



# The Book Of Isaiah

He Faithfully and

Forceably

Proclaimed The

Truth

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# Isaiah

## OVERVIEW:

SLOWLY he rose, and the crowd fell silent. Those at the back leaned forward, straining to hear. The atmosphere was electric. He spoke, and his carefully chosen words flew like swift arrows and found their mark. The great man, a spokesman for God, was warning. . . and condemning. The crowd became restless—shifting positions, clenching fists, and murmuring. Some agreed with his message, nodding their heads and weeping softly. But most were angry, and they began to shout back insults and threats.

Such was the life of a prophet.

The “office” of prophet was instituted during the days of Samuel, the last of the judges. Prophets stood with the priests as God’s special representatives. The prophet’s role was to speak for God, confronting the people and their leaders with God’s commands and promises. Because of this confrontational stance and the continuing tendency of people to disobey God, true prophets usually were not very popular. But though their message often went unheeded, they faithfully and forcefully proclaimed the truth.

The book of Isaiah is the first of the writings of the Prophets in the Bible; and Isaiah, the author, is generally considered to be the greatest prophet. He was probably reared in an aristocratic home and was married to a prophetess. In the beginning of his ministry he was well-liked. But, like most prophets, he soon became unpopular because his messages were so difficult to hear. He called the people to turn from their lives of sin and warned them of God’s judgment and punishment. Isaiah had an active ministry for 60 years before he was executed during Manasseh’s reign (according to tradition). As God’s special messenger to Judah, Isaiah prophesied during the reigns of several of its rulers. Many of those messages are recorded in his book: Uzziah and Jotham, Isaiah 1-6; Ahaz, Isaiah 7-14; and Hezekiah, Isaiah 15-39.

The first half of the book of Isaiah (Isaiah 1-39) contains scathing denunciations and pronouncements as he calls Judah, Israel, and the surrounding nations to repent of their sins. However, the last 27 chapters (Isaiah 40-66) are filled with consolation and hope as Isaiah unfolds God's promise of future blessings through his Messiah.

As you read Isaiah, imagine this strong and courageous man of God, fearlessly proclaiming God's word, and listen to his message in relation to your own life—*return, repent, and be renewed*. Then trust in God's *redemption* through Christ and *rejoice*. Your Savior has come, and he's coming again!

## THE BLUEPRINT

### A. WORDS OF JUDGMENT (Isaiah 1:1-39:8)

The 39 chapters in the first half of Isaiah generally carry the message of judgment for sin. Isaiah brings the message of judgment to Judah, Israel, and the surrounding pagan nations. Judah had a form of godliness, but in their hearts they were corrupt. Isaiah's warnings were intended to purify the people by helping them understand God's true nature and message. However, they ignored the repeated warnings that Isaiah brought. We need not repeat their error; rather, we should heed the prophetic voice.

1. The sins of Israel and Judah
2. Judgment against pagan nations
3. God's purpose in judgment
4. Jerusalem's true and false hopes
5. Events during the reign of Hezekiah

#### Isaiah 1:1-39:8

These visions concerning Judah and Jerusalem came to Isaiah son of Amoz during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah—all kings of Judah.

[2] Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! This is what the Lord says: "The children I raised and cared for have turned against me. [3] Even the animals—the donkey and the ox—know their owner and appreciate his care, but not my people Israel. No matter what I do for them, they still do not understand."

[4] Oh, what a sinful nation they are! They are loaded down with a burden of guilt. They are evil and corrupt children who have turned away from the Lord. They have despised the Holy One of Israel, cutting themselves off from his help.

[5] Why do you continue to invite punishment? Must you rebel forever? Your head is injured, and your heart is sick. [6] You are sick from head to foot—covered with bruises, welts, and infected wounds—without any ointments or bandages. [7] Your country lies in ruins, and your cities are burned. As you watch, foreigners plunder your fields and destroy everything they see.

[8] Jerusalem stands abandoned like a watchman's shelter in a vineyard or field after the harvest is over. It is as helpless as a city under siege. [9] If the Lord Almighty had not spared a few of us, we would have been wiped out as completely as Sodom and Gomorrah.

[10] Listen to the Lord, you leaders of Israel! Listen to the law of our God, people of Israel. You act just like the rulers and people of Sodom and Gomorrah. [11] "I am sick of your sacrifices," says the Lord. "Don't bring me any more burnt offerings! I don't want the fat from your rams or other animals. I don't want to see the blood from your offerings of bulls and rams and goats. [12] Why do you keep parading through my courts with your worthless sacrifices? [13] The incense you bring me is a stench in my nostrils! Your celebrations of the new moon and the Sabbath day, and your special days for fasting—even your most pious meetings—are all sinful and false. I want nothing more to do with them. [14] I hate all your festivals and sacrifices. I cannot stand the sight of them! [15] From now on, when you lift up your hands in prayer, I will refuse to look. Even though you offer many prayers, I will not listen. For your hands are covered with the blood of your innocent victims. [16] Wash yourselves and be clean! Let me no longer see your evil deeds. Give up your wicked ways. [17] Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the orphan. Fight for the rights of widows.

[18] "Come now, let us argue this out," says the Lord. "No matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can remove it. I can make you as clean as freshly fallen snow. Even if you are stained as red as crimson, I can make you as white as wool. [19] If you will only obey me and let me help you, then you will have plenty to eat. [20] But if you keep turning away and refusing to listen, you will be destroyed by your enemies. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

[21] See how Jerusalem, once so faithful, has become a prostitute. Once the home of justice and righteousness, she is now filled with murderers. [22] Once like pure silver, you have become like worthless slag. Once so pure, you are now like watered-down wine. [23] Your leaders are rebels, the companions of thieves. All of them take bribes and refuse to defend the orphans and the widows.

[24] Therefore, the Lord, the Lord Almighty, the Mighty One of Israel, says, "I will pour out my fury on you, my enemies! [25] I will turn against you. I will melt you down and skim off your slag. I will remove all your impurities. [26] Afterward I will give you good judges and wise counselors like the ones you used to have. Then Jerusalem will again be called the Home of Justice and the Faithful City."

[27] Because the Lord is just and righteous, the repentant people of Jerusalem will be redeemed. [28] But all sinners will be completely destroyed, for they refuse to come to the Lord.

[29] Shame will cover you when you think of the times you offered sacrifices to idols in your groves of sacred oaks. You will blush when you think of all the sins you committed in your sacred gardens. [30] You will wither away like an oak or garden without water. [31] The strongest among you will disappear like burning straw. Your evil deeds are the spark that will set the straw on fire, and no one will be able to put it out.

[2:1] This is another vision that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem:

[2] In the last days, the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem will become the most important place on earth. People from all over the world will go there to worship.

[3] Many nations will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the Temple of the God of Israel. There he will teach us his ways, so that we may obey him." For in those days the Lord's teaching and his word will go out from Jerusalem.

[4] The Lord will settle international disputes. All the nations will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. All wars will stop, and military training will come to an end. [5] Come, people of Israel, and let us walk in the light of the Lord!

[6] The Lord has rejected the people of Israel because they have made alliances with foreigners from the East who practice magic and divination, just like the Philistines. [7] Israel has vast treasures of silver and gold and many horses and chariots. [8] The land is filled with idols. The people bow down and worship these things they have made. [9] So now everyone will be humbled and brought low. The Lord cannot simply ignore their sins!

[10] Crawl into caves in the rocks. Hide from the terror of the Lord and the glory of his majesty. [11] The day is coming when your pride will be brought low and the Lord alone will be exalted. [12] In that day the Lord Almighty will punish the proud, bringing them down to the dust. [13] He will cut down the tall cedars of Lebanon and the mighty oaks of Bashan. [14] He will level the high mountains and hills. [15] He will break down every high tower and wall. [16] He will destroy the great trading ships and all the small boats in the harbor. [17] The arrogance of all people will be brought low. Their pride will lie in the dust. The Lord alone will be exalted! [18] Idols will be utterly abolished and destroyed.

[19] When the Lord rises to shake the earth, his enemies will crawl with fear into holes in the ground. They will hide in caves in the rocks from the terror of the Lord and the glory of his majesty. [20] They will abandon their gold and silver idols to the moles and bats. [21] They will crawl into caverns and hide among the jagged rocks at the tops of cliffs. In this way, they will try to escape the terror of the Lord and the glory of his majesty as he rises to shake the earth.

[22] Stop putting your trust in mere humans. They are as frail as breath. How can they be of help to anyone?

[3:1] The Lord, the Lord Almighty, will cut off the supplies of food and water from Jerusalem and Judah. [2] He will destroy all the nation's leaders—the heroes, soldiers, judges, prophets, diviners, elders, [3] army officers, honorable citizens, advisers, skilled magicians, and expert enchanters. [4] Then he will appoint children to rule over them, and anarchy will prevail. [5] People will take advantage of each other—man against man, neighbor fighting neighbor. Young people will revolt against authority, and nobodies will sneer at honorable people.

[6] In those days a man will say to his brother, "Since you have a cloak, you be our leader! Take charge of this heap of ruins!"

[7] "No!" he will reply. "I can't help. I don't have any extra food or clothes. Don't ask me to get involved!"

[8] Judah and Jerusalem will lie in ruins because they speak out against the Lord and refuse to obey him. They have offended his glorious presence among them. [9] The very look on their faces gives them away and displays their guilt. They sin openly like the people of Sodom. They are not one bit ashamed. How terrible it will be for them! They have brought about their own destruction.

[10] But all will be well for those who are godly. Tell them, "You will receive a wonderful reward!" [11] But say to the wicked, "Your destruction is sure. You, too, will get what you deserve. Your well-earned punishment is on the way."

[12] Children oppress my people, and women rule over them. O my people, can't you see what fools your rulers are? They are leading you down a pretty garden path to destruction.

[13] The Lord takes his place in court. He is the great prosecuting attorney, presenting his case against his people! [14] The leaders and the princes will be the first to feel the Lord's judgment. "You have ruined Israel, which is my vineyard. You have taken advantage of the poor, filling your barns with grain extorted from helpless people. [15] How dare you grind my people into the dust like that!" demands the Lord, the Lord Almighty.

[16] Next the Lord will judge the women of Jerusalem, who walk around with their noses in the air, with tinkling ornaments on their ankles. Their eyes rove among the crowds, flirting with the men. [17] The Lord will send a plague of scabs to ornament their heads. Yes, the Lord will make them bald for all to see!

[18] The Lord will strip away their artful beauty—their ornaments, headbands, and crescent necklaces; [19] their earrings, bracelets, and veils of shimmering gauze. [20] Gone will be their scarves, ankle chains, sashes, perfumes, and charms; [21] their rings, jewels, [22] party clothes, gowns, capes, and purses; [23] their mirrors, linen garments, head ornaments, and shawls. [24] Instead of smelling of sweet perfume, they will stink. They will wear ropes for sashes, and their well-set hair will fall out. They will wear rough sackcloth instead of rich robes. Their beauty will be gone. Only shame will be left to them.

[25] The men of the city will die in battle. [26] The gates of Jerusalem will weep and mourn. The city will be like a ravaged woman, huddled on the ground.

[4:1] in that day few men will be left alive. Seven women will fight over each of them and say, "Let us all marry you! We will provide our own food and clothing. Only let us be called by your name so we won't be mocked as old maids."

[2] But in the future, Israel—the branch of the Lord—will be lush and beautiful, and the fruit of the land will be the pride of its people. [3] All those whose names are written down, who have survived the destruction of Jerusalem, will be a holy people. [4] The Lord will wash the moral filth from the women of Jerusalem. He will cleanse Jerusalem of its bloodstains by a spirit of judgment that burns like fire. [5] Then the Lord will provide shade for Jerusalem and all who assemble there. There will be a canopy of smoke and cloud throughout the day and clouds of fire at night, covering the glorious land. [6] It will be a shelter from daytime heat and a hiding place from storms and rain.

[5:1] now I will sing a song for the one I love about his vineyard:

My beloved has a vineyard  
on a rich and fertile hill.

[2] He plowed the land, cleared its stones,  
and planted it with choice vines.  
In the middle he built a watchtower  
and carved a winepress in the nearby rocks.  
Then he waited for a harvest of sweet grapes,  
but the grapes that grew were wild and sour.

[3] "Now, you people of Jerusalem and Judah,  
you have heard the case; you be the judges.

[4] What more could I have done  
to cultivate a rich harvest?  
Why did my vineyard give me wild grapes  
when I expected sweet ones?

[5] Now this is what I am going to do to my vineyard:

I will tear down its fences  
and let it be destroyed.

I will break down its walls  
and let the animals trample it.

[6] I will make it a wild place.  
I will not prune the vines or hoe the ground.  
I will let it be overgrown with briars and thorns.

I will command the clouds  
to drop no more rain on it."

[7] This is the story of the Lord's people.  
They are the vineyard of the Lord Almighty.  
Israel and Judah are his pleasant garden.  
He expected them to yield a crop of justice,  
but instead he found bloodshed.  
He expected to find righteousness,  
but instead he heard cries of oppression.

[8] Destruction is certain for you who buy up property so others have no place to live. Your homes are built on great estates so you can be alone in the land. [9] But the Lord Almighty has sealed your awful fate. With my own ears I heard him say, "Many beautiful homes will stand deserted, the owners dead or gone. [10] Ten acres of vineyard will not produce even six gallons of wine. Ten measures of seed will yield only one measure of grain."

[11] Destruction is certain for you who get up early to begin long drinking bouts that last late into the night. [12] You furnish lovely music and wine at your grand parties; the harps, lyres, tambourines, and flutes are superb! But you never think about the Lord or notice what he is

doing. [13] So I will send my people into exile far away because they do not know me. The great and honored among them will starve, and the common people will die of thirst.

[14] The grave is licking its chops in anticipation of Jerusalem, this delicious morsel. Her great and lowly will be swallowed up, with all her drunken crowds. [15] In that day the arrogant will be brought down to the dust; the proud will be humbled. [16] But the Lord Almighty is exalted by his justice. The holiness of God is displayed by his righteousness. [17] In those days flocks will feed among the ruins; lambs and kids will pasture there.

[18] Destruction is certain for those who drag their sins behind them, tied with cords of falsehood. [19] They even mock the Holy One of Israel and say, "Hurry up and do something! Quick, show us what you can do. We want to see what you have planned."

[20] Destruction is certain for those who say that evil is good and good is evil; that dark is light and light is dark; that bitter is sweet and sweet is bitter.

[21] Destruction is certain for those who think they are wise and consider themselves to be clever.

[22] Destruction is certain for those who are heroes when it comes to drinking, who boast about all the liquor they can hold. [23] They take bribes to pervert justice. They let the wicked go free while punishing the innocent.

[24] Therefore, they will all disappear like burning straw. Their roots will rot and their flowers wither, for they have rejected the law of the Lord Almighty. They have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. [25] That is why the anger of the Lord burns against his people. That is why he has raised his fist to crush them. The hills tremble, and the rotting bodies of his people are thrown as garbage into the streets. But even then the Lord's anger will not be satisfied. His fist is still poised to strike!

[26] He will send a signal to the nations far away. He will whistle to those at the ends of the earth, and they will come racing toward Jerusalem. [27] They will not get tired or stumble. They will run without stopping for rest or sleep. Not a belt will be loose, not a sandal thong broken. [28] Their arrows will be sharp and their bows ready for battle. Sparks will fly from their horses' hooves as the wheels of their chariots spin like the wind. [29] Roaring like lions, they will pounce on their prey. They will seize my people and carry them off into captivity, and no one will be there to rescue them. [30] The enemy nations will growl over their victims like the roaring of the sea. A cloud of darkness and sorrow will hover over Israel. The clouds will blot out the light.

[6:1] In the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord. He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple. [2] Hovering around him were mighty seraphim, each with six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with the remaining two they flew. [3] In a great chorus they sang, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty! The whole earth is filled with his glory!" [4] The glorious singing shook the Temple to its foundations, and the entire sanctuary was filled with smoke.

[5] Then I said, "My destruction is sealed, for I am a sinful man and a member of a sinful race. Yet I have seen the King, the Lord Almighty!"

[6] Then one of the seraphim flew over to the altar, and he picked up a burning coal with a pair of tongs. [7] He touched my lips with it and said, "See, this coal has touched your lips. Now your guilt is removed, and your sins are forgiven."

[8] Then I heard the Lord asking, "Whom should I send as a messenger to my people? Who will go for us?"

And I said, "Lord, I'll go! Send me."

[9] And he said, "Yes, go. But tell my people this: 'You will hear my words, but you will not understand. You will see what I do, but you will not perceive its meaning.' [10] Harden the hearts of these people. Close their ears, and shut their eyes. That way, they will not see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn to me for healing."

[11] Then I said, "Lord, how long must I do this?"

And he replied, "Until their cities are destroyed, with no one left in them. Until their houses are deserted and the whole country is an utter wasteland. [12] Do not stop until the Lord has sent everyone away to distant lands and the entire land of Israel lies deserted. [13] Even if only a tenth—a remnant—survive, it will be invaded again and burned. Israel will remain a stump, like a tree that is cut down, but the stump will be a holy seed that will grow again."

[7:1] During the reign of Ahaz son of Jotham and grandson of Uzziah, Jerusalem was attacked by King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah of Israel, the son of Remaliah. The city withstood the attack, however, and was not taken.

[2] The news had come to the royal court: "Aram is allied with Israel against us!" So the hearts of the king and his people trembled with fear, just as trees shake in a storm.

[3] Then the Lord said to Isaiah, "Go out to meet King Ahaz, you and your son Shear-jashub. You will find the king at the end of the aqueduct that feeds water into the upper pool, near the road leading to the field where cloth is bleached. [4] Tell him to stop worrying. Tell him he doesn't need to fear the fierce anger of those two burned-out embers, King Rezin of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah.

[5] "Yes, the kings of Aram and Israel are coming against you. They are saying, [6] 'We will invade Judah and throw its people into panic. Then we will fight our way into Jerusalem and install the son of Tabeel as Judah's king.'

[7] "But this is what the Sovereign Lord says: This invasion will never happen, [8] because Aram is no stronger than its capital, Damascus. And Damascus is no stronger than its king, Rezin. As for Israel, within sixty-five years it will be crushed and completely destroyed. [9] Israel is no stronger than its capital, Samaria. And Samaria is no stronger than its king, Pekah son of Remaliah. You do not believe me? If you want me to protect you, learn to believe what I say."

[10] Not long after this, the Lord sent this message to King Ahaz: [11] "Ask me for a sign, Ahaz, to prove that I will crush your enemies as I have promised. Ask for anything you like, and make it as difficult as you want."

[12] But the king refused. "No," he said, "I wouldn't test the Lord like that."

[13] Then Isaiah said, "Listen well, you royal family of David! You aren't satisfied to exhaust my patience. You exhaust the patience of God as well! [14] All right then, the Lord himself will choose the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel—'God is with us.' [15] By the time this child is old enough to eat curds and honey, he will know enough to choose what is right and reject what is wrong. [16] But before he knows right from wrong, the two kings you fear so much—the kings of Israel and Aram—will both be dead.

[17] "The Lord will bring a terrible curse on you, your nation, and your family. You will soon experience greater terror than has been known in all the years since Solomon's empire was divided into Israel and Judah. The mighty king of Assyria will come with his great army!"

[18] In that day the Lord will whistle for the army of Upper Egypt and for the army of Assyria. They will swarm around you like flies. Like bees, they will sting and kill. [19] They will come in vast hordes, spreading across the whole land. They will settle in the fertile areas and also in the desolate valleys, caves, and thorny places. [20] In that day the Lord will take this "razor"—these Assyrians you have hired to protect you—and use it to shave off everything: your land, your crops, and your people.

[21] When they finally stop plundering, a farmer will be fortunate to have a cow and two sheep left. [22] The few people still left in the land will live on curds and wild honey because that is all the land will produce. [23] In that day the lush vineyards, now worth as much as a thousand pieces of silver, will become patches of briars and thorns. [24] The entire land will be one vast brier patch, a hunting ground overrun by wildlife. [25] No one will go to the fertile hillsides where the gardens once grew, for briars and thorns will cover them. Cattle, sheep, and goats will graze there.

[8:1] Again the Lord said to me, "Make a large signboard and clearly write this name on it: Maher-shalal-hash-baz." [2] I asked Uriah the priest and Zechariah son of Jeberekiah, both known as honest men, to testify that I had written it before the child was conceived.

[3] Then I slept with my wife, and she became pregnant and had a son. And the Lord said, "Call him Maher-shalal-hash-baz. [4] This name prophesies that within a couple of years, before this child is old enough to say 'Papa' or 'Mama,' the king of Assyria will invade both Damascus and Samaria and carry away their riches."

[5] Then the Lord spoke to me again and said, [6] "The people of Judah have rejected my gentle care and are rejoicing over what will happen to King Rezin and King Pekah. [7] Therefore, the Lord will overwhelm them with a mighty flood from the Euphrates River—the king of Assyria and all his mighty armies. [8] This flood will overflow all its channels and sweep into Judah. It will submerge Immanuel's land from one end to the other.

[9] "The Assyrians will cry, 'Do your best to defend yourselves, but you will be shattered! Listen all you nations. Prepare for battle—and die! Yes, die! [10] Call your councils of war, develop your strategies, prepare your plans of attack—and then die! For God is with us!'"

[11] The Lord has said to me in the strongest terms: "Do not think like everyone else does. [12] Do not be afraid that some plan conceived behind closed doors will be the end of you. [13] Do not fear anything except the Lord Almighty. He alone is the Holy One. If you fear him, you need fear nothing else. [14] He will keep you safe. But to Israel and Judah he will be a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap that entangles them. [15] Many of them will stumble and fall, never to rise again. Many will be captured."

[16] I will write down all these things as a testimony of what the Lord will do. I will entrust it to my disciples, who will pass it down to future generations. [17] I will wait for the Lord to help us, though he has turned away from the people of Israel. My only hope is in him. [18] I and the children the Lord has given me have names that reveal the plans the Lord Almighty has for his people. [19] So why are you trying to find out the future by consulting mediums and psychics? Do not listen to their whisperings and mutterings. Can the living find out the future from the dead? Why not ask your God?

[20] "Check their predictions against my testimony," says the Lord. "If their predictions are different from mine, it is because there is no light or truth in them. [21] My people will be led away as captives, weary and hungry. And because they are hungry, they will rage and shake their fists at heaven and curse their king and their God. [22] Wherever they look, there will be trouble and anguish and dark despair. They will be thrown out into the darkness."

[9:1] Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali will soon be humbled, but there will be a time in the future when Galilee of the Gentiles, which lies along the road that runs between the Jordan and the sea, will be filled with glory. [2] The people who walk in darkness will see a great light—a light that will shine on all who live in the land where death casts its shadow. [3] Israel will again be great, and its people will rejoice as people rejoice at harvesttime. They will shout with joy like warriors dividing the plunder. [4] For God will break the chains that bind his people and the whip that scourges them, just as he did when he destroyed the army of Midian with Gideon's little band. [5] In that day of peace, battle gear will no longer be issued. Never again will uniforms be bloodstained by war. All such equipment will be burned.

[6] For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. And the government will rest on his shoulders. These will be his royal titles: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. [7] His ever expanding, peaceful government will never end. He will rule forever with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David. The passionate commitment of the Lord Almighty will guarantee this!

[8] The Lord has spoken out against that braggart Israel, [9] and the people of Israel and Samaria will soon discover it. In their pride and arrogance they say, [10] "Our land lies in ruins now, but we will rebuild it better than before. We will replace the broken bricks with cut stone, the fallen sycamore trees with cedars." [11] The Lord will reply to their bragging by bringing Rezin's enemies, the Assyrians, against them—

[12] along with Arameans from the east and Philistines from the west. With bared fangs, they will devour Israel. But even then the Lord's anger will not be satisfied. His fist is still poised to strike. [13] For after all this punishment, the people will still not repent and turn to the Lord Almighty.

[14] Therefore, in a single day, the Lord will destroy both the head and the tail, the palm branch and the reed. [15] The leaders of Israel are the head, and the lying prophets are the tail. [16] For the leaders of the people have led them down the path of destruction. [17] That is why the Lord has no joy in the young men and no mercy on even the widows and orphans. For they are all hypocrites, speaking wickedness with lies. But even then the Lord's anger will not be satisfied. His fist is still poised to strike.

[18] This wickedness is like a brushfire. It burns not only briars and thorns but the forests, too. Its burning sends up vast clouds of smoke. [19] The land is blackened by the fury of the Lord Almighty. The people are fuel for the fire, and no one spares anyone else. [20] They fight against their own neighbors to steal food, but they will still be hungry. In the end they will even eat their own children. [21] Manasseh will feed on Ephraim, Ephraim will feed on Manasseh, and both will devour Judah. But even then the Lord's anger will not be satisfied. His fist is still poised to strike.

[10:1] Destruction is certain for the unjust judges, for those who issue unfair laws. [2] They deprive the poor, the widows, and the orphans of justice. Yes, they rob widows and fatherless children! [3] What will you do when I send desolation upon you from a distant land? To whom will you turn for help? Where will your treasures be safe? [4] I will not help you. You will stumble along as prisoners or lie among the dead. But even then the Lord's anger will not be satisfied. His fist is still poised to strike.

[5] "Destruction is certain for Assyria, the whip of my anger. Its military power is a club in my hand. [6] Assyria will enslave my people, who are a godless nation. It will plunder them, trampling them like dirt beneath its feet. [7] But the king of Assyria will not know that it is I who sent him. He will merely think he is attacking my people as part of his plan to conquer the world. [8] He will say, 'Each of my princes will soon be a king, ruling a conquered land. [9] We will destroy Calno just as we did Carchemish. Hamath will fall before us as Arpad did. And we will destroy Samaria just as we did Damascus. [10] Yes, we have finished off many a kingdom whose gods were far greater than those in Jerusalem and Samaria. [11] So when we have defeated Samaria and her gods, we will destroy Jerusalem with hers.' "

[12] After the Lord has used the king of Assyria to accomplish his purposes in Jerusalem, he will turn against the king of Assyria and punish him—for he is proud and arrogant. [13] He boasts, "By my own power and wisdom I have won these wars. By my own strength I have captured many lands, destroyed their kings, and carried off their treasures. [14] By my greatness I have robbed their nests of riches and gathered up kingdoms as a farmer gathers eggs. No one can even flap a wing against me or utter a peep of protest."

[15] Can the ax boast greater power than the person who uses it? Is the saw greater than the person who saws? Can a whip strike unless a hand is moving it? Can a cane walk by itself?

[16] Listen now, king of Assyria! Because of all your evil boasting, the Lord, the Lord Almighty, will send a plague among your proud troops, and a flaming fire will ignite your glory.

[17] The Lord, the Light of Israel and the Holy One, will be a flaming fire that will destroy them. In a single night he will burn those thorns and briars, the Assyrians. [18] Assyria's vast army is like a glorious forest, yet it will be destroyed. The Lord will completely destroy Assyria's warriors, and they will waste away like sick people in a plague. [19] Only a few from all that mighty army will survive—so few that a child could count them!

[20] Then at last those left in Israel and Judah will trust the Lord, the Holy One of Israel. They will no longer depend on the Assyrians, who would destroy them. [21] A remnant of them will return to the Mighty God. [22] But though the people of Israel are as numerous as the sand on the seashore, only a few of them will return at that time. The Lord has rightly decided to destroy his people. [23] Yes, the Lord, the Lord Almighty, has already decided to consume them.

[24] So this is what the Lord, the Lord Almighty, says: "My people in Jerusalem, do not be afraid of the Assyrians when they oppress you just as the Egyptians did long ago. [25] It will not last very long. In a little while my anger against you will end, and then my anger will rise up to destroy them."

[26] The Lord Almighty will beat them with his whip, as he did when Gideon triumphed over the Midianites at the rock of Oreb, or when the Lord's staff was raised to drown the Egyptian army in the sea. [27] In that day the Lord will end the bondage of his people. He will break the yoke of slavery and lift it from their shoulders.

[28] Look, the mighty armies of Assyria are coming! They are now at Aiath, now at Migron. They are storing some of their equipment at Micmash. [29] They are crossing the pass and are staying overnight at Geba. Fear strikes the city of Ramah. All the people of Gibeah—the city of Saul—are running for their lives. [30] Well may you scream in terror, you people of Gallim! Shout out a warning to Laishah, for the mighty army comes. Poor Anathoth, what a fate is yours! [31] There go the people of Madmenah, all fleeing. And the citizens of Gebim are preparing to run. [32] But the enemy stops at Nob for the rest of that day. He shakes his fist at Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

[33] But look! The Lord, the Lord Almighty, will chop down the mighty tree! He will destroy all that vast army of Assyria—officers and high officials alike. [34] The Mighty One will cut down the enemy as an ax cuts down the forest trees in Lebanon.

[11:1] Out of the stump of David's family will grow a shoot—yes, a new Branch bearing fruit from the old root. [2] And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. [3] He will delight in obeying the Lord. He will never judge by appearance, false evidence, or hearsay. [4] He will defend the poor and the exploited. He will rule against the wicked and destroy them with the breath of his mouth. [5] He will be clothed with fairness and truth.

[6] In that day the wolf and the lamb will live together; the leopard and the goat will be at peace. Calves and yearlings will be safe among lions, and a little child will lead them all. [7] The cattle will graze among bears. Cubs and calves will lie down together. And lions will eat grass as the livestock do. [8] Babies will crawl safely among poisonous snakes. Yes, a little child will put its hand in a nest of deadly snakes and pull it out unharmed. [9] Nothing will hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain. And as the waters fill the sea, so the earth will be filled with people who know the Lord.

[10] In that day the heir to David's throne will be a banner of salvation to all the world. The nations will rally to him, for the land where he lives will be a glorious place. [11] In that day the Lord will bring back a remnant of his people for the second time, returning them to the land of Israel from Assyria, Lower Egypt, Upper Egypt, Ethiopia, Elam, Babylonia, Hamath, and all the distant coastlands.

[12] He will raise a flag among the nations for Israel to rally around. He will gather the scattered people of Judah from the ends of the earth. [13] Then at last the jealousy between Israel and Judah will end. They will not fight against each other anymore. [14] They will join forces to swoop down on Philistia to the west. Together they will attack and plunder the nations to the east. They will occupy all the lands of Edom, Moab, and Ammon.

[15] The Lord will make a dry path through the Red Sea. He will wave his hand over the Euphrates River, sending a mighty wind to divide it into seven streams that can easily be crossed. [16] He will make a highway from Assyria for the remnant there, just as he did for Israel long ago when they returned from Egypt.

[12:1] In that day you will sing:

"Praise the Lord!

He was angry with me,  
but now he comforts me.

[2] See, God has come to save me.

I will trust in him and not be afraid.

The Lord God is my strength and my song;  
he has become my salvation."

[3] With joy you will drink deeply from the fountain of salvation! [4] In that wonderful day you will sing:

"Thank the Lord!

Praise his name!

Tell the world what he has done.

Oh, how mighty he is!

[5] Sing to the Lord,

for he has done wonderful things.

Make known his praise around the world.

[6] Let all the people of Jerusalem shout his praise with joy!

For great is the Holy One of Israel who lives among you."

[13:1] Isaiah son of Amoz received this message concerning the destruction of Babylon:

[2] "See the flags waving as the enemy attacks. Cheer them on, O Israel! Wave to them as they march against Babylon to destroy the palaces of the high and mighty. [3] I, the Lord, have assigned this task to these armies, and they will rejoice when I am exalted. I have called them to satisfy my anger."

[4] Hear the noise on the mountains! Listen, as the armies march! It is the noise and the shout of many nations. The Lord Almighty has brought them here to form an army. [5] They came from countries far away. They are the Lord's weapons; they carry his anger with them and will destroy the whole land. [6] Scream in terror, for the Lord's time has arrived—the time for the Almighty to destroy. [7] Every arm is paralyzed with fear. Even the strongest hearts melt [8] and are afraid. Fear grips them with terrible pangs, like those of a woman about to give birth. They look helplessly at one another as the flames of the burning city reflect on their faces. [9] For see, the day of the Lord is coming—the terrible day of his fury and fierce anger. The land will be destroyed and all the sinners with it. [10] The heavens will be black above them. No light will shine from stars or sun or moon.

[11] "I, the Lord, will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their sin. I will crush the arrogance of the proud and the haughtiness of the mighty. [12] Few will be left alive when I have finished my work. People will be as scarce as gold—more rare than the gold of Ophir. [13] For I will shake the heavens, and the earth will move from its place. I, the Lord Almighty, will show my fury and fierce anger."

[14] Everyone will run until exhausted, rushing back to their own lands like hunted deer, wandering like sheep without a shepherd. [15] Anyone who is captured will be run through with a sword. [16] Their little children will be dashed to death right before their eyes. Their homes will be sacked and their wives raped by the attacking hordes. [17] For I will stir up the Medes against Babylon, and no amount of silver or gold will buy them off. [18] The attacking armies will shoot down the young people with arrows. They will have no mercy on helpless babies and will show no compassion for the children.

[19] Babylon, the most glorious of kingdoms, the flower of Chaldean culture, will be devastated like Sodom and Gomorrah when God destroyed them. [20] Babylon will never rise again. Generation after generation will come and go, but the land will never again be lived in. Nomads will refuse to camp there, and shepherds will not allow their sheep to stay overnight. [21] Wild animals of the desert will move into the ruined city. The houses will be haunted by howling creatures. Ostriches will live among the ruins, and wild goats will come there to dance. [22] Hyenas will howl in its fortresses, and jackals will make their dens in its palaces. Babylon's days are numbered; its time of destruction will soon arrive.

[14:1] But the Lord will have mercy on the descendants of Jacob. Israel will be his special people once again. He will bring them back to settle once again in their own land. And people from many different nations will come and join them there and become a part of the people of Israel. [2] The nations of the world will help the Lord's people to return, and those who come to live in their land will serve them. Those who captured Israel will be captured, and Israel will rule over its enemies.

[3] In that wonderful day when the Lord gives his people rest from sorrow and fear, from slavery and chains, [4] you will taunt the king of Babylon. You will say, "The mighty man has been destroyed. Yes, your insolence is ended. [5] For the Lord has crushed your wicked power and broken your evil rule. [6] You persecuted the people with unceasing blows of rage and held the nations in your angry grip. Your tyranny was unrestrained. [7] But at last the land is at rest and is quiet. Finally it can sing again! [8] Even the trees of the forest—the cypress trees and the cedars of Lebanon—sing out this joyous song: 'Your power is broken! No one will come to cut us down now!'

[9] "In the place of the dead there is excitement over your arrival. World leaders and mighty kings long dead are there to see you. [10] With one voice they all cry out, 'Now you are as weak as we are! [11] Your might and power are gone; they were buried with you. All the pleasant music in your palace has ceased. Now maggots are your sheet and worms your blanket.'

[12] "How you are fallen from heaven, O shining star, son of the morning! You have been thrown down to the earth, you who destroyed the nations of the world.

[13] For you said to yourself, 'I will ascend to heaven and set my throne above God's stars. I will preside on the mountain of the gods far away in the north. [14] I will climb to the highest heavens and be like the Most High.' [15] But instead, you will be brought down to the place of the dead, down to its lowest depths. [16] Everyone there will stare at you and ask, 'Can this be the one who shook the earth and the kingdoms of the world? [17] Is this the one who destroyed the world and made it into a wilderness? Is this the king who demolished the world's greatest cities and had no mercy on his prisoners?'

[18] "The kings of the nations lie in stately glory in their tombs, [19] but you will be thrown out of your grave like a worthless branch. Like a corpse trampled underfoot, you will be dumped into a mass grave with those killed in battle. You will descend to the pit. [20] You will not be given a proper burial, for you have destroyed your nation and slaughtered your people. Your son will not succeed you as king. [21] Kill the children of this sinner! Do not let them rise and conquer the land or rebuild the cities of the world."

[22] This is what the Lord Almighty says: "I, myself, have risen against him! I will destroy his children and his children's children, so they will never sit on his throne. [23] I will make Babylon into a desolate land, a place of porcupines, filled with swamps and marshes. I will sweep the land with the broom of destruction. I, the Lord Almighty, have spoken!"

[24] The Lord Almighty has sworn this oath: "It will all happen as I have planned. It will come about according to my purposes. [25] I will break the Assyrians when they are in Israel; I will trample them on my mountains. My people will no longer be their slaves. [26] I have a plan for the whole earth, for my mighty power reaches throughout the world. [27] The Lord Almighty has spoken—who can change his plans? When his hand moves, who can stop him?"

[28] This message came to me the year King Ahaz died:

[29] Do not rejoice, you Philistines, that the king who attacked you is dead. For even though that whip is broken, his son will be worse than his father ever was. From that snake a poisonous snake will be born, a fiery serpent to destroy you! [30] I will feed the poor in my pasture; the needy will lie down in peace. But as for you, I will wipe you out with famine. I will destroy the few who remain.

[31] Weep, you Philistine cities, for you are doomed! Melt in fear, for everyone will be destroyed. A powerful army is coming out of the north. Each soldier rushes forward ready to fight. [32] What should we tell the enemy messengers? Tell them that the Lord has built Jerusalem, and that the poor of his people will find refuge in its walls.

[15:1] This message came to me concerning Moab:

In one night your cities of Ar and Kir will be destroyed. [2] Your people in Dibon will mourn at their temples and shrines, weeping for the fate of Nebo and Medeba. They will shave their heads in sorrow and cut off their beards. [3] They will wear sackcloth as they wander the streets. From every home will come the sound of weeping. [4] The cries from the cities of Heshbon and Elealeh will be heard far away, even in Jahaz! The bravest warriors of Moab will cry out in utter terror.

[5] My heart weeps for Moab. Its people flee to Zoar and Eglath-shelishiyah. Weeping, they climb the road to Luhith. Their crying can be heard all along the road to Horonaim. [6] Even the waters of Nimrim are dried up! The grassy banks are scorched, and the tender plants are gone. [7] The desperate refugees take only the possessions they can carry and flee across the Ravine of Willows. [8] The whole land of Moab is a land of weeping from one end to the other—from Eglaim to Beer-elim. [9] The stream near Dibon runs red with blood, but I am still not finished with Dibon! Lions will hunt down the survivors, both those who try to run and those who remain behind.

[16:1] Moab's refugees at Sela send lambs to Jerusalem as a token of alliance with the king of Judah. [2] The women of Moab are left like homeless birds at the shallow crossings of the Arnon River. [3] "Help us," they cry. "Defend us against our enemies. Protect us from their relentless attack. Do not betray us. [4] Let our outcasts stay among you. Hide them from our enemies until the terror is past."

When oppression and destruction have ceased and enemy raiders have disappeared, [5] then David's throne will be established by love. From that throne a faithful king will reign, one who always does what is just and right.

[6] Is this Moab, the proud land we have heard so much about? Its pride and insolence are all gone now! [7] The entire land of Moab weeps. Yes, you people of Moab, mourn for the delicacies of Kir-hareseth. [8] Weep for the abandoned farms of Heshbon and the vineyards at Sibmah. The wine from those vineyards used to make the rulers of the nations drunk. Moab was once like a spreading grapevine. Her tendrils spread out as far as Jazer and trailed out into the desert. Her shoots once reached as far as the Dead Sea.

[9] But now the enemy has completely destroyed that vine. So I wail and lament for Jazer and the vineyards of Sibmah. My tears will flow for Heshbon and Elealeh, for their summer fruits and harvests have all been destroyed.

[10] Gone now is the gladness; gone is the joy of harvest. The happy singing in the vineyards will be heard no more. The treading out of grapes in the winepresses has ceased forever. I have ended all their harvest joys. [11] I will weep for Moab. My sorrow for Kir-hareseth will be very great. [12] On the hilltops the people of Moab will pray in anguish to their idols, but it will do them no good. They will cry to the gods in their temples, but no one will come to save them.

[13] The Lord has already said this about Moab in the past. [14] But now the Lord says, "Within three years, without fail, the glory of Moab will be ended, and few of its people will be left alive."

[17:1] this message came to me concerning Damascus:

"Look, Damascus will disappear! It will become a heap of ruins. [2] The cities of Aroer will be deserted. Sheep will graze in the streets and lie down unafraid. There will be no one to chase them away. [3] The fortified cities of Israel will also be destroyed, and the power of Damascus will end. The few left in Aram will share the fate of Israel's departed glory," says the Lord Almighty.

[4] "In that day the glory of Israel will be very dim, for poverty will stalk the land. [5] Israel will be abandoned like the grain fields in the valley of Rephaim after the harvest. [6] Only a few of its people will be left, like the stray olives left on the tree after the harvest. Only two or three remain in the highest branches, four or five out on the tips of the limbs. Yes, Israel will be stripped bare of people," says the Lord, the God of Israel.

[7] Then at last the people will think of their Creator and have respect for the Holy One of Israel. [8] They will no longer ask their idols for help or worship what their own hands have made. They will never again bow down to their Asherah poles or burn incense on the altars they built.

[9] Their largest cities will be as deserted as overgrown thickets. They will become like the cities the Amorites abandoned when the Israelites came here so long ago. [10] Why? Because you have turned from the God who can save you—the Rock who can hide you. You may plant the finest imported grapevines, [11] and they may grow so well that they blossom on the very morning you plant them, but you will never pick any grapes from them. Your only harvest will be a load of grief and incurable pain.

[12] Look! The armies rush forward like waves thundering toward the shore. [13] But though they roar like breakers on a beach, God will silence them. They will flee like chaff scattered by the wind or like dust whirling before a storm. [14] In the evening Israel waits in terror, but by dawn its enemies are dead. This is the just reward of those who plunder and destroy the people of God.

[18:1] Destruction is certain for the land of Ethiopia, which lies at the headwaters of the Nile. Its winged sailboats glide along the river, [2] and ambassadors are sent in fast boats down the Nile. Go home, swift messengers! Take a message to your land divided by rivers, to your tall, smooth-skinned people, who are feared far and wide for their conquests and destruction.

[3] When I raise my battle flag on the mountain, let all the world take notice. When I blow the trumpet, listen! [4] For the Lord has told me this: "I will watch quietly from my dwelling place—as quietly as the heat rises on a summer day, or as the dew forms on an autumn morning during the harvest."

[5] Even before you begin your attack, while your plans are ripening like grapes, the Lord will cut you off as though with pruning shears. He will snip your spreading branches. [6] Your mighty army will be left dead in the fields for the mountain birds and wild animals to eat. The vultures will tear at corpses all summer. The wild animals will gnaw at bones all winter.

[7] But the time will come when the Lord Almighty will receive gifts from this land divided by rivers, from this tall, smooth-skinned people, who are feared far and wide for their conquests and destruction. They will bring the gifts to the Lord Almighty in Jerusalem, the place where his name dwells.

[19:1] This message came to me concerning Egypt:

Look! The Lord is advancing against Egypt, riding on a swift cloud. The idols of Egypt tremble. The hearts of the Egyptians melt with fear.

[2] "I will make the Egyptians fight against each other—brother against brother, neighbor against neighbor, city against city, province against province. [3] The Egyptians will lose heart, and I will confuse their plans. They will plead with their idols for wisdom. They will call on spirits, mediums, and psychics to show them which way to turn. [4] I will hand Egypt over to a hard, cruel master, to a fierce king," says the Lord, the Lord Almighty.

[5] The waters of the Nile will fail to rise and flood the fields. The riverbed will be parched and dry. [6] The canals of the Nile will dry up, and the streams of Egypt will become foul with rotting reeds and rushes. [7] All the greenery along the riverbank will wither and blow away. All the crops will dry up, and everything will die. [8] The fishermen will weep for lack of work. Those who fish with hooks and those who use nets will all be unemployed. [9] The weavers will have no flax or cotton, for the crops will fail. [10] The weavers and all the workers will be sick at heart.

[11] What fools are the counselors of Zoan! Their best counsel to the king of Egypt is stupid and wrong. Will they still boast of their wisdom? Will they dare tell Pharaoh about their long line of wise ancestors? [12] What has happened to your wise counselors, Pharaoh? If they are so wise, let them tell you what the Lord Almighty is going to do to Egypt. [13] The wise men from Zoan are fools, and those from Memphis are deluded. The leaders of Egypt have ruined the land with their foolish counsel. [14] The Lord has sent a spirit of foolishness on them, so all their suggestions are wrong. They cause the land of Egypt to stagger like a sick drunkard. [15] Nobody in Egypt, whether rich or poor, important or unknown, can offer any help.

[16] In that day the Egyptians will be as weak as women. They will cower in fear beneath the upraised fist of the Lord Almighty. [17] Just to speak the name of Israel will strike deep terror in their hearts, for the Lord Almighty has laid out his plans against them.

[18] In that day five of Egypt's cities will follow the Lord Almighty. They will even begin to speak the Hebrew language. One of these will be Heliopolis, the City of the Sun. [19] In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the heart of Egypt, and there will be a monument to the Lord at its border. [20] It will be a sign and a witness to the Lord Almighty in the land of Egypt. When the people cry to the Lord for help against those who oppress them, he will send them a savior who will rescue them.

[21] In that day the Lord will make himself known to the Egyptians. Yes, they will know the Lord and will give their sacrifices and offerings to him. They will make promises to the Lord and keep them. [22] The Lord will strike Egypt in a way that will bring healing. For the Egyptians will turn to the Lord, and he will listen to their pleas and heal them.

[23] In that day Egypt and Assyria will be connected by a highway. The Egyptians and Assyrians will move freely between their lands, and they will worship the same God. [24] And Israel will be their ally. The three will be together, and Israel will be a blessing to them. [25] For the Lord Almighty will say, "Blessed be Egypt, my people. Blessed be Assyria, the land I have made. Blessed be Israel, my special possession!"

[20:1] In the year when King Sargon of Assyria captured the Philistine city of Ashdod, [2] the Lord told Isaiah son of Amoz, "Take off all your clothes, including your sandals." Isaiah did as he was told and walked around naked and barefoot.

[3] Then the Lord said, "My servant Isaiah has been walking around naked and barefoot for the last three years. This is a sign—a symbol of the terrible troubles I will bring upon Egypt and Ethiopia. [4] For the king of Assyria will take away the Egyptians and Ethiopians as prisoners. He will make them walk naked and barefoot, both young and old, their buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt. [5] How dismayed will be the Philistines, who counted on the power of Ethiopia and boasted of their allies in Egypt! [6] They will say, 'If this can happen to Egypt, what chance do we have? For we counted on Egypt to protect us from the king of Assyria.' "

[21:1] This message came to me concerning the land of Babylonia:

Disaster is roaring down on you from the desert, like a whirlwind sweeping in from the Negev. [2] I see an awesome vision: I see you plundered and destroyed. Go ahead, you Elamites and Medes, take part in the siege. Babylon will fall, and the groaning of all the nations she enslaved will end. [3] My stomach aches and burns with pain. Sharp pangs of horror are upon me, like the pangs of a woman giving birth. I grow faint when I hear what God is planning; I am blinded with dismay. [4] My mind reels; my heart races. The sleep I once enjoyed at night is now a faint memory. I lie awake, trembling.

[5] Look! They are preparing a great feast. They are spreading rugs for people to sit on. Everyone is eating and drinking. Quick! Grab your shields and prepare for battle! You are being attacked!

[6] Meanwhile, the Lord said to me, "Put a watchman on the city wall to shout out what he sees. [7] Tell him to sound the alert when he sees chariots drawn by horses and warriors mounted on donkeys and camels."

[8] Then the watchman called out, "Day after day I have stood on the watchtower, my lord. Night after night I have remained at my post. [9] Now at last—look! Here come the chariots and

warriors!" Then the watchman said, "Babylon is fallen! All the idols of Babylon lie broken on the ground!"

[10] O my people, threshed and winnowed, I have told you everything the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, has said.

[11] This message came to me concerning Edom:

Someone from Edom keeps calling to me, "Watchman, how much longer until morning? When will the night be over?"

[12] The watchman replies, "Morning is coming, but night will soon follow. If you wish to ask again, then come back and ask."

[13] This message came to me concerning Arabia:

O caravans from Dedan, hide in the deserts of Arabia. [14] O people of Tema, bring food and water to these weary refugees. [15] They have fled from drawn swords and sharp arrows and the terrors of war. [16] "But within a year," says the Lord, "all the glory of Kedar will come to an end. [17] Only a few of its courageous archers will survive. I, the Lord, the God of Israel, have spoken!"

[22:1] This message came to me concerning Jerusalem:

What is happening? Why is everyone running to the rooftops? [2] The whole city is in a terrible uproar. What do I see in this reveling city? Bodies are lying everywhere, killed by famine and disease. [3] All your leaders flee. They surrender without resistance. The people try to slip away, but they are captured, too. [4] Leave me alone to weep; do not try to comfort me. Let me cry for my people as I watch them being destroyed.

[5] Oh, what a day of crushing trouble! What a day of confusion and terror the Lord, the Lord Almighty, has brought upon the Valley of Vision! The walls of Jerusalem have been broken, and cries of death echo from the mountainsides. [6] Elamites are the archers; Arameans drive the chariots. The men of Kir hold up the shields. [7] They fill your beautiful valleys and crowd against your gates. [8] Judah's defenses have been stripped away. You run to the armory for your weapons. [9] You inspect the walls of Jerusalem to see what needs to be repaired. You store up water in the lower pool. [10] You check the houses and tear some down to get stone to fix the walls. [11] Between the city walls, you build a reservoir for water from the old pool. But all your feverish plans are to no avail because you never ask God for help. He is the one who planned this long ago.

[12] The Lord, the Lord Almighty, called you to weep and mourn. He told you to shave your heads in sorrow for your sins and to wear clothes of sackcloth to show your remorse. [13] But instead, you dance and play; you slaughter sacrificial animals, feast on meat, and drink wine. "Let's eat, drink, and be merry," you say. "What's the difference, for tomorrow we die." [14] The Lord Almighty has revealed to me that this sin will never be forgiven you until the day you die. That is the judgment of the Lord, the Lord Almighty.

[15] Furthermore, the Lord, the Lord Almighty, told me to confront Shebna, the palace administrator, and to give him this message: [16] "Who do you think you are, building a beautiful tomb for yourself in the rock? [17] For the Lord is about to seize you and hurl you away. He is going to send you into captivity, you strong man! [18] He will crumple you up into a

ball and toss you away into a distant, barren land. There you will die, and there your glorious chariots will remain, broken and useless. You are a disgrace to your master.

[19] "Yes, I will drive you out of office," says the Lord. "I will pull you down from your high position. [20] And then I will call my servant Eliakim son of Hilkiyah to replace you. [21] He will have your royal robes, your title, and your authority. And he will be a father to the people of Jerusalem and Judah. [22] I will give him the key to the house of David—the highest position in the royal court. He will open doors, and no one will be able to shut them; he will close doors, and no one will be able to open them. [23] He will bring honor to his family name, for I will drive him firmly in place like a tent stake. [24] He will be loaded down with responsibility, and he will bring honor to even the lowliest members of his family."

[25] The Lord Almighty says: "When that time comes, I will pull out the stake that seemed so firm. It will come out and fall to the ground. Everything it supports will fall with it. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

[23:1] This message came to me concerning Tyre:

Weep, O ships of Tarshish, returning home from distant lands! Weep for your harbor at Tyre because it is gone! The rumors you heard in Cyprus are all true. [2] Mourn in silence, you people of the coast and you merchants of Sidon. Your traders crossed the sea, [3] sailing over deep waters. They brought you grain from Egypt and harvests from along the Nile. You were the merchandise mart of the world.

[4] But now you are put to shame, city of Sidon, fortress on the sea. For the sea says, "Now I am childless; I have no sons or daughters." [5] When Egypt hears the news about Tyre, there will be great sorrow. [6] Flee now to Tarshish! Wail, you people who live by the sea! [7] How can this silent ruin be all that is left of your once joyous city? What a history was yours! Think of all the colonists you sent to distant lands.

[8] Who has brought this disaster on Tyre, empire builder and chief trader of the world? [9] The Lord Almighty has done it to destroy your pride and show his contempt for all human greatness. [10] Come, Tarshish, sweep over your mother Tyre like the flooding Nile, for the city is defenseless. [11] The Lord holds out his hand over the seas. He shakes the kingdoms of the earth. He has spoken out against Phoenicia and depleted its strength. [12] He says, "Never again will you rejoice, O daughter of Sidon. Once you were a lovely city, but you will never again be strong. Even if you flee to Cyprus, you will find no rest."

[13] Look at the land of Babylonia—the people of that land are gone! The Assyrians have handed Babylon over to the wild beasts. They have built siege ramps against its walls, torn down its palaces, and turned it into a heap of rubble.

[14] Wail, O ships of Tarshish, for your home port is destroyed! [15] For seventy years, the length of a king's life, Tyre will be forgotten. But then the city will come back to life and sing sweet songs like a prostitute. [16] Long absent from her lovers, she will take a harp, walk the streets, and sing her songs, so that she will again be remembered. [17] Yes, after seventy years the Lord will revive Tyre. But she will be no different than she was before. She will return again to all her evil ways around the world. [18] But in the end her businesses will give their profits to the Lord. Her wealth will not be hoarded but will be used to provide good food and fine clothing for the Lord's priests.

[24:1] Look! The Lord is about to destroy the earth and make it a vast wasteland. See how he is scattering the people over the face of the earth. [2] Priests and laypeople, servants and masters,

maids and mistresses, buyers and sellers, lenders and borrowers, bankers and debtors—none will be spared. [3] The earth will be completely emptied and looted. The Lord has spoken!

[4] The earth dries up, the crops wither, the skies refuse to rain. [5] The earth suffers for the sins of its people, for they have twisted the instructions of God, violated his laws, and broken his everlasting covenant. [6] Therefore, a curse consumes the earth and its people. They are left desolate, destroyed by fire. Few will be left alive.

[7] All the joys of life will be gone. The grape harvest will fail, and there will be no wine. The merrymakers will sigh and mourn. [8] The clash of tambourines will be stilled; the happy cries of celebration will be heard no more. The melodious chords of the harp will be silent. [9] Gone are the joys of wine and song; strong drink now turns bitter in the mouth.

[10] The city writhes in chaos; every home is locked to keep out looters. [11] Mobs gather in the streets, crying out for wine. Joy has reached its lowest ebb. Gladness has been banished from the land. [12] The city is left in ruins, with its gates battered down. [13] Throughout the earth the story is the same—like the stray olives left on the tree or the few grapes left on the vine after harvest, only a remnant is left.

[14] But all who are left will shout and sing for joy. Those in the west will praise the Lord's majesty. [15] In eastern lands, give glory to the Lord. In the coastlands of the sea, praise the name of the Lord, the God of Israel. [16] Listen to them as they sing to the Lord from the ends of the earth. Hear those singing praises to the Righteous One!

But my heart is heavy with grief. I am discouraged, for evil still prevails, and treachery is everywhere. [17] Terror and traps and snares will be your lot, you people of the earth. [18] Those who flee in terror will fall into a trap, and those who escape the trap will step into a snare.

Destruction falls on you from the heavens. The world is shaken beneath you. [19] The earth has broken down and has utterly collapsed. Everything is lost, abandoned, and confused. [20] The earth staggers like a drunkard. It trembles like a tent in a storm. It falls and will not rise again, for its sins are very great.

[21] In that day the Lord will punish the fallen angels in the heavens and the proud rulers of the nations on earth. [22] They will be rounded up and put in prison until they are tried and condemned. [23] Then the Lord Almighty will mount his throne on Mount Zion. He will rule gloriously in Jerusalem, in the sight of all the leaders of his people. There will be such glory that the brightness of the sun and moon will seem to fade away.

[25:1] O Lord, I will honor and praise your name, for you are my God. You do such wonderful things! You planned them long ago, and now you have accomplished them. [2] You turn mighty cities into heaps of ruins. Cities with strong walls are turned to rubble. Beautiful palaces in distant lands disappear and will never be rebuilt. [3] Therefore, strong nations will declare your glory; ruthless nations will revere you.

[4] But to the poor, O Lord, you are a refuge from the storm. To the needy in distress, you are a shelter from the rain and the heat. For the oppressive acts of ruthless people are like a storm beating against a wall, [5] or like the relentless heat of the desert. But you silence the roar of foreign nations. You cool the land with the shade of a cloud. So the boastful songs of ruthless people are stilled.

[6] In Jerusalem, the Lord Almighty will spread a wonderful feast for everyone around the world. It will be a delicious feast of good food, with clear, well-aged wine and choice beef. [7] In that day he will remove the cloud of gloom, the shadow of death that hangs over the earth. [8] He

will swallow up death forever! The Sovereign Lord will wipe away all tears. He will remove forever all insults and mockery against his land and people. The Lord has spoken!

[9] In that day the people will proclaim, "This is our God. We trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord, in whom we trusted. Let us rejoice in the salvation he brings!" [10] For the Lord's good hand will rest on Jerusalem.

Moab will be crushed like trampled straw and left to rot. [11] God will push down Moab's people as a swimmer pushes down water with his hands. He will end their pride and all their evil works. [12] The high walls of Moab will be demolished and ground to dust.

[26:1] In that day, everyone in the land of Judah will sing this song:

Our city is now strong!

We are surrounded by the walls of God's salvation.

[2] Open the gates to all who are righteous;  
allow the faithful to enter.

[3] You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you,  
whose thoughts are fixed on you!

[4] Trust in the Lord always,  
for the Lord God is the eternal Rock.

[5] He humbles the proud  
and brings the arrogant city to the dust.

Its walls come crashing down!

[6] The poor and oppressed trample it underfoot.

[7] But for those who are righteous,  
the path is not steep and rough.  
You are a God of justice,  
and you smooth out the road ahead of them.

[8] Lord, we love to obey your laws;  
our heart's desire is to glorify your name.

[9] All night long I search for you;  
earnestly I seek for God.

For only when you come to judge the earth  
will people turn from wickedness and do what is right.

[10] Your kindness to the wicked does not make them do good.

They keep doing wrong and take no notice of the Lord's majesty.

[11] O Lord, they do not listen when you threaten.  
They do not see your upraised fist.

Show them your eagerness to defend your people.  
Perhaps then they will be ashamed.

Let your fire consume your enemies.

[12] Lord, you will grant us peace,  
for all we have accomplished is really from you.

[13] O Lord our God, others have ruled us,  
but we worship you alone.

[14] Those we served before are dead and gone.

Never again will they return!

You attacked them and destroyed them,  
and they are long forgotten.

[15] We praise you, Lord!

You have made our nation great;  
you have extended our borders!

[16] Lord, in distress we searched for you.

We were bowed beneath the burden of your discipline.

[17] We were like a woman about to give birth,

writhing and crying out in pain.

When we are in your presence, Lord,

[18] we, too, writhe in agony,  
but nothing comes of our suffering.

We have done nothing to rescue the world;

no one has been born to populate the earth.

[19] Yet we have this assurance:

Those who belong to God will live;  
their bodies will rise again!

Those who sleep in the earth

will rise up and sing for joy!

For God's light of life will fall like dew

on his people in the place of the dead!

[20] Go home, my people, and lock your doors! Hide until the Lord's anger against your enemies has passed. [21] Look! The Lord is coming from heaven to punish the people of the earth for their sins. The earth will no longer hide those who have been murdered. They will be brought out for all to see.

[27:1] In that day the Lord will take his terrible, swift sword and punish Leviathan, the swiftly moving serpent, the coiling, writhing serpent, the dragon of the sea.

[2] "In that day we will sing of the pleasant vineyard. [3] I, the Lord, will watch over it and tend its fruitful vines. Each day I will water them; day and night I will watch to keep enemies away. [4] My anger against Israel will be gone. If I find briars and thorns bothering her, I will burn them up. [5] These enemies will be spared only if they surrender and beg for peace and protection."

[6] The time is coming when my people will take root. Israel will bud and blossom and fill the whole earth with her fruit! [7] Has the Lord punished Israel in the same way he has punished her enemies? No, for he devastated her enemies, [8] but he has punished Israel only a little. He has exiled her from her land as though blown away in a storm from the east. [9] The Lord did this to purge away Israel's sin. When he has finished, all the pagan altars will be crushed to dust. There won't be an Asherah pole or incense altar left standing. [10] Israel's fortified cities will be silent and empty, the houses abandoned, the streets covered with grass. Cattle will graze there, chewing on twigs and branches.

[11] The people are like the dead branches of a tree, broken off and used for kindling beneath the cooking pots. Israel is a foolish and stupid nation, for its people have turned away from God. Therefore, the one who made them will show them no pity or mercy. [12] Yet the time will come when the Lord will gather them together one by one like handpicked grain. He will bring them to his great threshing floor—from the Euphrates River in the east to the brook of Egypt in the west. [13] In that day the great trumpet will sound. Many who were dying in exile in Assyria and Egypt will return to Jerusalem to worship the Lord on his holy mountain.

[28:1] Destruction is certain for the city of Samaria—the pride and joy of the drunkards of Israel! It sits in a rich valley, but its glorious beauty will suddenly disappear. Destruction is certain for that city—the pride of a people brought low by wine. [2] For the Lord will send the mighty Assyrian army against it. Like a mighty hailstorm and a torrential rain, they will burst upon it and dash it to the ground. [3] The proud city of Samaria—the pride and joy of the drunkards of Israel—will be trampled beneath its enemies' feet. [4] It sits in a fertile valley, but its glorious beauty will suddenly disappear. It will be greedily snatched up, as an early fig is hungrily picked and eaten.

[5] Then at last the Lord Almighty will himself be Israel's crowning glory. He will be the pride and joy of the remnant of his people. [6] He will give a longing for justice to their judges. He will give great courage to their warriors who stand at the gates.

[7] Now, however, Israel is being led by drunks! The priests and prophets reel and stagger from beer and wine. They make stupid mistakes as they carry out their responsibilities. [8] Their tables are covered with vomit; filth is everywhere. [9] They say, "Who does the Lord think we are? Why does he speak to us like this? Are we little children, barely old enough to talk? [10] He tells us everything over and over again, a line at a time, in very simple words!"

[11] Since they refuse to listen, God will speak to them through foreign oppressors who speak an unknown language! [12] God's people could have rest in their own land if they would only obey him, but they will not listen. [13] So the Lord will spell out his message for them again, repeating it over and over, a line at a time, in very simple words. Yet they will stumble over this simple, straightforward message. They will be injured, trapped, and captured.

[14] Therefore, listen to this message from the Lord, you scoffing rulers in Jerusalem. [15] You boast that you have struck a bargain to avoid death and have made a deal to dodge the grave. You say, "The Assyrians can never touch us, for we have built a strong refuge made of lies and deception." [16] Therefore, this is what the Sovereign Lord says: "Look! I am placing a foundation stone in Jerusalem. It is firm, a tested and precious cornerstone that is safe to build on. Whoever believes need never run away again.

[17] "I will take the measuring line of justice and the plumb line of righteousness to check the foundation wall you have built. Your refuge looks strong, but since it is made of lies, a hailstorm will knock it down. Since it is made of deception, the enemy will come like a flood to sweep it away. [18] I will cancel the bargain you made to avoid death, and I will overturn your deal to dodge the grave. When the terrible enemy floods in, you will be trampled into the ground. [19] Again and again that flood will come, morning after morning, day and night, until you are carried away."

This message will bring terror to your people. [20] For you have no place of refuge—the bed you have made is too short to lie on. The blankets are too narrow to cover you. [21] The Lord will come suddenly and in anger, as he did against the Philistines at Mount Perazim and against the Amorites at Gibeon. He will come to do a strange, unusual thing: He will destroy his own

people! [22] So scoff no more, or your punishment will be even greater. For the Lord, the Lord Almighty, has plainly told me that he is determined to crush you.

[23] Listen to me; listen as I plead! [24] Does a farmer always plow and never sow? Is he forever cultivating the soil and never planting it? [25] Does he not finally plant his seeds for dill, cumin, wheat, barley, and spelt, each in its own section of his land? [26] The farmer knows just what to do, for God has given him understanding. [27] He doesn't thresh all his crops the same way. A heavy sledge is never used on dill; rather, it is beaten with a light stick. A threshing wheel is never rolled on cumin; instead, it is beaten softly with a flail. [28] Bread grain is easily crushed, so he doesn't keep on pounding it. He threshes it under the wheels of a cart, but he doesn't pulverize it. [29] The Lord Almighty is a wonderful teacher, and he gives the farmer great wisdom.

[29:1] "Destruction is certain for Ariel, the City of David. Year after year you offer your many sacrifices. [2] Yet I will bring disaster upon you, and there will be much weeping and sorrow. For Jerusalem will become as her name Ariel means—an altar covered with blood. [3] I will be your enemy, surrounding Jerusalem and attacking its walls. I will build siege towers around it and will destroy it. [4] Your voice will whisper like a ghost from the earth where you will lie buried.

[5] "But suddenly, your ruthless enemies will be driven away like chaff before the wind. [6] In an instant, I, the Lord Almighty, will come against them with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with whirlwind and storm and consuming fire. [7] All the nations fighting against Jerusalem will vanish like a dream! Those who are attacking her walls will vanish like a vision in the night. [8] A hungry person dreams of eating but is still hungry. A thirsty person dreams of drinking but is still faint from thirst when morning comes. In the same way, your enemies will dream of a victorious conquest over Jerusalem, but all to no avail."

[9] Are you amazed and incredulous? Do you not believe it? Then go ahead and be blind if you must. You are stupid, but not from wine! You stagger, but not from beer! [10] For the Lord has poured out on you a spirit of deep sleep. He has closed the eyes of your prophets and visionaries. [11] All these future events are a sealed book to them. When you give it to those who can read, they will say, "We can't read it because it is sealed." [12] When you give it to those who cannot read, they will say, "Sorry, we don't know how to read."

[13] And so the Lord says, "These people say they are mine. They honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far away. And their worship of me amounts to nothing more than human laws learned by rote. [14] Because of this, I will do wonders among these hypocrites. I will show that human wisdom is foolish and even the most brilliant people lack understanding."

[15] Destruction is certain for those who try to hide their plans from the Lord, who try to keep him in the dark concerning what they do! "The Lord can't see us," you say to yourselves. "He doesn't know what is going on!" [16] How stupid can you be? He is the Potter, and he is certainly greater than you. You are only the jars he makes! Should the thing that was created say to the one who made it, "He didn't make us"? Does a jar ever say, "The potter who made me is stupid"?

[17] Soon—and it will not be very long—the wilderness of Lebanon will be a fertile field once again. And the fertile fields will become a lush and fertile forest. [18] In that day deaf people will hear words read from a book, and blind people will see through the gloom and darkness. [19] The humble will be filled with fresh joy from the Lord. Those who are poor will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. [20] Those who intimidate and harass will be gone, and all those who plot evil will be killed. [21] Those who make the innocent guilty by their false testimony will

disappear. And those who use trickery to pervert justice and tell lies to tear down the innocent will be no more.

[22] That is why the Lord, who redeemed Abraham, says to the people of Israel, "My people will no longer pale with fear or be ashamed. [23] For when they see their many children and material blessings, they will recognize the holiness of the Holy One of Israel. They will stand in awe of the God of Israel. [24] Those in error will then believe the truth, and those who constantly complain will accept instruction.

[30:1] "Destruction is certain for my rebellious children," says the Lord. "You make plans that are contrary to my will. You weave a web of plans that are not from my Spirit, thus piling up your sins. [2] For without consulting me, you have gone down to Egypt to find help. You have put your trust in Pharaoh for his protection. [3] But in trusting Pharaoh, you will be humiliated and disgraced. [4] For though his power extends to Zoan and Hanes, [5] it will all turn out to your shame. He will not help you even one little bit."

[6] Look at the animals moving slowly across the terrible desert to Egypt—donkeys and camels loaded with treasure to pay for Egypt's aid. On through the wilderness they go, where lions and poisonous snakes live. All this, and Egypt will give you nothing in return. [7] Egypt's promises are worthless! I call her the Harmless Dragon.

[8] Now go and write down these words concerning Egypt. They will then stand until the end of time as a witness to Israel's unbelief. [9] For these people are stubborn rebels who refuse to pay any attention to the Lord's instructions.

[10] They tell the prophets, "Shut up! We don't want any more of your reports." They say, "Don't tell us the truth. Tell us nice things. Tell us lies. [11] Forget all this gloom. We have heard more than enough about your 'Holy One of Israel.' We are tired of listening to what he has to say."

[12] This is the reply of the Holy One of Israel: "Because you despise what I tell you and trust instead in oppression and lies, [13] calamity will come upon you suddenly. It will be like a bulging wall that bursts and falls. In an instant it will collapse and come crashing down. [14] You will be smashed like a piece of pottery—shattered so completely that there won't be a piece left that is big enough to carry coals from a fireplace or a little water from the well."

[15] The Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says, "Only in returning to me and waiting for me will you be saved. In quietness and confidence is your strength. But you would have none of it. [16] You said, 'No, we will get our help from Egypt. They will give us swift horses for riding into battle.' But the only swiftness you are going to see is the swiftness of your enemies chasing you! [17] One of them will chase a thousand of you. Five of them will make all of you flee. You will be left like a lonely flagpole on a distant mountaintop."

[18] But the Lord still waits for you to come to him so he can show you his love and compassion. For the Lord is a faithful God. Blessed are those who wait for him to help them.

[19] O people of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. He will be gracious if you ask for help. He will respond instantly to the sound of your cries. [20] Though the Lord gave you adversity for food and affliction for drink, he will still be with you to teach you. You will see your teacher with your own eyes, [21] and you will hear a voice say, "This is the way; turn around and walk here." [22] Then you will destroy all your silver idols and gold images. You will throw them out like filthy rags. "Ugh!" you will say to them. "Begone!"

[23] Then the Lord will bless you with rain at planting time. There will be wonderful harvests and plenty of pastureland for your cattle. [24] The oxen and donkeys that till the ground will eat good grain, its chaff having been blown away by the wind. [25] In that day, when your enemies are slaughtered, there will be streams of water flowing down every mountain and hill. [26] The moon will be as bright as the sun, and the sun will be seven times brighter—like the light of seven days! So it will be when the Lord begins to heal his people and cure the wounds he gave them.

[27] Look! The Lord is coming from far away, burning with anger, surrounded by a thick, rising smoke. His lips are filled with fury; his words consume like fire. [28] His anger pours out like a flood on his enemies, sweeping them all away. He will sift out the proud nations. He will bridle them and lead them off to their destruction.

[29] But the people of God will sing a song of joy, like the songs at the holy festivals. You will be filled with joy, as when a flutist leads a group of pilgrims to Jerusalem—the mountain of the Lord—to the Rock of Israel. [30] And the Lord will make his majestic voice heard. With angry indignation he will bring down his mighty arm on his enemies. It will descend with devouring flames, with cloudbursts, thunderstorms, and huge hailstones, bringing their destruction. [31] At the Lord's command, the Assyrians will be shattered. He will strike them down with his rod. [32] And as the Lord strikes them, his people will keep time with the music of tambourines and harps. [33] Topheth—the place of burning—has long been ready for the Assyrian king; it has been piled high with wood. The breath of the Lord, like fire from a volcano, will set it ablaze.

[31:1] Destruction is certain for those who look to Egypt for help, trusting their cavalry and chariots instead of looking to the Lord, the Holy One of Israel. [2] In his wisdom, the Lord will send great disaster; he will not change his mind. He will rise against those who are wicked, and he will crush their allies, too. [3] For these Egyptians are mere humans, not God! Their horses are puny flesh, not mighty spirits! When the Lord clenches his fist against them, they will stumble and fall among those they are trying to help. They will all fall down and die together.

[4] But the Lord has told me this: "When a lion, even a young one, kills a sheep, it pays no attention to the shepherd's shouts and noise. It just goes right on eating. In the same way, the Lord Almighty will come and fight on Mount Zion. He will not be frightened away! [5] The Lord Almighty will hover over Jerusalem as a bird hovers around its nest. He will defend and save the city; he will pass over it and rescue it."

[6] Therefore, my people, though you are such wicked rebels, come and return to the Lord. [7] I know the glorious day will come when every one of you will throw away the gold idols and silver images that your sinful hands have made.

[8] "The Assyrians will be destroyed, but not by the swords of men. The sword of God will strike them, and they will panic and flee. The strong young Assyrians will be taken away as captives. [9] Even their generals will quake with terror and flee when they see the battle flags," says the Lord, whose flame burns brightly in Jerusalem.

[32:1] Look, a righteous king is coming! And honest princes will rule under him. [2] He will shelter Israel from the storm and the wind. He will refresh her as a river in the desert and as the cool shadow of a large rock in a hot and weary land. [3] Then everyone who can see will be looking for God, and those who can hear will listen to his voice. [4] Even the hotheads among

them will be full of sense and understanding. Those who stammer in uncertainty will speak out plainly.

[5] In that day ungodly fools will not be heroes. Wealthy cheaters will not be respected as outstanding citizens. [6] Everyone will recognize ungodly fools for what they are. They spread lies about the Lord; they deprive the hungry of food and give no water to the thirsty. [7] The smooth tricks of evil people will be exposed, including all the lies they use to oppress the poor in the courts. [8] But good people will be generous to others and will be blessed for all they do.

[9] Listen, you women who lie around in lazy ease. Listen to me, and I will tell you of your reward. [10] In a short time—in just a little more than a year—you careless ones will suddenly begin to care. For your fruit crop will fail, and the harvest will never take place. [11] Tremble, you women of ease; throw off your unconcern. Strip off your pretty clothes, and wear sackcloth in your grief. [12] Beat your breasts in sorrow for your bountiful farms that will soon be gone, and for those fruitful vines of other years. [13] For your land will be overgrown with thorns and briars. Your joyful homes and happy cities will be gone. [14] The palace and the city will be deserted, and busy towns will be empty. Herds of donkeys and goats will graze on the hills where the watchtowers are, [15] until at last the Spirit is poured down upon us from heaven. Then the wilderness will become a fertile field, and the fertile field will become a lush and fertile forest. [16] Justice will rule in the wilderness and righteousness in the fertile field. [17] And this righteousness will bring peace. Quietness and confidence will fill the land forever.

[18] My people will live in safety, quietly at home. They will be at rest. [19] Even though the forest will be destroyed and the city torn down, [20] God will greatly bless his people. Wherever they plant seed, bountiful crops will spring up. Their flocks and herds will graze in green pastures.

[33:1] Destruction is certain for you Assyrians, who have destroyed everything around you but have never felt destruction yourselves. You expect others to respect their promises to you, while you betray your promises to them. Now you, too, will be betrayed and destroyed!

[2] But Lord, be merciful to us, for we have waited for you. Be our strength each day and our salvation in times of trouble. [3] The enemy runs at the sound of your voice. When you stand up, the nations flee! [4] Just as locusts strip the fields and vines, so Jerusalem will strip the fallen army of Assyria!

[5] Though the Lord is very great and lives in heaven, he will make Jerusalem his home of justice and righteousness. [6] In that day he will be your sure foundation, providing a rich store of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge. The fear of the Lord is the key to this treasure.

[7] But now your ambassadors weep in bitter disappointment, for Assyria has refused their petition for peace. [8] Your roads are deserted; no one travels them anymore. The Assyrians have broken their peace pact and care nothing for the promises they made before witnesses. They have no respect for anyone. [9] All the land of Israel is in trouble. Lebanon has been destroyed. The Plain of Sharon is now a wilderness. Bashan and Carmel have been plundered.

[10] But the Lord says: "I will stand up and show my power and might. [11] You Assyrians will gain nothing by all your efforts. Your own breath will turn to fire and kill you. [12] Your people will be burned up completely, like thorns cut down and tossed in a fire. [13] Listen to what I have done, you nations far away! And you that are near, acknowledge my might!"

[14] The sinners in Jerusalem shake with fear. "Which one of us," they cry, "can live here in the presence of this all-consuming fire?" [15] The ones who can live here are those who are honest and fair, who reject making a profit by fraud, who stay far away from bribes, who refuse

to listen to those who plot murder, who shut their eyes to all enticement to do wrong. [16] These are the ones who will dwell on high. The rocks of the mountains will be their fortress of safety. Food will be supplied to them, and they will have water in abundance.

[17] Your eyes will see the king in all his splendor, and you will see a land that stretches into the distance. [18] You will think back to this time of terror when the Assyrian officers outside your walls counted your towers and estimated how much plunder they would get from your fallen city. [19] But soon they will all be gone. These fierce, violent people with a strange, unknown language will disappear.

[20] Instead, you will see Zion as a place of worship and celebration. You will see Jerusalem, a city quiet and secure. [21] The Lord will be our Mighty One. He will be like a wide river of protection that no enemy can cross. [22] For the Lord is our judge, our lawgiver, and our king. He will care for us and save us. [23] The enemies' sails hang loose on broken masts with useless tackle. Their treasure will be divided by the people of God. Even the lame will win their share! [24] The people of Israel will no longer say, "We are sick and helpless," for the Lord will forgive their sins.

[34:1] Come here and listen, O nations of the earth. Let the world and everything in it hear my words. [2] For the Lord is enraged against the nations. His fury is against all their armies. He will completely destroy them, bringing about their slaughter. [3] Their dead will be left unburied, and the stench of rotting bodies will fill the land. The mountains will flow with their blood. [4] The heavens above will melt away and disappear like a rolled-up scroll. The stars will fall from the sky, just as withered leaves and fruit fall from a tree.

[5] And when my sword has finished its work in the heavens, then watch. It will fall upon Edom, the nation I have completely destroyed. [6] The sword of the Lord is drenched with blood. It is covered with fat as though it had been used for killing lambs and goats and rams for a sacrifice. Yes, the Lord will offer a great sacrifice in the rich city of Bozrah. He will make a mighty slaughter in Edom. [7] The strongest will die—veterans and young men, too. The land will be soaked with blood and the soil enriched with fat. [8] For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, the year when Edom will be paid back for all it did to Israel. [9] The streams of Edom will be filled with burning pitch, and the ground will be covered with fire.

[10] This judgment on Edom will never end; the smoke of its burning will rise forever. The land will lie deserted from generation to generation. No one will live there anymore. [11] It will be haunted by the horned owl, the hawk, the screech owl, and the raven. For God will bring chaos and destruction to that land. [12] It will be called the Land of Nothing, and its princes soon will all be gone. [13] Thorns will overrun its palaces; nettles will grow in its forts. The ruins will become a haunt for jackals and a home for ostriches. [14] Wild animals of the desert will mingle there with hyenas, their howls filling the night. Wild goats will bleat at one another among the ruins, and night creatures will come there to rest. [15] There the owl will make her nest and lay her eggs. She will hatch her young and cover them with her wings. And the vultures will come, each one with its mate.

[16] Search the book of the Lord, and see what he will do. He will not miss a single detail. Not one of these birds and animals will be missing, and none will lack a mate, for the Lord has promised this. His Spirit will make it all come true. [17] He has surveyed and divided the land and deeded it over to those creatures. They will possess it forever, from generation to generation.

[35:1] Even the wilderness will rejoice in those days. The desert will blossom with flowers. [2] Yes, there will be an abundance of flowers and singing and joy! The deserts will become as green as the mountains of Lebanon, as lovely as Mount Carmel's pastures and the Plain of Sharon. There the Lord will display his glory, the splendor of our God.

[3] With this news, strengthen those who have tired hands, and encourage those who have weak knees. [4] Say to those who are afraid, "Be strong, and do not fear, for your God is coming to destroy your enemies. He is coming to save you." [5] And when he comes, he will open the eyes of the blind and unstop the ears of the deaf. [6] The lame will leap like a deer, and those who cannot speak will shout and sing! Springs will gush forth in the wilderness, and streams will water the desert. [7] The parched ground will become a pool, and springs of water will satisfy the thirsty land. Marsh grass and reeds and rushes will flourish where desert jackals once lived.

[8] And a main road will go through that once deserted land. It will be named the Highway of Holiness. Evil-hearted people will never travel on it. It will be only for those who walk in God's ways; fools will never walk there. [9] Lions will not lurk along its course, and there will be no other dangers. Only the redeemed will follow it. [10] Those who have been ransomed by the Lord will return to Jerusalem, singing songs of everlasting joy. Sorrow and mourning will disappear, and they will be overcome with joy and gladness.

[36:1] In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah's reign, King Sennacherib of Assyria came to attack the fortified cities of Judah and conquered them. [2] Then the king of Assyria sent his personal representative with a huge army from Lachish to confront King Hezekiah in Jerusalem. The Assyrians stopped beside the aqueduct that feeds water into the upper pool, near the road leading to the field where cloth is bleached.

[3] These are the officials who went out to meet with them: Eliakim son of Hilkiyah, the palace administrator, Shebna the court secretary, and Joah son of Asaph, the royal historian. [4] Then the Assyrian king's personal representative sent this message to King Hezekiah:

"This is what the great king of Assyria says: What are you trusting in that makes you so confident? [5] Do you think that mere words can substitute for military skill and strength? Which of your allies will give you any military backing against Assyria? [6] Will Egypt? If you lean on Egypt, you will find it to be a stick that breaks beneath your weight and pierces your hand. The Pharaoh of Egypt is completely unreliable!

[7] "But perhaps you will say, 'We are trusting in the Lord our God!' But isn't he the one who was insulted by King Hezekiah? Didn't Hezekiah tear down his shrines and altars and make everyone in Judah worship only at the altar here in Jerusalem?

[8] "I'll tell you what! My master, the king of Assyria, will strike a bargain with you. If you can find two thousand horsemen in your entire army, he will give you two thousand horses for them to ride on! [9] With your tiny army, how can you think of challenging even the weakest contingent of my master's troops, even with the help of Egypt's chariots and horsemen? [10] What's more, do you think we have invaded your land without the Lord's direction? The Lord himself told us, 'Go and destroy it!' "

[11] Then Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah said to the king's representative, "Please speak to us in Aramaic, for we understand it well. Don't speak in Hebrew, for the people on the wall will hear."

[12] But Sennacherib's representative replied, "My master wants everyone in Jerusalem to hear this, not just you. He wants them to know that if you do not surrender, this city will be put under

siege. The people will become so hungry and thirsty that they will eat their own dung and drink their own urine."

[13] Then he stood and shouted in Hebrew to the people on the wall, "Listen to this message from the great king of Assyria! [14] This is what the king says: Don't let King Hezekiah deceive you. He will never be able to rescue you. [15] Don't let him fool you into trusting in the Lord by saying, 'The Lord will rescue us! This city will never be handed over to the Assyrian king.'

[16] "Don't listen to Hezekiah! These are the terms the king of Assyria is offering: Make peace with me—open the gates and come out. Then I will allow each of you to continue eating from your own garden and drinking from your own well. [17] Then I will arrange to take you to another land like this one—a country with bountiful harvests of grain and wine, bread and vineyards—a land of plenty.

[18] "Don't let Hezekiah mislead you by saying, 'The Lord will rescue us!' Have the gods of any other nations ever saved their people from the king of Assyria? [19] What happened to the gods of Hamath and Arpad? And what about the gods of Sepharvaim? Did they rescue Samaria from my power? [20] What god of any nation has ever been able to save its people from my power? Name just one! So what makes you think that the Lord can rescue Jerusalem?"

[21] But the people were silent and did not answer because Hezekiah had told them not to speak. [22] Then Eliakim son of Hilkiah, the palace administrator, Shebna the court secretary, and Joah son of Asaph, the royal historian, went back to Hezekiah. They tore their clothes in despair, and they went in to see the king and told him what the Assyrian representative had said.

[37:1] When King Hezekiah heard their report, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and went into the Temple of the Lord to pray. [2] And he sent Eliakim the palace administrator, Shebna the court secretary, and the leading priests, all dressed in sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz. [3] They told him, "This is what King Hezekiah says: This is a day of trouble, insult, and disgrace. It is like when a child is ready to be born, but the mother has no strength to deliver it. [4] But perhaps the Lord your God has heard the Assyrian representative defying the living God and will punish him for his words. Oh, pray for those of us who are left!"

[5] After King Hezekiah's officials delivered the king's message to Isaiah, [6] the prophet replied, "Say to your master, 'This is what the Lord says: Do not be disturbed by this blasphemous speech against me from the Assyrian king's messengers. [7] Listen! I myself will make sure that the king will receive a report from Assyria telling him that he is needed at home. Then I will make him want to return to his land, where I will have him killed with a sword.' "

[8] Meanwhile, the Assyrian representative left Jerusalem and went to consult his king, who had left Lachish and was attacking Libnah. [9] Soon afterward King Sennacherib received word that King Tirhakah of Ethiopia was leading an army to fight against him. Before leaving to meet the attack, he sent this message back to Hezekiah in Jerusalem:

[10] "This message is for King Hezekiah of Judah. Don't let this God you trust deceive you with promises that Jerusalem will not be captured by the king of Assyria. [11] You know perfectly well what the kings of Assyria have done wherever they have gone. They have crushed everyone who stood in their way! Why should you be any different? [12] Have the gods of other nations rescued them—such nations as Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and the people of Eden who were in Tel-assar? The former kings of Assyria destroyed them all! [13] What happened to the king of Hamath and the king of Arpad? What happened to the kings of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah?"

[14] After Hezekiah received the letter and read it, he went up to the Lord's Temple and spread it out before the Lord. [15] And Hezekiah prayed this prayer before the Lord: [16] "O Lord Almighty, God of Israel, you are enthroned between the mighty cherubim! You alone are God of all the kingdoms of the earth. You alone created the heavens and the earth. [17] Listen to me, O Lord, and hear! Open your eyes, O Lord, and see! Listen to Sennacherib's words of defiance against the living God.

[18] "It is true, Lord, that the kings of Assyria have destroyed all these nations, just as the message says. [19] And they have thrown the gods of these nations into the fire and burned them. But of course the Assyrians could destroy them! They were not gods at all—only idols of wood and stone shaped by human hands. [20] Now, O Lord our God, rescue us from his power; then all the kingdoms of the earth will know that you alone, O Lord, are God."

[21] Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent this message to Hezekiah: "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: This is my answer to your prayer concerning King Sennacherib of Assyria. [22] This is the message that the Lord has spoken against him:

'The virgin daughter of Zion  
despises you and laughs at you.  
The daughter of Jerusalem  
scoffs and shakes her head as you flee.

[23] 'Whom do you think you have been insulting and ridiculing?  
Against whom did you raise your voice?  
At whom did you look in such proud condescension?  
It was the Holy One of Israel!

[24] By your messengers you have mocked the Lord.  
You have said, "With my many chariots  
I have conquered the highest mountains—  
yes, the remotest peaks of Lebanon.  
I have cut down its tallest cedars  
and its choicest cypress trees.  
I have reached its farthest corners  
and explored its deepest forests.

[25] I have dug wells in many a foreign land  
and refreshed myself with their water.  
I even stopped up the rivers of Egypt  
so that my armies could go across!"

[26] 'But have you not heard?  
It was I, the Lord, who decided this long ago.  
Long ago I planned what I am now causing to happen,  
that you should crush fortified cities into heaps of rubble.

[27] That is why their people have so little power  
and are such easy prey for you.  
They are as helpless as the grass,  
as easily trampled as tender green shoots.

They are like grass sprouting on a housetop,  
easily scorched by the sun.

[28] 'But I know you well—  
your comings and goings and all you do.  
I know the way you have raged against me.  
[29] And because of your arrogance against me,  
which I have heard for myself,  
I will put my hook in your nose  
and my bridle in your mouth.  
I will make you return  
by the road on which you came.' "

[30] Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Here is the proof that the Lord will protect this city from Assyria's king. This year you will eat only what grows up by itself, and next year you will eat what springs up from that. But in the third year you will plant crops and harvest them; you will tend vineyards and eat their fruit. [31] And you who are left in Judah, who have escaped the ravages of the siege, will take root again in your own soil, and you will flourish and multiply. [32] For a remnant of my people will spread out from Jerusalem, a group of survivors from Mount Zion. The passion of the Lord Almighty will make this happen!

[33] "And this is what the Lord says about the king of Assyria: His armies will not enter Jerusalem to shoot their arrows. They will not march outside its gates with their shields and build banks of earth against its walls. [34] The king will return to his own country by the road on which he came. He will not enter this city, says the Lord. [35] For my own honor and for the sake of my servant David, I will defend it."

[36] That night the angel of the Lord went out to the Assyrian camp and killed 185,000 Assyrian troops. When the surviving Assyrians woke up the next morning, they found corpses everywhere. [37] Then King Sennacherib of Assyria broke camp and returned to his own land. He went home to his capital of Nineveh and stayed there. [38] One day while he was worshipping in the temple of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with their swords. They then escaped to the land of Ararat, and another son, Esarhaddon, became the next king of Assyria.

[38:1] About that time Hezekiah became deathly ill, and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to visit him. He gave the king this message: "This is what the Lord says: Set your affairs in order, for you are going to die. You will not recover from this illness."

[2] When Hezekiah heard this, he turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, [3] "Remember, O Lord, how I have always tried to be faithful to you and do what is pleasing in your sight." Then he broke down and wept bitterly.

[4] Then this message came to Isaiah from the Lord: [5] "Go back to Hezekiah and tell him, 'This is what the Lord, the God of your ancestor David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears. I will add fifteen years to your life, [6] and I will rescue you and this city from the king of Assyria. Yes, I will defend this city.

[7] " 'And this is the sign that the Lord will give you to prove he will do as he promised: [8] I will cause the sun's shadow to move ten steps backward on the sundial of Ahaz!' " So the shadow on the sundial moved backward ten steps.

[9] When King Hezekiah was well again, he wrote this poem about his experience:

[10] I said, "In the prime of my life,  
must I now enter the place of the dead?  
Am I to be robbed of my normal years?"

[11] I said, "Never again will I see the Lord God  
while still in the land of the living.

Never again will I see my friends  
or laugh with those who live in this world.

[12] My life has been blown away  
like a shepherd's tent in a storm.

It has been cut short,  
as when a weaver cuts cloth from a loom.  
Suddenly, my life was over.

[13] I waited patiently all night,  
but I was torn apart as though by lions.  
Suddenly, my life was over.

[14] Delirious, I chattered like a swallow or a crane,  
and then I moaned like a mourning dove.

My eyes grew tired of looking to heaven for help.  
I am in trouble, Lord. Help me!"

[15] But what could I say?  
For he himself had sent this sickness.  
Now I will walk humbly throughout my years  
because of this anguish I have felt.

[16] Lord, your discipline is good,  
for it leads to life and health.

You have restored my health  
and have allowed me to live!

[17] Yes, it was good for me to suffer this anguish,  
for you have rescued me from death  
and have forgiven all my sins.

[18] For the dead cannot praise you;  
they cannot raise their voices in praise.

Those who go down to destruction  
can no longer hope in your faithfulness.

[19] Only the living can praise you as I do today.  
Each generation can make known your faithfulness to the next.

[20] Think of it—the Lord has healed me!  
I will sing his praises with instruments

every day of my life  
in the Temple of the Lord.

[21] Isaiah had said to Hezekiah's servants, "Make an ointment from figs and spread it over the boil, and Hezekiah will recover."

[22] And Hezekiah had asked, "What sign will prove that I will go to the Temple of the Lord three days from now?"

[39:1] Soon after this, Merodach-baladan son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent Hezekiah his best wishes and a gift. He had heard that Hezekiah had been very sick and that he had recovered. [2] Hezekiah welcomed the Babylonian envoys and showed them everything in his treasure-houses—the silver, the gold, the spices, and the aromatic oils. He also took them to see his armory and showed them all his other treasures—everything! There was nothing in his palace or kingdom that Hezekiah did not show them.

[3] Then Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah and asked him, "What did those men want? Where were they from?"

Hezekiah replied, "They came from the distant land of Babylon."

[4] "What did they see in your palace?" asked Isaiah.

"They saw everything," Hezekiah replied. "I showed them everything I own—all my treasures."

[5] Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Listen to this message from the Lord Almighty: [6] The time is coming when everything you have—all the treasures stored up by your ancestors—will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the Lord. [7] Some of your own descendants will be taken away into exile. They will become eunuchs who will serve in the palace of Babylon's king."

[8] Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "This message you have given me from the Lord is good." But the king was thinking, "At least there will be peace and security during my lifetime."

## **B. WORDS OF COMFORT (Isaiah 40:1-66:24)**

The 27 chapters in the second half of Isaiah generally bring a message of forgiveness, comfort, and hope. This message of hope looks forward to the coming of the Messiah. Isaiah speaks more about the Messiah than does any other Old Testament prophet. He describes the Messiah as both a suffering servant and a sovereign Lord. The fact that the Messiah was to be both a suffering servant and a sovereign Lord could not be understood clearly until New Testament times. Based on what Jesus Christ has done, God freely offers forgiveness to all who turn to him in faith. This is God's message of comfort to us because those who heed it find eternal peace and fellowship with him.

1. Israel's release from captivity
2. The future Redeemer
3. The future kingdom

### **Isaiah 40:1-66:24**

"Comfort, comfort my people," says your God. [2] "Speak tenderly to Jerusalem. Tell her that her sad days are gone and that her sins are pardoned. Yes, the Lord has punished her in full for all her sins."

[3] Listen! I hear the voice of someone shouting, "Make a highway for the Lord through the wilderness. Make a straight, smooth road through the desert for our God. [4] Fill the valleys and level the hills. Straighten out the curves and smooth off the rough spots. [5] Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together. The Lord has spoken!"

[6] A voice said, "Shout!"

I asked, "What should I shout?"

"Shout that people are like the grass that dies away. Their beauty fades as quickly as the beauty of flowers in a field. [7] The grass withers, and the flowers fade beneath the breath of the Lord. And so it is with people. [8] The grass withers, and the flowers fade, but the word of our God stands forever."

[9] Messenger of good news, shout to Zion from the mountaintops! Shout louder to Jerusalem—do not be afraid. Tell the towns of Judah, "Your God is coming!" [10] Yes, the Sovereign Lord is coming in all his glorious power. He will rule with awesome strength. See, he brings his reward with him as he comes. [11] He will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in his arms, holding them close to his heart. He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young.

[12] Who else has held the oceans in his hand? Who has measured off the heavens with his fingers? Who else knows the weight of the earth or has weighed out the mountains and the hills? [13] Who is able to advise the Spirit of the Lord? Who knows enough to be his teacher or counselor? [14] Has the Lord ever needed anyone's advice? Does he need instruction about what is good or what is best? [15] No, for all the nations of the world are nothing in comparison with him. They are but a drop in the bucket, dust on the scales. He picks up the islands as though they had no weight at all. [16] All Lebanon's forests do not contain sufficient fuel to consume a sacrifice large enough to honor him. All Lebanon's sacrificial animals would not make an offering worthy of our God. [17] The nations of the world are as nothing to him. In his eyes they are less than nothing—mere emptiness and froth.

[18] To whom, then, can we compare God? What image might we find to resemble him? [19] Can he be compared to an idol formed in a mold, overlaid with gold, and decorated with silver chains? [20] Or is a poor person's wooden idol better? Can God be compared to an idol that must be placed on a stand so it won't fall down?

[21] Have you never heard or understood? Are you deaf to the words of God—the words he gave before the world began? Are you so ignorant? [22] It is God who sits above the circle of the earth. The people below must seem to him like grasshoppers! He is the one who spreads out the heavens like a curtain and makes his tent from them. [23] He judges the great people of the world and brings them all to nothing. [24] They hardly get started, barely taking root, when he blows on them and their work withers. The wind carries them off like straw.

[25] "To whom will you compare me? Who is my equal?" asks the Holy One.

[26] Look up into the heavens. Who created all the stars? He brings them out one after another, calling each by its name. And he counts them to see that none are lost or have strayed away.

[27] O Israel, how can you say the Lord does not see your troubles? How can you say God refuses to hear your case? [28] Have you never heard or understood? Don't you know that the Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth? He never grows faint or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding. [29] He gives power to those who are tired and worn out; he offers strength to the weak. [30] Even youths will become exhausted, and young men will give up. [31] But those who wait on the Lord will find new strength. They will fly high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.

[41:1] "Listen in silence before me, you lands beyond the sea. Bring your strongest arguments. Come now and speak. The court is ready for your case.

[2] "Who has stirred up this king from the east, who meets victory at every step? Who, indeed, but the Lord? He gives him victory over many nations and permits him to trample their kings underfoot. He puts entire armies to the sword. He scatters them in the wind with his bow. [3] He chases them away and goes on safely, though he is walking over unfamiliar ground. [4] Who has done such mighty deeds, directing the affairs of the human race as each new generation marches by? It is I, the Lord, the First and the Last. I alone am he."

[5] The lands beyond the sea watch in fear. Remote lands tremble and mobilize for war. [6] They encourage one another with the words, "Be strong!" [7] The craftsmen rush to make new idols. The carver hurries the goldsmith, and the molder helps at the anvil. "Good," they say. "It's coming along fine." Carefully they join the parts together, then fasten the thing in place so it won't fall over.

[8] "But as for you, Israel my servant, Jacob my chosen one, descended from my friend Abraham, [9] I have called you back from the ends of the earth so you can serve me. For I have chosen you and will not throw you away. [10] Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.

[11] "See, all your angry enemies lie there, confused and ashamed. Anyone who opposes you will die. [12] You will look for them in vain. They will all be gone! [13] I am holding you by your right hand—I, the Lord your God. And I say to you, 'Do not be afraid. I am here to help you. [14] Despised though you are, O Israel, don't be afraid, for I will help you. I am the Lord, your Redeemer. I am the Holy One of Israel.' [15] You will be a new threshing instrument with many sharp teeth. You will tear all your enemies apart, making chaff of mountains. [16] You will toss them in the air, and the wind will blow them all away; a whirlwind will scatter them. And the joy of the Lord will fill you to overflowing.

You will glory in the Holy One of Israel.

[17] "When the poor and needy search for water and there is none, and their tongues are parched from thirst, then I, the Lord, will answer them. I, the God of Israel, will never forsake them. [18] I will open up rivers for them on high plateaus. I will give them fountains of water in the valleys. In the deserts they will find pools of water. Rivers fed by springs will flow across the dry, parched ground. [19] I will plant trees—cedar, acacia, myrtle, olive, cypress, fir, and pine—on barren land. [20] Everyone will see this miracle and understand that it is the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, who did it.

[21] "Can your idols make such claims as these? Let them come and show what they can do!" says the Lord, the King of Israel. [22] "Let them try to tell us what happened long ago or what the future holds. [23] Yes, that's it! If you are gods, tell what will occur in the days ahead. Or perform a mighty miracle that will fill us with amazement and fear. Do something, whether good or bad! [24] But no! You are less than nothing and can do nothing at all. Anyone who chooses you becomes filthy, just like you!

[25] "But I have stirred up a leader from the north and east. He will come against the nations and call on my name, and I will give him victory over kings and princes. He will trample them as a potter treads on clay.

[26] "Who but I have told you this would happen? Who else predicted this, making you admit that he was right? No one else said a word! [27] I was the first to tell Jerusalem, 'Look! Help is on the way!' [28] Not one of your idols told you this. Not one gave any answer when I asked. [29] See, they are all foolish, worthless things. Your idols are all as empty as the wind.

[42:1] "Look at my servant, whom I strengthen. He is my chosen one, and I am pleased with him. I have put my Spirit upon him. He will reveal justice to the nations. [2] He will be gentle—he will not shout or raise his voice in public. [3] He will not crush those who are weak or quench the smallest hope. He will bring full justice to all who have been wronged. [4] He will not stop until truth and righteousness prevail throughout the earth. Even distant lands beyond the sea will wait for his instruction."

[5] God, the Lord, created the heavens and stretched them out. He created the earth and everything in it. He gives breath and life to everyone in all the world. And it is he who says, [6] "I, the Lord, have called you to demonstrate my righteousness. I will guard and support you, for I have given you to my people as the personal confirmation of my covenant with them. And you will be a light to guide all nations to me. [7] You will open the eyes of the blind and free the captives from prison. You will release those who sit in dark dungeons.

[8] "I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not give my glory to anyone else. I will not share my praise with carved idols. [9] Everything I prophesied has come true, and now I will prophesy again. I will tell you the future before it happens."

[10] Sing a new song to the Lord!

Sing his praises from the ends of the earth!

Sing, all you who sail the seas,

all you who live in distant coastlands.

[11] Join in the chorus, you desert towns;

let the villages of Kedar rejoice!

Let the people of Sela sing for joy;

shout praises from the mountaintops!

[12] Let the coastlands glorify the Lord;

let them sing his praise.

[13] The Lord will march forth like a mighty man;

he will come out like a warrior, full of fury.

He will shout his thundering battle cry,

and he will crush all his enemies.

[14] He will say, "I have long been silent;

yes, I have restrained myself.

But now I will give full vent to my fury;

I will gasp and pant like a woman giving birth.

[15] I will level the mountains and hills

and bring a blight on all their greenery.

I will turn the rivers into dry land

and will dry up all the pools.

[16] I will lead blind Israel down a new path,

guiding them along an unfamiliar way.

I will make the darkness bright before them

and smooth out the road ahead of them.

Yes, I will indeed do these things;

I will not forsake them.

[17] But those who trust in idols,  
calling them their gods—  
they will be turned away in shame.

[18] "Oh, how deaf and blind you are toward me! Why won't you listen? Why do you refuse to see? [19] Who in all the world is as blind as my own people, my servant? Who is as deaf as my messengers? Who is as blind as my chosen people, the servant of the Lord? [20] You see and understand what is right but refuse to act on it. You hear, but you don't really listen."

[21] The Lord has magnified his law and made it truly glorious. Through it he had planned to show the world that he is righteous. [22] But what a sight his people are, for they have been robbed, enslaved, imprisoned, and trapped. They are fair game for all and have no one to protect them. [23] Will not even one of you apply these lessons from the past and see the ruin that awaits you? [24] Who allowed Israel to be robbed and hurt? Was it not the Lord? It was the Lord whom we sinned against, for the people would not go where he sent them, nor would they obey his law. [25] That is why he poured out such fury on them and destroyed them in battle. They were set on fire and burned, but they still refused to understand.

[43:1] But now, O Israel, the Lord who created you says: "Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. [2] When you go through deep waters and great trouble, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. [3] For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I gave Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba as a ransom for your freedom. [4] Others died that you might live. I traded their lives for yours because you are precious to me. You are honored, and I love you.

[5] "Do not be afraid, for I am with you. I will gather you and your children from east and west [6] and from north and south. I will bring my sons and daughters back to Israel from the distant corners of the earth. [7] All who claim me as their God will come, for I have made them for my glory. It was I who created them."

[8] Bring out the people who have eyes but are blind, who have ears but are deaf. [9] Gather the nations together! Which of their idols has ever foretold such things? Can any of them predict something even a single day in advance? Where are the witnesses of such predictions? Who can verify that they spoke the truth?

[10] "But you are my witnesses, O Israel!" says the Lord. "And you are my servant. You have been chosen to know me, believe in me, and understand that I alone am God. There is no other God; there never has been and never will be. [11] I am the Lord, and there is no other Savior. [12] First I predicted your deliverance; I declared what I would do, and then I did it—I saved you. No foreign god has ever done this before. You are witnesses that I am the only God," says the Lord. [13] "From eternity to eternity I am God. No one can oppose what I do. No one can reverse my actions."

[14] The Lord your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, says: "For your sakes I will send an invading army against Babylon. And the Babylonians will be forced to flee in those ships they are so proud of. [15] I am the Lord, your Holy One, Israel's Creator and King. [16] I am the Lord, who opened a way through the waters, making a dry path through the sea.

[17] I called forth the mighty army of Egypt with all its chariots and horses. I drew them beneath the waves, and they drowned, their lives snuffed out like a smoldering candlewick.

[18] "But forget all that—it is nothing compared to what I am going to do. [19] For I am about to do a brand-new thing. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness for my people to come home. I will create rivers for them in the desert!

[20] The wild animals in the fields will thank me, the jackals and ostriches, too, for giving them water in the wilderness. Yes, I will make springs in the desert, so that my chosen people can be refreshed. [21] I have made Israel for myself, and they will someday honor me before the whole world.

[22] "But, my dear people, you refuse to ask for my help. You have grown tired of me! [23] You have not brought me lambs for burnt offerings. You have not honored me with sacrifices, though I have not burdened and wearied you with my requests for grain offerings and incense.

[24] You have not brought me fragrant incense or pleased me with the fat from sacrifices. Instead, you have burdened me with your sins and wearied me with your faults.

[25] "I—yes, I alone—am the one who blots out your sins for my own sake and will never think of them again. [26] Let us review the situation together, and you can present your case if you have one. [27] From the very beginning, your ancestors sinned against me—all your leaders broke my laws. [28] That is why I have disgraced your priests and assigned Israel a future of complete destruction and shame.

[44:1] "But now, listen to me, Jacob my servant, Israel my chosen one. [2] The Lord who made you and helps you says: O Jacob, my servant, do not be afraid. O Israel, my chosen one, do not fear. [3] For I will give you abundant water to quench your thirst and to moisten your parched fields. And I will pour out my Spirit and my blessings on your children. [4] They will thrive like watered grass, like willows on a riverbank. [5] Some will proudly claim, 'I belong to the Lord.' Others will say, 'I am a descendant of Jacob.' Some will write the Lord's name on their hands and will take the honored name of Israel as their own.

[6] "This is what the Lord, Israel's King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty, says: I am the First and the Last; there is no other God. [7] Who else can tell you what is going to happen in the days ahead? Let them tell you if they can and thus prove their power. Let them do as I have done since ancient times. [8] Do not tremble; do not be afraid. Have I not proclaimed from ages past what my purposes are for you? You are my witnesses—is there any other God? No! There is no other Rock—not one!"

[9] How foolish are those who manufacture idols to be their gods. These highly valued objects are really worthless. They themselves are witnesses that this is so, for their idols neither see nor know. No wonder those who worship them are put to shame. [10] Who but a fool would make his own god—an idol that cannot help him one bit! [11] All who worship idols will stand before the Lord in shame, along with all these craftsmen—mere humans—who claim they can make a god. Together they will stand in terror and shame.

[12] The blacksmith stands at his forge to make a sharp tool, pounding and shaping it with all his might. His work makes him hungry and thirsty, weak and faint.

[13] Then the wood-carver measures and marks out a block of wood, takes the tool, and carves the figure of a man. Now he has a wonderful idol that cannot even move from where it is placed! [14] He cuts down cedars; he selects the cypress and the oak; he plants the cedar in the forest to be nourished by the rain. [15] And after his care, he uses part of the wood to make a fire to warm himself and bake his bread. Then—yes, it's true—he takes the rest of it and makes himself a god for people to worship! He makes an idol and bows down and praises it! [16] He burns part of the tree to roast his meat and to keep himself warm. [17] Then he takes what's left and makes his god: a carved idol! He falls down in front of it, worshiping and praying to it. "Rescue me!" he says. "You are my god!"

[18] Such stupidity and ignorance! Their eyes are closed, and they cannot see. Their minds are shut, and they cannot think. [19] The person who made the idol never stops to reflect, "Why, it's just a block of wood! I burned half of it for heat and used it to bake my bread and roast my meat. How can the rest of it be a god? Should I bow down to worship a chunk of wood?" [20] The poor, deluded fool feeds on ashes. He is trusting something that can give him no help at all. Yet he cannot bring himself to ask, "Is this thing, this idol that I'm holding in my hand, a lie?"

[21] "Pay attention, O Israel, for you are my servant. I, the Lord, made you, and I will not forget to help you. [22] I have swept away your sins like the morning mists. I have scattered your offenses like the clouds. Oh, return to me, for I have paid the price to set you free."

[23] Sing, O heavens, for the Lord has done this wondrous thing. Shout, O earth! Break forth into song, O mountains and forests and every tree! For the Lord has redeemed Jacob and is glorified in Israel.

[24] The Lord, your Redeemer and Creator, says: "I am the Lord, who made all things. I alone stretched out the heavens. By myself I made the earth and everything in it. [25] I am the one who exposes the false prophets as liars by causing events to happen that are contrary to their predictions. I cause wise people to give bad advice, thus proving them to be fools. [26] But I carry out the predictions of my prophets! When they say Jerusalem will be saved and the towns of Judah will be lived in once again, it will be done! [27] When I speak to the rivers and say, 'Be dry!' they will be dry. [28] When I say of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd,' he will certainly do as I say. He will command that Jerusalem be rebuilt and that the Temple be restored."

[45:1] This is what the Lord says to Cyrus, his anointed one, whose right hand he will empower. Before him, mighty kings will be paralyzed with fear. Their fortress gates will be opened, never again to shut against him. [2] This is what the Lord says: "I will go before you, Cyrus, and level the mountains. I will smash down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron. [3] And I will give you treasures hidden in the darkness—secret riches. I will do this so you may know that I am the Lord, the God of Israel, the one who calls you by name.

[4] "And why have I called you for this work? It is for the sake of Jacob my servant, Israel my chosen one. I called you by name when you did not know me. [5] I am the Lord; there is no other God. I have prepared you, even though you do not know me, [6] so all the world from east to west will know there is no other God. I am the Lord, and there is no other. [7] I am the one who creates the light and makes the darkness. I am the one who sends good times and bad times. I, the Lord, am the one who does these things.

[8] Open up, O heavens, and pour out your righteousness. Let the earth open wide so salvation and righteousness can sprout up together. I, the Lord, created them.

[9] "Destruction is certain for those who argue with their Creator. Does a clay pot ever argue with its maker? Does the clay dispute with the one who shapes it, saying, 'Stop, you are doing it wrong!' Does the pot exclaim, 'How clumsy can you be!' [10] How terrible it would be if a newborn baby said to its father and mother, 'Why was I born? Why did you make me this way?' "

[11] This is what the Lord, the Creator and Holy One of Israel, says: "Do you question what I do? Do you give me orders about the work of my hands? [12] I am the one who made the earth and created people to live on it. With my hands I stretched out the heavens. All the millions of stars are at my command. [13] I will raise up Cyrus to fulfill my righteous purpose, and I will guide all his actions. He will restore my city and free my captive people—and not for a reward! I, the Lord Almighty, have spoken!"

[14] This is what the Lord says: "The Egyptians, Ethiopians, and Sabeans will be subject to you. They will come to you with all their merchandise, and it will all be yours. They will follow you as prisoners in chains. They will fall to their knees in front of you and say, 'God is with you, and he is the only God.' "

[15] Truly, O God of Israel, our Savior, you work in strange and mysterious ways. [16] All who make idols will be humiliated and disgraced. [17] But the Lord will save the people of Israel with eternal salvation. They will never again be humiliated and disgraced throughout everlasting ages. [18] For the Lord is God, and he created the heavens and earth and put everything in place. He made the world to be lived in, not to be a place of empty chaos.

"I am the Lord," he says, "and there is no other. [19] I publicly proclaim bold promises. I do not whisper obscurities in some dark corner so no one can understand what I mean. And I did not tell the people of Israel to ask me for something I did not plan to give. I, the Lord, speak only what is true and right.

[20] "Gather together and come, you fugitives from surrounding nations. What fools they are who carry around their wooden idols and pray to gods that cannot save! [21] Consult together, argue your case, and state your proofs that idol worship pays. Who made these things known long ago? What idol ever told you they would happen? Was it not I, the Lord? For there is no other God but me—a just God and a Savior—no, not one! [22] Let all the world look to me for salvation! For I am God; there is no other. [23] I have sworn by my own name, and I will never go back on my word: Every knee will bow to me, and every tongue will confess allegiance to my name."

[24] The people will declare, "The Lord is the source of all my righteousness and strength." And all who were angry with him will come to him and be ashamed. [25] In the Lord all the generations of Israel will be justified, and in him they will boast.

[46:1] The idols of Babylon, Bel and Nebo, are being hauled away on ox carts. But look! The beasts are staggering under the weight! [2] Both the idols and the ones carrying them are bowed down. The gods cannot protect the people, and the people cannot protect the gods. They go off into captivity together.

[3] "Listen to me, all you who are left in Israel. I created you and have cared for you since before you were born. [4] I will be your God throughout your lifetime—until your hair is white with age. I made you, and I will care for you. I will carry you along and save you.

[5] "To whom will you compare me? Who is my equal? [6] Some people pour out their silver and gold and hire a craftsman to make a god from it. Then they bow down and worship it! [7] They carry it around on their shoulders, and when they set it down, it stays there. It cannot even move! And when someone prays to it, there is no answer. It has no power to get anyone out of trouble.

[8] "Do not forget this, you guilty ones. [9] And do not forget the things I have done throughout history. For I am God—I alone! I am God, and there is no one else like me. [10] Only I can tell you what is going to happen even before it happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish. [11] I will call a swift bird of prey from the east—a leader from a distant land who will come and do my bidding. I have said I would do it, and I will. [12] Listen to me, you stubborn, evil people! [13] For I am ready to set things right, not in the distant future, but right now! I am ready to save Jerusalem and give my glory to Israel.

[47:1] "Come, Babylon, unconquered one, sit in the dust. For your days of glory, pomp, and honor have ended. O daughter of Babylonia, never again will you be the lovely princess, tender and delicate. [2] Take heavy millstones and grind the corn. Remove your veil and strip off your robe. Expose yourself to public view. [3] You will be naked and burdened with shame. I will take vengeance against you and will not negotiate."

[4] Our Redeemer, whose name is the Lord Almighty, is the Holy One of Israel.

[5] "O daughter of Babylonia, sit now in darkness and silence. Never again will you be known as the queen of kingdoms. [6] For I was angry with my chosen people and began their punishment by letting them fall into your hands. But you, Babylon, showed them no mercy. You have forced even the elderly to carry heavy burdens. [7] You thought, 'I will reign forever as queen of the world!' You did not care at all about my people or think about the consequences of your actions.

[8] "You are a pleasure-crazy kingdom, living at ease and feeling secure, bragging as if you were the greatest in the world! You say, 'I'm self-sufficient and not accountable to anyone! I will never be a widow or lose my children.' [9] Well, those two things will come upon you in a moment: widowhood and the loss of your children. Yes, these calamities will come upon you, despite all your witchcraft and magic.

[10] "You felt secure in all your wickedness. 'No one sees me,' you said. Your 'wisdom' and 'knowledge' have caused you to turn away from me and claim, 'I am self-sufficient and not accountable to anyone!' [11] So disaster will overtake you suddenly, and you won't be able to charm it away. Calamity will fall upon you, and you won't be able to buy your way out. A catastrophe will arise so fast that you won't know what hit you.

[12] "Call out the demon hordes you have worshiped all these years. Ask them to help you strike terror into the hearts of people once again. [13] You have more than enough advisers, astrologers, and stargazers. Let them stand up and save you from what the future holds. [14] But they are as useless as dried grass burning in a fire. They cannot even save themselves! You will get no help from them at all. Their hearth is not a place to sit for warmth. [15] And all your friends, those with whom you have done business since childhood, will slip away and disappear, unable to help.

[48:1] "Listen to me, O family of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel and born into the family of Judah. Listen, you who take oaths in the name of the Lord and call on the God of Israel. You don't follow through on any of your promises, [2] even though you call yourself the holy city and talk about depending on the God of Israel, whose name is the Lord Almighty. [3] Time and again I warned you about what was going to happen in the future. Then suddenly I took action, and all my predictions came true.

[4] "I know how stubborn and obstinate you are. Your necks are as unbending as iron. You are as hardheaded as bronze. [5] That is why I told you ahead of time what I was going to do. That way, you could never say, 'My idols did it. My wooden image and metal god commanded it to happen!' [6] You have heard my predictions and seen them fulfilled, but you refuse to admit it. Now I will tell you new things I have not mentioned before, secrets you have not yet heard. [7] They are brand new, not things from the past. So you cannot say, 'We knew that all the time!'

[8] "Yes, I will tell you of things that are entirely new, for I know so well what traitors you are. You have been rebels from your earliest childhood, rotten through and through. [9] Yet for my own sake and for the honor of my name, I will hold back my anger and not wipe you out. [10] I have refined you but not in the way silver is refined. Rather, I have refined you in the furnace of suffering. [11] I will rescue you for my sake—yes, for my own sake! That way, the pagan nations will not be able to claim that their gods have conquered me. I will not let them have my glory!

[12] "Listen to me, O family of Jacob, Israel my chosen one! I alone am God, the First and the Last. [13] It was my hand that laid the foundations of the earth. The palm of my right hand spread out the heavens above. I spoke, and they came into being.

[14] "Have any of your idols ever told you this? Come, all of you, and listen: 'The Lord has chosen Cyrus as his ally. He will use him to put an end to the empire of Babylon, destroying the Babylonian armies.' [15] I have said it: I am calling Cyrus! I will send him on this errand and will help him succeed. [16] Come closer and listen. I have always told you plainly what would happen so you would have no trouble understanding."

And now the Sovereign Lord and his Spirit have sent me with this message: [17] "The Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, says: I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is good and leads you along the paths you should follow. [18] Oh, that you had listened to my commands! Then you would have had peace flowing like a gentle river and righteousness rolling like waves. [19] Then you would have become as numerous as the sands along the seashore—too many to count! There would have been no need for your destruction."

[20] Yet even now, be free from your captivity! Leave Babylon and the Babylonians, singing as you go! Shout to the ends of the earth that the Lord has redeemed his servants, the people of Israel. [21] They were not thirsty when he led them through the desert. He divided the rock, and water gushed out for them to drink.

[22] "But there is no peace for the wicked," says the Lord.

[49:1] Listen to me, all of you in far-off lands! The Lord called me before my birth; from within the womb he called me by name. [2] He made my words of judgment as sharp as a sword. He has hidden me in the shadow of his hand. I am like a sharp arrow in his quiver.

[3] He said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, and you will bring me glory."

[4] I replied, "But my work all seems so useless! I have spent my strength for nothing and to no purpose at all. Yet I leave it all in the Lord's hand; I will trust God for my reward."

[5] And now the Lord speaks—he who formed me in my mother's womb to be his servant, who commissioned me to bring his people of Israel back to him. The Lord has honored me, and my God has given me strength. [6] He says, "You will do more than restore the people of Israel to me. I will make you a light to the Gentiles, and you will bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."

[7] The Lord, the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel, says to the one who is despised and rejected by a nation, to the one who is the servant of rulers: "Kings will stand at attention when you pass by. Princes will bow low because the Lord has chosen you. He, the faithful Lord, the Holy One of Israel, chooses you."

[8] This is what the Lord says: "At just the right time, I will respond to you. On the day of salvation, I will help you. I will give you as a token and pledge to Israel. This will prove that I will reestablish the land of Israel and reassign it to its own people again. [9] Through you I am saying to the prisoners of darkness, 'Come out! I am giving you your freedom!' They will be my sheep, grazing in green pastures and on hills that were previously bare. [10] They will neither hunger nor thirst. The searing sun and scorching desert winds will not reach them anymore. For the Lord in his mercy will lead them beside cool waters. [11] And I will make my mountains into level paths for them. The highways will be raised above the valleys. [12] See, my people will return from far away, from lands to the north and west, and from as far south as Egypt."

[13] Sing for joy, O heavens! Rejoice, O earth! Burst into song, O mountains! For the Lord has comforted his people and will have compassion on them in their sorrow.

[14] Yet Jerusalem says, "The Lord has deserted us; the Lord has forgotten us."

[15] "Never! Can a mother forget her nursing child? Can she feel no love for a child she has borne? But even if that were possible, I would not forget you! [16] See, I have written your name on my hand. Ever before me is a picture of Jerusalem's walls in ruins. [17] Soon your descendants will come back, and all who are trying to destroy you will go away. [18] Look and see, for all your children will come back to you. As surely as I live," says the Lord, "they will be like jewels or bridal ornaments for you to display."

[19] "Even the most desolate parts of your abandoned land will soon be crowded with your people. Your enemies who enslaved you will be far away. [20] The generations born in exile will return and say, 'We need more room! It's crowded here!' [21] Then you will think to yourself, 'Who has given me all these descendants? For most of my children were killed, and the rest were carried away into exile. I was left here all alone. Who bore these children? Who raised them for me?' "

[22] This is what the Sovereign Lord says: "See, I will give a signal to the godless nations. They will carry your little sons back to you in their arms; they will bring your daughters on their shoulders. [23] Kings and queens will serve you. They will care for all your needs. They will bow to the earth before you and lick the dust from your feet. Then you will know that I am the Lord. Those who wait for me will never be put to shame."

[24] Who can snatch the plunder of war from the hands of a warrior? Who can demand that a tyrant let his captives go? [25] But the Lord says, "The captives of warriors will be released, and the plunder of tyrants will be retrieved. For I will fight those who fight you, and I will save your children. [26] I will feed your enemies with their own flesh. They will be drunk with rivers of their own blood. All the world will know that I, the Lord, am your Savior and Redeemer, the Mighty One of Israel."

[50:1] The Lord asks, "Did I sell you as slaves to my creditors? Is that why you are not here? Is your mother gone because I divorced her and sent her away? No, you went away as captives because of your sins. And your mother, too, was taken because of your sins. [2] Was I too weak to save you? Is that why the house is silent and empty when I come home? Is it because I have no power to rescue? No, that is not the reason! For I can speak to the sea and make it dry! I can turn rivers into deserts covered with dying fish. [3] I am the one who sends darkness out across the skies, bringing it to a state of mourning."

[4] The Sovereign Lord has given me his words of wisdom, so that I know what to say to all these weary ones. Morning by morning he awakens me and opens my understanding to his will. [5] The Sovereign Lord has spoken to me, and I have listened. I do not rebel or turn away. [6] I give my back to those who beat me and my cheeks to those who pull out my beard. I do not hide from shame, for they mock me and spit in my face.

[7] Because the Sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be dismayed. Therefore, I have set my face like a stone, determined to do his will. And I know that I will triumph. [8] He who gives me justice is near. Who will dare to oppose me now? Where are my enemies? Let them appear! [9] See, the Sovereign Lord is on my side! Who will declare me guilty? All my enemies will be destroyed like old clothes that have been eaten by moths!

[10] Who among you fears the Lord and obeys his servant? If you are walking in darkness, without a ray of light, trust in the Lord and rely on your God. [11] But watch out, you who live in your own light and warm yourselves by your own fires. This is the reward you will receive from me: You will soon lie down in great torment.

[51:1] "Listen to me, all who hope for deliverance—all who seek the Lord! Consider the quarry from which you were mined, the rock from which you were cut! [2] Yes, think about your ancestors Abraham and Sarah, from whom you came. Abraham was alone when I called him. But when I blessed him, he became a great nation."

[3] The Lord will comfort Israel again and make her deserts blossom. Her barren wilderness will become as beautiful as Eden—the garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness will be found there. Lovely songs of thanksgiving will fill the air.

[4] "Listen to me, my people. Hear me, Israel, for my law will be proclaimed, and my justice will become a light to the nations. [5] My mercy and justice are coming soon. Your salvation is on the way. I will rule the nations. They will wait for me and long for my power. [6] Look up to the skies above, and gaze down on the earth beneath. For the skies will disappear like smoke, and the earth will wear out like a piece of clothing. The people of the earth will die like flies, but my salvation lasts forever. My righteous rule will never end!

[7] "Listen to me, you who know right from wrong and cherish my law in your hearts. Do not be afraid of people's scorn or their slanderous talk. [8] For the moth will destroy them as it destroys clothing. The worm will eat away at them as it eats wool. But my righteousness will last forever. My salvation will continue from generation to generation."

[9] Wake up, Lord! Robe yourself with strength! Rouse yourself as in the days of old when you slew Egypt, the dragon of the Nile. [10] Are you not the same today, the one who dried up the sea, making a path of escape when you saved your people? [11] Those who have been ransomed by the Lord will return to Jerusalem, singing songs of everlasting joy. Sorrow and mourning will disappear, and they will be overcome with joy and gladness.

[12] "I, even I, am the one who comforts you. So why are you afraid of mere humans, who wither like the grass and disappear? [13] Yet you have forgotten the Lord, your Creator, the one who put the stars in the sky and established the earth. Will you remain in constant dread of human oppression? Will you continue to fear the anger of your enemies from morning till night? [14] Soon all you captives will be released! Imprisonment, starvation, and death will not be your fate! [15] For I am the Lord your God, who stirs up the sea, causing its waves to roar. My name is the Lord Almighty. [16] And I have put my words in your mouth and hidden you safely within my hand. I set all the stars in space and established the earth. I am the one who says to Israel, 'You are mine!' "

[17] Wake up, wake up, O Jerusalem! You have drunk enough from the cup of the Lord's fury. You have drunk the cup of terror, tipping out its last drops. [18] Not one of your children is left alive to help you or tell you what to do. [19] These two things have been your lot: desolation and destruction, famine and war. And who is left to sympathize? Who is left to comfort you? [20] For your children have fainted and lie in the streets, helpless as antelopes caught in a net. The Lord has poured out his fury; God has rebuked them.

[21] But now listen to this, you afflicted ones, who sit in a drunken stupor, though not from drinking wine. [22] This is what the Sovereign Lord, your God and Defender, says: "See, I am taking the terrible cup from your hands. You will drink no more of my fury. It is gone at last! [23] But I will put that cup into the hands of those who tormented you. I will give it to those who trampled you into the dust and walked on your backs."

[52:1] Wake up, wake up, O Zion! Clothe yourselves with strength. Put on your beautiful clothes, O holy city of Jerusalem, for unclean and godless people will no longer enter your gates. [2] Rise from the dust, O Jerusalem. Remove the slave bands from your neck, O captive daughter of Zion. [3] For this is what the Lord says: "When I sold you into exile, I received no payment. Now I can redeem you without paying for you."

[4] This is what the Sovereign Lord says: "Long ago my people went to live as resident foreigners in Egypt. Now they have been oppressed without cause by Assyria. [5] And now, what is this?" asks the Lord. "Why are my people enslaved again? Those who rule them shout in exultation. My name is being blasphemed all day long. [6] But I will reveal my name to my people, and they will come to know its power. Then at last they will recognize that it is I who speaks to them."

[7] How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news of peace and salvation, the news that the God of Israel reigns! [8] The watchmen shout and sing with joy, for before their very eyes they see the Lord bringing his people home to Jerusalem. [9] Let the ruins of Jerusalem break into joyful song, for the Lord has comforted his people. He has redeemed Jerusalem. [10] The Lord will demonstrate his holy power before the eyes of all the nations. The ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.

[11] Go now, leave your bonds and slavery. Put Babylon behind you, with everything it represents, for it is unclean to you. You are the Lord's holy people. Purify yourselves, you who carry home the vessels of the Lord. [12] You will not leave in a hurry, running for your lives. For the Lord will go ahead of you, and the God of Israel will protect you from behind.

[13] See, my servant will prosper; he will be highly exalted. [14] Many were amazed when they saw him—beaten and bloodied, so disfigured one would scarcely know he was a person. [15] And he will again startle many nations. Kings will stand speechless in his presence. For they will see what they had not previously been told about; they will understand what they had not heard about.

[53:1] Who has believed our message? To whom will the Lord reveal his saving power? [2] My servant grew up in the Lord's presence like a tender green shoot, sprouting from a root in dry and sterile ground. There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him. [3] He was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with bitterest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way when he went by. He was despised, and we did not care.

[4] Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God for his own sins! [5] But he was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped, and we were healed! [6] All of us have strayed away like sheep. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the guilt and sins of us all.

[7] He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth. [8] From prison and trial they led him away to his death. But who among the people realized that he was dying for their sins—that he was suffering their punishment? [9] He had done no wrong, and he never deceived anyone. But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man's grave.

[10] But it was the Lord's good plan to crush him and fill him with grief. Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have a multitude of children, many heirs. He will enjoy a long life, and the Lord's plan will prosper in his hands. [11] When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish, he will be satisfied. And because of what he has experienced, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins. [12] I will give him the honors of one who is mighty and great, because he exposed himself to death. He was counted among those who were sinners. He bore the sins of many and interceded for sinners.

[54:1] "Sing, O childless woman! Break forth into loud and joyful song, O Jerusalem, even though you never gave birth to a child. For the woman who could bear no children now has more than all the other women," says the Lord. [2] "Enlarge your house; build an addition; spread out your home! [3] For you will soon be bursting at the seams. Your descendants will take over other nations and live in their cities.

[4] "Fear not; you will no longer live in shame. The shame of your youth and the sorrows of widowhood will be remembered no more, [5] for your Creator will be your husband. The Lord Almighty is his name! He is your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, the God of all the earth. [6] For the Lord has called you back from your grief—as though you were a young wife abandoned by her husband," says your God. [7] "For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with great compassion I will take you back. [8] In a moment of anger I turned my face away for a little while. But with everlasting love I will have compassion on you," says the Lord, your Redeemer.

[9] "Just as I swore in the time of Noah that I would never again let a flood cover the earth and destroy its life, so now I swear that I will never again pour out my anger on you. [10] For the mountains may depart and the hills disappear, but even then I will remain loyal to you. My covenant of blessing will never be broken," says the Lord, who has mercy on you.

[11] "O storm-battered city, troubled and desolate! I will rebuild you on a foundation of sapphires and make the walls of your houses from precious jewels. [12] I will make your towers of sparkling rubies and your gates and walls of shining gems. [13] I will teach all your citizens, and their prosperity will be great. [14] You will live under a government that is just and fair. Your enemies will stay far away; you will live in peace. Terror will not come near. [15] If any nation comes to fight you, it will not be because I sent them to punish you. Your enemies will always be defeated because I am on your side. [16] I have created the blacksmith who fans the coals beneath the forge and makes the weapons of destruction. And I have created the armies that destroy.

[17] But in that coming day, no weapon turned against you will succeed. And everyone who tells lies in court will be brought to justice. These benefits are enjoyed by the servants of the Lord; their vindication will come from me. I, the Lord, have spoken!

[55:1] "Is anyone thirsty? Come and drink—even if you have no money! Come, take your choice of wine or milk—it's all free! [2] Why spend your money on food that does not give you strength? Why pay for food that does you no good? Listen, and I will tell you where to get food that is good for the soul!

[3] "Come to me with your ears wide open. Listen, for the life of your soul is at stake. I am ready to make an everlasting covenant with you. I will give you all the mercies and unfailing love that I promised to David. [4] He displayed my power by being my witness and a leader among the nations. [5] You also will command the nations, and they will come running to obey, because I, the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, have made you glorious."

[6] Seek the Lord while you can find him. Call on him now while he is near. [7] Let the people turn from their wicked deeds. Let them banish from their minds the very thought of doing wrong! Let them turn to the Lord that he may have mercy on them. Yes, turn to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

[8] "My thoughts are completely different from yours," says the Lord. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. [9] For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.

[10] "The rain and snow come down from the heavens and stay on the ground to water the earth. They cause the grain to grow, producing seed for the farmer and bread for the hungry. [11] It is the same with my word. I send it out, and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it to, and it will prosper everywhere I send it. [12] You will live in joy and peace. The mountains and hills will burst into song, and the trees of the field will clap their hands! [13] Where once there were thorns, cypress trees will grow. Where briars grew, myrtles will sprout up. This miracle will bring great honor to the Lord's name; it will be an everlasting sign of his power and love.

[56:1] "Be just and fair to all," says the Lord. "Do what is right and good, for I am coming soon to rescue you. [2] Blessed are those who are careful to do this. Blessed are those who honor my Sabbath days of rest by refusing to work. And blessed are those who keep themselves from doing wrong.

[3] "And my blessings are for Gentiles, too, when they commit themselves to the Lord. Do not let them think that I consider them second-class citizens. And my blessings are also for the eunuchs. They are as much mine as anyone else. [4] For I say this to the eunuchs who keep my Sabbath days holy, who choose to do what pleases me and commit their lives to me: [5] I will give them—in my house, within my walls—a memorial and a name far greater than the honor they would have received by having sons and daughters. For the name I give them is an everlasting one. It will never disappear!

[6] "I will also bless the Gentiles who commit themselves to the Lord and serve him and love his name, who worship him and do not desecrate the Sabbath day of rest, and who have accepted his covenant. [7] I will bring them also to my holy mountain of Jerusalem and will fill them with joy in my house of prayer. I will accept their burnt offerings and sacrifices, because my Temple will be called a house of prayer for all nations. [8] For the Sovereign Lord, who brings back the outcasts of Israel, says: I will bring others, too, besides my people Israel."

[9] Come, wild animals of the field! Come, wild animals of the forest! Come and devour my people! [10] For the leaders of my people—the Lord's watchmen, his shepherds—are blind to every danger. They are like silent watchdogs that give no warning when danger comes. They love to lie around, sleeping and dreaming. [11] And they are as greedy as dogs, never satisfied. They are stupid shepherds, all following their own path, all of them intent on personal gain.

[12] "Come," they say. "We will get some wine and have a party. Let's all get drunk. Let this go on and on, and tomorrow will be even better."

[57:1] The righteous pass away; the godly often die before their time. And no one seems to care or wonder why. No one seems to understand that God is protecting them from the evil to come. [2] For the godly who die will rest in peace.

[3] "But you—come here, you witches' children, you offspring of adulterers and prostitutes! [4] Whom do you mock, making faces and sticking out your tongues? You children of sinners and liars! [5] You worship your idols with great passion beneath every green tree. You slaughter your children as human sacrifices down in the valleys, under overhanging rocks. [6] Your gods are the smooth stones in the valleys. You worship them with drink offerings and grain offerings. They, not I, are your inheritance. Does all this make me happy? [7] You have committed adultery on the mountaintops by worshiping idols there, and so you have been unfaithful to me. [8] Behind closed doors, you have set up your idols and worship them instead of me. This is adultery, for you are loving these idols instead of loving me. You have climbed right into bed with these detestable gods. [9] You have given olive oil and perfume to Molech as your gift. You have traveled far, even into the world of the dead, to find new gods to love. [10] You grew weary in your search, but you never gave up. You strengthened yourself and went on. [11] Why were you more afraid of them than of me? How is it that you don't even remember me or think about me? Is it because I have not corrected you that you have no fear of me?"

[12] "Now I will expose your so-called good deeds that you consider so righteous. None of them will benefit or save you. [13] Let's see if your idols can do anything for you when you cry to them for help. They are so helpless that a breath of wind can knock them down! But whoever trusts in me will possess the land and inherit my holy mountain. [14] I will say, 'Rebuild the road! Clear away the rocks and stones so my people can return from captivity.' "

[15] The high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, the Holy One, says this: "I live in that high and holy place with those whose spirits are contrite and humble. I refresh the humble and give new courage to those with repentant hearts. [16] For I will not fight against you forever; I will not always show my anger. If I did, all people would pass away—all the souls I have made.

[17] I was angry and punished these greedy people. I withdrew myself from them, but they went right on sinning. [18] I have seen what they do, but I will heal them anyway! I will lead them and comfort those who mourn. [19] Then words of praise will be on their lips. May they have peace, both near and far, for I will heal them all," says the Lord. [20] "But those who still reject me are like the restless sea. It is never still but continually churns up mire and dirt. [21] There is no peace for the wicked," says my God.

[58:1] "Shout with the voice of a trumpet blast. Tell my people Israel of their sins! [2] Yet they act so pious! They come to the Temple every day and seem delighted to hear my laws. You would almost think this was a righteous nation that would never abandon its God. They love to make a show of coming to me and asking me to take action on their behalf. [3] 'We have fasted before you!' they say. 'Why aren't you impressed? We have done much penance, and you don't even notice it!'

"I will tell you why! It's because you are living for yourselves even while you are fasting. You keep right on oppressing your workers. [4] What good is fasting when you keep on fighting and quarreling? This kind of fasting will never get you anywhere with me. [5] You humble yourselves by going through the motions of penance, bowing your heads like a blade of grass in the wind. You dress in sackcloth and cover yourselves with ashes. Is this what you call fasting? Do you really think this will please the Lord?

[6] "No, the kind of fasting I want calls you to free those who are wrongly imprisoned and to stop oppressing those who work for you. Treat them fairly and give them what they earn. [7] I want you to share your food with the hungry and to welcome poor wanderers into your homes. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help.

[8] "If you do these things, your salvation will come like the dawn. Yes, your healing will come quickly. Your godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the Lord will protect you from behind. [9] Then when you call, the Lord will answer. 'Yes, I am here,' he will quickly reply.

"Stop oppressing the helpless and stop making false accusations and spreading vicious rumors! [10] Feed the hungry and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as day. [11] The Lord will guide you continually, watering your life when you are dry and keeping you healthy, too. You will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring. [12] Your children will rebuild the deserted ruins of your cities. Then you will be known as the people who rebuild their walls and cities.

[13] "Keep the Sabbath day holy. Don't pursue your own interests on that day, but enjoy the Sabbath and speak of it with delight as the Lord's holy day. Honor the Lord in everything you do, and don't follow your own desires or talk idly. If you do this, [14] the Lord will be your delight. I will give you great honor and give you your full share of the inheritance I promised to Jacob, your ancestor. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

[59:1] Listen! The Lord is not too weak to save you, and he is not becoming deaf. He can hear you when you call. [2] But there is a problem—your sins have cut you off from God. Because of your sin, he has turned away and will not listen anymore.

[3] Your hands are the hands of murderers, and your fingers are filthy with sin. Your mouth is full of lies, and your lips are tainted with corruption.

[4] No one cares about being fair and honest. Their lawsuits are based on lies. They spend their time plotting evil deeds and then doing them. [5] They spend their time and energy spinning evil plans that end up in deadly actions. [6] They cheat and shortchange everyone. Nothing they do is productive; all their activity is filled with sin. Violence is their trademark. [7] Their feet run to do evil, and they rush to commit murder. They think only about sinning. Wherever they go, misery and destruction follow them. [8] They do not know what true peace is or what it means to be just and good. They continually do wrong, and those who follow them cannot experience a moment's peace.

[9] It is because of all this evil that deliverance is far from us. That is why God doesn't punish those who injure us. No wonder we are in darkness when we expected light. No wonder we are walking in the gloom. [10] No wonder we grope like blind people and stumble along. Even at brightest noontime, we fall down as though it were dark. No wonder we are like corpses when compared to vigorous young men! [11] We growl like hungry bears; we moan like mournful doves. We look for justice, but it is nowhere to be found. We look to be rescued, but it is far away from us. [12] For our sins are piled up before God and testify against us. Yes, we know what sinners we are. [13] We know that we have rebelled against the Lord. We have turned our backs on God. We know how unfair and oppressive we have been, carefully planning our deceitful lies. [14] Our courts oppose people who are righteous, and justice is nowhere to be found. Truth falls dead in the streets, and fairness has been outlawed. [15] Yes, truth is gone, and anyone who tries to live a godly life is soon attacked.

The Lord looked and was displeased to find that there was no justice. [16] He was amazed to see that no one intervened to help the oppressed. So he himself stepped in to save them with his mighty power and justice. [17] He put on righteousness as his body armor and placed the helmet of salvation on his head. He clothed himself with the robes of vengeance and godly fury. [18] He will repay his enemies for their evil deeds. His fury will fall on his foes in distant lands. [19] Then at last they will respect and glorify the name of the Lord throughout the world. For he will come like a flood tide driven by the breath of the Lord.

[20] "The Redeemer will come to Jerusalem," says the Lord, "to buy back those in Israel who have turned from their sins. [21] And this is my covenant with them," says the Lord. "My Spirit will not leave them, and neither will these words I have given you. They will be on your lips and on the lips of your children and your children's children forever. I, the Lord, have spoken!

[60:1] "Arise, Jerusalem! Let your light shine for all the nations to see! For the glory of the Lord is shining upon you. [2] Darkness as black as night will cover all the nations of the earth, but the glory of the Lord will shine over you. [3] All nations will come to your light. Mighty kings will come to see your radiance.

[4] "Look and see, for everyone is coming home! Your sons are coming from distant lands; your little daughters will be carried home. [5] Your eyes will shine, and your hearts will thrill with joy, for merchants from around the world will come to you. They will bring you the wealth of many lands.

[6] Vast caravans of camels will converge on you, the camels of Midian and Ephah. From Sheba they will bring gold and incense for the worship of the Lord. [7] The flocks of Kedar will be given to you, and the rams of Nebaioth will be brought for my altars. In that day I will make my Temple glorious.

[8] "And what do I see flying like clouds to Israel, like doves to their nests? [9] They are the ships of Tarshish, reserved to bring the people of Israel home. They will bring their wealth with them, and it will bring great honor to the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he will fill you with splendor.

[10] "Foreigners will come to rebuild your cities. Kings and rulers will send you aid. For though I have destroyed you in my anger, I will have mercy on you through my grace. [11] Your gates will stay open around the clock to receive the wealth of many lands. The kings of the world will be led as captives in a victory procession. [12] For the nations that refuse to be your allies will be destroyed. [13] The glory of Lebanon will be yours—the forests of cypress, fir, and pine—to beautify my sanctuary. My Temple will be glorious!

[14] "The children of your tormentors will come and bow before you. Those who despised you will kiss your feet. They will call you the City of the Lord, and Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

[15] "Though you were once despised and hated and rebuffed by all, you will be beautiful forever. You will be a joy to all generations, for I will make you so. [16] Powerful kings and mighty nations will bring the best of their goods to satisfy your every need. You will know at last that I, the Lord, am your Savior and Redeemer, the Mighty One of Israel. [17] I will exchange your bronze for gold, your iron for silver, your wood for bronze, and your stones for iron. Peace and righteousness will be your leaders! [18] Violence will disappear from your land; the desolation and destruction of war will end. Salvation will surround you like city walls, and praise will be on the lips of all who enter there.

[19] "No longer will you need the sun or moon to give you light, for the Lord your God will be your everlasting light, and he will be your glory. [20] The sun will never set; the moon will not go down. For the Lord will be your everlasting light. Your days of mourning will come to an end. [21] All your people will be righteous. They will possess their land forever, for I will plant them there with my own hands in order to bring myself glory. [22] The smallest family will multiply into a large clan. The tiniest group will become a mighty nation. I, the Lord, will bring it all to pass at the right time."

[61:1] The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me, because the Lord has appointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to announce that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed. [2] He has sent me to tell those who mourn that the time of the Lord's favor has come, and with it, the day of God's anger against their enemies. [3] To all who mourn in Israel, he will give beauty for ashes, joy instead of mourning, praise instead of despair. For the Lord has planted them like strong and graceful oaks for his own glory.

[4] They will rebuild the ancient ruins, repairing cities long ago destroyed. They will revive them, though they have been empty for many generations. [5] Foreigners will be your servants. They will feed your flocks and plow your fields and tend your vineyards. [6] You will be called priests of the Lord, ministers of our God. You will be fed with the treasures of the nations and will boast in their riches. [7] Instead of shame and dishonor, you will inherit a double portion of prosperity and everlasting joy.

[8] "For I, the Lord, love justice. I hate robbery and wrongdoing. I will faithfully reward my people for their suffering and make an everlasting covenant with them. [9] Their descendants will be known and honored among the nations. Everyone will realize that they are a people the Lord has blessed."

[10] I am overwhelmed with joy in the Lord my God! For he has dressed me with the clothing of salvation and draped me in a robe of righteousness. I am like a bridegroom in his wedding suit or a bride with her jewels. [11] The Sovereign Lord will show his justice to the nations of the world. Everyone will praise him! His righteousness will be like a garden in early spring, filled with young plants springing up everywhere.

[62:1] Because I love Zion, because my heart yearns for Jerusalem, I cannot remain silent. I will not stop praying for her until her righteousness shines like the dawn, and her salvation blazes like a burning torch.

[2] The nations will see your righteousness. Kings will be blinded by your glory. And the Lord will give you a new name. [3] The Lord will hold you in his hands for all to see—a splendid crown in the hands of God. [4] Never again will you be called the Godforsaken City or the Desolate Land. Your new name will be the City of God's Delight and the Bride of God, for the Lord delights in you and will claim you as his own. [5] Your children will care for you with joy, O Jerusalem, just as a young man cares for his bride. Then God will rejoice over you as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride.

[6] O Jerusalem, I have posted watchmen on your walls; they will pray to the Lord day and night for the fulfillment of his promises. Take no rest, all you who pray. [7] Give the Lord no rest until he makes Jerusalem the object of praise throughout the earth. [8] The Lord has sworn to Jerusalem by his own strength: "I will never again hand you over to your enemies. Never again will foreign warriors come and take away your grain and wine. [9] You raised it, and you will keep it, praising the Lord. Within the courtyards of the Temple, you yourselves will drink the wine that you have pressed."

[10] Go out! Prepare the highway for my people to return! Smooth out the road; pull out the boulders; raise a flag for all the nations to see. [11] The Lord has sent this message to every land: "Tell the people of Israel, 'Look, your Savior is coming. See, he brings his reward with him as he comes.' "[12] They will be called the Holy People and the People Redeemed by the Lord. And Jerusalem will be known as the Desirable Place and the City No Longer Forsaken.

[63:1] Who is this who comes from Edom, from the city of Bozrah, with his clothing stained red? Who is this in royal robes, marching in the greatness of his strength?

"It is I, the Lord, announcing your salvation! It is I, the Lord, who is mighty to save!"

[2] Why are your clothes so red, as if you have been treading out grapes?

[3] "I have trodden the winepress alone; no one was there to help me. In my anger I have trampled my enemies as if they were grapes. In my fury I have trampled my foes. It is their blood that has stained my clothes. [4] For the time has come for me to avenge my people, to ransom them from their oppressors. [5] I looked, but no one came to help my people. I was amazed and appalled at what I saw. So I executed vengeance alone; unaided, I passed down judgment. [6] I crushed the nations in my anger and made them stagger and fall to the ground."

[7] I will tell of the Lord's unfailing love. I will praise the Lord for all he has done. I will rejoice in his great goodness to Israel, which he has granted according to his mercy and love. [8] He said, "They are my very own people. Surely they will not be false again." And he became their Savior. [9] In all their suffering he also suffered, and he personally rescued them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them. He lifted them up and carried them through all the years.

[10] But they rebelled against him and grieved his Holy Spirit. That is why he became their enemy and fought against them.

[11] Then they remembered those days of old when Moses led his people out of Egypt. They cried out, "Where is the one who brought Israel through the sea, with Moses as their shepherd? Where is the one who sent his Holy Spirit to be among his people? [12] Where is the one whose power divided the sea before them, when Moses lifted up his hand, establishing his reputation forever? [13] Where is the one who led them through the bottom of the sea? They were like fine stallions racing through the desert, never stumbling. [14] As with cattle going down into a peaceful valley, the Spirit of the Lord gave them rest. You led your people, Lord, and gained a magnificent reputation."

[15] Lord, look down from heaven and see us from your holy, glorious home. Where is the passion and the might you used to show on our behalf? Where are your mercy and compassion now? [16] Surely you are still our Father! Even if Abraham and Jacob would disown us, Lord, you would still be our Father. You are our Redeemer from ages past. [17] Lord, why have you allowed us to turn from your path? Why have you given us stubborn hearts so we no longer fear you? Return and help us, for we are your servants and your special possession. [18] How briefly your holy people possessed the holy place, and now our enemies have destroyed it. [19] Lord, why do you treat us as though we never belonged to you? Why do you act as though we had never been known as your people?

[64:1] Oh that you would burst from the heavens and come down! How the mountains would quake in your presence! [2] As fire causes wood to burn and water to boil, your coming would make the nations tremble. Then your enemies would learn the reason for your fame! [3] When you came down long ago, you did awesome things beyond our highest expectations. And oh, how the mountains quaked! [4] For since the world began, no ear has heard, and no eye has seen a God like you, who works for those who wait for him! [5] You welcome those who cheerfully do good, who follow godly ways.

But we are not godly. We are constant sinners, so your anger is heavy on us. How can people like us be saved? [6] We are all infected and impure with sin. When we proudly display our righteous deeds, we find they are but filthy rags. Like autumn leaves, we wither and fall. And our sins, like the wind, sweep us away. [7] Yet no one calls on your name or pleads with you for mercy. Therefore, you have turned away from us and turned us over to our sins.

[8] And yet, Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay, and you are the potter. We are all formed by your hand. [9] Oh, don't be so angry with us, Lord. Please don't remember our sins forever. Look at us, we pray, and see that we are all your people.

[10] Your holy cities are destroyed; even Jerusalem is a desolate wilderness. [11] The holy, beautiful Temple where our ancestors praised you has been burned down, and all the things of beauty are destroyed. [12] After all this, Lord, must you still refuse to help us? Will you continue to be silent and punish us?

[65:1] The Lord says, "People who never before inquired about me are now asking about me. I am being found by people who were not looking for me. To them I have said, 'I am here!'

[2] "I opened my arms to my own people all day long, but they have rebelled. They follow their own evil paths and thoughts. [3] All day long they insult me to my face by worshiping idols in their sacred gardens. They burn incense on the rooftops of their homes. [4] At night they go out among the graves and secret places to worship evil spirits. They also eat pork and other forbidden foods. [5] Yet they say to each other, 'Don't come too close or you will defile me! I am holier than you!' They are a stench in my nostrils, an acrid smell that never goes away.

[6] "Look, my decree is written out in front of me: I will not stand silent; I will repay them in full! Yes, I will repay them— [7] both for their own sins and for those of their ancestors," says the Lord. "For they also burned incense on the mountains and insulted me on the hills. I will pay them back in full!

[8] "But I will not destroy them all," says the Lord. "For just as good grapes are found among a cluster of bad ones (and someone will say, 'Don't throw them all away—there are some good grapes there!'), so I will not destroy all Israel. For I still have true servants there. [9] I will preserve a remnant of the people of Israel and of Judah to possess my land. Those I choose will inherit it and serve me there. [10] For my people who have searched for me, the plain of Sharon will again be filled with flocks, and the valley of Achor will be a place to pasture herds.

[11] "But because the rest of you have forsaken the Lord and his Temple and worship the gods of Fate and Destiny, [12] I will 'destine' you to the sword. All of you will bow before the executioner, for when I called, you did not answer. When I spoke, you did not listen. You deliberately sinned—before my very eyes—and chose to do what you know I despise."

[13] Therefore, this is what the Sovereign Lord says: "You will starve, but my servants will eat. You will be thirsty, but they will drink. You will be sad and ashamed, but they will rejoice. [14] You will cry in sorrow and despair, while my servants sing for joy. [15] Your name will be a curse word among my people, for the Sovereign Lord will destroy you and call his true servants by another name. [16] All who invoke a blessing or take an oath will do so by the God of truth. For I will put aside my anger and forget the evil of earlier days.

[17] "Look! I am creating new heavens and a new earth—so wonderful that no one will even think about the old ones anymore.

[18] Be glad; rejoice forever in my creation! And look! I will create Jerusalem as a place of happiness. Her people will be a source of joy. [19] I will rejoice in Jerusalem and delight in my people. And the sound of weeping and crying will be heard no more.

[20] "No longer will babies die when only a few days old. No longer will adults die before they have lived a full life. No longer will people be considered old at one hundred! Only sinners will die that young! [21] In those days, people will live in the houses they build and eat the fruit of their own vineyards. [22] It will not be like the past, when invaders took the houses and confiscated the vineyards. For my people will live as long as trees and will have time to enjoy their hard-won gains. [23] They will not work in vain, and their children will not be doomed to misfortune. For they are people blessed by the Lord, and their children, too, will be blessed. [24] I will answer them before they even call to me. While they are still talking to me about their needs, I will go ahead and answer their prayers! [25] The wolf and lamb will feed together. The lion will eat straw like the ox. Poisonous snakes will strike no more. In those days, no one will be hurt or destroyed on my holy mountain. I, the Lord, have spoken!"

[66:1] This is what the Lord says: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Could you ever build me a temple as good as that? Could you build a dwelling place for me? [2] My hands have made both heaven and earth, and they are mine. I, the Lord, have spoken!

"I will bless those who have humble and contrite hearts, who tremble at my word. [3] But those who choose their own ways, delighting in their sins, are cursed. Their offerings will not be accepted. When such people sacrifice an ox, it is no more acceptable than a human sacrifice. When they sacrifice a lamb or bring an offering of grain, it is as bad as putting a dog or the blood of a pig on the altar! When they burn incense, it is as if they had blessed an idol. [4] I will send great troubles against them—all the things they feared. For when I called, they did not answer. When I spoke, they did not listen. They deliberately sinned—before my very eyes—and chose to do what they know I despise."

[5] Hear this message from the Lord, and tremble at his words: "Your close relatives hate you and throw you out for being loyal to my name.'Let the Lord be honored!' they scoff. 'Be joyful in him!' But they will be put to shame. [6] What is all the commotion in the city? What is that terrible noise from the Temple? It is the voice of the Lord taking vengeance against his enemies.

[7] "Before the birth pains even begin, Jerusalem gives birth to a son. [8] Who has ever seen or heard of anything as strange as this? Has a nation ever been born in a single day? Has a country ever come forth in a mere moment? But by the time Jerusalem's birth pains begin, the baby will be born; the nation will come forth. [9] Would I ever bring this nation to the point of birth and then not deliver it?" asks the Lord. "No! I would never keep this nation from being born," says your God.

[10] "Rejoice with Jerusalem! Be glad with her, all you who love her and mourn for her. [11] Delight in Jerusalem! Drink deeply of her glory even as an infant drinks at its mother's generous breasts. [12] Peace and prosperity will overflow Jerusalem like a river," says the Lord. "The wealth of the nations will flow to her. Her children will be nursed at her breasts, carried in her arms, and treated with love. [13] I will comfort you there as a child is comforted by its mother."

[14] When you see these things, your heart will rejoice. Vigorous health will be yours! Everyone will see the good hand of the Lord on his people—and his anger against his enemies.

[15] See, the Lord is coming with fire, and his swift chariots of destruction roar like a whirlwind. He will bring punishment with the fury of his anger and the flaming fire of his hot rebuke. [16] The Lord will punish the world by fire and by his sword, and many will be killed by the Lord.

[17] "Those who 'purify' themselves in a sacred garden, feasting on pork and rats and other forbidden meats, will come to a terrible end," says the Lord. [18] "I can see what they are doing, and I know what they are thinking. So I will gather all nations and peoples together, and they will see my glory. [19] I will perform a sign among them. And I will send those who survive to be messengers to the nations—to Tarshish, to the Libyans and Lydians (who are famous as archers), to Tubal and Greece, and to all the lands beyond the sea that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory. There they will declare my glory to the nations. [20] They will bring the remnant of your people back from every nation. They will bring them to my holy mountain in Jerusalem as an offering to the Lord. They will ride on horses, in chariots and wagons, and on mules and camels," says the Lord. [21] "And I will appoint some of those who return to be my priests and Levites. I, the Lord, have spoken!

[22] "As surely as my new heavens and earth will remain, so will you always be my people, with a name that will never disappear," says the Lord. [23] "All humanity will come to worship me from week to week and from month to month. [24] And as they go out, they will see the dead bodies of those who have rebelled against me. For the worms that devour them will never die, and the fire that burns them will never go out. All who pass by will view them with utter horror."

## **MEGATHEMES**

### **THEME: Holiness**

#### **EXPLANATION:**

God is highly exalted above all his creatures. His moral perfection stands in contrast to evil people and nations. God is perfect and sinless in all his motives and actions, so he is in perfect control of his power, judgment, love, and mercy. His holy nature is our yardstick for morality.

**IMPORTANCE:**

Because God is without sin, he alone can help us with our sin. It is only right that we regard him as supreme in power and moral perfection. We must never treat God as common or ordinary. He alone deserves our devotion and praise. He is always truthful, fair, and just.

**THEME: Punishment****EXPLANATION:**

Because God is holy, he requires his people to treat others justly. He promised to punish Israel, Judah, and other nations for faithless immorality and idolatry. True faith had degenerated into national pride and empty religious rituals.

**IMPORTANCE:**

We must trust in God alone and fulfill his commands. We cannot forsake justice nor give in to selfishness. If we harden our hearts against his message, punishment will surely come to us.

**THEME: Salvation****EXPLANATION:**

Because God's judgment is coming, we need a Savior. No man or nation can be saved without God's help. Christ's perfect sacrifice for our sins is foretold and portrayed in Isaiah. All who trust God can be freed from their sin and restored to him.

**IMPORTANCE:**

Christ died to save us from our sin. We cannot save ourselves. He is willing to save all those who turn from their sin and come to him. Salvation is from God alone. No amount of good works can earn it.

**THEME: Messiah****EXPLANATION:**

God will send the Messiah to save his people. He will set up his own kingdom as the faithful Prince of Peace who rules with righteousness. He will come as sovereign Lord, but he will do so as a servant who will die to take away sins.

**IMPORTANCE:**

Our trust must be in the Messiah, not in ourselves or in any nation or power. There is no hope unless we believe in him. Trust Christ fully and let him rule in your life as your sovereign Lord.

**THEME: Hope****EXPLANATION:**

God promises comfort, deliverance, and restoration in his future kingdom. The Messiah will rule over his faithful followers in the age to come. Hope is possible because Christ is coming.

**IMPORTANCE:**

We can be refreshed because there is compassion for those who repent. No matter how bleak our situation or how evil the world is, we must continue to be God's faithful people who hope for his return.

## TIMELINE

Amos becomes a prophet 760 B.C.  
Hosea becomes a prophet 753  
Micah becomes a prophet 742  
Isaiah becomes a prophet 740  
Ahaz becomes king of Judah 735  
Hoshea becomes king of Israel 732  
Israel falls to the Assyrians 722  
Hezekiah becomes king of Judah 715  
Sennacherib surrounds Jerusalem 701  
Manasseh becomes king of Judah 697  
Isaiah's ministry ends 681  
Josiah becomes king of Judah 640

**An invitation is given to open your heart's door.**

**Rev. 3:20**

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

**To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:**

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: Living Bible Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print