 2.12: “I will bring them together like sheep in a pen, like a flock in its pasture.” *Dover* is derived from *davar*, the common verbal root meaning to speak. The latter suggests desolation as in an arid place. “And of their ruins, ‘I will restore them” [44.26].

Three types of animals known for their docility and sacrificial offerings will dwell in safety among the *charbah*, presumably of Jerusalem, thereby making it their home.

5-Vs. 18: Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of falsehood, who draw sin as with cart ropes,

Hoy or “woe” noted last in vs. 11 and used to begin vss. 20-23. *Mashak* is the verb for “draw” and found next in 13.22.

Havon or “iniquity” is noted last in 1.4 where it connotes depravity. Mention of “cords” or *chevel* (it also means a region or lot) in the verse at hand don’t seem to be as strong or harsh compared with “ropes” belonging to a cart, *havoth* also being suggestive of something interwoven or a wreath. For the former, cf. 13.8: “Pain and anguish will grip them.” For the latter, cf. Ps 2.3: “‘Let us break their chains,’ they say, ‘and throw off their fetters.’”

Shav’ is the noun for falsehood and implies vanity (cf. 1.13).

5-Vs. 19: who say: "Let him make haste, let him speed his work that we may see it; let the purpose of the Holy One of Israel draw near, and let it come that we may know it!"

The *hoy* of the previous verse continues here with respect to those who are taunting the Lord. Note the four verbs related to the Lord coming which, if he took them up on it, would regret his presence:

- 1) "Make haste" or *mahar* which connotes being rash or headstrong. "The mind of the rash will know and understand" [32.4].
- 2) "Speed" or *chush* which connotes fleeing in alarm. "The one who trusts shall never be dismayed" [28.16].
- 3) "Draw near" or *qarav*. "Then I went to the prophetess" [8.3].
- 4) "Come" or the common *bo'* which often refers to entering.

Note the divine "work and purpose" or *mahaseh* (cf. vs. 12) and *hetsah* which alternately translates as "counsel." "Devise your strategy, but it will be thwarted" [8.10].

5-Vs. 20: Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!

Three contrasts which are taken in reverse order as being normal: evil = good, darkness = light and bitter = sweet. Each pair is prefaced with the preposition *l-* or "to" which intimates greater directness and immediacy.

5-Vs. 21: Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and shrewd in their own sight!

Note the two pairs, "eyes and faces" and "wise and "shrewd." *B-* is the preposition for "in" and *neged* is the preposition meaning "before" with regard to "faces." That is, the second part of this sentence reads literally "before their faces shrewd," the word here being *byn* to understand (cf. 3.3).

5-Vs. 22: Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine, and valiant men in mixing strong drink,

"Heroes and "valiant men:" *gibor* (cf. 3.2) and *'anshey-chayl, chayl* also referring to those who are wealthy. "The wealth of Damascus" [8.4]. However, both refer to less than edifying behavior, drinking wine and "strong drink," the latter (*shakar*) applying to wine made from barley or distilled from honey or dates. It is mentioned last in vs. 11 in a similar situation to the one at hand.

5-Vs. 23: who acquit the guilty for a bribe and deprive the innocent of his right!

This short verse which is a continuation of the previous one has the verbal root *tsadaq* (to be righteous) three times in different modes, if you will: "acquit, innocent and right." Such immoral behavior is affected, of course, by the influence of alcohol as noted in vs. 22.

5-Vs. 24: Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours the stubble, and as dry grass sinks down in the flame, so their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom go up like dust; for they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts and have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

Laken or "therefore" is an ominous word not unlike *hoy* or "woe" in the verses above because it indicates a quick follow-up on the Lord's part in response to the evil he is beholding. It seems that the Lord is about to send fire from heaven in the form of a tongue and flame to consume the people. *Chashash* or "dry grass" has one other biblical reference, 33.11: "You

conceive chaff, you give birth to straw.” *Maq* is the noun for “rotteness” which has one other biblical reference in 3.24.

Torah is the noun for “law” found last in 2.3 which here is associated not just with the Lord but with “the Lord of hosts,” as though these hosts were co-witnesses of the people’s rejection of Torah. The verb is *ma’as* as in 8.6: “Because this people has rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloah.” *Ma’as* is similar to *na’ats* or “despised” noted last in 1.4. In the verse at hand, it concerns the divine “word” or *imrah* which is akin to the more familiar *amar* (to speak, to say) and different from *davar*, word as expression. In other words, *imrah* relates more to speech or to the act of saying of which the people certainly had their fill but chose not to listen. “Listen and hear my voice” [28.23].

5-Vs. 25: Therefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against his people, and he stretched out his hand against them and smote them, and the mountains quaked; and their corpses were as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger is not turned away and his hand is stretched out still.

A second verse beginning with *laken* or “therefore” to continue what the Lord intends. Note use of the personal pronoun “his” for “his people:” despite their perversity, the Lord continues to identify with them. *Aph* or “anger” (cf. 13.13) also refers to nostrils implying that he will breathe forth destruction not simply “against” his people but “in” (*b-*) them.

The verb *natah* or “stretched out” as used here is not unlike the times Moses did the same when bringing on the plagues against Egypt. “Stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt” [Ex 7.19]. In the verse at hand, the divine hand continues to be extended for an indefinite period of time even after apparently everyone in the city was killed.

5-Vs. 26: He will raise a signal for a nation afar off, and whistle for it from the ends of the earth; and lo, swiftly, speedily it comes!

Perhaps this “signal” or *nes* will be given while the Lord continues to have his hand stretched out as in the previous verse. “In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples” [11.10]. This *nes* will be quite large since a nation (as yet unidentified) will have to see it from a distance. In other words, the immediate threat to Israel will not be from one of its neighbors.

Sharaq means “whistle” as well as to hiss. “In that day the Lord will whistle for flies from the distant streams of Egypt” [7.18]. “Ends of the earth” put this nation at hand even further than expected and perhaps completely unknown to Israel and Judah. *Qal* is the adjective for “speedily,” also meaning light in weight. “Go, swift messengers” [18.2].

NB: Vss. 27-30 describe the character of that very distant nation which will come to fulfil the Lord’s vengeance, again, as “my people.” En route those comprising this nation, i.e., soldiers, will be following that *nes* set up in the previous verse. Those left alive in Israel and Judah certainly were aware of their approaching doom and perhaps were resigned to the fate awaiting them, for the drama ends here. Nevertheless, lack of a resolution to this tension could spell hope for the people, rather “my people.”

Chapter Six

6-Vs. 1: In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple.

At the very beginning of his prophecy Isaiah mentions King Uzziah who had reigned for fifty-two years. So between that opening verse until now Isaiah was unfolding the content of his *chazon* or vision. Now he shifts gears, if you will, speaking of his own divine commission. Chances are that if Isaiah hadn't decided to take this wise approach the people would have killed him on the spot for what he had presented to them thus far. Although Isaiah clearly speaks here of his *chazon*, this word is found one other time, 29.7, "a vision of the night." You'd think it would occur frequently but then again, the entire book of Isaiah may be taken as a *chazon*.

What Isaiah "saw" (the common verb *ra'ah*, cf. 5.12) takes place in the Jerusalem temple though that location isn't specified. Apparently he is there all alone because nothing is said of other people being present to witness the dramatic contents of Chapter Six. Despite the Lord being way up on a throne within the temple ('high and lifted up' or *rum* and *nasa'*, 2.17 & 3.7), the rest of the building was filled with his "train" or *shul* which also means the hem of a garment. The image is rather unusual, either a garment or its hem filling the temple. If the latter is taken, we can say that Isaiah got lost in the folds of this garment. "Make pomegranates of blue, purple and scarlet yarn around the hem of the robe (i.e., the priestly ephod) with gold bells between them" [Ex 29.32].

6-Vs. 2: Above him stood the seraphim; each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

Although the Lord is upon this throne which is both high and lifted up, the seraphim were "above" him, *mimahal* also suggestive of being upon. Certainly the temple was full...bursting at the seams...allowing no one to enter. The next reference to "seraphim" (*saraph*) is vs. 6 and is derived from a verbal root meaning to burn, to consume. *Saraph* also applies to the fiery serpents which afflicted the Israelites in the Sinai desert. "The Lord sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died" [Num 21.6]. In order to cure them, Moses fashioned a bronze seraph and mounted it on a pole. Those who looked at it were cured. With this in mind, we could say that the seraphim above the Lord were of this bronze color.

Nothing is said as to the number of seraphim present above the Lord although Isaiah could make out clearly that each had three pairs of wings, two of which to cover himself and one to fly. Presumably the first two pairs were kept in their place out of fear and reverence even though while flying.

6-Vs. 3: And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory."

Qara' (cf. 4.5) is the common verb for "called" which must have been quite noisy because the temple was filled with a large number of seraphim. As noted in vs. 1, all were above the Lord meaning that they were doing this not in his sight. *Qadosh* or "holy" is the familiar cry uttered three times which means one seraph spoke first followed by another and so on, echoing back and forth. There must have been pauses between each set as represented by the

noun *selah* used often in the Psalter, a kind of pause or break with liturgical connotations as when singing the Psalms. Most likely the seraphim observed a *selah* of sorts in order to maintain a rhythmic balance to their recitation.

The “glory” or *kavod* (cf. 4.5) which fills the earth certainly is present, although the harsh words of last two chapters applies to those who were blind to it.

6-Vs. 4: And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.

Note the singular of the seraph of the one “who called,” perhaps the leader of this chorus, if you will, who began the threefold call of *qadosh*. His voice was louder than all the others, causing the temple’s “foundations” to shake, the noun being *amah* which commonly refers to a unit of measurement, that is, a cubit. It occurs frequently throughout Ezekiel with regard to the temple’s measurements. In the verse at hand, *amah* is joined with *saph* or “threshold” which also means a basin. “Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the doorframe” [Ex 12.22]. Surely Isaiah thought of this while in the temple, of how Moses prepared the people for the first Passover, he being safe within the temple with the Lord and his heavenly attendants. Those outside heard the commotion and saw the smoke but nothing else, perhaps recalling how the Lord appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Here the temple is called “house” (*bayth*) which is filled with smoke which hearkens back to 4.5: “a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night.”

6-Vs. 5: And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"

Oy or “woe” is similar to *hoy* of 5.18 and several subsequent verses, here coupled with the preposition *l-* or literally, “woe to me.” Isaiah speaks like this despite having been privy to that *chazon* or “vision” with which this book begins. Despite knowing the Lord’s dismay over the people’s behavior, this verse reveals that for the first time Isaiah actually beholds the Lord.

Damah is the verb for “lost” which fundamentally means to be reduced to silence as well as come to an end. “Kir in Moab is ruined, destroyed in a night” [15.1]! As soon as Isaiah utters these words he adds that his lips are “unclean” or *tame*,’ (the verb has the same transliteration) an adjective found next in 35.8: “The unclean will not journey on it (way of holiness).” *Tame*’ often relates to the nature of sacrifice and is found abundantly in the Book of Leviticus. Isaiah refers to his lips implying that he is unclean when speaking about his experience.

Although not mentioned explicitly, it would be no surprise if Isaiah also considered his sight as unclean, that is, with regard to his *chazon*. If that weren’t bad enough, he laments that he is living not just with people of the same unclean lips but in their very “midst” or *betok*. And so Isaiah claims that he has seen the Lord with the seraphim in attendance. However, he hadn’t aligned this seeing (again, the common verb *ra’ah*) with his *chazon* or vision which belonged to another order of seeing.

6-Vs. 6: Then flew one of the seraphim to me, having in his hand a burning coal which he had taken with tongs from the altar.

As noted in vs. 2, the seraphim were stationed above the Lord who was enjoying this triple *qadosh*. Then on his own, a seraph flew down—dove down, if you will—to Isaiah with lightning speed. But before approaching Isaiah, the seraph went over to the altar to take a “burning coal” or *ritspah*, the only use of this noun in the Bible. It is closely related to *retseph*, a stone on a hearth on which food was baked. A sacrifice must have taken place or was being prepared in the temple for this coal to be ignited. Presumably no one was in the temple except Isaiah, but anyone outside who might have heard the approach of the seraphim vacated the area as quickly as possible, knowing that something was about to transpire.

6-Vs. 7: And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven."

The verb for “touched” is *nagah* (cf. 8.8) which also means to draw near or to approached. “The choicest vines which once reached Jazer and spread toward the desert” [16.8]. In the verse at hand, *nagah* is used with the preposition *hal* which reads literally, “upon my mouth,” the same as with “upon your lips.”

The two verbs *sur* and *kaphar* are similar in this context. The former as “taken away” (cf. 3.4) and the latter intimates making atonement, the two with respect to guilt and sin respectively. “Until your dying day this sin will not be atoned” [22.14]. *Chata'th* (cf. 27.9) is the noun for “sin.”

6-Vs. 8: And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me."

As soon as the Lord begins to speak, the triple *qadosh* falls silent immediately. Of course, the Lord was fully aware that the seraph had approached Isaiah and by his divine authority, removed his guilt and sin without burning him with the coal from the altar. Then the Lord ask rhetorically, “Whom shall I send (etc.)?” Without hesitation Isaiah steps forward even though he doesn’t know where he will go nor what he is to do. However, he had a clue about it from the *chazon* which began back in Chapter One, not an enviable mission.

6-Vs. 9: And he said, "Go, and say to this people: 'Hear and hear but do not understand; see and see but do not perceive.'

Isaiah pretty much knew in advance what the Lord was going to ask of him, that is, through his *chazon*, so the words that follow here and through the rest of Chapter Six come as no surprise. The words “this people” have a slightly veiled contempt.

Note the double use of “hear” (*shamah*, cf. 5.9) with respect to “understand” (*byn*, cf. 5.21) and the same with “see” (*ra'ah*, cf. vs. 5) with respect to “perceive” (*yadah*, cf. 5.6). Such has been the case all along this early in the Book of Isaiah.

6-Vs. 10: Make the heart of this people fat and their ears heavy and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their hearts and turn and be healed."

Even though Isaiah was ready and willing to obey, when he heard these words he must

have been dismayed. Already the people had become dull and insensitive to things divine, so how bad could it get? No small wonder that in the next verse he asks, "How long?"

The Lord has in mind the triple nature of the people, if you will:

1) Note the singular "heart" (*lev*; cf. 7.2) belonging to the plural people which reveals their collective nature whether concerning good or in evil. "My heart cries out over Moab" [15.5]. In the verse at hand, this singular heart will become "fat" or *shaman* which means that Isaiah will have an easy job of it, for already the people have come far along that path. *Shaman* has four other biblical references, one being Gn 49.20: "Asher's food will be rich."

2) The people's ears will become "heavy" or *kaved* (cf. 1.4), almost as though being filled with ear wax.

3) Finally, their eyes will be "shut" or *shahah* which means to look around as well as to be smeared over. "In that day men will look to their Maker" [17.7].

The opposite of these three are see, hear and understanding as noted in the previous verse. However, the Lord adds "turn and be healed" or *shuv* (cf. 1.27) and *rapha'*, the latter fundamentally meaning to sew together or to mend. "He (the Lord) will strike them and heal them" [19.22].

6-Vs. 11: Then I said, "How long, O Lord?" And he said: "Until cities lie waste without inhabitant and houses without men and the land is utterly desolate,

Isaiah's response to this question after having willingly taken on the Lord's request shows some regret with regard to the duration of having to carry out his mission. Although the people have sunken low and Isaiah is fully aware of it, he must come to grips with actually carrying it out...a kind of inverse mission, if you will, instead of enlightening the people.

Isaiah might be afraid that he will have a role in the impending destruction, again, quite the opposite of what we expect of a missionary prophet. The same verb *sha'ah* is used for both "lie waste" and "destroyed." "They roar like the roaring of great waters" [17.12]. The noun *shemamah* translates as "utterly" and found last in 1.7.

6-Vs. 12: and the Lord removes men far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.

These words are a kind of double-whammy for the people. On one hand a removal (*rachaq*), a not-so veiled intimation of exile. "You have extended all the borders of the land" [26.15]. On the other hand, the same reality, if you will, not just in the land but in its "midst" (*qerev*, cf. 5.8). The latter is put in terms of places which are "forsaken" or *hazuvah*, the only use of this noun in the Bible.

6-Vs. 13: And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again like a terebinth or an oak whose stump remains standing when it is felled." The holy seed is its stump.

Here the Lord has in mind a fraction of those who are in the just mentioned *qerev* or midst of the land, that they will be burned "again" (*hod*) which suggests that they had undergone something similar such as the razing of Jerusalem by an invading army. This tenth of the population is likened to both a terebinth or an oak or better, an oak stump which nevertheless remains with the possibility of regrowth. This is no ordinary seed but one which is

“holy” or *qodesh*. “They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain” [11.9].

Note the similarity between “Terebinth and oak,” *alah* and *alon* (cf. 2.13). The former has three other biblical references, one of which is Hos 4.13: “They sacrifice...under oak, poplar and terebinth.”

Chapter Seven

7-Vs. 1: In the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, Rezin the king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah the king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but they could not conquer it.

Ahaz and Uzziah are mentioned at the very beginning of Isaiah, that is, in conjunction with his *chazon* or vision. The phrase “in the days” are common with regard to a specific time or event (i.e., more poetic) as well a way to introduce a story not unlike “In the beginning” of Genesis or “In the beginning was the Word” of John’s Gospel.

Rezin and Pekah form an alliance against Ahaz to assault Jerusalem. The noun *milchamah* (cf. 3.2) is used for “wage war” and reads literally, “to war.”

Lacham means “conquer” and more fundamentally, to eat (*lechem* or bread is derived from it). “Tirhakah was marching out to fight against him” [37.9]. In the verse at hand, *lacham* is used with the preposition *hal-* or upon literally as “could (not) conquer upon it.”

7-Vs. 2: When the house of David was told "Syria is in league with Ephraim," his heart and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.

“House of David” refers to Ahaz though it includes all kings from David to the present. For Syria to be “in league” with Ephraim means Israel, the verb *nuach* or to rest and with the preposition *hal-* or “upon Ephraim.” “They will all come and settle in the steep ravines and in the crevices” [vs. 19].

Lev (cf. 6.10) or “heart” pertains to Ahaz and the people under his jurisdiction, both of whom “shook,” *nuah* (similar in sound to *nuach*). “The earth reels like a drunkard, it sways like a hut in the wind” [24.19]. Nothing is said of how the house of David got this news which is secondary to the response described so vividly.

7-Vs. 3: And the Lord said to Isaiah, "Go forth to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-jashub your son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller's Field,

The Lord gets right down to business with Isaiah who was having second thoughts about his willingness to be at his disposal. This is the first and last time his son Shear-jashub is mentioned chiefly because of the significance of his name, A Remnant Will Return. Since father and son are to meet Ahaz, Isaiah hopes the king will pick up on the significance of this name and take action that will bring about what it represents.

The reason for meeting at the upper pool’s conduit might be for two reasons: either the king was on an inspection tour of the water supply in the event of a siege or it was an out-of-the-way place for the two to meet. By now Ahaz had gotten wind of Isaiah’s subversive prophecies and wanted to check out his credentials.

7-Vs. 4: and say to him, 'Take heed, be quiet, do not fear and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands, at the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria and the son of Remaliah.

What Isaiah is to say from the Lord continues through vs. 9 after which the Lord speaks directly to King Ahaz. In other words, we have no account of the king's response to Isaiah's prophecy which consist of four parts:

1) "Take heed" or *shamar* which means to be on guard or to pay close attention. "Watchman, what is left of the night" [21.11]?

2) "Be quiet" or *shaqat* (cf. 14.7) which is the state of rest itself, that is, of having been achieved.

3) "Do (not) fear" or *yare'* as in 8.12: "Do not fear what they fear, and do not dread it."

4) "Do (not) be faint" or *rakak* noted last in 1.6 as "softened."

The object of all three is toward Rezin and Syria who are compared to a "firebrand" and "fierce anger (*'od* and *chory*)." The former has two other biblical references, Am 4.11 and Zech 3.2, the former being cited here: "You were like a burning stick snatched from the fire." For the latter, cf. Lam 2.3: "In fierce anger he has cut off every horn of Israel."

7-Vs. 5: Because Syria, with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has devised evil against you, saying,

This verse is in reference to vs. 2 (Ephraim) and vs. 4 (Remaliah), both having "devised evil" against King Ahaz, the verb being *yahats* which also means to take counsel along with *rah* (cf. 3.9). "And as I have purposed, so it will stand" [14.24].

7-Vs. 6: "Let us go up against Judah and terrify it, and let us conquer it for ourselves and set up the son of Tabe-el as king in the midst of it,"

The verb "let us go up" has the preposition *b-* prefaced to Judah, i.e., "in Judah," which is more forceful. *Qots* is the verb for "terrify" which also means to fear from which "thorn" is derived. "The land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste" [vs. 16]. Once this has been done—a kind of preliminary action meant to subdue the land—then Syria along with Ephraim will "conquer" Judah. The verb here is *baqah*, fundamentally as to divide or to break forth. "The owl will nest there and lay eggs; she will hatch them" [24.15].

As for the identity of Tabe-el, the **RSV** says in a footnote: "perhaps a prince of Judah whose mother came from Tabe-el, a region of northern Transjordan." *Betok* means "in the midst of," more in the middle" noted last in 6.5.

7-Vs. 7: thus says the Lord God: It shall not stand, and it shall not come to pass.

Although the Lord has been speaking with Isaiah about the prophetic words he is to utter, he makes it a point of reaffirming these words, i.e., "thus says the Lord God." *Qum* is the verb for "stand" (cf. 2.19 and connotes rising) and the simple verb "to be" for "shall (not) come to pass."

7-Vs. 8: For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin. (Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be broken to pieces so that it will no longer be a people).

R'osh is the noun for “head” first with regard to Damascus and then Rezin (cf. 2.2). The span of sixty-five years is approximately one and a half or two generations, given the shorter span of life. That means the destruction of Ephraim will occur within living memory.

Chatat is the verb for “broken to pieces” and connotes an element of fear. “The voice of the Lord will shatter Assyria” [30.31]. In the verse at hand, the *chatat* will be so complete that Ephraim will cease being a nation.

7-Vs. 9: And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah. If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established."

Another use of *r'osh* or “head,” here as Ephraim->Samaria->Remaliah. This verse concludes one part of the Lord’s words to King Ahaz through Isaiah. The belief followed by establishment follows the command to take head and be quiet in vs. 4. The verse here contains the one verb *'aman* for “believe and establish.” So it seems that believing is some kind of making stable, the two forming one action (cf. 1.26).

7-Vs. 11: Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven."

In a sense, vs. 10 forms part of vs. 11, an introduction: “Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz.” “Again” is the verb *yasaph* which means to increase as noted in 1.13. It’s as though the divine words grew within King Ahaz until it culminated in a decision related to that double *'aman* of the previous verse.

With this notion of *yasaph* in mind, the Lord bidding King Ahaz to ask for a sign is more or less to reflect such *yasaph* back to him. The verb *sha'al* (‘ask’) uses the preposition *l-* (to) reading literally “ask to you.” The asking is with respect to a “sign” or *'oth* (found next in vs. 14) which represents that which at the moment can’t be seen.

The Lord puts this asking in term of two (vertical) opposites: “Sheol (cf. 5.14) and “heaven,” the latter being *mahal* which connotes more an ascent compared with the common *shamym*, suggestive of a vault. *Mahal* is found last in 6.2 as “above.” These two opposites have the adjectives “deep and “high” describing them, *hamaq* and *gavoah* (cf. 5.16), both being verbs. The former is for King Ahaz to make deep his request. “Its fire pit has been made deep and wide” [30.33]. And so we have Ahaz situated in the middle point between these two extremes.

7-Vs. 12: But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test."

Even though King Ahaz was in dire s, he felt that he was being set up by the mediating words of Isaiah. When being presented with the request to ask for a sign, Ahaz must have paused as he looked first at the ground and then raised his eyes to the sky. He thought he could get out of this by refusing an answer, thinking it to be a test, the verb being *nasah* which connotes putting on trial. “They willfully put God to the test by demanding the food they craved” [Ps 78.18]. Perhaps King Ahaz was thinking of this incident with Israel in the desert which had serious consequences.

7-Vs. 13: And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also?"

This verse conveys a sense of the Lord being offended and snapping back somewhat angrily to King Ahaz who refused to ask for a sign. Immediately he addresses the king as "house of David" which intimates that all Israel is implicated. *La'ah* is the verb for "weary" (cf. 1.14) with regard to the king's subjects. So when the Lord applies this *la'ah* to himself, he is hitting home in a big way because Ahaz knew exactly what was involved.

7-Vs. 14: Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanu-el.

The Lord knew that Ahaz would refuse an '*oth*...a "sign"...so he had one prepared beforehand which perhaps was as far removed from the king's thinking as possible and prefaces it with an exclamation, "behold" or *hineh* (cf. 3.1).

The '*oth* at hand consists of a "young woman" or *halmah*, a girl of marriageable age (compare with *betulah* or a virgin, not the same). Her identity isn't given which is secondary to the child to whom she will give birth although to Ahaz she must have been visibly pregnant. "Therefore the maidens love you" [Sg 1.3]. This verse is applied to the Virgin Mary and birth of Jesus announced by an unidentified angel to Joseph: "and they will call him Immanu-el which means 'God with us'" [Mt 1.23]. Almost certainly this same angel was present with the Lord and King Ahaz, kept it in mind and therefore was well prepared later on to act in a similar fashion with Joseph, Mary's husband. In this way the angel was bound to get it right.

7-Vs. 15: He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good.

"Curds and honey" or *chem'ah* and *devash*, that is, food that is of a subsistence diet available once the nation's food supply has been disrupted by the Assyrian invasion. Both are found next in vs. 22. Apparently Immanu-el will be among the survivors of the impending invasion. However, after that we have just one other reference to him in 8.8, again with reference to the Assyrian invasion. The next time Immanu-el appears is Mt 1.23 cited in the previous verse.

The curds and honey are reminiscent of John the Baptist only "his food was locusts and wild honey" [Mt 3.4]. Thus John must have read about Immanu-el in Isaiah and decided to imitate his life style as outside society yet parallel to it. Although John knew that he was not Immanu-el, nevertheless he could copy this way of life. Besides, in his youth John must have heard about Jesus being designated by that name, knowing that sometime in the future their paths would cross.

This steady diet of curds and honey is bound to affect Immanu-el's outlook on life. Due to its simplicity and sameness, he knows the difference between evil and good. And so Immanu-el rectifies or serves to become a model of reconciliation of the first man's transgression in the Garden of Eden. "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil" [Gn 3.22].

7-Vs. 16: For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before

whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.

Here Immanu-el is identified as a “child” or *nahar* (cf. 3.5), not an adult, which means he was pretty much abandoned at an early age with no companions. Most likely the two kingdoms at hand are Israel and Aram. *Qots* is the verb for “dread” which fundamentally means to be weary of and noted last in vs. 6.

7-Vs. 17: The Lord will bring upon you and upon your people and upon your father's house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—the king of Assyria."

Note the three uses of the preposition *hal-* or “upon,” indicative of the inescapable disaster to come. Such “days” do not have to be spelled out because everyone knows to what the Lord is referring. As for the separation of Ephraim from Judah, refer to 1Kg 19.20: “So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.” “To this day” refers, of course, to back then yet retains just as much force in the present situation if not more.

The remaining verses of Chapter Seven (18-25) spell out the fate that is about to befall Israel. The previous verse speaks of “such days” (plural) compared to four references of a singular day, “in that day” (vss. 18, 20, 21 and 23).

Chapter Eight

8-Vs. 1: Then the Lord said to me, "Take a large tablet and write upon it in common characters, 'Belonging to Maher-shalal-hash-baz."

We have no information about when or the means by which the Lord spoke (the common *amar*) to Isaiah, that is, whether in a dream or through some other means. The noun for “tablet” is *kilayon* which is suggestive of glass and therefore of reflection and has one other reference in 3.23: “and mirrors and the linen garments and tiaras and shawls.” Here it’s a large tablet which means Isaiah believed he was about to jot down a lengthy communication, but it turns out to be a short one. Most likely the tablet’s size is for others to see clearly.

The adjective for “common” is *enush* which in Hebrew is a noun meaning “man.” Such are the “characters” or *cheret* which means a pen and has one other reference, Ex 32.4: “fashioning it (golden calf) with a tool.” The name which Isaiah is about to write is quite long, another reason for the large tablet, but he didn’t know this beforehand.

The proper name Maher-shalal-hash-baz (found next in vs. 3) translates something like “quick plunder, swift spoil.” Isaiah didn’t know if this name belonged to someone or to something but wrote it down anyway. He figured that he would receive the ability to interpret it to whomever he was asked. Both *shalal* and *baz* have ominous implications at this point. Would Israel suffer such a fate or would she be the instrument to do it to her enemies? The former is found next in vs. 4 (‘spoil of Samaria’) and the latter in 10.6: “to seize loot and snatch plunder.”

8-Vs. 2: And I got reliable witnesses, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah, to attest for me.

And so the Lord's communication to Isaiah was shorter than Isaiah had anticipated, consisting only of having written a name which required interpretation. Because this ambiguous name could be taken two ways, wisely Isaiah sought out two witnesses who were "reliable," an adjective derived from the common verb *'aman* meaning to believe (cf. 7.11). It isn't clear whether Isaiah had known these two men or was aware of their reputation. Still, he felt confident that both could "attest" for him, *hud* being the verbal root for "witness" or *hed* (cf. 19.20). "Hear, O my people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify against you" [Ps 50.7]. And so off went Isaiah with that tablet under his arm though he was careful to conceal it in case anyone should see its "common characters" and get the wrong idea that he was up to no good.

8-Vs. 3: And I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then the Lord said to me, "Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz;

Isaiah is considered a prophet though he doesn't call himself such. Perhaps the anonymous prophetess is someone with whom he had been acquainted and shared some interest in their mutual calling. However, as in this case the identity of the woman is secondary to her function which is to bear a son for Isaiah. The tone of the verse is not one of entering a marriage contract; the prophetess may be akin to a temple prostitute. Given Isaiah's sterling reputation, he wouldn't even think of doing this, but it seems to be the result of the two men's consultation he sought in vs. 2. At least the identity of Maher-shalal-hash-baz is solved though Isaiah had to wait nine months until his birth.

8-Vs. 4: for before the child knows how to cry 'My father' or 'My mother,' the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria."

A baby begins to speak approximately after some twelve to fifteen months...let's say a year. That means in less than twelve months the king of Assyria will despoil Damascus and Samaria, thereby leaving Israel in the clear. The verse at hand more specifically applies to the baby's first verbal recognition of his parents even though actual recognition takes place earlier.

8-Vs. 6: "Because this people have refused the waters of Shiloah that flow gently, and melt in fear before Rezin and the son of Remaliah;

This verse is preceded by the very short words of vs. 5, "The Lord spoke to me again." The verb is *yasaph* noted last in 7.11 and means to increase. The idea seems to be that the Lord just doesn't begin speaking with Isaiah but continues to do so with each communication building upon the previous one.

Whenever the Lord uses such words as "this people," it has an air of disgust and revilement, as though he were barely able to handle them. The verb for "refused" is *ma'as* noted last in 5.24 with respect to the waters of "Shiloah" (the only biblical reference) and derives from the verbal root *shalach*, to send. Such waters flow "gently" or *'at* where usually the preposition *l-* (to) is found prefaced, i.e., "to gently." There are three other biblical references, one of which being 2Sam 18.5: "Be gentle with the you man Absalom for my sake." In the verse at hand, these waters seem to flow quietly and unnoticed beneath Jerusalem which is in a tumult. They are sent, that is, sent from the Lord.

The word *masus* for “melt in fear” is difficult to understand; it derives from the verbal root *sus* which means to rejoice. Perhaps in extreme situations the sentiment of fear and exultation are not terribly far apart, that is, by reason of their intensity.

8-Vs. 7: therefore, behold, the Lord is bringing up against them the waters of the River, mighty and many, the king of Assyria and all his glory; and it will rise over all its channels and go over all its banks;

Note the similarity of sounds: *mahaleh haleyhem*, “bringing up against them,” the letters “h” and “m” suggestive of this assault, if you will.

The waters here are quite different from those of Shiloah in the previous verse, coming from the Euphrates or the River. Such waters flow down from the north, an image of the king of Assyria’s invasion as well as intimating the primeval waters of chaos. “Darkness was over the surface of the deep” [Gn 1.2]. Certainly the Assyrian invasion gave the vivid impression that this ancient order was on the verge of being overthrown with the “deep” about to engulf Israel.

8-Vs. 8: and it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass on, reaching even to the neck; and its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanu-el.”

The invasion by the king of Assyria will be relentless, but at least the warning provided by Isaiah may galvanize the people. Note the sudden, relentless movement of this invasion by the five verbs *chalaph*, *shataph*, *havar*, *nagah* (cf. 6.7) and *mala’* (sweep, pass, reaching and fill). *Chalaph* means to pass on, come on against and thus implies an assault. “They have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes” [24.5]. *Shataph* is suggestive of a flood as in 28.17✓: “and the water will overflow your hiding place.”

The flood of Assyria will pass through the land like a tsunami and worse of all, will submerge the “breadth” of Immanu-el’s land, *rochav*. “He measured the breadth of the building” [Ezk 40.5]. Here Immanuel-el is addressed directly, that is God who is with us (cf. 7.14). This must have come as a genuine shock, Immanu-el thinking himself to be secure by reason of his name.

8-Vs. 9: Be broken, you peoples and be dismayed; give ear, all you far countries; gird yourselves and be dismayed; gird yourselves and be dismayed.

These words are addressed to “far countries” or those sufficiently distant from Judah and the land of Immanu-el yet have gotten word of the Assyrian invasion. In other words, they may be next. And so the Lord bids them to “be broken and dismayed,” *raha* and *chata*. The former is noted last in 1.4 and fundamentally means to make a lot of noise. The latter is noted last in 7.8 and connotes fear; it is found a second time in the verse at hand. Despite this, the command to give ear and to be girded means to be prepared. Without that, the Lord’s words would be too much to hand.

8-Vs. 10: Take counsel together, but it will come to nought; speak a word, but it will not stand, for God is with us.

The tone of this verse which carries over from the previous one intimates that far off

countries may stand to reap benefits from the Assyrian invasion, that is, once that country has finished off Judah. Such nations may “take counsel” or *yahats* (cf. 7.5), but it will fail; more accurately, it will “come to nought” or *parar* which means to break into pieces. “His hand is stretched out, who can turn it back” [14.27]?

The words “God is with us” or *himanu el* are identical to the proper name Immanu-el.

8-Vs. 11: For the Lord spoke thus to me with his strong hand upon me and warned me not to walk in the way of this people, saying:

These words from Isaiah intimate that he is speaking thus almost against his will, hence the reason for the divine strong arm, not just a hand. Here the hand isn’t upon Isaiah but to him, *el* being the preposition.

Yatsar means “warned” and connotes exhortation and is found next in 22.10. Ever since the beginning of his *chazon* or vision, Isaiah had been wary of his fellow Israelites but now received definite confirmation to remain apart from them in their dealings with Assyria.

8-Vs. 12: "Do not call conspiracy all that this people call conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear nor be in dread.

Isaiah is commanded not to fear any conspiracy the people may try to forge with Assyria, the word being *qesher* which derives from a verbal root meaning to bind. “There is a conspiracy among the people of Judah and those who live in Jerusalem” [Jer 11.9]. If Isaiah bound himself with the people, he would be unable to escape and be consumed along with them by Assyria.

Yare’ (7.4) or “fear” and *harats* or “be in dread” (cf. 2.19), the latter connoting trembling.

8-Vs. 13: But the Lord of hosts, him you shall regard as holy; let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.

Here the Lord associates himself with one of his titles, “of hosts” or *tseva’oth* (cf. 6.5) which means an angelic army which is more than enough to repel any invasion such as by the Assyrians. Isaiah is to “regard as holy” the Lord, the verb *qadash* being used (cf. 5.16) which can read as sanctify, to keep holy and therefore apart. “They will keep my name holy” [29.23].

Harats is the verb for “be (your) dread” which contrasts with that of the people in the previous verse.

8-Vs. 14: And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

This divine plan to foil the people is for their own benefit, to save them from falling into the hands of the Assyrians, even though they are not fully aware of it. Note the contrast between “sanctuary” and “stone of offence,” rock of stumbling” and “snare:” *miqdash* which derives from *qadash* as in the previous verse. “When she (Moab) goes to her shrine to pray, it is to no avail” [16.12]. *Negeph* as “offense” also means a plague (the spelling is *negaph*). “The plague shall not be upon you” [Ex 12.13].

Mikshol is the noun for “stumbling” and connotes an offense. “Remove the obstacles out

of the way of my people" [57.14].

Pach means "trap" as well as a thin plate. "Terror and pit and snare await you, O people of the earth" [24.17].

Moqesh means "snare" as in Ps 18.5: "The cords of the grave coiled around me; the snares of death confronted me."

8-Vs. 15: And many shall stumble thereon; they shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken."

In a sense, this verse is a mirror of the previous one due to mention of several verbal roots. *Kashal* means "stumble" (cf. 3.8), the verbal root for *mikshol*. Not only will this stumbling result in a fall, it will break many of the people, *shavar* meaning something worse, shattered into pieces. "Do not rejoice, all you Philistines, that the rod that struck you is broken" [14.29]. *Yaqash* means "snared," the verbal root for *moqesh* in the previous verse. "So that they will go and fall backward, be injured and snared and captured" [28.13].

8-Vs. 16: Bind up the testimony, seal the teaching among my disciples.

Now the Lord turns attention to Isaiah and his disciples who seem to comprise a small remnant from among the people, *limud* being an adjective derived from the verbal root *lamad* (cf. 2.4). Here it can be rendered as something like "those who have been taught." "The Sovereign Lord has given me an instructed tongue" [50.4].

The "testimony" or *tehudah* is not spelled out here, a law in the sense of a custom to be kept. It has two other references, vs. 20 and Rt 4.7, the latter cited here: "Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging." Perhaps this *tehudah* has been done orally and comprises an unwritten agreement among the disciples, a rule for their way of life. The Lord bids Isaiah to "bind" (*tsarar*) it up which also means to be in distress. In other words, to *tsarar* the customs held by this group (of prophets) means to keep it close to their hearts and preserve it during any future dangers when it could become lost. "And Judah's enemies will be cut off" [11.13].

Chatam or "seal" is used with regard to the Lord's "teaching" or *torah* (cf. 5.24), similar to the protective action of *tsarar*. "For you this whole vision is nothing but words sealed in a scroll" [29.11].

8-Vs. 17: I will wait for the Lord who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him.

Once Isaiah has put away for safety the testimony and teaching noted in the previous verse, he realizes that he has done everything in his power. Despite what may follow, and any disciples in his company he can be at peace. It is a time of waiting for the Lord, *chakah* being the verb which has the idea of tying or binding. "Blessed are all who wait for him" [30.18]! In the verse at hand, *chakah* is used with the preposition *l*, reading literally as "I will wait to the Lord," indicative not of passiveness but expectation.

Note that the Lord is "hiding" his face from the house of Jacob, *satar* often referring to the face as in the case here. "Like one from whom men hide their faces" [53.3]. In the verse at hand the preposition *min* is used, "from the house of Jacob" which contrasts with the *l* or

direction towards-which associated with *chakah*.

Qavah means “hope” noted last in 5.7 and also refers to waiting, thus being similar to *chakah* and like it, uses the preposition *l-*, “to him.”

8-Vs. 18: Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me are signs and portents in Israel from the Lord of hosts who dwells on Mount Zion.

In vs. 3 Isaiah has a child by the symbolic name of Maher-shalal-hash-baz who quickly passes off the scene, so most likely he isn't included among the children given him by the Lord. Perhaps these children are another way of designating the disciples in vs. 16.

“Signs and portents” or *'oth* (cf. 7.14) and *mopheth* are the children/disciples, the latter term having the characteristics of the former but referring more to a future event.

“Isaiah...as a sign and portent against Egypt and Cush” [20.3]. Both are “from the Lord, the preposition *min* being used with *him* or with reading literally something as “from with” which implies the special significance of both signs and portents. Despite the confusion and rebellion, the Lord continues to reside on Mount Zion or more specifically, within the temple.

8-Vs. 19: And when they say to you, "Consult the mediums and the wizards who chirp and mutter," should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?

“They” obviously refers to the people as a whole but may include some of the children entrusted to Isaiah who still have their doubts. They bid Isaiah, actually taunt him, by demanding that he consult “mediums and wizards” instead of the Lord, *'ov* (cf. 29.4) and *yadhony*. The former specialize in evoking the dead by invocations. “They will consult the idols and the spirits of the dead, the mediums and the spiritists”[19.3]. The most famous *'ov* is the so-called witch of Endor whom King Saul consulted on the eve of his death in battle in order to conjure up the soul of Samuel (cf. 1Sam 28). Chances are that Isaiah had this incident in mind when referring to consultation of the dead for the benefit of the living. The latter is derived from the verbal root *yadah* (to know in the intimate sense) and refer more to false prophets. It is also found in 19.3.

The verb for “consult” is *darash* noted last in 1.17 and connotes treading or frequenting a specific place time and again. This notion fits in well here, that Isaiah is to go back and forth to these two types of fortune tellers, anxiously seeking a response. It is used a second time in this verse with respect to “their God.”

“Chirp and mutter” are derogatory ways of describing the two who attempt to mimic the true prophet's role. *Tsaphaph* is the former which has three other references, all in Isaiah, the next being 10.14: “Not one flapped a wing or opened its mouth to chirp.” *Hagah* is the latter which also means to murmur or in the case at hand, to utter incantations in a low voice so that no one else will be able to hear. “Lament and grieve (*hagah*) for the men of Kir Hareseth” [16.7].

8-Vs. 20: To the teaching and to the testimony! Surely for this word which they speak there is no dawn.

Both “teaching and testimony” or *torah* and *tehudah* refer back to vs. 16; the former is to

be sealed and the latter, bound up.

Davar is the noun for “word” as in 2.3 and for it to have no “dawn” (*shachar*) means endless darkness or perpetual night. “How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star” [14.12]! By contrast, both teaching and testimony will be in the light although that is not stated explicitly.

8-Vs. 21: They will pass through the land greatly distressed and hungry; and when they are hungry, they will be enraged and will curse their king and their God and turn their faces upward;

This verse echoes the Exodus experience, that is, passing through a desert and complaining against the Lord and Moses.

There’s something relative to cursing and condemning by the two letters used together, *qa-* as is the case cat hand. *Qatsaph* is the verb for “enraged” and can mean to break as well as to provoke. “I will not accuse forever nor will I always be angry” [57.16]. *Qalal* means “curse” and suggests despising, being light. “In the past he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali” [9.1].

8-Vs. 22: and they will look to the earth but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and they will be thrust into thick darkness.

Compare this looking to the earth with turning upward to heaven to curse God in the previous verse. The verb at hand is *navat* which connotes beholding (cf. 5.13). It has three objects and results in being “thrust” or *nadach*. “Like a hunted gazelle” [13.14]. The place of this thrusting is “thick darkness” or *aphelah*. “And your night will become like the noonday” [58.10].

As for the three objects of *navat*:

- 1) “Distress” or *tsarah*: “Through a land of hardship and distress” [30.6].
- 2) “Darkness” or *choshek*: found last in 5.30 but not noted there.
- 3) “Gloom” or *mahuph*: the only use of this term in the Bible. This word is used with *tsuqah* or “anguish” which has two other biblical references, Prov 1.27 and Is 30.6, the latter being cited here: “through a land of hardship and distress.”