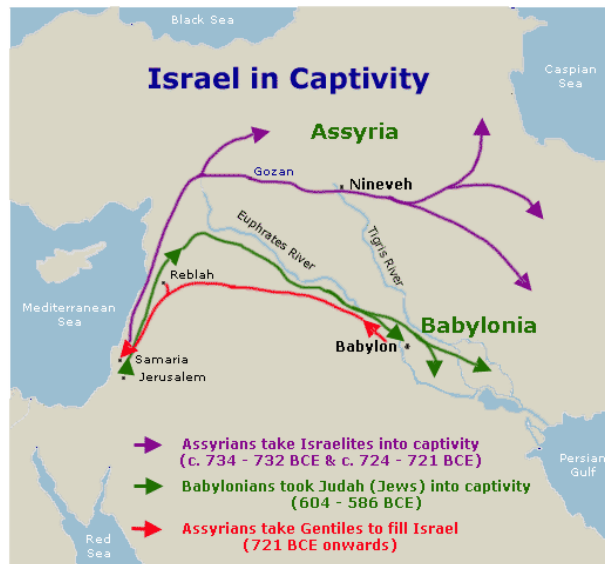


Read the Bible in A Year: Chronological

Readings for July 19-25, 2020

Psalm 119-121; 123; 125-126; 128-130; 134-136; 146-150

We return to the events in Israel and Judah during this time in their history. If you recall, the people of Israel had been exiled to Assyria (see the purple lines on the map below), and the King of Assyria had repopulated the cities of Israel (Samaria) with gentiles from other lands (see red line below). Hezekiah had become king over Judah and had instituted several reforms to try to bring the people back to God.



Isaiah continues to prophecy in Judah and warn the nation of their fate due to their failure to trust God, and to prophecy against those nations who have threatened and led God's people away from Him.

Isaiah 18-27, 29-35

A Prophecy Against Cush: Woe to the land of whirring wings along the rivers of Cush, which sends envoys by sea in papyrus boats over the water. Go, swift messengers, to a people tall and smooth-skinned, to a people feared far and wide, an aggressive nation of strange speech, whose land is divided by rivers. All you people of the world, you who live on the earth, when a banner is raised on the mountains, you will see it, and when a trumpet sounds, you will hear it. This is what the LORD says to me: "I will remain quiet and will look on from my dwelling place, like shimmering heat in the sunshine, like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest." For, before the harvest, when the blossom is gone and the flower becomes a ripening grape, he will cut off the shoots with pruning knives, and cut down and take away the spreading branches. They will all be left to the mountain birds of prey and to the wild animals; the birds will feed on them all summer, the wild animals all winter. At that time gifts will be brought to the LORD Almighty from a people tall and smooth-skinned, from a people feared far and wide, an aggressive nation of strange speech, whose land is divided by rivers—the gifts will be brought to Mount Zion, the place of the Name of the LORD Almighty.

A Prophecy Against Egypt: A prophecy against Egypt: See, the LORD rides on a swift cloud and is coming to Egypt. The idols of Egypt tremble before him, and the hearts of the Egyptians melt with fear. “I will stir up Egyptian against Egyptian— brother will fight against brother, neighbor against neighbor, city against city, kingdom against kingdom. The Egyptians will lose heart, and I will bring their plans to nothing; they will consult the idols and the spirits of the dead, the mediums and the spiritists. I will hand the Egyptians over to the power of a cruel master, and a fierce king will rule over them,” declares the Lord, the LORD Almighty.

The waters of the river will dry up, and the riverbed will be parched and dry. The canals will stink; the streams of Egypt will dwindle and dry up. The reeds and rushes will wither, also the plants along the Nile, at the mouth of the river. Every sown field along the Nile will become parched, will blow away and be no more. The fishermen will groan and lament, all who cast hooks into the Nile; those who throw nets on the water will pine away. Those who work with combed flax will despair, the weavers of fine linen will lose hope. The workers in cloth will be dejected, and all the wage earners will be sick at heart.

The officials of Zoan are nothing but fools; the wise counselors of Pharaoh give senseless advice. How can you say to Pharaoh, “I am one of the wise men, a disciple of the ancient kings”? Where are your wise men now? Let them show you and make known what the LORD Almighty has planned against Egypt. The officials of Zoan have become fools, the leaders of Memphis are deceived; the cornerstones of her peoples have led Egypt astray. The LORD has poured into them a spirit of dizziness; they make Egypt stagger in all that she does, as a drunkard staggers around in his vomit. There is nothing Egypt can do— head or tail, palm branch or reed.

In that day the Egyptians will become weaklings. They will shudder with fear at the uplifted hand that the LORD Almighty raises against them. And the land of Judah will bring terror to the Egyptians; everyone to whom Judah is mentioned will be terrified, because of what the LORD Almighty is planning against them. In that day five cities in Egypt will speak the language of Canaan and swear allegiance to the LORD Almighty. One of them will be called the City of the Sun. In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the heart of Egypt, and a monument to the LORD at its border. It will be a sign and witness to the LORD Almighty in the land of Egypt. When they cry out to the LORD because of their oppressors, he will send them a savior and defender, and he will rescue them. So the LORD will make himself known to the Egyptians, and in that day they will acknowledge the LORD. They will worship with sacrifices and grain offerings; they will make vows to the LORD and keep them. The LORD will strike Egypt with a plague; he will strike them and heal them. They will turn to the LORD, and he will respond to their pleas and heal them. In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. The LORD Almighty will bless them, saying, “Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance.”

A Prophecy Against Egypt and Cush: In the year that the supreme commander, sent by Sargon king of Assyria, came to Ashdod and attacked and captured it— at that time the LORD spoke through Isaiah son of Amoz. He said to him, “Take off the sackcloth from your body and the sandals from your feet.” And he did so, going around stripped and barefoot. Then the LORD said, “Just as my servant Isaiah has gone stripped and barefoot for three years, as a sign and portent against Egypt and Cush, so the king of Assyria will lead away stripped and barefoot the Egyptian captives and Cushite exiles, young and old, with buttocks bared—to Egypt’s shame. Those who trusted in Cush and boasted in Egypt will be dismayed and put to shame. In that day the people who live on this coast will say, “See what has happened to those we relied on, those we fled to for help and deliverance from the king of Assyria! How then can we escape?””

A Prophecy Against Babylon: A prophecy against the Desert by the Sea: Like whirlwinds sweeping through the southland, an invader comes from the desert, from a land of terror. A dire vision has been shown to me: The traitor betrays, the looter takes loot. Elam, attack! Media, lay siege! I will bring to an end all the groaning she caused. At this my body is racked with pain, pangs seize me, like those of a woman in labor; I am staggered by what I hear, I am bewildered by what I see. My heart falters, fear makes me tremble; the twilight I longed for has become a horror to me. They set the tables, they spread the rugs, they eat, they drink! Get up, you

officers, oil the shields! This is what the Lord says to me: “Go, post a lookout and have him report what he sees. When he sees chariots with teams of horses, riders on donkeys or riders on camels, let him be alert, fully alert.” And the lookout shouted, “Day after day, my lord, I stand on the watchtower; every night I stay at my post. Look, here comes a man in a chariot with a team of horses. And he gives back the answer: ‘Babylon has fallen, has fallen! All the images of its gods lie shattered on the ground!’”

My people who are crushed on the threshing floor, I tell you what I have heard from the LORD Almighty, from the God of Israel.

A Prophecy Against Edom: A prophecy against Dumah: Someone calls to me from Seir, “Watchman, what is left of the night? Watchman, what is left of the night?” The watchman replies, “Morning is coming, but also the night. If you would ask, then ask; and come back yet again.”

A Prophecy Against Arabia: A prophecy against Arabia: You caravans of Dedanites, who camp in the thickets of Arabia, bring water for the thirsty; you who live in Tema, bring food for the fugitives. They flee from the sword, from the drawn sword, from the bent bow and from the heat of battle. This is what the Lord says to me: “Within one year, as a servant bound by contract would count it, all the splendor of Kedar will come to an end. The survivors of the archers, the warriors of Kedar, will be few.” The LORD, the God of Israel, has spoken.

A Prophecy About Jerusalem: A prophecy against the Valley of Vision: What troubles you now, that you have all gone up on the roofs, you town so full of commotion, you city of tumult and revelry? Your slain were not killed by the sword, nor did they die in battle. All your leaders have fled together; they have been captured without using the bow. All you who were caught were taken prisoner together, having fled while the enemy was still far away. Therefore I said, “Turn away from me; let me weep bitterly. Do not try to console me over the destruction of my people.”

The Lord, the LORD Almighty, has a day of tumult and trampling and terror in the Valley of Vision, a day of battering down walls and of crying out to the mountains. Elam takes up the quiver, with her charioteers and horses; Kir uncovers the shield. Your choicest valleys are full of chariots, and horsemen are posted at the city gates.

The Lord stripped away the defenses of Judah, and you looked in that day to the weapons in the Palace of the Forest. You saw that the walls of the City of David were broken through in many places; you stored up water in the Lower Pool. You counted the buildings in Jerusalem and tore down houses to strengthen the wall. You built a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the Old Pool, but you did not look to the One who made it, or have regard for the One who planned it long ago.

The Lord, the LORD Almighty, called you on that day to weep and to wail, to tear out your hair and put on sackcloth. But see, there is joy and revelry, slaughtering of cattle and killing of sheep, eating of meat and drinking of wine! “Let us eat and drink,” you say, “for tomorrow we die!”

The LORD Almighty has revealed this in my hearing: “Till your dying day this sin will not be atoned for,” says the Lord, the LORD Almighty. This is what the Lord, the LORD Almighty, says: “Go, say to this steward, to Shebna the palace administrator: What are you doing here and who gave you permission to cut out a grave for yourself here, hewing your grave on the height and chiseling your resting place in the rock?”

“Beware, the LORD is about to take firm hold of you and hurl you away, you mighty man. He will roll you up tightly like a ball and throw you into a large country. There you will die and there the chariots you were so proud of will become a disgrace to your master’s house. I will depose you from your office, and you will be ousted from your position. In that day I will summon my servant, Eliakim son of Hilkiyah. I will clothe him with your robe and fasten your sash around him and hand your authority over to him. He will be a father to those who live in Jerusalem and to the people of Judah. I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. I will drive him like a peg into a firm place; he will become a seat of honor for the house of his father. All the glory of his family will hang on him: its

offspring and offshoots—all its lesser vessels, from the bowls to all the jars. In that day,” declares the LORD Almighty, “the peg driven into the firm place will give way; it will be sheared off and will fall, and the load hanging on it will be cut down.” The LORD has spoken.

A prophecy against Tyre: Wail, you ships of Tarshish! For Tyre is destroyed and left without house or harbor. From the land of Cyprus word has come to them.

Be silent, you people of the island and you merchants of Sidon, whom the seafarers have enriched. On the great waters came the grain of the Shihor; the harvest of the Nile was the revenue of Tyre, and she became the marketplace of the nations. Be ashamed, Sidon, and you fortress of the sea, for the sea has spoken: “I have neither been in labor nor given birth; I have neither reared sons nor brought up daughters.” When word comes to Egypt, they will be in anguish at the report from Tyre.

Cross over to Tarshish; wail, you people of the island. Is this your city of revelry, the old, old city, whose feet have taken her to settle in far-off lands? Who planned this against Tyre, the bestower of crowns, whose merchants are princes, whose traders are renowned in the earth? The LORD Almighty planned it, to bring down her pride in all her splendor and to humble all who are renowned on the earth.

Till your land as they do along the Nile, Daughter Tarshish, for you no longer have a harbor. The LORD has stretched out his hand over the sea and made its kingdoms tremble. He has given an order concerning Phoenicia that her fortresses be destroyed. He said, “No more of your reveling, Virgin Daughter Sidon, now crushed. Up, cross over to Cyprus; even there you will find no rest. Look at the land of the Babylonians, this people that is now of no account! The Assyrians have made it a place for desert creatures; they raised up their siege towers, they stripped its fortresses bare and turned it into a ruin. Wail, you ships of Tarshish; your fortress is destroyed! At that time Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years, the span of a king’s life. But at the end of these seventy years, it will happen to Tyre as in the song of the prostitute: Take up a harp, walk through the city, you forgotten prostitute, play the harp well, sing many a song, so that you will be remembered.”

At the end of seventy years, the LORD will deal with Tyre. She will return to her lucrative prostitution and will ply her trade with all the kingdoms on the face of the earth. Yet her profit and her earnings will be set apart for the LORD; they will not be stored up or hoarded. Her profits will go to those who live before the LORD, for abundant food and fine clothes.

The LORD’s Devastation of the Earth: See, the LORD is going to lay waste the earth and devastate it; he will ruin its face and scatter its inhabitants— it will be the same for priest as for people, for the master as for his servant, for the mistress as for her servant, for seller as for buyer, for borrower as for lender, for debtor as for creditor. The earth will be completely laid waste and totally plundered. The LORD has spoken this word.

The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers, the heavens languish with the earth. The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore, a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt. Therefore, earth’s inhabitants are burned up, and very few are left. The new wine dries up and the vine withers, all the merrymakers groan. The joyful timbrels are stilled, the noise of the revelers has stopped, the joyful harp is silent. No longer do they drink wine with a song; the beer is bitter to its drinkers. The ruined city lies desolate; the entrance to every house is barred. In the streets they cry out for wine; all joy turns to gloom; all joyful sounds are banished from the earth. The city is left in ruins, its gate is battered to pieces. So will it be on the earth and among the nations, as when an olive tree is beaten, or as when gleanings are left after the grape harvest.

They raise their voices; they shout for joy; from the west they acclaim the LORD's majesty. Therefore, in the east give glory to the LORD; exalt the name of the LORD, the God of Israel, in the islands of the sea. From the ends of the earth we hear singing: "Glory to the Righteous One."

But I said, "I waste away, I waste away! Woe to me! The treacherous betray! With treachery the treacherous betray!" Terror and pit and snare await you, people of the earth. Whoever flees at the sound of terror will fall into a pit; whoever climbs out of the pit will be caught in a snare. The floodgates of the heavens are opened, the foundations of the earth shake. The earth is broken up, the earth is split asunder, the earth is violently shaken. The earth reels like a drunkard, it sways like a hut in the winds, so heavy upon it is the guilt of its rebellion that it falls—never to rise again.

In that day the LORD will punish the powers in the heavens above and the kings on the earth below. They will be herded together like prisoners bound in a dungeon; they will be shut up in prison and be punished after many days. The moon will be dismayed, the sun ashamed; for the LORD Almighty will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before its elders—with great glory.

And in that day, the people will praise the Lord!

Praise to the LORD:

LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name,
for in perfect faithfulness you have done wonderful things, things planned long ago.

You have made the city a heap of rubble, the fortified town a ruin,
the foreigners' stronghold a city no more, it will never be rebuilt.

Therefore strong peoples will honor you; cities of ruthless nations will revere you.

You have been a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in their distress,
a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat.

For the breath of the ruthless is like a storm driving against a wall and like the heat of the desert.

You silence the uproar of foreigners; as heat is reduced by the shadow of a cloud,
so, the song of the ruthless is stilled.

On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples,
a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines.

On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations;
he will swallow up death forever.

The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces;
he will remove his people's disgrace from all the earth.

The LORD has spoken.

In that day they will say,

"Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us.

This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation."

The hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain; but Moab will be trampled in their land
as straw is trampled down in the manure.

They will stretch out their hands in it, as swimmers stretch out their hands to swim.

God will bring down their pride despite the cleverness of their hands.

He will bring down your high fortified walls and lay them low;
he will bring them down to the ground, to the very dust.

A Song of Praise:

In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah:

We have a strong city; God makes salvation its walls and ramparts.
Open the gates that the righteous nation may enter, the nation that keeps faith.

You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.
Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD himself, is the Rock eternal.
He humbles those who dwell on high, he lays the lofty city low;
he levels it to the ground and casts it down to the dust.
Feet trample it down—the feet of the oppressed, the footsteps of the poor.

The path of the righteous is level; you, the Upright One, make the way of the righteous smooth.
Yes, LORD, walking in the way of your laws, we wait for you;
your name and renown are the desire of our hearts.
My soul yearns for you in the night; in the morning my spirit longs for you.
When your judgments come upon the earth, the people of the world learn righteousness.
But when grace is shown to the wicked, they do not learn righteousness;
even in a land of uprightness they go on doing evil and do not regard the majesty of the LORD.
LORD, your hand is lifted high, but they do not see it.
Let them see your zeal for your people and be put to shame;
let the fire reserved for your enemies consume them.

LORD, you establish peace for us; all that we have accomplished you have done for us.
LORD our God, other lords besides you have ruled over us, but your name alone do we honor.
They are now dead, they live no more; their spirits do not rise.
You punished them and brought them to ruin; you wiped out all memory of them.
You have enlarged the nation, LORD; you have enlarged the nation.
You have gained glory for yourself; you have extended all the borders of the land.

LORD, they came to you in their distress; when you disciplined them, they could barely whisper a prayer.
As a pregnant woman about to give birth writhes and cries out in her pain, so were we in your presence, LORD.
We were with child, we writhed in labor, but we gave birth to wind.
We have not brought salvation to the earth, and the people of the world have not come to life.

But your dead will live, LORD; their bodies will rise—
let those who dwell in the dust wake up and shout for joy—
your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead.

Go, my people, enter your rooms and shut the doors behind you;
hide yourselves for a little while until his wrath has passed by.
See, the LORD is coming out of his dwelling to punish the people of the earth for their sins.
The earth will disclose the blood shed on it; the earth will conceal its slain no longer.

Deliverance of Israel

In that day, the LORD will punish with his sword—his fierce, great and powerful sword—
Leviathan the gliding serpent, Leviathan the coiling serpent; he will slay the monster of the sea.

In that day—“Sing about a fruitful vineyard: I, the LORD, watch over it; I water it continually.
I guard it day and night so that no one may harm it.
I am not angry. If only there were briars and thorns confronting me!

I would march against them in battle; I would set them all on fire.
Or else let them come to me for refuge; let them make peace with me, yes, let them make peace with me.”

In days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will bud and blossom and fill all the world with fruit.

Has the LORD struck her as he struck down those who struck her?

Has she been killed as those were killed who killed her?

By warfare and exile you contend with her— with his fierce blast he drives her out,
as on a day the east wind blows.

By this, then, will Jacob’s guilt be atoned for, and this will be the full fruit of the removal of his sin:

When he makes all the altar stones to be like limestone crushed to pieces,
no Asherah poles or incense altars will be left standing.

The fortified city stands desolate, an abandoned settlement, forsaken like the wilderness;
there the calves graze, there they lie down; they strip its branches bare.

When its twigs are dry, they are broken off and women come and make fires with them.

For this is a people without understanding; so their Maker has no compassion on them,
and their Creator shows them no favor.

In that day the LORD will thresh from the flowing Euphrates to the Wadi of Egypt, and you, Israel, will be gathered up one by one. And in that day a great trumpet will sound. Those who were perishing in Assyria and those who were exiled in Egypt will come and worship the LORD on the holy mountain in Jerusalem.

That will be a great day, in that day... BUT before that day...

Woe to David’s City: Woe to you, Ariel, Ariel, the city where David settled! Add year to year and let your cycle of festivals go on. Yet I will besiege Ariel; she will mourn and lament, she will be to me like an altar hearth. I will encamp against you on all sides; I will encircle you with towers and set up my siege works against you. Brought low, you will speak from the ground; your speech will mumble out of the dust. Your voice will come ghostlike from the earth; out of the dust your speech will whisper. But your many enemies will become like fine dust, the ruthless hordes like blown chaff. Suddenly, in an instant, the LORD Almighty will come with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with windstorm and tempest and flames of a devouring fire. Then the hordes of all the nations that fight against Ariel, that attack her and her fortress and besiege her, will be as it is with a dream, with a vision in the night— as when a hungry person dreams of eating, but awakens hungry still; as when a thirsty person dreams of drinking, but awakens faint and thirsty still. So will it be with the hordes of all the nations that fight against Mount Zion. Be stunned and amazed, blind yourselves and be sightless; be drunk, but not from wine, stagger, but not from beer. The LORD has brought over you a deep sleep: He has sealed your eyes (the prophets); he has covered your heads (the seers). For you this whole vision is nothing, but words sealed in a scroll. And if you give the scroll to someone who can read, and say, “Read this, please,” they will answer, “I can’t; it is sealed.” Or if you give the scroll to someone who cannot read, and say, “Read this, please,” they will answer, “I don’t know how to read.” The Lord says: “These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is based on merely human rules they have been taught.

Therefore, once more I will astound these people with wonder upon wonder; the wisdom of the wise will perish, the intelligence of the intelligent will vanish.” Woe to those who go to great depths to hide their plans from the LORD, who do their work in darkness and think, “Who sees us? Who will know?” You turn things upside down, as if the potter were thought to be like the clay! Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, “You did not make me”? Can the pot say to the potter, “You know nothing”? In a very short time, will not Lebanon be turned into a fertile field and the fertile field seem like a forest? In that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see. Once more the humble will rejoice in the LORD; the needy will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. The ruthless will vanish, the mockers will disappear, and all who have an eye for evil will be cut down— those who with a word make

someone out to be guilty, who ensnare the defender in court and with false testimony deprive the innocent of justice. Therefore, this is what the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, says to the descendants of Jacob: “No longer will Jacob be ashamed; no longer will their faces grow pale. When they see among them their children, the work of my hands, they will keep my name holy; they will acknowledge the holiness of the Holy One of Jacob and will stand in awe of the God of Israel. Those who are wayward in spirit will gain understanding; those who complain will accept instruction.”

Woe to the Obstinate Nation: “Woe to the obstinate children,” declares the LORD, “to those who carry out plans that are not mine, forming an alliance, but not by my Spirit, heaping sin upon sin; who go down to Egypt without consulting me; who look for help to Pharaoh’s protection, to Egypt’s shade for refuge. But Pharaoh’s protection will be to your shame, Egypt’s shade will bring you disgrace. Though they have officials in Zoan and their envoys have arrived in Hanes, everyone will be put to shame because of a people useless to them, who bring neither help nor advantage, but only shame and disgrace.”

A prophecy concerning the animals of the Negev: Through a land of hardship and distress, of lions and lionesses, of adders and darting snakes, the envoys carry their riches on donkeys’ backs, their treasures on the humps of camels, to that unprofitable nation, to Egypt, whose help is utterly useless. Therefore I call her Rahab the Do-Nothing.

Go now, write it on a tablet for them, inscribe it on a scroll, that for the days to come it may be an everlasting witness. For these are rebellious people, deceitful children, children unwilling to listen to the LORD’s instruction. They say to the seers, “See no more visions!” and to the prophets, “Give us no more visions of what is right! Tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions. Leave this way, get off this path and stop confronting us with the Holy One of Israel!”

Therefore this is what the Holy One of Israel says: “Because you have rejected this message, relied on oppression and depended on deceit, this sin will become for you like a high wall, cracked and bulging, that collapses suddenly, in an instant. It will break in pieces like pottery, shattered so mercilessly that among its pieces not a fragment will be found for taking coals from a hearth or scooping water out of a cistern.”

This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: “In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it. You said, ‘No, we will flee on horses.’ Therefore you will flee. You said, ‘We will ride off on swift horses.’ Therefore your pursuers will be swift! A thousand will flee at the threat of one; at the threat of five you will all flee away, till you are left like a flagstaff on a mountaintop, like a banner on a hill.”

Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!

People of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. How gracious he will be when you cry for help! As soon as he hears, he will answer you. Although the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, your teachers will be hidden no more; with your own eyes you will see them. Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, “This is the way; walk in it.” Then you will desecrate your idols overlaid with silver and your images covered with gold; you will throw them away like a menstrual cloth and say to them, “Away with you!”

He will also send you rain for the seed you sow in the ground, and the food that comes from the land will be rich and plentiful. In that day your cattle will graze in broad meadows. The oxen and donkeys that work the soil will eat fodder and mash, spread out with fork and shovel. In the day of great slaughter, when the towers fall, streams of water will flow on every high mountain and every lofty hill. The moon will shine like the sun, and the sunlight will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven full days, when the LORD binds up the bruises of his people and heals the wounds he inflicted.

See, the Name of the LORD comes from afar, with burning anger and dense clouds of smoke; his lips are full of wrath, and his tongue is a consuming fire. His breath is like a rushing torrent, rising up to the neck. He shakes the nations in the sieve of destruction; he places in the jaws of the peoples a bit that leads them astray. And you will sing as on the night you celebrate a holy festival; your hearts will rejoice as when people playing pipes go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel. The LORD will cause people to hear his majestic voice and will make them see his arm coming down with raging anger and consuming fire, with cloudburst, thunderstorm and hail. The voice of the LORD will shatter Assyria; with his rod he will strike them down. Every stroke the LORD lays on them with his punishing club will be to the music of timbrels and harps, as he fights them in battle with the blows of his arm. Topheth has long been prepared; it has been made ready for the king. Its fire pit has been made deep and wide, with an abundance of fire and wood; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of burning sulfur, sets it ablaze.

Woe to Those Who Rely on Egypt: Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots and in the great strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek help from the LORD. Yet he too is wise and can bring disaster; he does not take back his words. He will rise up against that wicked nation, against those who help evildoers. But the Egyptians are mere mortals and not God; their horses are flesh and not spirit. When the LORD stretches out his hand, those who help will stumble, those who are helped will fall; all will perish together.

This is what the LORD says to me: “As a lion growls, a great lion over its prey— and though a whole band of shepherds is called together against it, it is not frightened by their shouts or disturbed by their clamor— so the LORD Almighty will come down to do battle on Mount Zion and on its heights. Like birds hovering overhead, the LORD Almighty will shield Jerusalem; he will shield it and deliver it, he will ‘pass over’ it and will rescue it.”

Return, you Israelites, to the One you have so greatly revolted against.⁷ For in that day every one of you will reject the idols of silver and gold your sinful hands have made. “Assyria will fall by no human sword; a sword, not of mortals, will devour them. They will flee before the sword and their young men will be put to forced labor. Their stronghold will fall because of terror; at the sight of the battle standard their commanders will panic,” declares the LORD, whose fire is in Zion, whose furnace is in Jerusalem.

The Kingdom of Righteousness: See, a king will reign in righteousness and rulers will rule with justice. Each one will be like a shelter from the wind and a refuge from the storm, like streams of water in the desert and the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land. Then the eyes of those who see will no longer be closed, and the ears of those who hear will listen. The fearful heart will know and understand, and the stammering tongue will be fluent and clear. No longer will the fool be called noble nor the scoundrel be highly respected. For fools speak folly, their hearts are bent on evil: They practice ungodliness and spread error concerning the LORD; the hungry they leave empty and from the thirsty they withhold water. Scoundrels use wicked methods, they make up evil schemes to destroy the poor with lies, even when the plea of the needy is just. But the noble make noble plans, and by noble deeds they stand.

The Women of Jerusalem: You women who are so complacent, rise up and listen to me; you daughters who feel secure, hear what I have to say! In little more than a year you who feel secure will tremble; the grape harvest will fail, and the harvest of fruit will not come. Tremble, you complacent women; shudder, you daughters who feel secure! Strip off your fine clothes and wrap yourselves in rags. Beat your breasts for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vines and for the land of my people, a land overgrown with thorns and briars— yes, mourn for all houses of merriment and for this city of revelry. The fortress will be abandoned, the noisy city deserted; citadel and watchtower will become a wasteland forever, the delight of donkeys, a pasture for flocks, till the Spirit is poured on us from on high, and the desert becomes a fertile field, and the fertile field seems like a forest. The LORD’s justice will dwell in the desert, his righteousness live in the fertile field. The fruit of that righteousness will be peace; its effect will be quietness and confidence forever. My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest. Though hail flattens the forest and the

city is leveled completely, how blessed you will be, sowing your seed by every stream, and letting your cattle and donkeys range free.

Distress and Help: Woe to you, destroyer, you who have not been destroyed! Woe to you, betrayer, you who have not been betrayed! When you stop destroying, you will be destroyed; when you stop betraying, you will be betrayed.

LORD, be gracious to us; we long for you.

Be our strength every morning, our salvation in time of distress.

At the uproar of your army, the peoples flee; when you rise up, the nations scatter.

Your plunder, O nations, is harvested as by young locusts; like a swarm of locusts people pounce on it.

The LORD is exalted, for he dwells on high; he will fill Zion with his justice and righteousness.
He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge;
the fear of the LORD is the key to this treasure.

Look, their brave men cry aloud in the streets; the envoys of peace weep bitterly.

The highways are deserted, no travelers are on the roads.

The treaty is broken, its witnesses are despised, no one is respected.

The land dries up and wastes away, Lebanon is ashamed and withers;
Sharon is like the Arabah, and Bashan and Carmel drop their leaves.

“Now will I arise,” says the LORD. “Now will I be exalted; now will I be lifted up.
You conceive chaff, you give birth to straw; your breath is a fire that consumes you.
The peoples will be burned to ashes; like cut thorn bushes they will be set ablaze.”

You who are far away, hear what I have done; you who are near, acknowledge my power!

The sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling grips the godless:

“Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?”

Those who walk righteously and speak what is right,

who reject gain from extortion and keep their hands from accepting bribes,

who stop their ears against plots of murder and shut their eyes against contemplating evil—
they are the ones who will dwell on the heights, whose refuge will be the mountain fortress.

Their bread will be supplied, and water will not fail them.

Your eyes will see the king in his beauty and view a land that stretches afar.

In your thoughts you will ponder the former terror: “Where is that chief officer?

Where is the one who took the revenue? Where is the officer in charge of the towers?”

You will see those arrogant people no more, people whose speech is obscure,
whose language is strange and incomprehensible.

Look on Zion, the city of our festivals; your eyes will see Jerusalem,
a peaceful abode, a tent that will not be moved;

its stakes will never be pulled up, nor any of its ropes broken.

There the LORD will be our Mighty One. It will be like a place of broad rivers and streams.

No galley with oars will ride them, no mighty ship will sail them.

For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver; the LORD is our king; it is he who will save us.

Your rigging hangs loose: The mast is not held secure, the sail is not spread.

Then an abundance of spoils will be divided and even the lame will carry off plunder.

No one living in Zion will say, “I am ill”; and the sins of those who dwell there will be forgiven.

Judgment Against the Nations:

Come near, you nations, and listen; pay attention, you peoples!
Let the earth hear, and all that is in it, the world, and all that comes out of it!
The LORD is angry with all nations; his wrath is on all their armies.
He will totally destroy them, he will give them over to slaughter.
Their slain will be thrown out, their dead bodies will stink; the mountains will be soaked with their blood.
All the stars in the sky will be dissolved and the heavens rolled up like a scroll;
all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shriveled figs from the fig tree.

My sword has drunk its fill in the heavens;
see, it descends in judgment on Edom, the people I have totally destroyed.
The sword of the LORD is bathed in blood, it is covered with fat—
the blood of lambs and goats, fat from the kidneys of rams.
For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah and a great slaughter in the land of Edom.
And the wild oxen will fall with them, the bull calves and the great bulls.
Their land will be drenched with blood, and the dust will be soaked with fat.

For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of retribution, to uphold Zion's cause.
Edom's streams will be turned into pitch, her dust into burning sulfur; her land will become blazing pitch!
It will not be quenched night or day; its smoke will rise forever.

From generation to generation it will lie desolate; no one will ever pass through it again.
The desert owl and screech owl will possess it; the great owl and the raven will nest there.
God will stretch out over Edom the measuring line of chaos and the plumb line of desolation.
Her nobles will have nothing there to be called a kingdom, all her princes will vanish away.
Thorns will overrun her citadels, nettles and brambles her strongholds.
She will become a haunt for jackals, a home for owls.
Desert creatures will meet with hyenas, and wild goats will bleat to each other;
there the night creatures will also lie down and find for themselves places of rest.
The owl will nest there and lay eggs, she will hatch them,
and care for her young under the shadow of her wings;
there also the falcons will gather, each with its mate.

Look in the scroll of the LORD and read:

None of these will be missing, not one will lack her mate.
For it is his mouth that has given the order, and his Spirit will gather them together.
He allots their portions; his hand distributes them by measure.
They will possess it forever and dwell there from generation to generation.

Joy of the Redeemed

The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom.
Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy.
The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon;
they will see the glory of the LORD, the splendor of our God.
Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts,
“Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance;
with divine retribution he will come to save you.”

Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped.
Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.

Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.
The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs.
In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow.

And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness; it will be for those who walk on that Way.

The unclean will not journey on it; wicked fools will not go about on it.
No lion will be there, nor any ravenous beast; they will not be found there.
But only the redeemed will walk there, and those the LORD has rescued will return.
They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads.
Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

During this same time, another prophet, Micah, came from Judah and began prophesying to the people of Judah, especially those in Jerusalem.

Micah 2-7

Woe to those who plan iniquity, to those who plot evil on their beds! At morning's light they carry it out because it is in their power to do it. They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them. They defraud people of their homes; they rob them of their inheritance.

Therefore, the LORD says: "I am planning disaster against this people, from which you cannot save yourselves. You will no longer walk proudly, for it will be a time of calamity. In that day people will ridicule you; they will taunt you with this mournful song: 'We are utterly ruined; my people's possession is divided up. He takes it from me! He assigns our fields to traitors.'"

Therefore, you will have no one in the assembly of the LORD to divide the land by lot.

"Do not prophesy," their prophets say. "Do not prophesy about these things; disgrace will not overtake us." You descendants of Jacob, should it be said, "Does the LORD become impatient?" Does he do such things?

"Do not my words do good to the one whose ways are upright? Lately my people have risen up like an enemy. You strip off the rich robe from those who pass by without a care, like men returning from battle. You drive the women of my people from their pleasant homes. You take away my blessing from their children forever. Get up, go away! For this is not your resting place because it is defiled, it is ruined, beyond all remedy. If a liar and deceiver comes and says, 'I will prophesy for you plenty of wine and beer,' that would be just the prophet for this people!

"I will surely gather all of you, Jacob; I will surely bring together the remnant of Israel. I will bring them together like sheep in a pen, like a flock in its pasture; the place will throng with people. The One who breaks open the way will go up before them; they will break through the gate and go out. Their King will pass through before them, the LORD at their head."

Then I said, "Listen, you leaders of Jacob, you rulers of Israel. Should you not embrace justice, you who hate good and love evil; who tear the skin from my people and the flesh from their bones; who eat my people's flesh, strip off their skin and break their bones in pieces; who chop them up like meat for the pan, like flesh for the pot?"

Then they will cry out to the LORD, but he will not answer them. At that time he will hide his face from them because of the evil they have done.

This is what the LORD says: “As for the prophets who lead my people astray, they proclaim ‘peace’ if they have something to eat but prepare to wage war against anyone who refuses to feed them. Therefore, night will come over you, without visions, and darkness, without divination. The sun will set for the prophets, and the day will go dark for them. The seers will be ashamed and the diviners disgraced. They will all cover their faces because there is no answer from God.” But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression, to Israel his sin.

Hear this, you leaders of Jacob, you rulers of Israel, who despise justice and distort all that is right; who build Zion with bloodshed, and Jerusalem with wickedness. Her leaders judge for a bribe, her priests teach for a price, and her prophets tell fortunes for money. Yet they look for the LORD’s support and say, “Is not the LORD among us? No disaster will come upon us.” Therefore because of you, Zion will be plowed like a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of rubble, the temple hill a mound overgrown with thickets.

In the last days the mountain of the LORD’s temple will be established
as the highest of the mountains;
it will be exalted above the hills, and peoples will stream to it.

Many nations will come and say,
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the temple of the God of Jacob.
He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.”
The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide.
They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.
Everyone will sit under their own vine, and under their own fig tree,
and no one will make them afraid, for the LORD Almighty has spoken.
All the nations may walk in the name of their gods,
but we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever.

“In that day,” declares the LORD,
“I will gather the lame; I will assemble the exiles and those I have brought to grief.
I will make the lame my remnant, those driven away a strong nation.
The LORD will rule over them in Mount Zion from that day and forever.
As for you, watchtower of the flock, stronghold of Daughter Zion,
the former dominion will be restored to you; kingship will come to Daughter Jerusalem.”

Why do you now cry aloud—have you no king?
Has your ruler perished, that pain seizes you like that of a woman in labor?
Writhe in agony, Daughter Zion, like a woman in labor,
for now you must leave the city to camp in the open field.
You will go to Babylon; there you will be rescued.
There the LORD will redeem you out of the hand of your enemies.

But now many nations are gathered against you.
They say, “Let her be defiled, let our eyes gloat over Zion!”
But they do not know the thoughts of the LORD;
they do not understand his plan, that he has gathered them like sheaves to the threshing floor.

“Rise and thresh, Daughter Zion, for I will give you horns of iron;
I will give you hooves of bronze, and you will break to pieces many nations.”
You will devote their ill-gotten gains to the LORD, their wealth to the Lord of all the earth.

A Promised Ruler from Bethlehem

Marshal your troops now, city of troops, for a siege is laid against us.
They will strike Israel’s ruler on the cheek with a rod.

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah,
out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel,
whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”

Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor bears a son,
and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites.

He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.

And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth.

And he will be our peace when the Assyrians invade our land and march through our fortresses.

We will raise against them seven shepherds, even eight commanders,
who will rule the land of Assyria with the sword, the land of Nimrod with drawn sword.
He will deliver us from the Assyrians when they invade our land and march across our borders.

The remnant of Jacob will be in the midst of many peoples like dew from the LORD,
like showers on the grass, which do not wait for anyone or depend on man.

The remnant of Jacob will be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples,
like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among flocks of sheep,
which mauls and mangles as it goes, and no one can rescue.

Your hand will be lifted up in triumph over your enemies, and all your foes will be destroyed.

“In that day,” declares the LORD,

“I will destroy your horses from among you and demolish your chariots.

I will destroy the cities of your land and tear down all your strongholds.

I will destroy your witchcraft and you will no longer cast spells.

I will destroy your idols and your sacred stones from among you;
you will no longer bow down to the work of your hands.

I will uproot from among you your Asherah poles when I demolish your cities.

I will take vengeance in anger and wrath on the nations that have not obeyed me.”

The LORD’s Case Against Israel: Listen to what the LORD says: “Stand up, plead my case before the mountains; let the hills hear what you have to say. Hear, you mountains, the LORD’s accusation; listen, you everlasting foundations of the earth. For the LORD has a case against his people; he is lodging a charge against Israel. My people, what have I done to you? How have I burdened you? Answer me. I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam. My people, remember what Balak king

of Moab plotted and what Balaam son of Beor answered. Remember your journey from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD.”

The People Ask...With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

The Prophet Replies...He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. Listen! The LORD is calling to the city— and to fear your name is wisdom—

The Lord Speaks... “Heed the rod and the One who appointed it. Am I still to forget your ill-gotten treasures, you wicked house, and the short ephah, which is accursed? Shall I acquit someone with dishonest scales, with a bag of false weights? Your rich people are violent; your inhabitants are liars and their tongues speak deceitfully. Therefore, I have begun to destroy you, to ruin you because of your sins. You will eat but not be satisfied; your stomach will still be empty. You will store up but save nothing, because what you save I will give to the sword. You will plant but not harvest; you will press olives but not use the oil, you will crush grapes but not drink the wine. You have observed the statutes of Omri and all the practices of Ahab’s house; you have followed their traditions. Therefore I will give you over to ruin and your people to derision; you will bear the scorn of the nations.”

Israel Cries... What misery is mine! I am like one who gathers summer fruit at the gleaning of the vineyard; there is no cluster of grapes to eat, none of the early figs that I crave. The faithful have been swept from the land; not one upright person remains. Everyone lies in wait to shed blood; they hunt each other with nets. Both hands are skilled in doing evil; the ruler demands gifts, the judge accepts bribes, the powerful dictate what they desire— they all conspire together. The best of them is like a brier, the most upright worse than a thorn hedge. The day God visits you has come, the day your watchmen sound the alarm. Now is the time of your confusion. Do not trust a neighbor; put no confidence in a friend. Even with the woman who lies in your embrace guard the words of your lips. For a son dishonors his father, a daughter rises up against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law— a man’s enemies are the members of his own household.

But as for me, I watch in hope for the LORD, I wait for God my Savior; my God will hear me.

Do not gloat over me, my enemy! Though I have fallen, I will rise.

Though I sit in darkness, the LORD will be my light.

Because I have sinned against him, I will bear the LORD’s wrath,
until he pleads my case and upholds my cause.

He will bring me out into the light; I will see his righteousness.

Then my enemy will see it and will be covered with shame,
she who said to me, “Where is the LORD your God?”

My eyes will see her downfall; even now she will be trampled underfoot like mire in the streets.

The day for building your walls will come, the day for extending your boundaries.

In that day people will come to you from Assyria and the cities of Egypt,
even from Egypt to the Euphrates and from sea to sea and from mountain to mountain.

The earth will become desolate because of its inhabitants, as the result of their deeds.

Prayer and Praise

Shepherd your people with your staff, the flock of your inheritance,
which lives by itself in a forest, in fertile pasturelands.
Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead as in days long ago.

“As in the days when you came out of Egypt, I will show them my wonders.”

Nations will see and be ashamed, deprived of all their power.
They will put their hands over their mouths and their ears will become deaf.
They will lick dust like a snake, like creatures that crawl on the ground.
They will come trembling out of their dens;
they will turn in fear to the LORD our God and will be afraid of you.

Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression
of the remnant of his inheritance?

You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy.
You will again have compassion on us;; you will tread our sins underfoot
and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.
You will be faithful to Jacob, and show love to Abraham,
as you pledged on oath to our ancestors in days long ago.

We return at this point to the narrative accounts of the history of Israel and Judah- in these readings, those that are in plain text are from 2 Kings, and those in italics are from 2 Chronicles. As in previous readings, some events are recorded in both places, so you may see some repetition. Some events are also recorded in Isaiah, and those will be indicated for you.

The prophets had warned of it, and now it became reality, though Hezekiah had instituted reforms, the people had still acted unfaithfully, and Jerusalem now fell under the threat of foreign powers....

***Sennacherib Threatens Jerusalem:** After all that Hezekiah had so faithfully done, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah. He laid siege to the fortified cities, thinking to conquer them for himself. When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come and that he intended to wage war against Jerusalem, he consulted with his officials and military staff about blocking off the water from the springs outside the city, and they helped him. They gathered a large group of people who blocked all the springs and the stream that flowed through the land. “Why should the kings of Assyria come and find plenty of water?” they said. Then he worked hard repairing all the broken sections of the wall and building towers on it. He built another wall outside that one and reinforced the terraces of the City of David. He also made large numbers of weapons and shields. He appointed military officers over the people and assembled them before him in the square at the city gate and encouraged them with these words: “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than with him. With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles.” And the people gained confidence from what Hezekiah the king of Judah said.*

In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah's reign, Sennacherib king of Assyria attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them. So Hezekiah king of Judah sent this message to the king of Assyria at Lachish: "I have done wrong. Withdraw from me, and I will pay whatever you demand of me." The king of Assyria exacted from Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. So Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the temple of the LORD and in the treasuries of the royal palace. At this time Hezekiah king of Judah stripped off the gold with which he had covered the doors and doorposts of the temple of the LORD, and gave it to the king of Assyria.

The king of Assyria sent his supreme commander, his chief officer and his field commander with a large army, from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. They came up to Jerusalem and stopped at the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the road to the Washerman's Field. They called for the king; and Eliakim son of Hilkiah the palace administrator, Shebna the secretary, and Joah son of Asaph the recorder went out to them.

In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah's reign, Sennacherib king of Assyria attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them. Then the king of Assyria sent his field commander with a large army from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. When the commander stopped at the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the road to the Launderer's Field, Eliakim son of Hilkiah the palace administrator, Shebna the secretary, and Joah son of Asaph the recorder went out to him. (Isaiah 36:1-3)

The field commander said to them, "Tell Hezekiah: 'This is what the great king, the king of Assyria, says: On what are you basing this confidence of yours? You say you have the counsel and the might for war—but you speak only empty words. On whom are you depending, that you rebel against me? Look, I know you are depending on Egypt, that splintered reed of a staff, which pierces the hand of anyone who leans on it! Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who depend on him. But if you say to me, "We are depending on the LORD our God"—isn't he the one whose high places and altars Hezekiah removed, saying to Judah and Jerusalem, "You must worship before this altar in Jerusalem"? Come now, make a bargain with my master, the king of Assyria: I will give you two thousand horses—if you can put riders on them! How can you repulse one officer of the least of my master's officials, even though you are depending on Egypt for chariots and horsemen? ²⁵ Furthermore, have I come to attack and destroy this place without word from the LORD? The LORD himself told me to march against this country and destroy it.'"

Then Eliakim son of Hilkiah, and Shebna and Joah said to the field commander, "Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, since we understand it. Don't speak to us in Hebrew in the hearing of the people on the wall." But the commander replied, "Was it only to your master and you that my master sent me to say these things, and not to the people sitting on the wall—who, like you, will have to eat their own excrement and drink their own urine?"

Then the commander stood and called out in Hebrew, "Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria! This is what the king says: Do not let Hezekiah deceive you. He cannot deliver you from my hand. Do not let Hezekiah persuade you to trust in the LORD when he says, 'The LORD will surely deliver us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. Do not listen to Hezekiah. This is what the king of Assyria says: Make peace with me and come out to me. Then each of you will eat fruit from your own vine and fig tree and drink water from your own cistern, until I come and take you to a land like your own—a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive trees and honey. Choose life and not death! Do not listen to Hezekiah, for he is misleading you when he says,

'The LORD will deliver us.' Has the god of any nation ever delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena and Ivvah? Have they rescued Samaria from my hand? Who of all the gods of these countries has been able to save his land from me? How then can the LORD deliver Jerusalem from my hand?"

But the people remained silent and said nothing in reply, because the king had commanded, "Do not answer him." Then Eliakim son of Hilkiah the palace administrator, Shebna the secretary, and Joah son of Asaph the recorder went to Hezekiah, with their clothes torn, and told him what the field commander had said.

The field commander said to them, "Tell Hezekiah: 'This is what the great king, the king of Assyria, says: On what are you basing this confidence of yours? You say you have counsel and might for war—but you speak only empty words. On whom are you depending, that you rebel against me? Look, I know you are depending on Egypt, that splintered reed of a staff, which pierces the hand of anyone who leans on it! Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who depend on him. But if you say to me, "We are depending on the LORD our God"—isn't he the one whose high places and altars Hezekiah removed, saying to Judah and Jerusalem, "You must worship before this altar"? Come now, make a bargain with my master, the king of Assyria: I will give you two thousand horses—if you can put riders on them! How then can you repulse one officer of the least of my master's officials, even though you are depending on Egypt for chariots and horsemen? Furthermore, have I come to attack and destroy this land without the LORD? The LORD himself told me to march against this country and destroy it.'"

Then Eliakim, Shebna and Joah said to the field commander, "Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, since we understand it. Don't speak to us in Hebrew in the hearing of the people on the wall." But the commander replied, "Was it only to your master and you that my master sent me to say these things, and not to the people sitting on the wall—who, like you, will have to eat their own excrement and drink their own urine?"

Then the commander stood and called out in Hebrew, "Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria! This is what the king says: Do not let Hezekiah deceive you. He cannot deliver you! Do not let Hezekiah persuade you to trust in the LORD when he says, 'The LORD will surely deliver us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.' Do not listen to Hezekiah. This is what the king of Assyria says: Make peace with me and come out to me. Then each of you will eat fruit from your own vine and fig tree and drink water from your own cistern, until I come and take you to a land like your own—a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards. Do not let Hezekiah mislead you when he says, 'The LORD will deliver us.' Have the gods of any nations ever delivered their lands from the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Have they rescued Samaria from my hand? Who of all the gods of these countries have been able to save their lands from me? How then can the LORD deliver Jerusalem from my hand?"

But the people remained silent and said nothing in reply, because the king had commanded, "Do not answer him." Then Eliakim son of Hilkiah the palace administrator, Shebna the secretary and Joah son of Asaph the recorder went to Hezekiah, with their clothes torn, and told him what the field commander had said. (Isaiah 36:4-22)

When King Hezekiah heard this, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and went into the temple of the LORD. He sent Eliakim the palace administrator, Shebna the secretary and the leading priests, all wearing sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz. They told him, "This is what Hezekiah says: This day is a day of distress and rebuke and disgrace, as when children come to the moment of birth and there is no strength to deliver them. It may be that the LORD your God will hear all the words of the field

commander, whom his master, the king of Assyria, has sent to ridicule the living God, and that he will rebuke him for the words the LORD your God has heard. Therefore, pray for the remnant that still survives.”

When King Hezekiah’s officials came to Isaiah, Isaiah said to them, “Tell your master, ‘This is what the LORD says: Do not be afraid of what you have heard—those words with which the underlings of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Listen! When he hears a certain report, I will make him want to return to his own country, and there I will have him cut down with the sword.’”

When the field commander heard that the king of Assyria had left Lachish, he withdrew and found the king fighting against Libnah.

Now Sennacherib received a report that Tirhakah, the king of Cush, was marching out to fight against him. So he again sent messengers to Hezekiah with this word: “Say to Hezekiah king of Judah: Do not let the god you depend on deceive you when he says, ‘Jerusalem will not be given into the hands of the king of Assyria.’ Surely you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the countries, destroying them completely. And will you be delivered? Did the gods of the nations that were destroyed by my predecessors deliver them—the gods of Gozan, Harran, Rezep and the people of Eden who were in Tel Assar? Where is the king of Hamath or the king of Arpad? Where are the kings of Lair, Sepharvaim, Hena and Ivah?”

Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers and read it. Then he went up to the temple of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD. And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD: “LORD, the God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Give ear, LORD, and hear; open your eyes, LORD, and see; listen to the words Sennacherib has sent to ridicule the living God. It is true, LORD, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste these nations and their lands. They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them, for they were not gods but only wood and stone, fashioned by human hands. Now, LORD our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone, LORD, are God.”

When King Hezekiah heard this, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and went into the temple of the LORD. He sent Eliakim the palace administrator, Shebna the secretary, and the leading priests, all wearing sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz. They told him, “This is what Hezekiah says: This day is a day of distress and rebuke and disgrace, as when children come to the moment of birth and there is no strength to deliver them. It may be that the LORD your God will hear the words of the field commander, whom his master, the king of Assyria, has sent to ridicule the living God, and that he will rebuke him for the words the LORD your God has heard. Therefore pray for the remnant that still survives.”

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countries, destroying them completely. And will you be delivered? Did the gods of the nations that were destroyed by my predecessors deliver them—the gods of Gozan, Harran, Rezeph and the people of Eden who were in Tel Assar? ¹³Where is the king of Hamath or the king of Arpad? Where are the kings of Lair, Sepharvaim, Hena and Ivvah?”

Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers and read it. Then he went up to the temple of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD. And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD: “LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Give ear, LORD, and hear; open your eyes, LORD, and see; listen to all the words Sennacherib has sent to ridicule the living God. It is true, LORD, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste all these peoples and their lands. They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them, for they were not gods but only wood and stone, fashioned by human hands. Now, LORD our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, LORD, are the only God.” (Isaiah 37:1-20)

Later, when Sennacherib king of Assyria and all his forces were laying siege to Lachish, he sent his officers to Jerusalem with this message for Hezekiah king of Judah and for all the people of Judah who were there: “This is what Sennacherib king of Assyria says: On what are you basing your confidence, that you remain in Jerusalem under siege? When Hezekiah says, ‘The LORD our God will save us from the hand of the king of Assyria,’ he is misleading you, to let you die of hunger and thirst. Did not Hezekiah himself remove this god’s high places and altars, saying to Judah and Jerusalem, ‘You must worship before one altar and burn sacrifices on it’? Do you not know what I and my predecessors have done to all the peoples of the other lands? Were the gods of those nations ever able to deliver their land from my hand? Who of all the gods of these nations that my predecessors destroyed has been able to save his people from me? How then can your god deliver you from my hand? Now do not let Hezekiah deceive you and mislead you like this. Do not believe him, for no god of any nation or kingdom has been able to deliver his people from my hand or the hand of my predecessors. How much less will your god deliver you from my hand!”

Sennacherib’s officers spoke further against the LORD God and against his servant Hezekiah. The king also wrote letters ridiculing the LORD, the God of Israel, and saying this against him: “Just as the gods of the peoples of the other lands did not rescue their people from my hand, so the god of Hezekiah will not rescue his people from my hand.” Then they called out in Hebrew to the people of Jerusalem who were on the wall, to terrify them and make them afraid in order to capture the city. They spoke about the God of Jerusalem as they did about the gods of the other peoples of the world—the work of human hands.

Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent a message to Hezekiah: “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I have heard your prayer concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria. This is the word that the LORD has spoken against him:

“Virgin Daughter Zion despises you and mocks you. Daughter Jerusalem tosses her head as you flee. Who is it you have ridiculed and blasphemed? Against whom have you raised your voice and lifted your eyes in pride? Against the Holy One of Israel! By your messengers you have ridiculed the Lord. And you have said, “With my many chariots I have ascended the heights of the mountains, the utmost heights of Lebanon. I have cut down its tallest cedars, the choicest of its junipers. I have reached its remotest parts, the finest of its forests. I have dug wells in foreign lands and drunk the water there. With the soles of my feet I have dried up all the streams of Egypt.”

“Have you not heard? Long ago I ordained it. In days of old I planned it; now I have brought it to pass, that you have turned fortified cities into piles of stone. Their people, drained of power, are dismayed and put to shame. They are like plants in the field, like tender green shoots, like grass sprouting on the roof, scorched before it grows up. But I know where you are and when you come and go and how you rage against me. Because you rage against me and because your insolence has reached my ears, I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth, and I will make you return by the way you came.”

This will be the sign for you, Hezekiah: “This year you will eat what grows by itself, and the second year what springs from that. But in the third year sow and reap, plant vineyards and eat their fruit. Once more a remnant of the kingdom of Judah will take root below and bear fruit above. For out of Jerusalem will come a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.”

Therefore this is what the LORD says concerning the king of Assyria: “He will not enter this city or shoot an arrow here. He will not come before it with shield or build a siege ramp against it. By the way that he came he will return; he will not enter this city, declares the LORD. I will defend this city and save it, for my sake and for the sake of David my servant.”

That night the angel of the LORD went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning—there were all the dead bodies! So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there. One day, while he was worshiping in the temple of his god Nisrok, his sons Adrammelek and Sharezer killed him with the sword, and they escaped to the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son succeeded him as king.

Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent a message to Hezekiah: “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Because you have prayed to me concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria, this is the word the LORD has spoken against him:

“Virgin Daughter Zion despises and mocks you. Daughter Jerusalem tosses her head as you flee. Who is it you have ridiculed and blasphemed? Against whom have you raised your voice and lifted your eyes in pride? Against the Holy One of Israel! By your messengers you have ridiculed the Lord. And you have said, ‘With my many chariots I have ascended the heights of the mountains, the utmost heights of Lebanon. I have cut down its tallest cedars, the choicest of its junipers. I have reached its remotest heights, the finest of its forests. I have dug wells in foreign lands and drunk the water there. With the soles of my feet I have dried up all the streams of Egypt. Have you not heard? Long ago I ordained it. In days of old I planned it; now I have brought it to pass, that you have turned fortified cities into piles of stone. Their people, drained of power, are dismayed and put to shame. They are like plants in the field, like tender green shoots, like grass sprouting on the roof, scorched before it grows up. But I know where you are and when you come and go and how you rage against me. Because you rage against me and because your insolence has reached my ears, I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth, and I will make you return by the way you came. This will be the sign for you, Hezekiah: This year you will eat what grows by itself, and the second year what springs from that. But in the third-year sow and reap, plant vineyards, and eat their fruit. Once more a remnant of the kingdom of Judah will take root below and bear fruit above. For out of Jerusalem will come a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this. Therefore this is what the LORD says concerning the king of Assyria: “He will not enter this city or shoot an arrow here. He will not come before it with shield or build a siege ramp against it. By the way that he came he will

return; he will not enter this city,” declares the LORD. “I will defend this city and save it, for my sake and for the sake of David my servant!” Then the angel of the LORD went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning—there were all the dead bodies! So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there. One day, while he was worshiping in the temple of his god Nisrok, his sons Adrammelek and Sharezer killed him with the sword, and they escaped to the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son succeeded him as king. (Isaiah 37:21-38)

King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz cried out in prayer to heaven about this. And the LORD sent an angel, who annihilated all the fighting men and the commanders and officers in the camp of the Assyrian king. So he withdrew to his own land in disgrace. And when he went into the temple of his god, some of his sons, his own flesh and blood, cut him down with the sword.

So the LORD saved Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib king of Assyria and from the hand of all others. He took care of them on every side. Many brought offerings to Jerusalem for the LORD and valuable gifts for Hezekiah king of Judah. From then on, he was highly regarded by all the nations.

In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to him and said, “This is what the Lord says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover.” Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, “Remember, Lord, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly.

Before Isaiah had left the middle court, the word of the Lord came to him: “Go back and tell Hezekiah, the ruler of my people, ‘This is what the Lord, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you. On the third day from now you will go up to the temple of the Lord. I will add fifteen years to your life. And I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city for my sake and for the sake of my servant David.’”

Then Isaiah said, “Prepare a poultice of figs.” They did so and applied it to the boil, and he recovered.

Hezekiah had asked Isaiah, “What will be the sign that the Lord will heal me and that I will go up to the temple of the Lord on the third day from now?” Isaiah answered, “This is the Lord’s sign to you that the Lord will do what he has promised: Shall the shadow go forward ten steps, or shall it go back ten steps?” “It is a simple matter for the shadow to go forward ten steps,” said Hezekiah. “Rather, have it go back ten steps.” Then the prophet Isaiah called on the Lord, and the Lord made the shadow go back the ten steps it had gone down on the stairway of Ahaz.

In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to him and said, “This is what the LORD says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover.” Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, “Remember, LORD, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly.

Then the word of the LORD came to Isaiah: ⁵“Go and tell Hezekiah, ‘This is what the LORD, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will add fifteen years to your life. And I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city.

A writing of Hezekiah king of Judah after his illness and recovery:

I said, "In the prime of my life must I go through the gates of death and be robbed of the rest of my years?"

I said, "I will not again see the LORD himself in the land of the living;
no longer will I look on my fellow man, or be with those who now dwell in this world.

Like a shepherd's tent my house has been pulled down and taken from me.

Like a weaver I have rolled up my life, and he has cut me off from the loom;
day and night you made an end of me.

I waited patiently till dawn, but like a lion he broke all my bones; day and night you made an end of me.

I cried like a swift or thrush, I moaned like a mourning dove.

My eyes grew weak as I looked to the heavens. I am being threatened; Lord, come to my aid!"

But what can I say? He has spoken to me, and he himself has done this.

I will walk humbly all my years because of this anguish of my soul.

Lord, by such things people live; and my spirit finds life in them too.

You restored me to health and let me live.

Surely it was for my benefit that I suffered such anguish.

In your love you kept me from the pit of destruction; you have put all my sins behind your back.

'For the grave cannot praise you, death cannot sing your praise;
those who go down to the pit cannot hope for your faithfulness.

The living, the living—they praise you, as I am doing today;
parents tell their children about your faithfulness.

The LORD will save me, and we will sing with stringed instruments all the days of our lives
in the temple of the LORD.

Isaiah had said, "Prepare a poultice of figs and apply it to the boil, and he will recover." Hezekiah had asked, "What will be the sign that I will go up to the temple of the LORD?" "This is the LORD's sign to you that the LORD will do what he has promised: I will make the shadow cast by the sun go back the ten steps it has gone down on the stairway of Ahaz." So the sunlight went back the ten steps it had gone down. (Isaiah 38:1-22)

In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. He prayed to the LORD, who answered him and gave him a miraculous sign. But Hezekiah's heart was proud and he did not respond to the kindness shown him; therefore the LORD's wrath was on him and on Judah and Jerusalem. Then Hezekiah repented of the pride of his heart, as did the people of Jerusalem; therefore the LORD's wrath did not come on them during the days of Hezekiah.

Hezekiah had very great wealth and honor, and he made treasuries for his silver and gold and for his precious stones, spices, shields and all kinds of valuables. He also made buildings to store the harvest of grain, new wine and olive oil; and he made stalls for various kinds of cattle, and pens for the flocks. He built villages and acquired great numbers of flocks and herds, for God had given him very great riches.

It was Hezekiah who blocked the upper outlet of the Gihon spring and channeled the water down to the west side of the City of David. He succeeded in everything he undertook. But when envoys were sent by the rulers of Babylon to ask him about the miraculous sign that had occurred in the land, God left him to test him and to know everything that was in his heart.

At that time Marduk-Baladan son of Baladan king of Babylon sent Hezekiah letters and a gift, because he had heard of Hezekiah's illness. Hezekiah received the envoys and showed them all that was in his storehouses—the silver, the gold, the spices and the fine olive oil—his armory and everything found

among his treasures. There was nothing in his palace or in all his kingdom that Hezekiah did not show them. Then Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah and asked, "What did those men say, and where did they come from?" "From a distant land," Hezekiah replied. "They came from Babylon." The prophet asked, "What did they see in your palace?" "They saw everything in my palace," Hezekiah said. "There is nothing among my treasures that I did not show them." Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD: The time will surely come when everything in your palace, and all that your predecessors have stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the LORD. And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood who will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." "The word of the LORD you have spoken is good," Hezekiah replied. For he thought, "Will there not be peace and security in my lifetime?"

At that time Marduk-Baladan son of Baladan king of Babylon sent Hezekiah letters and a gift, because he had heard of his illness and recovery. Hezekiah received the envoys gladly and showed them what was in his storehouses—the silver, the gold, the spices, the fine olive oil—his entire armory and everything found among his treasures. There was nothing in his palace or in all his kingdom that Hezekiah did not show them. Then Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah and asked, "What did those men say, and where did they come from?" "From a distant land," Hezekiah replied. "They came to me from Babylon." The prophet asked, "What did they see in your palace?" "They saw everything in my palace," Hezekiah said. "There is nothing among my treasures that I did not show them." Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD Almighty: The time will surely come when everything in your palace, and all that your predecessors have stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the LORD. And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood who will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." "The word of the LORD you have spoken is good," Hezekiah replied. For he thought, "There will be peace and security in my lifetime." (Isaiah 39:1-8)

In this next section, we read several chapters of Isaiah. These chapters, 40-55, are called, "Second Isaiah" by many scholars and are believed to be written by the prophet, Isaiah, and/or his students during the time just before Babylon's conquest of Judah (the time period we re up to in the narrative history), or in the time just after the people are taken to Babylon in exile (which we will be coming to soon in our readings). You will recognize many of these chapters, especially from Advent readings.

Comfort for God's People

Comfort, comfort my people says your God.

Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.

A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low;
the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.

And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together.
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

A voice says, "Cry out." And I said, "What shall I cry?"

"All people are like grass, and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field.
The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the LORD blows on them.

Surely the people are grass.

The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever."

You who bring good news to Zion, go up on a high mountain.

You who bring good news to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout,
lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God!"

See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and he rules with a mighty arm.

See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.

He tends his flock like a shepherd:

He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.

Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand,
or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens?

Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket,

or weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance?

Who can fathom the Spirit of the LORD, or instruct the LORD as his counselor?

Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way?

Who was it that taught him knowledge, or showed him the path of understanding?

Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket; they are regarded as dust on the scales;
he weighs the islands as though they were fine dust.

Lebanon is not sufficient for altar fires, nor its animals enough for burnt offerings.

Before him all the nations are as nothing; they are regarded by him as worthless and less than nothing.

With whom, then, will you compare God? To what image will you liken him?

As for an idol, a metalworker casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and fashions silver chains for it.

A person too poor to present such an offering selects wood that will not rot;
they look for a skilled worker to set up an idol that will not topple.

Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning?

Have you not understood since the earth was founded?

He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers.

He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in.

He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.

No sooner are they planted, no sooner are they sown, no sooner do they take root in the ground,
than he blows on them and they wither, and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.

"To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One.

Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens? Who created all these?

He who brings out the starry host one by one and calls forth each of them by name.

Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.

Why do you complain, Jacob? Why do you say, Israel,

"My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God"?

Do you not know? Have you not heard?

The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.

He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall;

but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary,

they will walk and not be faint.

The Helper of Israel

“Be silent before me, you islands! Let the nations renew their strength!
Let them come forward and speak; let us meet together at the place of judgment.

“Who has stirred up one from the east, calling him in righteousness to his service?
He hands nations over to him and subdues kings before him.

He turns them to dust with his sword, to windblown chaff with his bow.
He pursues them and moves on unscathed, by a path his feet have not traveled before.
Who has done this and carried it through, calling forth the generations from the beginning?
I, the LORD—with the first of them and with the last—I am he.”

The islands have seen it and fear; the ends of the earth tremble.
They approach and come forward; they help each other and say to their companions, “Be strong!”
The metalworker encourages the goldsmith, and the one who smooths with the hammer
spurs on the one who strikes the anvil.
One says of the welding, “It is good.” The other nails down the idol so it will not topple.

“But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, you descendants of Abraham my friend,
I took you from the ends of the earth, from its farthest corners I called you.
I said, ‘You are my servant’; I have chosen you and have not rejected you.
So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

“All who rage against you will surely be ashamed and disgraced;
those who oppose you will be as nothing and perish.
Though you search for your enemies you will not find them.
Those who wage war against you will be as nothing at all.

For I am the LORD your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you.
Do not be afraid, you worm Jacob, little Israel, do not fear, for I myself will help you,”
declares the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

“See, I will make you into a threshing sledge, new and sharp, with many teeth.
You will thresh the mountains and crush them, and reduce the hills to chaff.
You will winnow them, the wind will pick them up, and a gale will blow them away.
But you will rejoice in the LORD and glory in the Holy One of Israel.

“The poor and needy search for water, but there is none; their tongues are parched with thirst.
But I the LORD will answer them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.
I will make rivers flow on barren heights, and springs within the valleys.
I will turn the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into springs.
I will put in the desert the cedar and the acacia, the myrtle and the olive.
I will set junipers in the wasteland, the fir and the cypress together,
so that people may see and know, may consider and understand,
that the hand of the LORD has done this, that the Holy One of Israel has created it.

“Present your case,” says the LORD. “Set forth your arguments,” says Jacob’s King.
“Tell us, you idols, what is going to happen. Tell us what the former things were,
so that we may consider them and know their final outcome.

Or declare to us the things to come, tell us what the future holds, so we may know that you are gods.
Do something, whether good or bad, so that we will be dismayed and filled with fear.
But you are less than nothing and your works are utterly worthless; whoever chooses you is detestable.

“I have stirred up one from the north, and he comes—one from the rising sun who calls on my name.
He treads on rulers as if they were mortar, as if he were a potter treading the clay.
Who told of this from the beginning, so we could know, or beforehand, so we could say, ‘He was right’?

No one told of this, no one foretold it, no one heard any words from you.
I was the first to tell Zion, 'Look, here they are!' I gave to Jerusalem a messenger of good news.
I look but there is no one— no one among the gods to give counsel, no one to give answer when I ask them.
See, they are all false! Their deeds amount to nothing; their images are but wind and confusion.

The Servant of the LORD

"Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations.
He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets.
A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.
In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;
he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth.
In his teaching the islands will put their hope."

This is what God the LORD says—
the Creator of the heavens, who stretches them out, who spreads out the earth with all that springs from it,
who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it:
"I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand.
I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people
and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind,
to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.
"I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another or my praise to idols.
See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare;
before they spring into being I announce them to you."

Song of Praise to the LORD

Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise from the ends of the earth,
you who go down to the sea, and all that is in it, you islands, and all who live in them.
Let the wilderness and its towns raise their voices; let the settlements where Kedar lives rejoice.
Let the people of Sela sing for joy; let them shout from the mountaintops.
Let them give glory to the LORD and proclaim his praise in the islands.
The LORD will march out like a champion, like a warrior he will stir up his zeal;
with a shout he will raise the battle cry and will triumph over his enemies.
"For a long time I have kept silent, I have been quiet and held myself back.
But now, like a woman in childbirth, I cry out, I gasp and pant.
I will lay waste the mountains and hills and dry up all their vegetation;
I will turn rivers into islands and dry up the pools.
I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them;
I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth.
These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them.
But those who trust in idols, who say to images, 'You are our gods,' will be turned back in utter shame.

Israel Blind and Deaf

“Hear, you deaf; look, you blind, and see!
Who is blind but my servant, and deaf like the messenger I send?
Who is blind like the one in covenant with me, blind like the servant of the LORD?
You have seen many things, but you pay no attention; your ears are open, but you do not listen.”
It pleased the LORD for the sake of his righteousness to make his law great and glorious.
But this is a people plundered and looted, all of them trapped in pits or hidden away in prisons.
They have become plunder, with no one to rescue them, they have been made loot,
with no one to say, “Send them back.”

Which of you will listen to this or pay close attention in time to come?
Who handed Jacob over to become loot, and Israel to the plunderers?
Was it not the LORD, against whom we have sinned?
For they would not follow his ways; they did not obey his law.
So he poured out on them his burning anger, the violence of war.
It enveloped them in flames, yet they did not understand; it consumed them, but they did not take it to heart.

Israel's Only Savior

But now, this is what the LORD says—he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel:
“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.
For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior;
I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead.
Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you,
I will give people in exchange for you, nations in exchange for your life.
Do not be afraid, for I am with you;
I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west.
I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ and to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’
Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth—
everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”

Lead out those who have eyes but are blind, who have ears but are deaf.
All the nations gather together and the peoples assemble.
Which of their gods foretold this and proclaimed to us the former things?
Let them bring in their witnesses to prove they were right, so that others may hear and say, “It is true.”
“You are my witnesses,” declares the LORD, “and my servant whom I have chosen,
so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he.
Before me no god was formed nor will there be one after me.
I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no savior.
I have revealed and saved and proclaimed—I, and not some foreign god among you.
You are my witnesses,” declares the LORD, “that I am God.
Yes, and from ancient days I am he. No one can deliver out of my hand. When I act, who can reverse it?”

God's Mercy and Israel's Unfaithfulness

This is what the LORD says— your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:
“For your sake I will send to Babylon and bring down as fugitives all the Babylonians,
in the ships in which they took pride.
I am the LORD, your Holy One, Israel's Creator, your King.”

This is what the LORD says—
he who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters,
who drew out the chariots and horses, the army and reinforcements together,
and they lay there, never to rise again, extinguished, snuffed out like a wick:
“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?

I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.
The wild animals honor me, the jackals and the owls,
because I provide water in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland,
to give drink to my people, my chosen, the people I formed for myself
that they may proclaim my praise.

“Yet you have not called on me, Jacob, you have not wearied yourselves for me, Israel.
You have not brought me sheep for burnt offerings, nor honored me with your sacrifices.
I have not burdened you with grain offerings nor wearied you with demands for incense.
You have not bought any fragrant calamus for me, or lavished on me the fat of your sacrifices.
But you have burdened me with your sins and wearied me with your offenses.

“I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake,
and remembers your sins no more. Review the past for me,
let us argue the matter together; state the case for your innocence.
Your first father sinned; those I sent to teach you rebelled against me.
So I disgraced the dignitaries of your temple; I consigned Jacob to destruction and Israel to scorn.

Israel the Chosen

“But now listen, Jacob, my servant, Israel, whom I have chosen.
This is what the LORD says—
he who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you:
Do not be afraid, Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen.
For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground;
I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.
They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams.
Some will say, ‘I belong to the LORD’; others will call themselves by the name of Jacob;
still others will write on their hand, ‘The LORD's, and will take the name Israel.

The LORD, Not Idols

“This is what the LORD says— Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty:
I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God.
Who then is like me? Let him proclaim it.
Let him declare and lay out before me what has happened since I established my ancient people,
and what is yet to come—yes, let them foretell what will come.

Do not tremble, do not be afraid. Did I not proclaim this and foretell it long ago?
You are my witnesses. Is there any God besides me? No, there is no other Rock; I know not one.”

All who make idols are nothing, and the things they treasure are worthless.
Those who would speak up for them are blind; they are ignorant, to their own shame.
Who shapes a god and casts an idol, which can profit nothing?
People who do that will be put to shame; such craftsmen are only human beings.
Let them all come together and take their stand; they will be brought down to terror and shame.

The blacksmith takes a tool and works with it in the coals;
he shapes an idol with hammers, he forges it with the might of his arm.
He gets hungry and loses his strength; he drinks no water and grows faint.
The carpenter measures with a line and makes an outline with a marker;
he roughs it out with chisels and marks it with compasses.
He shapes it in human form, human form in all its glory, that it may dwell in a shrine.
He cut down cedars, or perhaps took a cypress or oak.
He let it grow among the trees of the forest, or planted a pine, and the rain made it grow.
It is used as fuel for burning; some of it he takes and warms himself, he kindles a fire and bakes bread.
But he also fashions a god and worships it; he makes an idol and bows down to it.
Half of the wood he burns in the fire; over it he prepares his meal, he roasts his meat and eats his fill.
He also warms himself and says, “Ah! I am warm; I see the fire.”
From the rest he makes a god, his idol; he bows down to it and worships.
He prays to it and says, “Save me! You are my god!”
They know nothing, they understand nothing; their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see,
and their minds closed so they cannot understand.
No one stops to think, no one has the knowledge or understanding to say,
“Half of it I used for fuel; I even baked bread over its coals, I roasted meat and I ate.
Shall I make a detestable thing from what is left? Shall I bow down to a block of wood?”
Such a person feeds on ashes; a deluded heart misleads him;
he cannot save himself, or say, “Is not this thing in my right hand a lie?”
“Remember these things, Jacob, for you, Israel, are my servant.
I have made you, you are my servant; Israel, I will not forget you.
I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist.
Return to me, for I have redeemed you.”

Sing for joy, you heavens, for the LORD has done this; shout aloud, you earth beneath.
Burst into song, you mountains, you forests and all your trees, for the LORD has redeemed Jacob,
he displays his glory in Israel.

Jerusalem to Be Inhabited

“This is what the LORD says- your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb:

I am the LORD, the Maker of all things, who stretches out the heavens,
who spreads out the earth by myself, who foils the signs of false prophets
and makes fools of diviners, who overthrows the learning of the wise and turns it into nonsense,
who carries out the words of his servants and fulfills the predictions of his messengers,
who says of Jerusalem, ‘It shall be inhabited,’ of the towns of Judah, ‘They shall be rebuilt,’
and of their ruins, ‘I will restore them,’

who says to the watery deep, 'Be dry and I will dry up your streams,'
who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please;
he will say of Jerusalem, "Let it be rebuilt," and of the temple, "Let its foundations be laid."'

"This is what the LORD says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of
to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor,
to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut:

I will go before you and will level the mountains;
I will break down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron.
I will give you hidden treasures, riches stored in secret places,
so that you may know that I am the LORD, the God of Israel, who summons you by name.
For the sake of Jacob my servant, of Israel my chosen,
I summon you by name and bestow on you a title of honor, though you do not acknowledge me.
I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God.
I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me,
so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting people may know there is none besides me.
I am the LORD, and there is no other.
I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things.

"You heavens above, rain down my righteousness; let the clouds shower it down.
Let the earth open wide, let salvation spring up, let righteousness flourish with it;
I, the LORD, have created it.

"Woe to those who quarrel with their Maker,
those who are nothing but potsherds among the potsherds on the ground.
Does the clay say to the potter, 'What are you making?'
Does your work say, 'The potter has no hands?'
Woe to the one who says to a father, 'What have you begotten?'
or to a mother, 'What have you brought to birth?'

"This is what the LORD says— the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker:
Concerning things to come, do you question me about my children,
or give me orders about the work of my hands?
It is I who made the earth and created mankind on it.
My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshaled their starry hosts.
I will raise up Cyrus in my righteousness: I will make all his ways straight.
He will rebuild my city and set my exiles free,
but not for a price or reward, says the LORD Almighty."

This is what the LORD says:

"The products of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush, and those tall Sabeans—
they will come over to you and will be yours; they will trudge behind you, coming over to you in chains.
They will bow down before you and plead with you, saying,
'Surely God is with you, and there is no other; there is no other god.'"

Truly you are a God who has been hiding himself, the God and Savior of Israel.
All the makers of idols will be put to shame and disgraced; they will go off into disgrace together.
But Israel will be saved by the LORD with an everlasting salvation;
you will never be put to shame or disgraced, to ages everlasting.

For this is what the LORD says, he who created the heavens, he is God;
he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it;
he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited—

he says, "I am the LORD, and there is no other.
I have not spoken in secret, from somewhere in a land of darkness;
I have not said to Jacob's descendants, 'Seek me in vain.'
I, the LORD, speak the truth; I declare what is right.

"Gather together and come; assemble, you fugitives from the nations.
Ignorant are those who carry about idols of wood, who pray to gods that cannot save.
Declare what is to be, present it— let them take counsel together.
Who foretold this long ago— who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the LORD?
And there is no God apart from me; a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me.

"Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.
By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked:
Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear.
They will say of me, 'In the LORD alone are deliverance and strength.'"
All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame.
But all the descendants of Israel will find deliverance in the LORD and will make their boast in him.

Gods of Babylon

Bel bows down, Nebo stoops low; their idols are borne by beasts of burden.
The images that are carried about are burdensome, a burden for the weary.
They stoop and bow down together; unable to rescue the burden, they themselves go off into captivity.

"Listen to me, you descendants of Jacob, all the remnant of the people of Israel,
you whom I have upheld since your birth, and have carried since you were born.
Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you.
I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.

"With whom will you compare me or count me equal? To whom will you liken me that we may be compared?
Some pour out gold from their bags and weigh out silver on the scales;
they hire a goldsmith to make it into a god, and they bow down and worship it.
They lift it to their shoulders and carry it; they set it up in its place, and there it stands.
From that spot it cannot move.
Even though someone cries out to it, it cannot answer; it cannot save them from their troubles.

"Remember this, keep it in mind, take it to heart, you rebels.
Remember the former things, those of long ago;
I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.
I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come.
I say, 'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.'
From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose.
What I have said, that I will bring about; what I have planned, that I will do.
Listen to me, you stubborn-hearted, you who are now far from my righteousness.
I am bringing my righteousness near, it is not far away; and my salvation will not be delayed.
I will grant salvation to Zion, my splendor to Israel.

The Fall of Babylon

“Go down, sit in the dust, Virgin Daughter Babylon;
sit on the ground without a throne, queen city of the Babylonians.
No more will you be called tender or delicate.
Take millstones and grind flour; take off your veil.
Lift up your skirts, bare your legs, and wade through the streams.
Your nakedness will be exposed and your shame uncovered.
I will take vengeance; I will spare no one.”

Our Redeemer—the LORD Almighty is his name—is the Holy One of Israel.

“Sit in silence, go into darkness, queen city of the Babylonians;
no more will you be called queen of kingdoms.
I was angry with my people and desecrated my inheritance;
I gave them into your hand, and you showed them no mercy.
Even on the aged you laid a very heavy yoke.
You said, ‘I am forever the eternal queen!’

But you did not consider these things or reflect on what might happen.

“Now then, listen, you lover of pleasure, lounging in your security and saying to yourself,
‘I am, and there is none besides me, I will never be a widow or suffer the loss of children.’
Both of these will overtake you in a moment, on a single day: loss of children and widowhood.
They will come upon you in full measure, in spite of your many sorceries and all your potent spells.
You have trusted in your wickedness and have said, ‘No one sees me.’
Your wisdom and knowledge mislead you when you say to yourself, ‘I am, and there is none besides me.’
Disaster will come upon you, and you will not know how to conjure it away.
A calamity will fall upon you that you cannot ward off with a ransom;
a catastrophe you cannot foresee will suddenly come upon you.

“Keep on, then, with your magic spells and with your many sorceries,
which you have labored at since childhood.
Perhaps you will succeed, perhaps you will cause terror.
All the counsel you have received has only worn you out!
Let your astrologers come forward, those stargazers who make predictions month by month,
let them save you from what is coming upon you.
Surely they are like stubble; the fire will burn them up.
They cannot even save themselves from the power of the flame.
These are not coals for warmth; this is not a fire to sit by.
That is all they are to you— these you have dealt with and labored with since childhood.
All of them go on in their error; there is not one that can save you.

Stubborn Israel

“Listen to this, you descendants of Jacob, you who are called by the name of Israel
and come from the line of Judah, you who take oaths in the name of the LORD
and invoke the God of Israel— but not in truth or righteousness—
you who call yourselves citizens of the holy city and claim to rely on the God of Israel—
the LORD Almighty is his name:
I foretold the former things long ago, my mouth announced them and I made them known;
then suddenly I acted, and they came to pass.
For I knew how stubborn you were, your neck muscles were iron, your forehead was bronze.
Therefore I told you these things long ago;

before they happened I announced them to you so that you could not say,
'My images brought them about; my wooden image and metal god ordained them.'
You have heard these things; look at them all. Will you not admit them?

"From now on I will tell you of new things, of hidden things unknown to you.
They are created now, and not long ago; you have not heard of them before today.
So you cannot say, 'Yes, I knew of them.'

You have neither heard nor understood; from of old your ears have not been open.
Well do I know how treacherous you are; you were called a rebel from birth.
For my own name's sake I delay my wrath; for the sake of my praise I hold it back from you,
so as not to destroy you completely.

See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.
For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this. How can I let myself be defamed?
I will not yield my glory to another.

Israel Freed

"Listen to me, Jacob, Israel, whom I have called.

I am he; I am the first and I am the last.
My own hand laid the foundations of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens;
when I summon them, they all stand up together.

"Come together, all of you, and listen: Which of the idols has foretold these things?
The LORD's chosen ally will carry out his purpose against Babylon; his arm will be against the Babylonians.
I, even I, have spoken; yes, I have called him. I will bring him, and he will succeed in his mission.

"Come near me and listen to this:

"From the first announcement I have not spoken in secret; at the time it happens, I am there."

And now the Sovereign LORD has sent me, endowed with his Spirit.

This is what the LORD says— your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:
"I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go.
If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river,
your well-being like the waves of the sea.
Your descendants would have been like the sand, your children like its numberless grains;
their name would never be blotted out nor destroyed from before me."

Leave Babylon, flee from the Babylonians!

Announce this with shouts of joy and proclaim it.

Send it out to the ends of the earth; say, "The LORD has redeemed his servant Jacob."
They did not thirst when he led them through the deserts; he made water flow for them from the rock;
he split the rock and water gushed out.

"There is no peace," says the LORD, "for the wicked."

The Servant of the LORD

Listen to me, you islands; hear this, you distant nations:
Before I was born the LORD called me; from my mother's womb he has spoken my name.
He made my mouth like a sharpened sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me;
he made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in his quiver.
He said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will display my splendor."
But I said, "I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nothing at all.
Yet what is due me is in the LORD's hand, and my reward is with my God."

And now the LORD says— he who formed me in the womb to be his servant
to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself,
for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD and my God has been my strength—
he says:
"It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob
and bring back those of Israel I have kept.
I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth."

This is what the LORD says—the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel—
to him who was despised and abhorred by the nation, to the servant of rulers:
"Kings will see you and stand up, princes will see and bow down,
because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."

Restoration of Israel

This is what the LORD says:

"In the time of my favor I will answer you, and in the day of salvation I will help you;
I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people,
to restore the land and to reassign its desolate inheritances,
to say to the captives, 'Come out,' and to those in darkness, 'Be free!'

"They will feed beside the roads and find pasture on every barren hill.
They will neither hunger nor thirst, nor will the desert heat or the sun beat down on them.
He who has compassion on them will guide them and lead them beside springs of water.
I will turn all my mountains into roads, and my highways will be raised up.
See, they will come from afar— some from the north, some from the west, some from the region of Aswan."

Shout for joy, you heavens; rejoice, you earth; burst into song, you mountains!
For the LORD comforts his people and will have compassion on his afflicted ones.

But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me."

"Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne?
Though she may forget, I will not forget you!
See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands, your walls are ever before me.
Your children hasten back, and those who laid you waste depart from you.
Lift up your eyes and look around; all your children gather and come to you.
As surely as I live," declares the LORD, "you will wear them all as ornaments; you will put them on, like a bride.

"Though you were ruined and made desolate and your land laid waste,
now you will be too small for your people, and those who devoured you will be far away.
The children born during your bereavement will yet say in your hearing,
'This place is too small for us; give us more space to live in.'

Then you will say in your heart, ‘Who bore me these? I was bereaved and barren; I was exiled and rejected. Who brought these up? I was left all alone, but these—where have they come from?’”

This is what the Sovereign LORD says:

“See, I will beckon to the nations, I will lift up my banner to the peoples;
they will bring your sons in their arms and carry your daughters on their hips.
Kings will be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers.
They will bow down before you with their faces to the ground; they will lick the dust at your feet.
Then you will know that I am the LORD; those who hope in me will not be disappointed.”

Can plunder be taken from warriors, or captives be rescued from the fierce^[s]?

But this is what the LORD says:

“Yes, captives will be taken from warriors, and plunder retrieved from the fierce;
I will contend with those who contend with you, and your children I will save.
I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh; they will be drunk on their own blood, as with wine.
Then all mankind will know that I, the LORD, am your Savior, your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.”

Israel’s Sin and the Servant’s Obedience

This is what the LORD says:

“Where is your mother’s certificate of divorce with which I sent her away?
Or to which of my creditors did I sell you?
Because of your sins you were sold; because of your transgressions your mother was sent away.
When I came, why was there no one? When I called, why was there no one to answer?
Was my arm too short to deliver you? Do I lack the strength to rescue you?
By a mere rebuke I dry up the sea, I turn rivers into a desert; their fish rot for lack of water and die of thirst.
I clothe the heavens with darkness and make sackcloth its covering.”

The Sovereign LORD has given me a well-instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary.
He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed.
The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears; I have not been rebellious,
I have not turned away.
I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard;
I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting.
Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced.
Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame.
He who vindicates me is near.
Who then will bring charges against me? Let us face each other!
Who is my accuser? Let him confront me!

Everlasting Salvation for Zion

“Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness and who seek the LORD:
Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn;
look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth.
When I called him he was only one man, and I blessed him and made him many.
The LORD will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins;

he will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the LORD.
Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing.

“Listen to me, my people, hear me, my nation:
Instruction will go out from me; my justice will become a light to the nations.
My righteousness draws near speedily, my salvation is on the way, and my arm will bring justice to the nations.
The islands will look to me and wait in hope for my arm.
Lift up your eyes to the heavens, look at the earth beneath;
the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment and its inhabitants die like flies.
But my salvation will last forever, my righteousness will never fail.

Hear me, you who know what is right, you people who have taken my instruction to heart:
Do not fear the reproach of mere mortals or be terrified by their insults.
For the moth will eat them up like a garment; the worm will devour them like wool.
But my righteousness will last forever, my salvation through all generations.”

Awake, awake, arm of the LORD, clothe yourself with strength!
Awake, as in days gone by, as in generations of old.
Was it not you who cut Rahab to pieces, who pierced that monster through?
Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep,
who made a road in the depths of the sea so that the redeemed might cross over?
Those the LORD has rescued will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads.
Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

“I, even I, am he who comforts you.
Who are you that you fear mere mortals, human beings who are but grass,
that you forget the LORD your Maker, who stretches out the heavens
and who lays the foundations of the earth, that you live in constant terror every day
because of the wrath of the oppressor, who is bent on destruction?
For where is the wrath of the oppressor?
The cowering prisoners will soon be set free; they will not die in their dungeon, nor will they lack bread.
For I am the LORD your God, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—
the LORD Almighty is his name.
I have put my words in your mouth and covered you with the shadow of my hand—
I who set the heavens in place, who laid the foundations of the earth,
and who say to Zion, “You are my people.””

The Cup of the LORD's Wrath

Awake, awake! Rise up, Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the LORD the cup of his wrath,
you who have drained to its dregs the goblet that makes people stagger.
Among all the children she bore there was none to guide her;
among all the children she reared there was none to take her by the hand.
These double calamities have come upon you—who can comfort you?—
ruin and destruction, famine and sword—who can console you?
Your children have fainted; they lie at every street corner, like antelope caught in a net.
They are filled with the wrath of the LORD, with the rebuke of your God.
Therefore hear this, you afflicted one, made drunk, but not with wine.
This is what your Sovereign LORD says, your God, who defends his people:
“See, I have taken out of your hand the cup that made you stagger;
from that cup, the goblet of my wrath, you will never drink again.

I will put it into the hands of your tormentors, who said to you, 'Fall prostrate that we may walk on you.'
And you made your back like the ground, like a street to be walked on."

Awake, awake, Zion, clothe yourself with strength!
Put on your garments of splendor, Jerusalem, the holy city.
The uncircumcised and defiled will not enter you again.
Shake off your dust; rise up, sit enthroned, Jerusalem.
Free yourself from the chains on your neck, Daughter Zion, now a captive.

For this is what the LORD says:
"You were sold for nothing, and without money you will be redeemed."

For this is what the Sovereign LORD says:
"At first my people went down to Egypt to live; lately, Assyria has oppressed them.

"And now what do I have here?" declares the LORD.
"For my people have been taken away for nothing, and those who rule them mock," declares the LORD.
"And all day long my name is constantly blasphemed.
Therefore my people will know my name.
Therefore, in that day they will know that it is I who foretold it. Yes, it is I."

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news,
who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation,
who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices, together they shout for joy.
When the LORD returns to Zion, they will see it with their own eyes.

Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem,
for the LORD has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem.
The LORD will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations,
and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.

Depart, depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing!
Come out from it and be pure, you who carry the articles of the LORD's house.
But you will not leave in haste; or go in flight;
for the LORD will go before you, the God of Israel will be your rear guard.

The Suffering and Glory of the Servant

See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted.
Just as there were many who were appalled at him—
his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being
and his form marred beyond human likeness—
so he will sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him.
For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand.

Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?
He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground.
He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.
He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.
Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

Surely, he took up our pain and bore our suffering,
yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted.
But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.
We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way;
and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth;
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.
By oppression and judgment he was taken away. Yet who of his generation protested?
For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished.
He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death,
though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer,
and though the LORD makes his life an offering for sin,
he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.
After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied;
by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.
Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong,
because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors.
For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

The Future Glory of Zion

“Sing, barren woman, you who never bore a child;
burst into song, shout for joy, you who were never in labor;
because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband,” says the LORD.

“Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back;
lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes.
For you will spread out to the right and to the left;
your descendants will dispossess nations and settle in their desolate cities.

“Do not be afraid; you will not be put to shame. Do not fear disgrace; you will not be humiliated.
You will forget the shame of your youth and remember no more the reproach of your widowhood.
For your Maker is your husband—the LORD Almighty is his name—the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer;
he is called the God of all the earth.

The LORD will call you back as if you were a wife deserted and distressed in spirit—
a wife who married young, only to be rejected,” says your God.

“For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back.
In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment,
but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you,”
says the LORD your Redeemer.

“To me this is like the days of Noah, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth.
So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again.
Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed,
yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken, nor my covenant of peace be removed,”
says the LORD, who has compassion on you.

“Afflicted city, lashed by storms and not comforted,
I will rebuild you with stones of turquoise, your foundations with lapis lazuli.
I will make your battlements of rubies, your gates of sparkling jewels, and all your walls of precious stones.
All your children will be taught by the LORD, and great will be their peace.
In righteousness you will be established: Tyranny will be far from you; you will have nothing to fear.
Terror will be far removed; it will not come near you.
If anyone does attack you, it will not be my doing; whoever attacks you will surrender to you.
“See, it is I who created the blacksmith who fans the coals into flame and forges a weapon fit for its work.
And it is I who have created the destroyer to wreak havoc; no weapon forged against you will prevail,
and you will refute every tongue that accuses you.
This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and this is their vindication from me,” declares the LORD.

Invitation to the Thirsty

“Come, all you who are thirsty; come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.
Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?
Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare.
Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live.
I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David.
See, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a ruler and commander of the peoples.
Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations you do not know will come running to you,
because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendor.”

Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near.
Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts.
Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD.
“As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.
As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it
without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish,
so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth:
It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.
Instead of the thorn bush will grow the juniper, and instead of briars the myrtle will grow.
This will be for the LORD’s renown, for an everlasting sign, that will endure forever.”