

27 August, Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

19) *I will thrust you from your office, and you will be cast down from your station. 20) In that day I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, 21) and I will clothe him with your robe and will bind your girdle on him and will commit your authority to his hand; and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. 22) And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. 23) And I will fasten him like a peg in a sure place, and he will become a throne of honor to his father's house. Isaiah 22.19-23*

Vs. 22 has the Lord placing the key belonging to the house of David on the shoulder of Eliakim, implying that while he may not become a king after the lineage of David, he will wield power for the good as steward under the current reign of King Hezekiah. His ability to open and shut is reminiscent of Peter's authority given by Jesus: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven" [Mt 16.19]. The other symbol attributed to Eliakim is he being a peg (connotes a tent) and a throne of "honor" or *kavod*" (cf. 17.4). Once Eliakim has become a peg and throne, symbols of stability, vs. 24 recounts that people will hang on him the entire "weight" of his father's house, another use of the noun *kavod* in its original sense.

Note the three symbols of authority or *memshalah*, if you will: robe, girdle and key, the last being placed upon the shoulder of Eliakim. This corresponds, if you will, to the weighty honor or *kavod* noted above. On occasion and as demanded, he will take this key and open as well as close. Once each has been done, nothing can reverse the action. Again referring to the verse with regard to Peter: "whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Surely Peter must have thought of the Isaiah passage at hand when hearing these words and later reflected upon them when he was making such decisions.

As for the peg which is sure, this intimates clearly the image of a tent which is set up, *taqah* being the verb to fasten as well as to drive as into the ground. Within this tent, if you will, Eliakim will become a throne of *kavod* to the house of his father. That is to say, future kings will sit upon it and govern Israel.

3 September, Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

7) *O Lord, you have deceived me, and I was deceived; you are stronger than I, and you have prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all the day; every one mocks me. 8) For whenever I speak, I cry out, I shout, "Violence and destruction!" For the word of the Lord has become for me a reproach and derision all day long. 9) If I say, "I will not mention*

him or speak any more in his name," there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot. Jeremiah 20.7-9

Here we have a personal lament by the prophet Jeremiah with a near-touch of blasphemy which reveals how angry he is against the Lord. Nevertheless the difference between him and for example, someone today, is that he addressed the Lord as present whereas a modern person simply would turn his back and walk away without looking back.

Patah is the verb for deceived which means to spread out, to open and can imply that the Lord took the initiative of opening up Jeremiah in the sense of making him vulnerable. It doesn't take long to realize that now he has become the object of scorn and derision. Immediately afterwards the prophet acknowledges that the Lord is stronger, enabling him to prevail in this *patah*, the verb being *yakal* which is indicative of being able or can. The result? Jeremiah becomes a laughingstock or *schoq* to the people which results in being mocked or *lahag*, the latter as to speak in a barbaric fashion which serves to intensify the situation. Note, too, that such derision isn't sporadic but continuous, that is, throughout the day.

So when Jeremiah does his thing as a prophet of the Lord, that is, crying out violence and destruction, the people mock him, hurling back his very words back which indeed sounds barbaric. He doesn't just proclaim violence and destruction but cries them out in full-throated fashion. Such *zahaq*, if you will, serves to make everyone spurn him all the more, so much that it seems he can't get a word in otherwise. Hence the prophecy Jeremiah is yelling out at the top of his lungs is to no avail. Actually the divine word or *davar* (word as expression) bounces back to him as both reproach and derision, *cherpah* and *qeles*. These words are indicative of scorn and contempt plus jeering, pretty much the same as that mocking mentioned in the last paragraph. Both *cherpah* and *qeles* are like being a laughingstock or *schoq* all the day long. This implies that the people didn't scorn Jeremiah on a given occasion but followed him around, even to his home.

It's natural for Jeremiah to call it quits which indeed he gives serious thought, the reason for proposing not to mention the Lord ever again, this being put as a rhetorical statement. Interestingly the verb *zakar* is used for "speak" which fundamentally means to recall or to remember. And to blot out remembrance of the Lord from one's memory is the ultimate act of defiance. Nevertheless, there remains within Jeremiah...in his heart...a fire which continues to burn. It's more than within him, if you will...present in his very bones. The verb has *hatsar* meaning to shut up or restrain and is similar in sound to *hetsem* or bone. Actually Jeremiah doesn't spell out the nature of this burning fire, *hahar* showing that it isn't a simply flame but akin to a raging conflagration that's inescapable. Thus heart and bones as deep within imply that despite the bitter complaint about being deceived,

Jeremiah can't escape his mission. He ends up by not renegeing but keeping alive memory of the Lord's summons to prophesy...that *zakar* or recollection of it...that will carry him through.

Finally Jeremiah admits that he can't restrain this fire. Despite being weary of attempts to do so, it bursts out. Such weariness is a sign of defeat in the human sense, especially as being scoffed continuously, yet he gives in and continuous with his prophetic mission. The verses that follow continue with threats from the people yet counters with acknowledging the Lord present with him as a warrior.

10 September, Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

8) *Owe no one anything except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.* 9) *The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet" and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* 10) *Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.* 11) *Besides this you know what hour it is, how it is full time now for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed;* 12) *the night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light;* 13) *let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.* Romans 13.8-14

Three notes with regard to this passage: 1) The second reading (Romans) is posted instead of the assigned one from Ezekiel. This is because at present I am engaged in composing *Expansions on the Book of Ezekiel*. 2) Although the excerpt ends with vs. 11, along with it the next two verses comprise one full sentence. Vs. 14 is added because it's at the end of Chapter Thirteen. 3) The notations posed are from *Expansions on the Book of Romans*.

Paul makes a shift away from his controversial remarks to safer territory, perhaps realizing that while talking he had wandered off in a thorny matter. *Opheilo* is the verb meaning to owe in the sense of being in debt. "For a man ought not to cover his head since he is the image and glory of God" [1Cor 11.7]. However, the debt, if you will, consists in *agapao* for each other (cf. 9.25), for having *agape* is fulfillment of the Torah, the *pleroo* of it (cf. 8.4).

In vs. 9 Paul cites four of the Ten Commandments lifted from the Book of Exodus (20.14, 13, 15 and 17), but as can be seen by the enumeration, are not in their original order. The commandment against coveting is *epithumeo*, literally as to have a desire or *thumos* (cf.

2.8) upon, *epi-*. It's the translation for the Hebrew *chamad*, both pretty much meaning the same thing. Paul next sums up the remaining six commandments, "any other" possibly including other injunctions of the Torah, the verb *anakephalaioo* suggesting a direction upon (*ana-*) the head in the sense of being source. It has one other NT reference, Eph 1.10: "to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth." This bring-back-to-the-head is found in Lev 19.18 which reads in full as "You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord." The verbs here are *naqam* and *natar*, the latter meaning to keep which better situate the command to love, *agapao* (cf. vs. 8). Mt 19.19, of course, develops this in light of Jesus speaking with the young man who didn't follow Jesus because he had many possessions.

Vs. 10 speaks of fulfilling the Torah, the noun *pleroma* (cf. 11.25) being used which echos vs. 8. Such *pleroma* results from the fact that *agape* (cf. vs. 9) does no wrong or *kakos* (cf. vs. 4). This not doing of evil, of course, omits what is positive and seems to be the minimum requirement of *agape* as presented here.

Paul presumes that his listeners are familiar with the hour or *kairos* (cf. 11.5), this being more than chronological time, an occasion fraught with urgency and demanding action. Most likely the *kairos* at hand pertains to whether or not the Romans will accept Paul's message. The verb *eido* (cf. 8.27) suggests a perceiving or beholding which involves taking in what's seen as a whole. Paul fleshes out this *kairos* by calling it "full time" which reads literally as *hora* (hour) and also refers to a given period as during a year. Here *hora* is a more specified time in the sense of heightened awareness of the urgency at hand. That translates into whether to accept the Christian message or not. In other words, Paul is putting his listeners on the spot. "To the present hour we hunger and thirst" [1Cor 4.11]. So within this *kairos* the *hora* consists of waking from sleep, a way of saying that the Romans hadn't been aware of Jesus Christ.

The urgency of waking up is spelled out in the second sentence of vs. 11 where Paul says that salvation is closer than first imagined, again using the first person plural with the verb being *pisteuo* (cf. 10.9) connoting belief. This *pisteuo* came into existence early on ("when we first believed") or when the Romans first heard about Jesus Christ, possibly by missionaries who had arrived in the capitol before Paul.

Vs. 12 continues the temporal imagery though it's rooted in a *kairos* event. That is to say, Paul speaks of night's advancement, *prokopto* meaning to advanced (*pro-* before). "And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people" [Ga. 1.14]. This advancement is equivalent to the last night watch just prior to first light of day. That day is, of course *kairos*. During this twilight time a person is to start getting rid of what was

done at night, *ergon* (cf. vs. 3) and put on the armor of light. That intimates preparing oneself for a coming battle where the *ergon* of night still can advance with their attacks in the form of reveling, drunkenness, debauchery, licentiousness, quarreling and jealousy.

Paul equates putting this armor not just with Jesus Christ himself but as Lord, and like a conventional piece of armor, requires time and care that it may fit properly. Once done, a person is ready for battle which Paul puts in terms as not giving room to the flesh. *Pronoia* is the noun for provision meaning forethought, *pro-* as before and suggests thinking about oneself instead of the amour as Jesus Christ. The noun *epithumia* (cf. 7.8) or desire-upon (*epi-*) is more or less equivalent to the six base practices Paul lists in vs. 13.

17 September, Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

30) Anger and wrath, these also are abominations, and the sinful man will possess them. 1) He who takes vengeance will suffer vengeance from the Lord, and he will firmly establish his sins. 2) Forgive your neighbor the wrong he has done, and then your sins will be pardoned when you pray. 3) Does a man harbor anger against another and yet seek for healing from the Lord? 4) Does he have no mercy toward a man like himself and yet pray for his own sins? 5) If he himself, being flesh, maintains wrath, who will make expiation for his sins? 6) Remember the end of your life and cease from enmity, remember destruction and death and be true to the commandments. 7) Remember the commandments and do not be angry with your neighbor; remember the covenant of the Most High and overlook ignorance. Sirach 27.30-28.7

The sinful man is characterized by possession of anger and wrath, the adjective *egkrates* being quite pertinent to both in that it means a holding fast and not letting go with regard to what amounts to abominations or *bdelugma* also meaning an idol. Thus this adjective and noun intimate that anger and wrath can become objects of worship because they are honored, if you will, above all else. Such perverse reverence bestows them with the power to have the same total sway over a person as would be the case if God were involved.

Vs. 1 equates doing vengeance with receiving vengeance, *ekdikeyo* being the verb which also applies to the punishment of a crime. The second vengeance turns out worse than the first simply because it comes for God, hence the recipient will be established firmly in his sin. The verb is *diatereo* meaning to closely observe which, if done long enough, will result in a certain permanence as is the case here. The preposition *dia* or through suggests this closeness. The way to escape such a fate is to forgive wrongs or *adikema* (same root as *ekdikeyo* or *adiketo*) which results in pardon of sins or the *luo* of them, this verb meaning to be loosened. The idea is that such wrongs resemble tightly bound ropes which gradually relax their stranglehold on a person.

The passage contains three rhetorical questions which the reader is to ask of himself. The first contrasts anger with divine healing or *orge* (used in vs. 30 above) and *iasis* which also means a remedy. The second contrasts lack of mercy with praying or more specifically, with regard to one's personal sins. Here this opposition consists of *eleos* and *deo* which means beseeching (of sins). The third consists in maintaining wrath vs. expiation for sins or *mesis* (also in vs. 30 with *orge*) and *exilaskomai*, also as to atone or propitiate.

The three rhetorical questions intended as a kind of self-examination are left unanswered, of course, but hinge upon remembrance of death. *Mimnesko* means more than simply to remember. It's a putting in mind and keeping it there so it will be able to judge future situations correctly and justly. If this recollective facility also known as *anamnesis* is inserted earlier in life, if you will, there is no fear to recall death because it enables a person to jump ahead to that time and hence transcend it.

As for the importance of *mimnesko*, it occurs three other times in this passage. The first with regard to destruction and death, being true to the (divine) commandments, another mention of these commandments and finally the Lord's covenant. Interestingly the text ends with the bidding to overlook ignorance. Such *agnoia* is a wont of perception...having no *gignosko*...which means to know. So if this fourfold mention of *mimnesko* (the first with regard to death) is implemented, lack of perception can be disregarded, not excused. The verb being *pareidon* can be taken literally as to observe beside (*para-*) or glanced at from the corner of one's eye. Thus *agnoia* is the direct result of having no *mimnesko* or *anamnesis* and is a form of amnesia which can be forgiven.

24 September, Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

6) *Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; 7) let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord that he may have mercy on him and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. 8) For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord. 9) For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. Isaiah 55.6-9*

Darash is the verb to seek and fundamentally means to trample down. Applied to the Lord, we get the idea of an intense, focused attention upon finding (*matsa'*) him. However, this finding is based upon awareness that he is already near or *qarov*, that already we have picked up his presence not unlike a scent. Because of this nearness the Lord bids that we call upon him, *qara'* so he won't...rather, we...drift away. Thus the two words, being

similar in sound, complement each other; we could say that *qara'* means *qarov* and *qarov* means *qara'*. The summons at hand seems to apply to everyone after which the Lord gets more specific regarding two categories of people as to this *qarov/qara'*.

The two types of people are to modify their calling out or *qara'*, as it were, the wicked and the unrighteous, *rashah* implies being guilty and *'ysh* 'even reading literally as "man of iniquity." Note what belongs to the two, way and thoughts, *derek* and *machasheveth*. The former suggests a well-trodden road and familiarity with the land through which it passes which here is wickedness. The latter derives from the verbal root *chashav* and implies inventing, composing as well as reckoning. Ultimately the two are one and the same. As for both *derek* and *machasheveth*, they are to be forsaken, *hazav* meaning to abandon, this letting go as applied to familiarity with ways of behavior.

What counters this *hazav* or abandoning of way and thoughts is a return to the Lord, *shuv* which also applies to making a restoration of what had been upset...in sum, a making aright. It has two results, if you will, *racham* and *salach*, the first being "to the Lord" and the second "to our God." *Racham* means to have tender affection and *salach*, to forgive. The later is used with the verb *ravah* which reads literally, "will multiply to pardon." Also *salach* has the more intimate words "our God."

Vs. 8 has the second use of two words, *machasheveth* or thoughts and *derek* or way, both applying to the Lord and his people though obviously of a different order. So while the distance is infinite, there exists a certain commonality to allay any hopelessness or despair. The infinite difference is described with the mention of *machasheveth* and *derek* with respect to the difference between heaven and earth, that is, in terms of height, the verb *gavah* being used. Thus the familiar location of two domains in Israel's religious heritage is introduced. Once the distinction is made, the two can not only co-exist but interact with each other. Reference to such a distinction needs to be made from time to time so as to keep the balance which is what Isaiah's message is all about.

1 October, Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

25) "Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way not just? Is it not your ways that are not just? 26) When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he shall die for it; for the iniquity which he has committed he shall die. 27) Again, when a wicked man turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is lawful and right, he shall save his life. 28) Because he considered and turned away from all the transgressions which he had committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. Ezekiel 18.25-28

The conjunctive *v-* opening vs. 25 translates as “yet” in response to the Lord’s lengthy words about committing sin, who is responsible and most importantly, that sin’s transference does not extend from one generation to the next. Thus the interminable weight of guilt is lifted and placed squarely upon the shoulders of the person responsible. Such a statement is so revolutionary that the Israelites listening to it can hardly believe it. Some reacted with sheer joy while most had considerable dismay and even were dumb-founded that such an ancient way of doing things is hereby suspended.

In light of this it’s only natural for Israel to question the Lord...not that they don’t trust him...but want to make sure they are hearing correctly. For this reason we have the exclamation “The way of the Lord is not just,” the verb *tachan* being used also as to make even or level (cf. vs. 29). Right away the Lord turns the table with a rhetorical question saying that Israel’s way is not just. This leads into a recap of sorts of what he had said through a good part of Chapter Eighteen, namely, that the new order of things is here to stay whether Israel likes it or not. Responsibility for any wrong-doing falls upon the individual, stops there and is not transferable to the next generation. The same applies to earlier generations impacting the present.

Vs. 27 puts the emphasis upon that which is lawful or *mishpat* (cf. vs. 19). Here it’s helpful to keep in mind the other meaning of this noun, judgment. The person responsible for wrong-doing who has renounced his past evil ways and does what’s right bring an automatic judgment on himself. This, in turn, sets him right with the Lord as well as the community of Israel.

Vs. 28 has an important verb relative to all this which reads “considered” or the common *ra’ah* (cf. 12.3) meaning to see implying that the guilty person has looked over his life and has decided to do something about it. Immediately upon this seeing he turns away, *shuv* (cf. 16.55) with respect to *peshah* (cf. vs. 22) or transgressions. The result? Surely he will live which reads literally “to live he shall live.”

Because we have such a revolutionary way of viewing not just the transmission of sin and all that but how the memory is to function in light of divine revelation, it’s to be expected that Israel will say again that the Lord’s way is not just or *tachan* as in vs. 25. And so the Lord leaves Israel with saying the opposite is true, that her ways are not just. With all this in mind, surely the people will struggle with it for a long time to come.

The rest of Chapter Eighteen or from vs. 30 through vs. 32 has the Lord passing judgment (*shaphat*, cf. 16.38) upon Israel or applying the newly established order of personal responsibility. Here the verb for repent and turn away is *shuv* as in vs. 28. The rest of this

verse reads literally as “so that they shall not be a stumbling block (*mikshul*, cf. 14.4) of iniquity to you.” Given what has been spelled out, this *mikshul* is grasping on to the memory of past sins and attempting to let them influence both the present and future. Part of this double *shuv*, if you will, is a new heart and new spirit, *lev* and *ruach* (cf. 16.30 and 16.19 respectively). This will preclude the Lord from taking delight or *chaphets* in the death of anyone which is what he had said in vs. 23. So once again, almost desperately, the Lord says “turn” or *shuv* which is the equivalent of living.

8 October, Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

1) Let me sing for my beloved a love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. 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. 3) And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard. 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? 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. 6) I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and briars and thorns shall grow up; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. 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! Isaiah 5.1-7

The following is excerpted from *Expansions on the Book of Isaiah* also on this home page.

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.

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].

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.

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].

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.

Vs. 6: I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and briars 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 fill 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 briars 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.

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:

1) "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."

15 October, Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

6) On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined. 7) And he will destroy on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. 8) He will swallow up death for ever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth; for the Lord has spoken. 9) It will be said on that day, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation." 10) For the hand of the Lord will rest on this mountain, and Moab shall be trodden down in his place as straw is trodden down in a dung-pit. Isaiah 25.6-10

The following is excerpted from *Expansions on the Book of Isaiah* also on this home page.

Vs. 6: On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined. The mountain isn't specified but most likely is Zion, the place where the Lord will prepare a "feast" or *mishteh* which fundamentally pertains to drinking (cf. 5.12). "Lees" are mentioned twice, *shemarym* which applies to dregs. "And all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs" [Ps 75.8].

Vs. 7: And he will destroy on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations.

Balah is the verb for "destroy" (cf. 19.3) and fundamentally means to swallow, that the Lord will swallow up a "covering" or *lut*, the only use of this term in the Bible which has its verbal root as "cast" and connotes a type of wrapping up not unlike *balah*. That

root has two other references, 1Sam 21.9 and 1Kg 19.13, the former being cited here: “Behold, it (sword of Goliath) wrapped in a clothe behind the ephod.”

The second object of *balah* is the “veil” or *masekah* (from the verbal root *kasah*, to cover) which has one other reference, 28.20: “the (bed) covering too narrow to wrap oneself in it.” This veil is “spread” over the “nations” or *goy* (cf. 16.8) compared with the “people” or *ham* (cf. 13.4), *nasak*, the only biblical reference though seems to be the same spelling as the verb applied to a liquid as for anointing. Both this covering and veil don't seem imposed by the Lord but woven by their own devices, if you will, over a long period of time.

Vs. 8: He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth; for the Lord has spoken.

Balah is the verb for “swallow” and is noted in the previous verse as “destroy.”

The image of wiping away tears brings to mind Rev 7.17: “For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd...and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” In the verse at hand, *machah* is the verb which means to blot out utterly (cf. 43.25).

Cherpah (cf. 4.1) or “reproach” which is upon the Lord's “people” or *ham* (cf. previous verse) seems to have extended to the rest of the “earth” (*erets*, cf. 24.20). The means of doing this is not specified—a kind of worldwide rollback, if you will—effected by the Lord speaking as at the conclusion of this verse, “for the Lord has spoken,” *davar* (cf. 24.3). It took place instantly and without warning because the divine *davar* isn't limited by space and time.

Vs. 9: It will be said on that day, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

Note the familiar words “on that day (*yom*),” cf. 24.21 which lays in the future but as this verse recounts, already has a response prepared which intimates the *kairos* nature of such a day.

“Lo” or *hineh* is like the “behold” of 24.1 which introduces someone or something important about to come on the scene, the Lord being the object of waiting, *qavah* which also means hope as in 8.17. The object of such waiting/hoping is for the Lord to “save,” *yashah* (cf. 19.20) which is used with the preposition *l-*, literally as “to us.” In the verse at hand, *qavah* is in the past tense with *hineh* introducing the Lord as already present.

The Lord being already present causes the people to both “be glad and rejoice” or *gyl* and *samach* (cf. 9.3 and 14.8) in divine “salvation” or *yeshuhah* (cf. 12.3), the proper name for Jesus.

Vs. 10: For the hand of the Lord will rest on this mountain, and Moab shall be trodden down in his place, as straw is trodden down in a dung-pit.

Most likely the mountain is Zion upon which the divine hand will “rest” or *nuach* (cf. 23.12) which implies settling down.

Moab (cf. 16.14), Israel's enemy, seems out of place here but will be “trodden down” or *dush* which implies being threshed. “Dill is not threshed with a threshing sledge” [18.27].

22 October, Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

1) Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and ungird the loins of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed: 2) "I will go before you and level the mountains, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut asunder the bars of iron, 3) I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places that you may know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who call you by your name. 4) For the sake of my servant Jacob and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I surname you, though you do not know me. 5) I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I gird you though you do not know me, 6) that men may know from the rising of the sun and from the west that there is none besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other. Isaiah 45.1-6

The following is excerpted from *Expansions on the Book of Isaiah*, also on this homepage.

45-Vs. 1: Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and ungird the loins of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed:

This chapter reveals what everyone had known for some time though not explicitly, that the Lord favors Cyrus, King of Persia, calling him “anointed” or *mashyach*, this being the only use of the word in Isaiah. As a footnote in the RSV says, *mashyach* is only reference to a non-Israelite. Also it brings up images of Jesus Christ as anointed. “And build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince” [Dan 9.25]. The Lord himself grasps Cyrus’ right hand in order to do the following three:

1) “Subdue” nations, *radad* fundamentally meaning to spread and has three other biblical references, one of which is Ps 144.2: “who subdues the peoples under him.”

2) “Ungirds” kings’ loins or *patach* which means to open as in 35.5 and can refer to loosening of swords around the waist.

3) To open doors and not allow gates be closed, the idea of *patach* of #2 similarly applicable here.

45-Vs. 2: I will go before you and level the mountains, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut asunder the bars of iron,

The Lord does what is described here, all the while holding Cyrus' right hand pretty much to teach him what to do and how to do it. *Hadar* is the verb for "level" which is found next in 63.1 as "glorious."

With respect to door of bronze and bars of iron, the Lord will "break in pieces and cut asunder," *shavar* (cf. 28.13) and *gadah* (cf. 14.12).

45-Vs. 3: I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places that you may know that it is I, the Lord, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name.

"Treasures and hoards" or '*otsar* (cf. 33.6) which can apply to storehouses for grain and *matmon* which has four other biblical references, one of which is Prov 2.4: "if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures." Both deal with hidden places, darkness and "secret places or *mistar* which is derived from *satar* as in 40.27. "My soul shall weep in secret places" [Jer 13.17].

These two places remain unidentified and will remain unknown to everyone except Cyrus. The same applies to what is placed in there. Regardless, one goal is to be kept in mind, namely, that Cyrus "know" (*yadah*, cf. 44.18) the Lord has not just chosen him but called by name which is a more intimate type of *yadah*, if you will.

45-Vs. 4: For the sake of my servant Jacob and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I surname you though you do not know me.

Although Cyrus is singled out to be the Lord's anointed, it is for one purpose only as stated here. A second time the Lord calls Cyrus by name as well as "surname" him or *kanah* used in 44.5 which means, as pointed out there, that he addresses him in a kindly fashion. Note that this verse says Cyrus doesn't know the Lord though the Lord knows him, so it will come as quite a surprise once he realizes this. This will be true not just for Cyrus but for the entire nation of Persia. Then again, the Persians probably consider Israel a minor nuisance, the quicker it's taken care of the better after which they will move on to more important conquests.

45-Vs. 5: I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I gird you though you do not know me,

Here the Lord speaks to Cyrus as he has done on other occasions to Israel (cf. 44.6). This type of statement, however, will have a different impact on someone who worshiped a multitude of gods. The Lord uses the intimate verb '*azar* as "gird" (cf. 8.9 but not noted there). It seems the Lord had been dressing Cyrus by way of preparing him though he was completely unaware of this.

"Other" or *had* occurs frequently in the rest of the chapter and suggests something like attaining a limit beyond which there is nothing else.

45-Vs. 6: that men may know from the rising of the sun and from the west that there is none besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other.

Once the Lord makes it clear to Cyrus that he hadn't known the Lord yet all the while had been attended to by him, vs. 6 continues the theme of knowing about the Lord's absolute lordship. With respect to this knowledge (*yadah*, cf. vs. 3) it may be said to lay in accord with two directions of the sun: its rising and setting as well as intimating all that lies in between.

29 October, Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

20) *"Whoever sacrifices to any god, save to the Lord only, shall be utterly destroyed. 21) "You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. 22) You shall not afflict any widow or orphan. 23) If you do afflict them, and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry; 24) and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless. 25) "If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be to him as a creditor, and you shall not exact interest from him. 26) If ever you take your neighbor's garment in pledge, you shall restore it to him before the sun goes down; 27) for that is his only covering, it is his mantle for his body; in what else shall he sleep? And if he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate. Exodus 22.20-26*

The following is excerpted from *Expansions on the Book of Exodus*, also on this homepage.

“And if he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate” [vs. 26]. Reference is to someone who is poor for whom the Lord has special concern because he is “compassionate” or *chanun* (also cf. 34.6). The verbal root (*chanan*) means to be favorably inclined, to pity. “I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and repent of evil” [Jon 4.2].

“The first-born of your sons you shall give to me...on the eighth day you shall give it (the mother of oxen and sheep) to me” [vss. 29-30]. *Bekor* is the noun for “first-born” which harkens back to the original consecration of 13.2: “Consecrate to me all the first-born...both of man and of beast.” This happened the same night the Lord slew the *bekor* of Egypt, the night of the Passover, and is a reminder of that event. As to the “giving” to the Lord of *bekor* in the verse at hand, no details are given as to how it is done. However, the same seems not applicable to the *bekor* of oxen and sheep. Seven days are to pass before they are given which most likely means they are physically sacrificed, again, a reminder of the Passover (lamb). “Day eight” is designated for this “giving” which signifies the day

after Sabbath or beginning of the new week. This is the first intimation of the concept signified by “eight” (or eighth) in Exodus.

“You shall be men consecrated to me; therefore you shall not eat any flesh that is torn by beasts in the field; you shall cast it to the dogs” [vs.31]. *Qodesh* is the adjective “consecrated” as used with respect to the Sabbath: “Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy sabbath to the Lord” [16.23]. Thus the men whom the Lord has in mind—and this seems to refer to the entire Israelites male population—are equivalent to the Sabbath itself.

1 November, All Saints

2) Then I saw another angel ascend from the rising of the sun with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, 3) saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the servants of our God upon their foreheads." 4) And I heard the number of the sealed, a hundred and forty-four thousand sealed, out of every tribe of the sons of Israel...9) After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands 10) and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb!" 11) And all the angels stood round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12) saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen." 13) Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and whence have they come?" 14) I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Revelation 7.2-4 & 9-14

The following is excerpted from *Notations on the Book of Revelation*, also on this homepage.

Vs. 2: Then I saw another angel ascend from the rising of the sun with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea.

Compare two similar forms of movement as though both were equivalent: the angel ascending (*anabaino*) and the “rising (*anatole*) of the sun.” Implied is that the angel precedes sunrise or perhaps foretells it much as twilight before dawn. He may be paralleled with the Magi of Mt 2.1: “Behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem”

inquiring about the birth of Christ. I.e., they came just prior to sunrise or before his birth. Also vs. 2 contains *anatole*: “We have seen his star in the East.”

Seal or *sphragis* as in 5.1, the scroll sealed with seven seals, only in vs. 2 it is more specific, as belonging to the “living God” (*zao*), that is, God who is actively engaged in what is going on. Such a seal indicates that God has property rights, so to speak, over his creation, but this emblem is not further designated. Perhaps it is more like a standard for all to behold much like the sun as it comes over the horizon. This particular angel transmits the seal, as it were, to the four angels just mentioned, that is, those endowed with the power to harm (*adikeo*), a verb which also means to treat unjustly. “For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality” [Col 3.25].

Vs. 3: saying, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the servants of our God upon their foreheads.”

Note the first person plural, “we,” which includes the four angels as well as the angel with the seal in the previous verse. Also, this angel mentions the servants (*doulos*) of “our” God: he acknowledges their subjection to God in the same fashion as his fellow angelic beings.

Forehead or *metopon*: a verse reminiscent of Gen 4.15: “And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest any who came upon him should kill him.” Although not specified as on Cain’s forehead, this mark or ‘*oth* is a sign of favor clearly visible to people. Another reference: “It shall be upon Aaron’s forehead” [Ex 28.38], that is, referring to a signet with the engraving “Holy to the Lord” [vs. 36]. Such a sign is *zontos* or living to correspond with the “living God” of vs. 2.

Vs. 4: And I heard the number of the sealed, a hundred and forty-four thousand sealed, out of every tribe of the sons of Israel.

Note the verb hear (*akouo*)...John did not see this number as he did with regard to four angels and the other angel in vss. 1 & 2. This number (144,000) was already present rolled up, as it were, and is now fully revealed. As vss. 5-8 describe, this number can signify perfection since it is divisible by the number twelve and pertains to each of the twelve tribes of Israel (also cf. 14.1 & 3). The twelve tribes can trace their origins back to Jacob as their father in Gen 49 where he blesses each one. In the context of this story, Joseph plays the most important role in that as virtual king of Egypt, he was responsible for burying his father Jacob not in that country but in Canaan, the future promised land (cf. 50.12).

2 November, All Souls

1) *But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them.* 2) *In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be an affliction,* 3) *and their going from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace.* 4) *For though in the sight of men they were punished, their hope is full of immortality.* 5) *Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good because God tested them and found them worthy of himself;* 6) *like gold in the furnace he tried them, and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them.* 7) *In the time of their visitation they will shine forth and will run like sparks through the stubble.* 8) *They will govern nations and rule over peoples, and the Lord will reign over them for ever.* 9) *Those who trust in him will understand truth, and the faithful will abide with him in love because grace and mercy are upon his elect, and he watches over his holy ones.* Wisdom 3.1-9

The location of righteous souls, those who are *dikaïos* or in accord with what is right, is God's hand which implies that he can do with them whatever he wishes. Being there makes one immune from torment or *basanos* which also means inquiry by torture. In the meanwhile those who are foolish or *aphron* or those who don't have sense or *phronesis* (thoughtfulness, prudence) can't help but gaze in wonder at this sight. They confuse being in God's hand with having suffered death which to them is an affliction or *kakosis*, more specifically, an evil. And so being *aphron* means the inability to distinguish what is *dikaïos* from *kakosis*, that which is right from that which is evil.

There's another distinction, if you will, which exists between the departure of righteous souls and their going from, *exodos* and *poreia*. The former means literally a going from (*ex-*) the road whereas the latter more as a journey. Thus we have two ways of looking at *exodos* and *poreia*: the positive one from the righteous point of view and the negative one from the foolish point of view. Vs. 3 adds almost by way of irony that the righteous are at peace, intended more to contrast with those who are *aphron* and by reason of this, never can be at peace.

Both vs. 4 and 5 speak of punishment and discipline which have applied to the righteous souls, this hearkening back to 1.16 where those who are *aphron* are described as being *asebes* or lacking *sebeia*, devotion to God, family and one's land. They engage in a fairly lengthy but boring lament of their lot which would be okay in and by itself. However, it turns deadly when their collective self-pity turns into a plot to destroy anyone who is not like them or not sharing their self-imposed plight. As for the punishment and discipline of the righteous, the verbs are *kolazo* and *paideuo*, to correct and to discipline. The latter is difficult to translate adequately since it implies an educative process in effect from childhood throughout one's entire life. To the former belongs hope of immortality and to the latter, great good, *euergeteuo* or to do well in the sense of services of kindness.

As a result of being punished and disciplined as just described, God has accepted the righteous souls as a sacrificial burnt offering. In vs. 7 this is put as a time visitation or a *kairos* with regard to *episkope*, the former meaning a special occasion and the latter, a watching over or literally, a watching upon (*epi-*). There seems no difference between this and the just noted trying as gold in a furnace and burnt offering where the image of fire dominates. Within this *kairos* relative to *episkope* the righteous souls will do the following three: 1) shine forth, 2) run like sparks through stubble (representative of those who are *aphron*) and 3) govern both nations and peoples. As for the last, the Lord will rule over them forever. With regard to those who are ruling, the verb is *krateo* or to hold sway or exert strength. With regard to the Lord, the verb is *basileuo* which implies exercising lordship above which is nothing higher. Thus human *krateuo* leads to divine *basileuo*.

This section concludes with mention of two groups or perhaps two aspects of those who trust in God, most likely the righteous souls: 1) Those who (literally) trust upon (*epi-*) God. Immediately this upon-ness, if you will, leads to understanding truth, *sunemi* or a bringing or setting together (*sun-*). 2) The faithful who will abide with God, *prosmeno*, the verb to wait prefaced with the preposition *pros-*, indicative of direction towards-which. Connected with this is *agape* or that difficult to define term for love. As for grace and mercy, they are not literally upon God's elect but in them, the dative case being used.

With regard to the concluding words "and he watches over his holy ones," they are not in the Greek text.

5 November, Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

14) Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock and vows it and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished; for I am a great King, says the Lord of hosts, and my name is feared among the nations...1) "And now, O priests, this command is for you.2) If you will not listen, if you will not lay it to heart to give glory to my name, says the Lord of hosts, then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings; indeed I have already cursed them because you do not lay it to heart. Malachi 1.14-2.2 & 8-10

Implied here is reference to Lev 22.18-23 with regard to the prohibition of sacrificing animals that are blind or have some physical deformity. A person who attempts to deceive the Lord cannot succeed even though the text doesn't say anything about being deceived. Instead, the Lord states simply that he is both king and lord of hosts as well as being feared.

Perhaps the defective sacrifice just noted comes from several of the priests who attempted to make a short-cut with regard to sacrifices. Their behavior is reminiscent of the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phineas who cheated people of their offerings. “Thus the sin of the young men was very great in the sight of the Lord; for the men treated the offering of the Lord with contempt” [1Sam 2.17].

As for the priests in this excerpt, their behavior is to some extent understandable because they are in the temple making sacrifices day after day. So when the Lord comes off with a command for them, he has in mind a passage as the one from Leviticus quoted above. He puts this command in two conditions: listening and laying (*sum*) to heart, *shamah* and *lev*, the noun having the preposition *hal-*, literally as “upon the heart.” If failure both concerning *shamah* and *sum* have such an effect so as to weigh, if you will, *hal-* the heart of these priests, they will suffer dire consequences. This will take the form of a curse upon them where the preposition *b-* is used, literally as “in them” which is more penetrating. In fact this curse already has come *hal-* the priests, a *hal-* in exchange for the one for not laying *hal-* their hearts.

12 November, Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

12) *Wisdom is radiant and unfading, and she is easily discerned by those who love her and is found by those who seek her.* 13) *She hastens to make herself known to those who desire her.* 14) *He who rises early to seek her will have no difficulty, for he will find her sitting at his gates.* 15) *To fix one's thought on her is perfect understanding, and he who is vigilant on her account will soon be free from care* 16) *because she goes about seeking those worthy of her, and she graciously appears to them in their paths and meets them in every thought* Wisdom 6.12-16

Even though wisdom or *sophia* is both radiant and unfading (*lampra* and *amarantos*, the latter suggestive of a flower) her brightness can go unnoticed by most people. That's why instead of a common verb related to seeing we have *theoreo* which implies beholding and doing so with care, and that takes more effort. Included is the adverb *eucheros*, literally as easily handled. In other words, there's a certain ease that comes with *theoreo* because it's bound up with love (the verb *agapao* from which *agape* is derived) and automatically does the seeking for *sophia*, the verb here being *heurisko*.

With this connection between *theoreo* and *agapao* in mind, the tables are turned. That is to say, instead of people seeking wisdom, wisdom takes the initiative. *Phthano* is the verb which expresses this intent meaning to be beforehand or to overtake, this overtaking intimated by the verb *progignosko* (to make known) with the preposition *pro-* suggestive of

being before. As for wisdom's initiative, it corresponds to desire or *epithumeo*, an intense longing for or upon (*epi*-).

Another way of expressing this ease and cordiality with wisdom is to experience no difficulty to rise early, the verb being *kopiaio* with the preposition *epi* prefaced to the personal pronoun *autos* which goes literally as "no difficulty upon him." Already wisdom has taken up her position at one's own gates, a second instance of her taking the initiative. Thus wisdom is not unlike the woman praised in the next chapter...rather, her works at the city gates. By waiting outside, wisdom, again as with an excerpt from the next excerpt, is "On the heights beside the way, in the paths she takes her stand; beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries aloud" [Wis 8.2-3].

Vs. 15 speaks of perfect understanding or literally the "perfection of wisdom" which is rendered by the two nouns *teleiotes* and *phronesis*. The former pertains to the goal of anything whereas the latter, purpose or a minding to do something. Also this verse speaks of being vigilant or *agrupneo*, to keep awake while at the same time being discreetly circumspect. Usually it's considered a tedious, boring task but here as applied to wisdom, has a liberating effect, of freeing one from care, *amerimnos* also as having no worries.

Vs. 16 has wisdom taking the initiative of seeking persons worthy of her for the third time, not the other way around, which brings up the fact that becoming worthy or *axios* (also as having value) is the self-preparatory task in which to engage as is the case in vs. 13. This excerpt concludes with the third instance of wisdom's outgoing behavior, that is, going out to people worthy of her, the adjective being *axios*. Compare this use of *axios* with what was just said about it as being the condition to spark wisdom's interest in a person.

Finally wisdom appears on the road rather suddenly, the verb *phantazo* meaning to make present to the eye that of which one hadn't noticed before. Even more intimately, wisdom meets a person (who has made himself *axios*) in his thoughts. The verb is *hupantao* or to fall in with; the noun is *epinoia* which literally is a thinking upon (*epi*-) and intimates the power of thought. With this definition in mind, that's why vs. 16 has "every *epinoia*"...wisdom being present as each and every thought, regardless of content, arises and falls away.

19 November, Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

10) A good wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. 11) The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. 12) She does him good and not harm all the days of her life. 13) She seeks wool and flax and works with willing

hands...19) She puts her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle. 20) She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy...30) Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. 31) Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates. Proverb 31.10-13, 19-20 & 30-31

This excerpt follows upon the description of wisdom of last Sunday, coming at the end of Proverbs with regard to a good wife who is diligent with regard to caring for her family as well as for the poor and needy. These are the *hany* and *'evyon*. Note, too, that while vs. 13 says this wife works with willing hands, the same willing hands extend to these two unfortunate types.

Vs. 30 has two pairs, if you will: charm = deceitful (*chen* and *sheqer*) and beauty = vain. As for the first pair, *chen* also means favor or grace and *sheqer* means falsehood, of breaking the law. As for the second pair, it's *yophy* and *hevel*, the latter implying emptiness. In contrast to these we have *yare'* or a woman who fears the Lord and thus is praised, *halal*.

And so the concluding verse of Proverbs find the works of this woman situated in the gates, that is to say, her reputation, where people funnel in and out of the city. Compare this woman with the personalization of wisdom in 8.2-3: "On the heights beside the way, in the paths she takes her stand; beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries aloud." Surely the woman described in this excerpt must have had in mind these words.

26 November, Christ the King

11) "For thus says the Lord God: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will see them out 12) As a shepherd seeks out his flock when some of his sheep have been scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep; and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. 13) And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the fountains, and in all the inhabited places of the country. 14) I will feed them with good pasture and upon the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on fat pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. 15) I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. 16) I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the crippled, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will watch over; I

will feed them in justice. 17) "As for you, my flock, thus says the Lord God: Behold, I judge between sheep and sheep, rams and he-goats. Ezekiel 34.11-12 & 15-17

The following is excerpted from *Expansions on the Book of Ezekiel* also on this Home Page.

Vss. 11-16 begin with the third instance of “thus says the Lord,” the current words coming on the heels of the previous use in vs. 10. While the Lord still has the shepherds of Israel in mind, in a sense we could say that he has turned away from them. Now he decides to take matters into his own hand, words with which Jesus as well as his listeners must have been familiar. Because the passage (Jn 10.7-18) where Jesus calls himself Good Shepherd has direct bearing on this section, it’s inserted here:

7) So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. 8) All who came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not heed them. 9) I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. 10) The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. 11) I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12) He who is a hireling and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13) He flees because he is a hireling and cares nothing for the sheep. 14) I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, 15) as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16) And I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd. 17) For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. 18) No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this charge I have received from my Father."

In vs. 11 the Lord says that he will both search and seek out his sheep, not those of the shepherds though the flock is the same. The two verbs here are *darash* and *baqar*, the former also means to tread and the latter is an intense form of seeking as in plowing up the earth. In fact, the noun for oxen and cattle (same spelling) is derived from it, these cloven footed animals noted for digging...plowing...up the land in their search for food. “One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life” [Ps 27.4].

Vs. 12 has a second use of *baqar* with “when some of sheep” have been scattered, the words in parentheses literally as “when he is among (*betok*, cf. 33.33) his sheep.” Such sheep have been scattered, *parash* (cf. 17.20 but not noted there). They got lost on a day of clouds and thick darkness, “day” meaning more an occasion which can refer to the flock’s

neglect by the shepherds. As for the latter, the noun is *haraphel* as in Ex 20.21: “And the people stood afar off while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.”

Vs. 13 speaks of sheep having been scattered among peoples and countries (*ham* and *‘erets* cf. 11.17 and 22.29 respectively), most likely due to the neglect of their rulers. The Lord will gather them from these far-off places and return them to their own land or *‘adamah* (cf. 25.3) where accent is upon the physical sense of place which gives the Israelites a greater sense of belonging. Once there, the Lord will feed them, *rahaḥ* being the word to pasture as in vs. 2 and will this more specifically in two places: 1) upon Israel’s mountains where are located fountains or *‘aphyq* (cf. 32.6 but not noted there) and 2) in inhabited places, the two being extremes of isolation and habitation.

Vs. 14 continues with the theme of the Lord pasturing his people, words which later would be remembered in terms of Psalm Twenty-Three. Like the passage from John’s Gospel above, this psalm is given in full:

1) The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want; 2) he makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters; 3) he restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 4) Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. 5) You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows. 6) Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Vss. 14 and 15 stand out by reason of the verb *ravats* (cf. 19.1) used twice and also mirrored in vs. 2 of Psalm Twenty-Three above which is typical of quadrupeds which put their legs under their bodies when laying down. To do this means that the animal feels completely secure. Note that *ravats* in vs. 15 has a certain force, if you will, by reason of hiphil which means to cause...to cause to lay down. Due to the abuse suffered under shepherds or rulers, the Israelites-as-sheep were reluctant to do this and had, to some extent, be compelled to lay down. Furthermore, the Lord will seek the lost and care for the wounded while the fat and strong he will destroy as vs. 16 has it literally, *shamad* (cf. 14.9) being the verb which connotes laying waste. All this care for the sheep is summed up by true meaning of *rahaḥ*, that is, with regard to justice or *mishpat* (cf. 23.24).

Mention of the destruction of fat and strong sheep in the previous verse sets the tone for a change as brought on by both “as for you” and “thus says the Lord in vs. 17. The flock at hand comprises the entire nation of Israel, shepherds and sheep, they being divided into sheep, rams and he-goats, the latter two being representative of the leaders. There comes to mind the Great Judgment as depicted in Matthew Chapter Twenty-Five: “Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd

separates the sheep from the goats” [vs. 32]. Such is the judgment foreshadowed in the section at hand where the Lord will judge (*shaphat*, cf. 30.19) between these. He addresses the rams and he-goats with a rhetorical question, as to why they didn’t share good pasture and water, following them with their feet. That means they haven’t learned to *ravats* as with the sheep noted in vs. 14.

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