

Isaiah

1 ¹ This is the vision that Isaiah, son of Amoz, saw about Judah and Jerusalem in the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

² Heavens, listen! Earth, pay attention! For the Lord has spoken!^a I brought up children, I cared for them, but they have rebelled against me. ³ An ox knows its owner, and a donkey knows its feeding trough; but my people don't know me, they don't understand me.

⁴ What a sinful nation—a people carrying such a load of guilt, an evil generation, corrupt children! They have abandoned the Lord. They have despised Israel's Holy One. They have become strangers. They have gone backwards. ⁵ Are you wanting to be punished? Are you going to continue to rebel? The whole of your head is damaged, and your heart is totally giving out. ⁶ You're injured from head to toe, bruised and sore, with open wounds that haven't been cleaned or bandaged or treated with olive oil.

⁷ Your country has been devastated, your towns burned down, your fields stripped bare by foreigners right in front of you, as they turn it all into a wasteland. ⁸ The daughter of Zion is left like a shack in a vineyard, like a hut in a cucumber field, like a city under attack. ⁹ If the Lord Almighty hadn't let a few of us survive, we would have become like Sodom and Gomorrah.

¹⁰ Listen to what the Lord has to say, you rulers of Sodom! Pay attention to the instructions of our God, you people of Gomorrah!

¹¹ What use are all your many sacrifices to me? asks the Lord. I am sick and tired of your burnt offerings of rams and the fat of sacrificial animals. I don't delight in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats! ¹² When you come to appear before me in worship, who asked you to proudly tramp around my courts? ¹³ Don't bring me any more meaningless offerings; your incense is offensive to me. Your

^a**1:2.** Since the prophet is speaking for the Lord, it is not always easy to determine exactly who is speaking. This version therefore does not use quotation marks in these circumstances, as it can be rather arbitrary to determine where the direct “quotation” begins and ends. Only when it is helpful and explicit are quotation marks used in prophetic material, since all prophets spoke as directed by God.

new moon festivals and Sabbath observations and your calling of special religious meetings—I can't stand them because they're evil, as are your solemn assemblies. ¹⁴ I detest your new moon and yearly festivals with my whole being! They've become just a burden to me—I can't bear them anymore!

¹⁵ When you hold up your hands to me in prayer, I'll look away. Even though you pray many prayers, I won't pay attention to them, because your hands are full of blood.^b ¹⁶ Wash yourselves and clean yourselves up. Get rid of your sins—I don't want to see them! Stop doing evil! ¹⁷ Learn to do good; strive for justice, condemn those who oppress others; support the rights of orphans, take up cases to defend widows.

¹⁸ Come on, let's argue this out, says the Lord. Even though your sins are like scarlet, they will become white like snow. Even though they are red like crimson, they will become like wool. ¹⁹ If you really want this, and if you do as you're told, then you yourselves will eat the best things that the land produces.^c ²⁰ But if you are defiant, and if you are rebellious, you'll be killed by the sword. This is what the Lord has declared!

²¹ The city that used to be faithful has turned into a prostitute! Once she operated on principles of justice and followed what was right, but now only murderers live there. ²² Your silver has become worthless waste; you wine has been watered down. ²³ Your leaders are rebels, friends of thieves. They all love bribes and want to get kickbacks. They don't defend the rights of orphans, and refuse to take cases to help widows.

²⁴ So this is what the Lord says, the Lord Almighty, the Mighty One of Israel: Ha! I will take satisfaction in punishing my enemies, by paying back those who hate me! ²⁵ I will turn against you. I will refine you in a furnace, removing all impurities. ²⁶ I will give you good leaders as you used to have before, wise counselors as you had in the beginning. After that you will once again be called the City of Integrity, the Faithful City.

^b1:15. Meaning they are guilty of committing violence, even murder.

^c1:19. “You yourselves will eat all the good things the land produces”: this means that there will be peace in the country—no invaders would come to steal the crops etc.

²⁷ Zion will be rescued by justice, those who repent by doing right.
²⁸ But rebels and sinners will be destroyed together, and those who abandon the Lord will die.

²⁹ You will be ashamed about how you enjoyed your pagan worship among the oak trees; you will be embarrassed because you chose the pleasure gardens of idols. ³⁰ As a result you will become like an oak whose leaves have withered, a dried-out garden that has no water. ³¹ Your strong people will become like tinder, and their work will become like a spark. They will burn together, and nobody will be able to put out the flames.

2 ¹ This is the vision that Isaiah, son of Amoz, saw about Judah and Jerusalem. ² In the last days the mountain where the Lord's Temple stands will be recognized as the highest of all mountains, rising above other hills. Many from the other nations will travel to it. ³ People will come and say, "Let's go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the Temple of the God of Jacob. There God will teach us his ways and we will follow his directions."^d God's teachings will spread out from Zion, his word from Jerusalem."

⁴ The Lord will decide the cases of the nations; he will settle arguments between nations. They will hammer their swords and turn them into plough blades, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nations will not fight against each other anymore; they will no longer learn methods of warfare.

⁵ Come, you Israelites,^e let's walk in the Lord's light. ⁶ For you, Lord, have given up on your people the Israelites, because they have adopted pagan practices from the East, they use spells like the Philistines, and make friends with foreigners.^f ⁷ Their country is full of silver and gold, and endless wealth. Their land is full of horses; and they have an endless amount of chariots. ⁸ Their country is full of idols; they bow down and worship what they have made themselves—produced by their own hands! ⁹ These people will be brought down and humiliated—Lord, don't forgive them!

¹⁰ Run away into rock caves, hide underground from the terrifying presence of the Lord, from the glory of his majesty. ¹¹ Those who

^d2:3. Literally, "walk in his paths."

^e2:5. Literally, "house of Jacob."

^f2:6. "Make friends with foreigners": Hebrew uncertain, probably "shake hands with children of foreigners."

look with arrogance will be brought low; those who are proud will be humbled. On that day only the Lord will be lifted high. ¹² The Lord has set aside a day when he will deal with the proud and arrogant. He will end all self-glorification, bringing it down. ¹³ He will cut down the cedars of Lebanon, tall and high, and all the great oaks of Bashan, ¹⁴ He will bring down the tall mountains and the high hills. ¹⁵ He will tear down every high tower and every defensive wall. ¹⁶ He will wipe out all the commercial ships of Tarshish as well as the pleasure vessels. ¹⁷ The arrogant will be humbled; the proud will be brought low. On that day only the Lord will be lifted high. ¹⁸ Idols will completely vanish away.

¹⁹ People will run away into rock caves and holes in the ground to try and hide from the terrifying presence of the Lord, from the glory of his majesty, when he arrives to shake the earth. ²⁰ On that day the people will take the idols of silver and gold that they made to worship and throw them away to the rats^g and the bats. ²¹ They will run to cracks in the rocks and gaps on the cliffs to try and hide from the terrifying presence of the Lord, from the glory of his majesty, when he arrives to shake the earth.

²² Don't bother trusting human beings who only live for a while.^h How much do they count?

3 ¹ Take a look! The Lord, the Lord Almighty, is going to take away from Jerusalem and from Judah everything they rely on—all their stocks of food and all means of supplying water, ² their strong fighters and soldiers, leaders and prophets, fortune-tellers and elders, ³ army captains, state officials, counselors, craftsmen, masters of magic, and experts in the occult. ⁴ I will give them boys as their leaders who will rule over them in childish ways. ⁵ People will mistreat one another, person against person, neighbor against neighbor; the young will assault the old, and the dregs of society will attack those who are reputable.

⁶ A man will grab hold of one of his brothers in their father's house, and tell him, “You've got a coat, you can be our leader! Take over the running of this pile of ruins!”

^g2:20. Literally a “dig pit,” so it can refer to any burrowing animal.

^h2:22. “Only live for a while”: literally, “who have breath in their nostrils.”

⁷ But immediately his brother will shout back, “No, not me! I can't take care of this family's problems. In my house I don't have food or clothes. Don't put me in charge as your leader!”

⁸ For Jerusalem has collapsed and Judah has fallen because of what they said and did in opposition to the Lord, rebelling right in front of him. ⁹ The look on their faces proves what they've done, proclaiming their sin just like Sodom—they don't even bother to try and hide it! Tragedy is coming to them! They have brought disaster down upon themselves.

¹⁰ Tell those who live right that they will be fine, for they will be happy to receive the reward for what they have done.ⁱ ¹¹ But tragedy comes to the wicked, for what they did will be done to them.

¹² Leaders who act in childish ways mistreat my people; women rule over them. My people, your leaders are misleading you, confusing you about which way to go. ¹³ The Lord stands up to prosecute his case. The Lord stands up to judge the people. ¹⁴ The Lord comes to give his judgment against the elders and leaders of his people: You are the ones who have destroyed my vineyard; your houses are full with everything you've stolen from the poor. ¹⁵ Why have you crushed my people? Why have you ground the faces of the poor into the dirt? the Lord Almighty demands to know.

¹⁶ The Lord says, The women of Zion are so conceited, walking with their heads held high, giving flirty glances, tripping along with their ankle bracelets jingling. ¹⁷ So the Lord will make their heads full of scabs, and the Lord will expose their private parts. ¹⁸ At that time the Lord will remove their fine ornaments: ankle bracelets, headbands, crescent necklaces, ¹⁹ pendant earrings, bracelets, veils, ²⁰ headdresses, bangles, sashes, perfume holders, lucky charms, ²¹ rings, nose rings, ²² festival clothes, gowns, cloaks, handbags, ²³ hand mirrors, fine linen underwear, head wraps, and shawls.

²⁴ What will happen is that instead of smelling of perfume, she will stink. Instead of wearing a sash, she will be tied with a rope. Instead of styled hair, she will be bald. Instead of fine clothes, she will wear sackcloth. Instead of looking beautiful, she will be

ⁱ3:10. “They will be happy to receive the reward for what they have done”: literally, “they will eat the fruit of their deeds.”

shamed.^j ²⁵ Your men will be killed by the sword; your soldiers will die in battle. ²⁶ The gates of Zion will cry and mourn. The city will be like a banished woman sitting on the ground.

4 ¹ At that time seven women will grab hold of one man and tell him, “We’ll eat our own food and we can provide our own clothes. Just let us take your name by being married to you.^k Please take away our disgrace!”

² But at that time, the “branch of the Lord”^l will be attractive and glorious; the fruit the land produces will be the pride and glory of the survivors who are left in Israel. ³ Everyone who remains in Zion will be called holy—all of those who are recorded among the living in Jerusalem— ⁴ once the Lord has washed away the excrement of the daughters of Zion, and cleaned the bloodstains from Jerusalem by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of fire.

⁵ Then the Lord will create over the whole of Mount Zion and over the assembly of those who meet there a cloud of smoke during the day and a blazing flame of fire during night—over everything there will be this glorious canopy. ⁶ It will provide a place to stay in the shade of the daytime heat, and a shelter to hide from storm and rain.

5 ¹ Let me sing a song for my love, about his vineyard. My love owned a vineyard on a productive hill. ² He dug it over, cleared the ground of stones, and planted it with the very best vines. In the middle of it he built a watchtower, and he also cut out a winepress from the rock. Then he waited for a good harvest of grapes, but it only produced wild, sour grapes.

³ “Now, you people who live in Jerusalem and Judah, please judge between me and my vineyard. ⁴ What more could I have done for my vineyard than I’ve already done? When I looked for sweet grapes, why did it only produce sour ones?”

⁵ So let me tell you what I’m going to do to my vineyard. I’ll remove its hedge, and it will be destroyed. I’ll tear down its wall, and it will be trampled underfoot. ⁶ I’ll turn it into a wasteland. It won’t be pruned or weeded—it will be overgrown with brambles and thorns. I’ll order the clouds not to rain on it.”

^j3:24. “Shamed”: Dead Sea Scroll reading rather than the often assumed reading of “branded.”

^k4:1. “By being married to you”: supplied for clarity.

^l4:2. Referring to the coming Messiah.

⁷ Israel is the vineyard of the Lord Almighty, and the people of Judah are the plants in his garden that made him happy. Yet while he hoped for justice, he only saw injustice; he hoped people would live right, but he only heard the cries of those who were suffering.

⁸ Tragedy is coming to you who buy house upon house and field upon field, joining them all together until no one else has anywhere to live and you live alone in the land. ⁹ I heard the Lord Almighty declare: You can be sure that many houses are destined to become ruins, and beautiful mansions destined to become uninhabited. ¹⁰ Ten acres of vineyard will only produce a six gallons of wine, and a measure of seed only a tenth of that in grain.^m

¹¹ Tragedy is coming to you who get up early in the morning wanting a drink, and who stay up late drinking wine until you're drunk. ¹² At their feasts you have lyres and harps, tambourines and flutes, and wine, but you don't ever consider what the Lord is doing, and you don't recognize his help. ¹³ As a result my people will be exiled for their lack of understanding.ⁿ Their honored leaders will starve, and the crowds will be dying of thirst. ¹⁴ The grave's appetite increases, its mouth opens wide, and Jerusalem's nobility and the masses will go down into it, along with the rowdy, drunken mobs. ¹⁵ Everyone will be brought down, everyone will be humbled; the proud will lower their eyes in humiliation.

¹⁶ But the Lord Almighty will be vindicated because he does what is right; the holy God will be shown to be holy because of his goodness. ¹⁷ Lambs will graze as in their own pasture; fattened livestock and goats will feed among the ruins of the rich.^o

¹⁸ Tragedy is coming to you who pull along your sins behind you with iniquity with cords made of lies, and pulling with ropes a cartful of wickedness. ¹⁹ You are among the people who say, “God should hurry up! Why doesn't God get a move on with what he's doing so we can see it? Why doesn't the Holy One of Israel execute his plan? Let's see it happen so we can understand what it is!”

²⁰ Tragedy is coming to you who say evil is good, and good is evil; who turn darkness into light and light into darkness; who make bitter sweet, and sweet bitter.

^m5:10. Literally, “a homer of seed will only produce an ephah of grain.”

ⁿ5:13. “For their lack of understanding”: or “unawares.”

^o5:17. Septuagint reading.

²¹ Tragedy is coming to you who are wise in your own eyes and think you're so clever.

²² Tragedy is coming to you who are wine-drinking champions, and experts at mixing alcoholic drinks; ²³ you who set the guilty free for a bribe, and yet deny justice to the innocent. ²⁴ In the same way fire burns up stubble and dry grass falls down in the flames, so their roots will decay and their flowers disintegrate into dust. For they have rejected the law of the Lord Almighty, and have treated with contempt what the Holy One of Israel has said. ²⁵ That's why the Lord burns with anger^p against his people. He has lifted up his hand and hit them, shaking the mountains, and leaving their corpses lying like refuse in the streets. Despite all this, his anger is not finished, and his hand is still lifted up.

²⁶ He will send a signal to the distant nations, and will whistle for those living at the ends of the earth. See how quickly they respond, how speedily they come! ²⁷ None of them gets tired or stumbles; none of them rests or sleeps. No belt comes loose, and no sandal strap breaks. ²⁸ Their arrows are already sharpened, and all their bows have been strung. The hooves of their horses are hard as flint; their chariot wheels spin like a whirlwind. ²⁹ They roar like lions, like young lions. They growl, and pounce on their prey. They drag it off so it can't be rescued. ³⁰ At that time they will roar over their prey like the roaring of the sea. Anyone who looks out over the land will see only darkness and distress—even the sunlight will be darkened by clouds.

6¹ In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated in majesty on a high throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple. ² Seraphim^q stood above him, and each of them had six wings: They used two wings to cover their faces, two to cover their feet, and two to fly. ³ They were calling out to one another: Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; his glory fills the whole earth. ⁴ The

P5:25. There are many references to the Lord's anger in Isaiah, as in other Old Testament books. This should not be equated to human anger which is often “out of control” and vindictive. The Lord's anger is an expression of his extreme displeasure, couched in human language so we can understand to some extent the impact of human sin on the Lord. Nor is it a question of God taking personal offense, but rather his concern as to what continued sin does to us, and a desire to do all he can to heal the damage sin causes.

q6:2. Literally, “shining ones.”

sound of their shouts made the doorposts and doorsteps shake, and the Temple was filled with smoke.

⁵ I cried out, “I’m doomed! I’m going to die because I’m a man of unclean lips,^f and I live among a people of unclean lips, for I’ve seen the King, the Lord Almighty!”

⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew over to me. He was holding a glowing coal that he had picked up with tongs from the altar. ⁷ He touched me on my mouth with it and told me, “Look! This has touched your lips, so now your guilt is taken away and your sin is forgiven.”

⁸ Then I heard the Lord asking, “Who shall I send? Who will go and speak^s for us?” So I said, “I’m here! Please send me!”

⁹ He replied, “Go and tell this people: ‘Keep on listening, but never understanding. Keep on seeing, but never comprehending.’ ¹⁰ Make the minds of this people insensitive; make their ears deaf and shut their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their minds, and repent and be healed.”

¹¹ Then I asked, “How long will this last, Lord?”

He replied, “Until towns are ruined and empty, houses are abandoned, and the land is devastated and destroyed; ¹² until the Lord sends the people far away and the country is totally deserted. ¹³ Even though a tenth of the population remains in the land, it will be destroyed again. But in the same way as the terebinth and oak trees leave stumps when they’re cut down, so the holy seed will remain as stump.”

7 ¹ It was during the reign of Ahaz son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin, king of Aram, marched to attack Jerusalem. Pekah, son of Remaliah, king of Israel, joined in the attack, but they couldn’t conquer the city.

² When the royal family of Judah was told,^t “Aram and Ephraim have an alliance,” Ahaz and his people were terrified and they shook like trees in the forest tossed about by the wind.

³ Then the Lord told Isaiah, “Take your son Shear-jashub^u with you and go and meet Ahaz. He’ll be at the end of the aqueduct of the

^f6:5. “Unclean lips”: symbolizing imperfection.

^s6:8. “And speak”: supplied for clarity.

^t7:2. “The royal family of Judah”: literally, “the house of David.” Also in verse 13.

^u7:3. His name means “a remnant shall return,”

upper pool, by the road to the laundry field. ⁴ Tell him, ‘Calm down and keep quiet. Don't be afraid or scared over a couple of smoldering bits of firewood, over the burning anger of Rezin and Aram, and of Remaliah's son. ⁵ Aram has plotted to destroy you together with Ephraim and Remaliah's son saying, ⁶ Let's go and attack Judah! We'll terrorize it and conquer it for ourselves, and make Tabeel's son its king.’”

⁷ But this is what the Lord God says, “This plan won't materialize—it just won't happen! ⁸ For the head of Aram is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin.^v In addition, within sixty-five years Israel^w as a nation will be destroyed. ⁹ The head of Israel is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If you don't trust in me, then you won't survive.”^x

¹⁰ Later the Lord sent another message to Ahaz, ¹¹ “Ask the Lord your God for a sign, whether as deep as where people are buried or as high as heaven.”

¹² “No, I'm not going to ask,” Ahaz replied. “I refuse to put the Lord to the test.”

¹³ Then Isaiah said, “Listen, royal family of Judah! Isn't it enough for you to wear people out? Do you have to wear my God out too?”

¹⁴ This is why the Lord himself is going to give you a sign. Look! The virgin^y will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and she will call him Immanuel.^z ¹⁵ He will eat curds and honey until the time he knows to refuse evil and choose the good. ¹⁶ For before the boy knows to refuse evil and choose the good, the land of the two kings^a you're afraid of will be deserted. ¹⁷ The Lord will make you,

^v7:8. Suggesting that the plan was dependent merely on the ambition of one man. Similarly in following verse regarding Remaliah's son.

^w7:8. “Israel”: literally, “Ephraim,” the most prominent tribe of Israel. Also in the following verse.

^x7:9. “If you don't trust in me, then you won't survive.” There is a play on words in Hebrew. “In me”: supplied for clarity.

^y7:14. “Virgin”: or “young woman.” The word used here is inclusive of both meanings. There is however a Hebrew word that exclusively means virgin but it is not used here. Matthew's reapplication of this prophecy should not blind us to its immediate application in the time of Ahaz. In this connection the rest of the prophecy should not be disregarded.

^z7:14. Immanuel means “God with us.”

^a7:16. Referring to king of Aram and the king of Israel.

your people, and the royal family experience a time unlike anything since the day Ephraim split from Judah. He will bring the king of Assyria to attack you!”^b

¹⁸ At that time the Lord will whistle to call flies from the distant rivers of Egypt and bees from the country of Assyria.^c ¹⁹ They will all come and descend on the steep valleys and rock crevices, on all the thorn bushes and waterholes.

²⁰ At that time the Lord will use a razor hired from beyond the Euphrates River, the king of Assyria, to shave you from head to toe, including your beards.

²¹ At that time a someone who manages to keep a young cow and two sheep alive ²² will eat curds, because they produce so much milk—for everyone who survives in the land will eat curds and honey.

²³ At that time everywhere that once had a thousand vines worth a thousand shekels will only have brambles and thorns. ²⁴ People will go hunting there with bows and arrows because the land will be covered with brambles and thorns. ²⁵ In fact, all the hills that were once tilled by the hoe you won't want to go to because you'll worry about the brambles and thorns there. They'll just be where cattle are let loose and where sheep roam.

8 ¹ Then the Lord told me, “Get a large tablet and write on it in with an ordinary pen, ‘Maher-shalal-hash-baz.’^d ² I will need Uriah the priest and Zechariah, son of Jeberekiah, to be my trustworthy witnesses.”

³ Then I slept with my wife^e the prophetess, and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. The Lord told me, “Call him Maher-shalal-hash-baz. ⁴ For even before the boy knows how to say ‘Daddy’ or ‘Mommy,’ the king of Assyria will carry off Damascus’ wealth and Samaria’s possessions.”

⁵ Then the Lord spoke to me again, saying, ⁶ “Because this people has rejected the waters of Shiloah that gently flow and instead

^b7:17. “To attack you.” Supplied for clarity.

^c7:18. Obviously referring to the kings of Egypt and Assyria. Their armies are referenced in the next verse.

^d8:1. Meaning “quick the looting, swift the plunder.”

^e8:3. “My wife”: supplied for clarity.

have rejoiced with Rezin and Remaliah's son,^{f 7} the Lord is going to bring the powerful floodwaters of the Euphrates River against them—the king of Assyria with all his glorious army. It will flood all its channels and overflow all its banks.⁸ It will sweep on into Judah, overflowing and flooding through, reaching up to the neck. Like outspread wings it will engulf the whole of your land, Immanuel!

⁹ Pay attention,^g you nations, and be smashed! Listen, all you distant lands, get ready, but you will be smashed. Get ready, but you will be smashed.¹⁰ You can plan your strategy, but it will be foiled; you can say what you're intending, but it won't happen, for God is with us.”

¹¹ For this is what the Lord told me, holding me with a strong hand, instructing me not to follow the way of this people. He said,¹² Don't call a conspiracy everything that these people call a conspiracy. Don't fear what they fear. Don't be overawed!¹³ The Lord Almighty is the one you should see as holy. He is the one you should fear, he is the one you should be in awe of.¹⁴ He will be a sanctuary for you. But to the royal families of both Israel and Judah he will be a stone they trip over and a rock that makes them stumble, a trap and a snare to the people who live in Jerusalem.¹⁵ Many people will stumble over them. They will fall and be broken. They will be trapped and caught.¹⁶ Safeguard this testimony, seal these instructions—they are for my disciples.

¹⁷ I will wait for the Lord, the one who is hiding his face from Jacob's descendants. I will wait in hope for him.

¹⁸ Look, I'm here, together with the children the Lord has given me. They are signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord Almighty, who lives on Mount Zion.

¹⁹ When someone suggests to you, “Go and ask mediums and spiritists who whisper and mutter;” shouldn't people ask their God? Why should they ask the dead on behalf of the living?²⁰ Go and examine God's law and his instructions! If what they say doesn't

^f**8:6.** It is unclear from the Hebrew exactly why the people are rejoicing with Rezin and Remaliah's son.

^g**8:9.** “Pay attention.” There is much debate over the meaning of the Hebrew word here. Possibilities include: raise the war cry, huddle together, be broken, make an uproar, rage, know etc.

correspond with God's word, there will be no dawn for them.^h

²¹ They will wander round the country, depressed and hungry. When they are starving they will become furious, and looking up they will curse their king and their God. ²² Then they will look towards the earth and see only misery and gloom and agonizing depression, and they will be thrown out into the darkness.

9¹ Even so, there will be no more darkness for those who suffered. In the past he humiliated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will bring honor to Galilee of the foreigners that is on the route that leads from Jordan to the sea.

² People walking in the dark will see a bright light; a light will shine on those living in a land of total darkness. ³ You will make the nation grow enormously, and will make it extremely happy.ⁱ The people will celebrate before you as people celebrate at harvest time, as soldiers celebrate when dividing up what has been looted. ⁴ For you will smash the yoke that burdens them down, the bar across their shoulders, and the oppressors' rod used to beat them just as you did when you defeated the Midianite army. ⁵ For every army boot that noisily trampled people down, and every uniform soaked in blood—they are going to be burned, fuel for the fire.

⁶ For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us. He will bear the responsibility to rule. He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ His rule and the peace he brings know no limits and will never come to an end. He will sit on David's throne and rule his kingdom, making it secure. He will operate from principles of justice and goodness, from the time he begins his rule and for all eternity. The Lord Almighty is determined to make this happen.

⁸ The Lord has sent a message directed against Jacob, and its consequences will fall upon Israel. ⁹ All the people will soon realize it—Ephraim and the people who live in Samaria. Proudly and arrogantly they say, ¹⁰“The brick buildings have collapsed, but we

^h8:20. The word “God” is not in the Hebrew text but is supplied here for clarity and emphasis.

ⁱ9:3. The verbs in this section (9:2-7) are in the past tense, but are translated here in the future tense, since this is an example of the “prophetic perfect” tense in which future actions are considered so definite they are stated as if they had already happened.

will rebuild them with dressed stone; the sycamore fig trees have been cut down, but we will replace them with cedars.”

¹¹ But the Lord has strengthened Rezin's enemies^j against Israel^k and has encouraged them. ¹² Arameans from the east and Philistines from the west have greedily eaten swallowed Israel up. In all of this he is still angry and his hand is still raised.¹

¹³ But the people didn't return to the one who punished them; they didn't come to worship the Lord Almighty. ¹⁴ So in just a single day the Lord will chop off Israel's head and tail, palm branch and reed. ¹⁵ Elders and honorable people are the head, and prophets who teach lies are the tail. ¹⁶ The people's leaders have misled them; those who were guided by them are confused. ¹⁷ As a result the Lord isn't pleased with their young men, he has no compassion for their orphans and widows, because all of them are hypocrites and do what's evil—they all talk stupidly. In all of this he is still angry and his hand is still raised.

¹⁸ For wickedness blazes like a fire, burning up brambles and thorns, setting the forest on fire, sending a column of smoke swirling upwards. ¹⁹ The anger of the Lord Almighty burns the land. People are like fuel for the fire, and nobody tries to help anyone else.

²⁰ People destroy^m others on the right, yet they're still hungry for more; people destroy others on the left, but they're still not satisfied. In the end they even destroy themselves!ⁿ ²¹ Manasseh destroys Ephraim, and Ephraim destroys Manasseh. Together they turn to destroy Judah. In all of this he is still angry and his hand is still raised.

10 ¹ Tragedy is coming to those who pass evil decrees and who write laws to harm people. ² They pervert the legal rights of the needy, and rob justice from the poor of my people. They steal from widows and cheat orphans. ³ What are you going to do on the day you're punished, when disaster falls on you from far away? Who are you going to run to so you can get help? Where are you going to

^j9:11. Rezin's enemies would be the Assyrians.

^k9:11. “Israel”: supplied for clarity.

^l9:12. Meaning that in these events God is still displaying his anger and it is not over yet. Also in verses 17 and 21.

^m9:20. “Destroy”: literally, “devour.”

ⁿ9:20. “Destroy themselves”: literally, “devour the flesh of their own arm.”

leave all your wealth? ⁴ All you'll be able to do is to bow down as prisoners, or lie among the dead! In all of this he is still angry and his hand is still raised.

⁵ Tragedy is coming to the Assyrians, even though the rod they use represents my anger and the stick they hold in their hands represents my fury! ⁶ I am sending the Assyrians against a nation that has given up on its God, against a people that make me angry. I order the Assyrians to loot them, to take their possessions, and to trample them down like mud in the street.

⁷ But this isn't what is behind the thinking of the king of Assyria. This isn't the plan he has in mind. What he wants to do is to destroy and eliminate many nations. ⁸ He says: "All my commanders are kings! ⁹ We conquered Calno like we did Carchemish; Hamath like Arpad; Samaria like Damascus. ¹⁰ I was the one who conquered these kingdoms along with the idols of their gods. These kingdoms had images of their gods that were better than those of Jerusalem and Samaria. ¹¹ Why shouldn't I do to Jerusalem and her idols just what I did to Samaria and her idols?"^o

¹² Once the Lord has finished all his work against Mount Zion and Jerusalem, he^p will punish the king of Assyria for his terrible arrogance and for the conceited look in his eyes.

¹³ For the king of Assyria says: "I have done this in my own strength. It was through my wisdom, because I'm clever. I have wiped out the boundaries of nations and looted their treasures. Like a bull I knocked their rulers off their thrones. ¹⁴ Like robbing a bird's nest, I took the wealth of the nations. Like collecting abandoned eggs, I collected the whole the earth. There wasn't a fluttering wing or an open beak, not even a chirp!"

¹⁵ Does an ax say it's more important than the person swinging it? Does a saw boast that it's greater than the person sawing with it? It would be as if a rod waved the person holding it, or a walking stick lifted up a person—who certainly wasn't wood!

¹⁶ So the Lord, the Lord Almighty, will send a disease on the king of Assyria's strong warriors that will make them waste away; a flaming fire will be set under everything he's so proud of. ¹⁷ Israel's

^o10:11. Different words are used for idols/images but the meaning is basically the same.

^p10:12. "He": literally, "I."

light will become a fire, and his Holy One will become a flame. It will burn up his thorns and brambles in just one day. ¹⁸ It will totally destroy its splendid forests and orchards. Assyria will waste away, staggering off like someone sick. ¹⁹ The trees left in its forests will be so few that a child could count them.

²⁰ At that time those who are left in Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no longer trust in those who turn on them, but they will truly trust in the Lord, the Holy One of Israel. ²¹ A remnant will return, a remnant of Jacob will come back to the Mighty God. ²² Israel, even though your people are as numerous as sand on the seashore, only a remnant will return. The Lord has rightly decided to destroy his people. ²³ The Lord God Almighty has rightly decided to bring destruction throughout the whole country.

²⁴ So this is what the Lord, the Lord Almighty, says, My people living in Zion, don't be afraid of the Assyrians who beat you with rods and hit you with clubs, just like the Egyptians did. ²⁵ Very shortly I will stop being angry with you. Then I will turn my anger on them and I will destroy them.

²⁶ The Lord Almighty will lash them with a whip, just as he did when he attacked the Midianites at the rock of Oreb. He will hold up his rod over the sea, just as he did in Egypt. ²⁷ At that time he will remove the burden from your shoulders and the yoke from your neck. The yoke will be broken because of the anointing with oil.⁹

²⁸ The Assyrians came to Aiath, passed through Migron, and stored their supplies at Michmash. ²⁹ They cross the pass, saying, "We'll stay overnight at Geba." The people of Ramah tremble in fear; the inhabitants of Gibeah of Saul run away. ³⁰ Shout out a warning, people of Gallim! Pay attention, those living in Laishah! You people of Anathoth! ³¹ The people of Madmenah, are all running away. The inhabitants of Gebim are looking for somewhere safe. ³² Today the invaders stop at Nob, shaking their fists at the mountain of the Daughter of Zion, at the hill of Jerusalem.

⁹10:27. "Anointing with oil:" literally, "before the oil/fat." The meaning of this phrase is much debated. Some suggest that this means that Israel has symbolically grown so fat that the yoke no longer fits. Jewish tradition however associates it with the anointing of King Hezekiah, and some Christian writers have pointed to Christ as the Messiah, the "anointed one."

³³ Look how the Lord Almighty is going to chop off the branches with great force. The tall trees will be cut down, the proud trees will be brought crashing down.^r ³⁴ He will cut down the thick forest with an ax, and Lebanon^s will fall at the hand of the Mighty One.

11 ¹ A shoot will grow from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will produce fruit. ² The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him, which is Spirit of wisdom and understanding, a Spirit of advice and power, a Spirit of knowledge and awe of the Lord. ³ His happiness will be in giving reverence to the Lord. He will not judge by what he sees, and he will not make decisions based on what he hears. ⁴ Instead, he will judge the poor justly, and make decisions fairness on behalf of the destitute people of the earth. He will strike the earth when he pronounces judgment, and he will execute the wicked with just a word from his lips. ⁵ He will wear goodness like a sash and trustworthiness like a belt.

⁶ Wolves will live with lambs; leopards will lie down with young goats, calves and young lions and young livestock will be together, and a small child will lead them along. ⁷ Cows and bears will graze side by side; young lions will eat straw like cattle. ⁸ Babies will be able to play safely near snake holes, little children will be able to put their hands into a vipers' den. ⁹ Nothing will cause any harm or damage anywhere on my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord in the same way that water fills the sea.

¹⁰ At that time the root of Jesse will stand like a banner for the nations. Foreigners will come to him, and the place of where he lives will be glorious.

¹¹ At that time the Lord will act a second time^t to bring back the remnant of His people from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Ethiopia, Elam, Babylonia, Hamath, and from the Mediterranean islands. ¹² He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiled people of Israel; he will bring together the scattered people of Judah from the ends of the earth. ¹³ Ephraim's jealousy will disappear, and Judah's enemies will be destroyed; Ephraim won't be jealous of Judah, and Judah won't treat Ephraim as an enemy. ¹⁴ Together they will fly downhill

^r**10:33.** The prophecy now turns to judgment on the Assyrian invaders, who will be “cut down like trees.”

^s**10:34.** “Lebanon”: a symbolic term for Assyria, see for example Ezekiel 31:3.

^t**11:11.** “Second time”: The first time was the exodus from Egypt.

to attack the Philistines to the west; they will plunder the people of the east. They will defeat Edom and Moab, and the Ammonites will become their subjects. ¹⁵ The Lord will divide the Gulf of Suez;^u he will wave his hand over the Euphrates River creating a scorching wind. He will split into seven streams that people can cross easily on foot. ¹⁶ There will be a highway from Assyria for the remnant of his people that are left, just as there was for Israel when they left the land of Egypt.

12 ¹ At that time you will say, “I will praise you, Lord! Though you were angry with me, your anger is over, and now you comfort me. ² Look! God is my salvation! I will trust in him and I won't be afraid! For the Lord is my strength and song, and he has saved me!” ³ With great happiness you will take water from the well of salvation.

⁴ At that time you will say: “Praise the Lord, shout out his name! Tell the nations what he has done—let them know of his wonderful character! ⁵ Sing to the Lord for all the glorious things he's done—let the whole world know! ⁶ Shout loudly and sing for joy, you people of Zion, for the Holy One of Israel is great, and is among you.”

13 ¹ This is the message Isaiah, son of Amoz, received^v about Babylon.

² Set up a banner on a bare hilltop; shout out to them; wave your hand to encourage them to enter the palaces of princes.^w ³ I have ordered the ones I have chosen to attack; I have called my warriors to execute my furious judgment and to celebrate my triumph.

⁴ A noise comes from the mountains, sounding like that of a huge crowd! It's the roaring sound from the kingdoms, from nations gathering together! The Lord Almighty is calling up an army for war. ⁵ They are coming from distant lands, from beyond the far horizons—the Lord and the weapons of his fury—coming to destroy the whole country.

⁶ Howl in fear, for the day of the Lord is approaching—the time when the Almighty destroys. ⁷ Everyone's hands will fall limp, and everyone will lose their minds in panic. ⁸ They will be terrified; pain and anguish will seize them; they will suffer like a woman giving

^u11:15. “Gulf of Suez”: modern name. Literally, “the tongue of the sea of Egypt.”

^v13:1. Literally, “saw.”

^w13:2. “Palaces of princes”: literally, “gates of the nobles.”

birth. They will look in shock at each other, their faces burning in fear. ⁹ Look! The day of the Lord is coming—cruel, with fury and fierce anger—to devastate the land and to wipe out its sinners. ¹⁰ The stars in the constellations of heaven above will not shine. When the sun rises it will stay dark. The moon will give no light.

¹¹ I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their sin, says the Lord.^x I will put an end to the conceit of the arrogant, and I will humiliate tyrants and their pride. ¹² I will make people scarcer than pure gold, rarer than the gold of Ophir. ¹³ So I will shake the heavens and make the earth jump out of its place because of the fury of the Lord Almighty, at the time when his anger burns.

¹⁴ Like a gazelle being hunted, or like sheep without a shepherd, the Babylonians^y will return to their own people, they will run away to their own land. ¹⁵ Anyone who is captured will be stabbed to death; anyone who is caught will be killed by the sword. ¹⁶ Their little children will be dashed to pieces as they watch, their houses will be looted, and their wives will be raped.

¹⁷ I'm going to get the Medes to attack them, people who don't care about silver or gold. ¹⁸ Their bows will slaughter their young men; they will show no mercy to babies; they will have no pity on children. ¹⁹ Babylon, the most marvelous city of any kingdom, the greatest pride of the Babylonian people, will be demolished by God like Sodom and Gomorrah. ²⁰ No one will ever live in Babylon again. It will be deserted—no desert nomad will set up a tent there, no shepherd will bring a flock to rest there. ²¹ Only desert animals will make their homes there, and the ruined houses will be inhabited by wild dogs. Owls will live there, and wild goats will leap around. ²² Hyenas will howl in her fortresses and jackals in her lavish palaces. Babylon's time is coming soon—they will not last much longer.

14 ¹ But the Lord will be merciful to the descendants of Jacob. Once again he will choose Israel and he will bring them back to live once more in their own land. Foreigners will come and join them there, and they will unite with the descendants of Jacob. ² Nations will go with them and escort them to their own land. The foreigners who stay in the Lord's land will serve the Israelites. In

^x13:11. "Says the Lord." Supplied for clarity.

^y13:14. "The Babylonians": supplied for clarity.

this way the captors become their captives, and they rule over their former oppressors.

³ At that time the Lord will give you relief from your pain and trouble, and from the hard labor you were forced to do. ⁴ You will mock the king of Babylon, saying, “How your oppressive rule has been ended, and your insolence stopped! ⁵ The Lord has broken the rod of the wicked, the rulers' scepter. ⁶ You kept on furiously hitting foreign peoples without stopping, and aggressively ruled nations with unrestrained persecution. ⁷ Now the whole earth rests peacefully, and everyone starts celebrating! ⁸ The cypress and cedar trees are glad you're gone. They sing, ‘Since you were cut down no woodcutters are coming to cut us down!’

⁹ Those in the grave beneath are keen to meet you when you arrive. It wakes the spirits of the dead to welcome you, those of all the rulers of the earth. All the kings of the nations stand up from their thrones.^z ¹⁰ They will all speak up and tell you, ‘So you too are as weak as we are—you've become just like us! ¹¹ Your pride is now buried with you in the grave, along with the harp music you loved. Maggots are the bed you lie on, and worms are your blanket.’

¹² Morning star,^a son of the dawn, how you have fallen from heaven! Destroyer of nations, you have been cut down to the ground! ¹³ You said to yourself: ‘I will ascend to heaven. I will raise my throne above the stars of God. I will sit enthroned on the mountain of meeting, the summit of the northern mountain.^b ¹⁴ I will ascend to the high places above the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ ¹⁵ But you are dragged down to the grave, into the depths of the pit. ¹⁶ Those who see you will stare at you, examining you closely, asking, ‘Is this the man who shook the earth, who made kingdoms tremble? ¹⁷ Is this the one who turned the world into a desert, destroyed cities, and never let his prisoners return home?’

^z14:9. These verses are poetic, and not to be taken literally.

^a14:12. Literally, “shining one,” referring to the planet Venus whose rise in the sky promised the soon-coming dawn. In the Septuagint this was translated as “dawn bringer” which in Latin became “Lucifer,” (light bringer) which is the basis for the King James translation.

^b14:13. This fits with Babylonian mythology in which the gods were thought of as meeting on a mountain north of Babylon.

¹⁸ All the other kings of the nations lie in splendor in their great mausoleums. ¹⁹ But you are thrown out of your grave like a branch nobody wants, buried underneath the bodies of those killed by the sword. You are like a corpse trodden underfoot. You are tossed into a pit full of rocks— ²⁰ you will not be buried like those other kings^c because you destroyed your own land and killed your own people. The descendants of those who do evil will never survive. ²¹ Get ready to execute his sons because of their fathers^d sins. Don't let them take over the earth; don't let them fill the whole world with their cities.

²² I will come and attack them, declares the Lord Almighty. I will destroy everything: their reputation, those who remain, their children, and their descendants, says the Lord. ²³ I will make Babylon into a place for water birds^e and into marshland. I will sweep her away with the broom of destruction, declares the Lord Almighty.”

²⁴ The Lord Almighty has sworn an oath: It will be as I have planned. It will happen as I have decided. ²⁵ I will smash the Assyrians when they are in my country Israel; I will trample them underfoot on my mountains. I will remove their yoke from my people, and take away the burdens they place on my people's shoulders. ²⁶ This is the plan I have made regarding the whole earth; my hand stretches out to control all the nations.

²⁷ The Lord Almighty has made his plan, and who will block it? His hand stretches out, and who will push back against it?

²⁸ The following message came in the year King Ahaz died. ²⁹ All you Philistines, don't celebrate the fact that the rod that was hitting you is broken, because from the root of that snake will grow up a viper, its fruit will be a flying serpent. ³⁰ The poor will have food, and the needy will live in safety, but you Philistines will die in a famine, and I^f will kill those who survive. ³¹ Howl, gates! Weep, town! Melt away in fear, all you Philistines! For a cloud of smoke is approaching from the north—an army with no soldier hanging back.

^c14:20. “Like those other kings”: supplied for clarity.

^d14:21. “Fathers” is plural to suggest that the guilt was not just the immediate father, but his ancestors as well.

^e14:23. Some suggest a species of owl, others the bittern.

^f14:30. “I”: Dead Sea Scroll reading. Traditional text, “he.”

³² What will be the answer given to the messengers from that nation? “The Lord was the one who laid the foundations of Zion, and that’s where his suffering people will be kept safe.”

15¹ A message about Moab. The town of Ar in Moab is devastated, destroyed in a single night! The town of Kir in Moab is devastated, destroyed in a single night!² The people of Dibon go up to their temple to weep at its high places. The Moabites weep over the towns of Nebo and Medeba. Every head has been shaved, every beard has been cut off in mourning.³ They wear sackcloth in their streets. On the rooftops and in the open squares they all weep, falling down crying.⁴ The people of Heshbon and Elealeh cry out in sadness, their voices heard as far as Jahaz. That’s why even the bravest soldiers of Moab shout—because they’re so terrified.

⁵ I weep over Moab. Moabite refugees run all the way to Zoar and to Eglath-shelishiyah. Weeping they go up Luhith hill; crying for their destruction they walk along the road to Horonaim.⁶ The waters of Nimrim have all dried up. The grass is withered, all the vegetation has disappeared—nothing green is left.⁷ Everything they had gained, all their possessions, they have to carry across Willow River.⁸ Their cry of grief echoes through the whole country of Moab; their wailing and mourning extends all the way from Eglaim to Beer-elim.⁹ River Dimon^g is full of blood, but I will bring more upon the town of Dimon—a lion to attack the Moabite refugees and those who are left in the country.

16¹ Send lambs as tribute to the ruler of the land,^h from Sela through the desert, to the mountain of the daughter of Zion.ⁱ² The Moabite women at the fords of the Arnon^j are like birds fluttering around when their nest is destroyed.³ Think about it and make a decision. Make your shadow as invisible at midday as during

^g15:9. Or “Dibon.”

^h16:1. Referring to the king of Judah.

ⁱ16:1. “The daughter of Zion” is Jerusalem.

^j16:2. This was the ancient boundary between the Moabites and the Amorites. After the Israelites conquered the Amorites, their territory was meant to have been taken over by the tribes of Reuben and Dan, yet they did not fully approach this border. What seems to be happening here is that these inhabitants of Moab are wondering whether they should cross the river and leave their homeland.

the night. Hide the refugees; don't betray them as they run away.^k

⁴ Let my refugees stay among you, Moab.¹ Hide them from our enemies until the destroyer is no more, the destruction is over, and the aggressive invaders have gone.

⁵ Then a kingdom will be set up based on trustworthy love, and on its throne will sit a faithful king from the line of David. He will judge fairly, and will be passionately committed to doing what is right.

⁶ We know all about the pride of the Moabites, how terribly vain and conceited they are, completely arrogant! But their boasting is false.⁷ All the Moabites grieve for Moab. They all mourn the loss of the raisin cakes^m of Kir-hareseth, all of them destroyed.⁸ Heshbon's fields have dried up, as have Sibmah's grapevines. The rulers of the nations have trampled down the vines that once branched out to Jazer and east towards the desert, and west as far as the sea.

⁹ So I cry with Jazer for Sibmah's vines; I soak Heshbon and Elealeh with my tears. Nobody shouts in celebration over your summer fruit and your harvest any more.¹⁰ Joy and happiness are gone. Nobody celebrates in the harvest fields or the vineyards; nobody shouts happily. Nobody treads grapes in the winepresses. I have stopped their cheering.¹¹ Heartbroken I cry for Moab like sad music on a harp; deep inside I weep for Kir-hareseth.¹² The Moabites go and wear themselves out worshiping at their high places. They go to their shrines to pray, but it does them no good.

¹³ This is the message that the Lord has already delivered about Moab.¹⁴ But now the Lord speaks again, and says, In three years, just as a contract worker precisely counts years, Moab's glory will turn into something to be laughed at. Despite there being so many Moabites now, soon there will only be a few feeble people left.

17¹ A message about Damascus. Look, Damascus will cease to exist as city. Instead it will become a pile of ruins.² The towns of Aroer will be abandoned. Flocks will live in the streets and rest there, because there won't be anyone to chase them away.

^k16:3. Some believe these words are from the Moabites to the people of Judah, others see them as the prophet's advice to the Moabites, encouraging them to look after refugees from Judah.

¹16:4. Or "Let my refugees from Moab stay among you."

^m16:7. Not only a valuable food item, but also much used in pagan worship festivals.

³ The fortified city will disappear from Ephraim,ⁿ Damascus will no longer be a kingdom, and those that are left of the Arameans will be like the lost glory of Israel, declares the Lord Almighty.

⁴ At that time the glory of Jacob will fade away; he will lose his strength.^o ⁵ It will look as empty as fields after reapers have harvested the grain, gathering up the grain in their arms. It will be like when people pick the heads of grain in the Valley of Rephaim.

⁶ Yet there will be some left behind, like an olive tree that has been shaken—two or three ripe olives are left at the top of the tree, four or five on its lower branches, declares the Lord, the God of Israel.

⁷ At that time people will pay attention to their Creator and look to the Holy One of Israel. ⁸ They won't believe in the altars they built and the idols they made; they will not look to the Asherah poles or the altars of incense.

⁹ At that time their fortified cities will be like places left to be taken over by bushes and trees, just as they were previously abandoned when the Israelites invaded.^p The country will become completely desolate.

¹⁰ You have forgotten the God who saves you; you have not remembered the Rock who protects you. So, even though you plant beautiful plants and grow exotic vines, ¹¹ even though you make them grow on the day that you plant them, and have them blossom in the morning that you sow them,^q your harvest will heap of trouble on a day of grief and pain that cannot be cured.

¹² Disaster is coming to the many nations that growl, growling like the raging sea! Disaster is coming to the peoples who roar, roaring like thundering waters!^r ¹³ The nations roar like the roaring of crashing waves. But he^s confronts them, and they run far away,

ⁿ17:3. In other words, Samaria, capital city of the northern tribes symbolized by Ephraim, will be destroyed.

^o17:4. “He will lose his strength”: literally, “the fat of his flesh will become lean.”

^p17:9. The reference is made to the time when the Israelites conquered the land. This is made explicit in the Septuagint which states that the cities will be abandoned just as the Amorites and the Hivites had done when confronted by the Israelites.

^q17:11. Clearly an impossibility, and is to be taken as a symbol of the rapid “cultivation” of pagan fertility religions.

^r17:12. While the nation is not named, this prophecy probably applies to Assyria.

^s17:13. “He”: referring to the Lord.

blown by the wind like chaff on the mountains, like tumbleweeds driven by a storm. ¹⁴ Sudden terror comes in the evening! By morning, they're gone! This is what happens to those who loot us, the fate of those who plunder us.

18 ¹ Tragedy is coming to the land of whirring wings that lies along the rivers of Ethiopia, ² They send messengers downriver^t in papyrus boats. Swift messengers, go and take a message to a tall and smooth-skinned people, to a people feared by everyone, to a very powerful nation of conquerors, whose land is washed away by rivers.^u

³ All you people of the world, everyone who lives on earth—you will see when a banner is raised on the mountains, you will hear when a trumpet sounds. ⁴ For this is what the Lord has told me: I will watch quietly from where I live, quiet as heat haze in sunlight, quiet as a mistcloud in the heat of harvest. ⁵ For before the harvest, after the flower is gone and becomes an unripe grape, he prunes the vine with a knife to take out the shoots and branches. ⁶ They will all be left as carrion for the birds of prey of the mountains, and for the wild animals. The birds will eat them in summer, and all the wild animals in winter.

⁷ At that time a gift will be brought to the Lord Almighty from a tall and smooth-skinned people, from a people feared by everyone, from a very powerful nation of conquerors, whose land is washed away by rivers. It will be brought to Mount Zion, the place identified with the Lord Almighty.

19 ¹ A message about Egypt. Look, the Lord is riding on a fast-moving cloud on his way to Egypt. The idols of Egypt will tremble before Him, and the Egyptians will become weak with fear. ² I will encourage Egyptians to attack other Egyptians. They will fight each other, neighbor versus neighbor, town versus town, and kingdom versus kingdom. ³ I will destroy the confidence of the Egyptians. I will have their plans become all mixed up. They will ask their idols and the spirits of the dead what to do through mediums and spiritists. ⁴ I will hand the Egyptians over to a harsh dictator. A cruel king will rule over them, declares the Lord.

^t18:2. Probably referring to the Nile. Literally, “sea.”

^u18:2. The Hebrew of this verse is unclear and has been variously interpreted.

⁵ The waters of the Nile^v will fail, and its riverbed will be sunbaked and dry. ⁶ The channels will start to stink; the branches of the Nile in Egypt will dry to a trickle and dry up; the reeds and rushes will wither away. ⁷ The vegetation along the banks of the Nile, and all the plants in the cultivated land along the Nile, will dry up and be blown away. Everything will be gone. ⁸ Fishermen will mourn: all of them all who use hooks to fish in the Nile will weep and wail, along with those who fish by throwing nets into the water. ⁹ The workers who prepare the flax for linen and the weavers of white fabric^w will be in despair. ¹⁰ The cloth workers will be depressed, and everyone who earns a wage will feel sick inside.

¹¹ The leaders of Zoan are stupid. Pharaoh's wise counselors give advice that doesn't make sense. How can you^x tell Pharaoh, "I myself am a wise man, descended from ancient kings"? ¹² So where are your wise counselors? Let them tell you so you can understand what the Lord Almighty has planned to do to Egypt. ¹³ The leaders of Zoan have become stupid; the leaders of Memphis^y have been fooled; the important leaders of Egypt have misled their people. ¹⁴ The Lord has mixed up a spirit of confusion for them to drink, making the Egyptians stagger around in everything they do, like a drunk slipping up on his own vomit. ¹⁵ Nobody in Egypt can do anything, whoever they are—head or tail, palm tree or reed.^z

¹⁶ At that time the Egyptians will become like women. They will shake with fear when the Lord Almighty raises his arm against them. ¹⁷ The land of Judah will be a source of terror to Egypt for whenever Judah is mentioned, all Egyptians will tremble over what the Lord Almighty has planned to do to them.

^v19:5. Literally, "the waters of the sea."

^w19:9. Probably referring to cotton.

^x19:11. Referring to the "wise counselors."

^y19:13. Literally, "Noph."

^z19:15. See 9:14. The palm tree was valued, reeds not so much.

¹⁸ At that time there will be five cities in Egypt that speak the language of Canaan^a and who have sworn to worship the Lord Almighty. One of them will be called the City of the Sun.^b

¹⁹ At that time there will be an altar to the Lord right in the middle of Egypt, and a stone monument to the Lord on its border. ²⁰ This will be a sign and a witness to the presence of the Lord Almighty in the land of Egypt. When they cry out to the Lord for help because they are being oppressed, he will send them a savior to fight for them and to rescue them. ²¹ The Lord will make himself known to Egypt, and at that time Egypt will come to know the Lord. They will worship him with sacrifices and offerings; they will make promises to the Lord and keep them.

²² The Lord will inflict a plague on Egypt. He will do this, but he will heal them. They will come back to the Lord. He will respond to their prayers and heal them.

²³ At that time there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt, and the Egyptians will go to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together.

²⁴ At that time Israel will be the third part of this alliance, joining with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing to the whole of the earth. ²⁵ The Lord Almighty will bless them, saying, “Blessed be Egypt, my people, Assyria, the creation of my hands, and Israel, my special possession.”

20¹ In the year when Sargon,^c king of Assyria, sent his army commander to attack the town of Ashdod and conquered it, ² at that time the Lord spoke through Isaiah, son of Amoz. He told him, “Take off the sackcloth clothes from your body and remove your sandals.” Isaiah did so and went around naked and barefoot.

³ Then the Lord said, “In the same way that my servant Isaiah has gone naked and barefoot for three years as a sign and a warning against Egypt and Ethiopia, ⁴ so shall the king of Assyria lead the

^a19:18. In other words, Hebrew.

^b19:18. “City of the Sun”: or as it is called today, using the Greek equivalent, “Heliopolis.” This reading is found in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in one version of the Septuagint etc. The current Hebrew text reads “City of Destruction” which may be related to the destruction of sun worship in the city.

^c20:1. This is the only Biblical mention of Sargon II, king of Assyria. However, his campaign against Ashdod in 711 BC has been confirmed by archaeology.

Egyptian prisoners and the Ethiopian exiles, both young and old, naked and barefoot. Their buttocks will be bare, to Egypt's shame. ⁵ They^d will be discouraged and humiliated because they had put their hope in Ethiopia and proudly trusted in Egypt. ⁶ At that time the people living in the coastal lands^e will say, ‘Look what has happened those we were depending on! We ran to them for help to save us from the king of Assyria. We don't stand a chance!’”

21 ¹ A message about the desert by the sea.^f Like storm winds passing through the Negev, something is coming from the desert, from a land of terror— ² a horrifying vision that has been explained to me. The betrayer still betrays; the destroyer still destroys. Elamites and Medes, go ahead, attack and lay siege to Babylon,^g for I'm putting a stop to all the pain it has caused.^h

³ As a result my body is filled with agony. I'm overwhelmed with pain, like the pain of a woman giving birth. I am confused by what I hear; I am distressed by what I see. ⁴ My mind falters; I shake in panic. The night I looked forward to has become terrifying.

⁵ They set the table, they spread out the rugs, they eat and drink...
“Get up, officers! Prepare your shields for battle!”

⁶ This is what the Lord told me: “Go! Have a lookout keep watch, and make sure he reports what he sees. ⁷ When he sees chariots coming pulled by pairs of horses, riders on donkeys and on camels, he should watch very carefully, paying close attention.”

⁸ Then the lookoutⁱ shouted “Sir, I've stood here on the watchtower day after day; night after night I've remained at my post. ⁹ Now look! A man in a chariot with a pair of horses is coming.”

Then he said, “Babylon has fallen, has fallen! All the idols of its gods lie smashed on the ground!”

¹⁰ My poor downtrodden people, so badly mistreated, I have told you what I have heard from the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel.

^d20:5. Referring to the Philistines in Ashdod.

^e20:6. The area including Ashdod occupied by the Philistines.

^f21:1. “Desert by the sea,” usually taken to refer to Babylon. Although there is no literal sea nearby, the large Euphrates River can be referred to as a “sea” in the same way the Nile is described in 18:2, 19:5.

^g21:2. “Babylon”: supplied for clarity.

^h21:2. “All the pain it has caused”: literally, “all its sighing.”

ⁱ21:8. Dead Sea Scroll reading. Hebrew text, “lion.”

¹¹ A message about Edom.^j A voice is calling to me from Seir, asking, “Watchman, what time of night is it? Watchman, what time of night is it?”

¹² The watchman replies, “Morning is coming, but the night is coming again soon. If you want to ask again, then come back and ask.”

¹³ A message about Arabia. Caravans from Dedan, spend the night in the bushes. ¹⁴ People of Tema, take water to the thirsty, meet the refugees with food. ¹⁵ They're running away from a fierce battle, from swords, drawn swords, from bows and arrows.

¹⁶ This is what the Lord told me: “Within one year, just as a contract worker precisely counts years, all the glory of Kedar will be gone. ¹⁷ There will only be a few left of the archers, the warriors of Kedar.” The Lord, the God of Israel, has spoken.

22 ¹ A message about the Valley of Vision (Jerusalem). What's happening? Why has everyone gone up onto the rooftops? ² There are shouts and commotion all over the city with people celebrating.

Your dead weren't killed by the sword or in battle.^k ³ All your leaders ran away together; they were captured without resistance. All your people trying to escape were captured together, even though they had run a long way away.

⁴ That's why I said, “Go away! Let me mourn in peace. Don't insist on comforting me as the daughter of my people^l is ruined.”

⁵ For the Lord has a day of defeat, of panic and confusion in the Valley of Vision, a day of tearing down walls and crying for help to the mountains.

⁶ The Elamites pick up their quivers full of arrows, and prepare their chariots and horsemen, while the people of Kir uncover their shields ready for battle.^m ⁷ Your most productive valleys are now

^j21:11. The word used here actually means silence, and is a play on words with the actual name of the country of Edom. This is how the Septuagint interprets it.

^k22:2. A criticism of the people of Jerusalem who were not fighting the invaders.

^l22:4. “Daughter of my people”: probably a reference to Jerusalem. The “ruining” was not the destruction of Jerusalem at the time of Sennacherib's attack, but the huge amount of money and other valuable gifts Hezekiah gave him to “buy him off.” See 2 Kings 18:15-16.

^m22:6. “Ready for battle”: supplied for clarity.

full of enemy chariots; and their cavalry are at your gates! ⁸ Judah's defenses have been stripped away and so at that time you went looking for weapons in the Palace of the Forest.ⁿ

⁹ You examined the breaks in the walls of the City of David and found there were many. You had water collect in the lower pool.

¹⁰ You reviewed the number of houses in the city and demolished some to provide stone^o to repair the walls. ¹¹ You built a reservoir inside the walls for the waters from the old pool, but you did not respect its Maker or think about the One who planned it long ago.

¹² At that time the Lord, the Lord Almighty, was calling you to weep and mourn, to shave your heads and wear sackcloth. ¹³ Instead, you go on happily partying! You slaughter cattle and sheep so you can have your feasts, eating meat and drinking wine, saying, “Let’s eat and drink, because we’re going to die tomorrow!”

¹⁴ The Lord Almighty has made this clear to me: “I will not forgive this sin till your dying day, says the Lord, the Lord Almighty.”

¹⁵ This is what the Lord, the Lord Almighty, told me to do. “Go to Shebna, the palace manager, and give him this message: ¹⁶ ‘What are you doing here? Who do you think you are, cutting out a tomb for yourself high up on a hill, carving out for yourself a place to rest? ¹⁷ Watch out, you “great man”! The Lord is about to grab you and violently toss you aside. ¹⁸ He’s going to roll you up into a ball, and throw you far away into a vast country.^p You will die there, and that’s where the chariots you were so proud of will remain. You’re a disgrace to your lord’s royal family. ¹⁹ I^q will push you out of office, I will strip you of your position.

²⁰ After that I will call for my servant, Eliakim, son of Hilkiah.

²¹ I will put your robe and place your sash around him, and I will give your authority to him. He will be a father to the people living in Jerusalem and Judah. ²² I will give him the key to the house of David.^r What he opens, nobody can shut; what he shuts, nobody can

ⁿ22:8. “The Palace of the Forest”: “The Palace of the Forest of Lebanon” made by Solomon. See 1 Kings 10:17, 1 Kings 10:21; 14:27-28.

^o22:10. “To provide stone”: supplied for clarity.

^p22:18. “Vast country”: literally, “a broad-handed land.”

^q22:19. Referring to the Lord.

^r22:22. “House of David” this could refer both the palace and to David’s descendants.

open. ²³ I will drive him like a nail hammered securely into a wall. He will bring honor to his family.

²⁴ The heavy burden of his father's family will hang on him—all the descendants and the inlaws—all the little containers, bowls and all kinds of jars. ²⁵ So the time will come, declares the Lord Almighty, when the nail will come out of the wall, even though it was hammered in securely. It will break off and fall down, and everything hanging on it will fall down too. The Lord has spoken.

23 ¹ A message about Tyre. Howl, people on the ships of Tarshish! Tyre has been destroyed—nothing is left of the houses and the harbor. They heard the news from the people of Cyprus. ² Stay shocked into silence, people of the coastlands, merchants of Sidon, and sailors. ³ Egyptian grain^s came across the wide oceans. The Nile's harvest was what made Tyre money; she was the merchant to the nations.

⁴ Feel the shame, Sidon! For the fortress of the sea says,^t “I have no children, having never been in labor or given birth. I have not brought up young men or brought up young women.”

⁵ When the news about Tyre reaches Egypt they will be in agony.

⁶ Sail across to Tarshish!

Howl, people of the coastlands! ⁷ Is this really your triumphant city, whose beginnings are from the distant past, who has sent out people to colonize faraway places? ⁸ Who planned this attack on Tyre? Tyre, who created kingdoms, whose merchants were princes, whose traders were honored around the world! ⁹ The Lord Almighty planned it, to humble its pride in all its glory, and to bring down all who receive worldly honor.

¹⁰ Work your land, people of Tarshish, as they do beside the Nile, for you don't have a harbor anymore.^u ¹¹ The Lord held his hand out

^s23:3. “Egyptian grain”: literally, “the grain of Shihor.”

^t23:4. Tyre was called the daughter of Sidon (Isaiah 23:12), so the words that follow could be Sidon mourning the loss of her “daughter.” Alternatively it could be Tyre, mourning the loss of her children (inhabitants).

^u23:10. The Hebrew of this verse is unclear. It apparently suggests that the people of Tarshish should turn to agriculture now that there won't be any more trade from the mother city of Tyre.

over the sea and shook kingdoms.^v He has condemned Phoenicia, giving the order to destroy their fortresses. ¹² He said, “Don’t celebrate any more, mistreated virgin daughter of Sidon. Go and sail over to Cyprus—however, even there you won’t find rest.”

¹³ Look at the country of the Babylonians, this people that are not as they used to be! The Assyrians have turned it into a place for desert animals. They set up their siege towers, they demolished the fortresses, and ruined the country.

¹⁴ Howl, people on the ships of Tarshish because your fortress is destroyed!

¹⁵ At that time Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years, a king’s lifetime, as it were. But at the end of these seventy years, Tyre will be like the song about a prostitute, ¹⁶ “Take a lyre and walk around the city, forgotten prostitute! Play and sing so people will remember you!” ¹⁷ After seventy years, the Lord will restore Tyre. But then she will go back to hiring herself out as a prostitute, selling herself to all the kingdoms of the world. ¹⁸ However, her profits and what she earns will be consecrated to the Lord. They won’t be kept or saved up, for her business earnings will go to those who worship the Lord, to provide them with plenty of food and good clothes.

24 ¹ Watch out! The Lord is going to destroy the earth, to make it totally devastated. He’s going to rip up the surface of the earth and scatter its inhabitants. ² It will happen the same for everybody—whether people or priests, servants or their masters, maids or their mistresses, buyers or sellers, lenders or borrowers, creditors or debtors. ³ The earth will be completely laid waste and looted. This is what the Lord has said.

⁴ The earth dries up and withers away; the world shrivels up and withers away, the high and mighty people^w shrivel up along with the earth. ⁵ The earth is polluted by its people; they have flouted God’s laws, violated his regulations, and broken the eternal agreement with him. ⁶ That is why a curse is destroying the earth. The people suffer because of their guilt. The inhabitants of the earth are burned up and only a few survive. ⁷ The new wine dries up, and the vine withers. All the people celebrating groan. ⁸ The happy sound of tambourines

^v23:11. “Kingdoms”: presumably the other Phoenician kingdoms along the coast from Tyre.

^w24:4. “The high and mighty people”: or, “the heavens.”

is over; the noise of the party-goers has stopped; the delightful harp music has finished,⁹ People don't sing any more as they drink wine, and the beer tastes bitter.¹⁰ The chaotic city is falling apart; every house is barred shut to keep others out.¹¹ Crowds on the street are shouting, demanding to have wine. Joy turns into darkness. There's no happiness left on earth.¹² The city is in a horrible state of ruin; its gates have been broken down.¹³ This is the way it's going to be all throughout the earth among the nations—only a few olives are left after the tree is shaken, only a few grapes are left to be gleaned after the harvest.

¹⁴ These survivors shout aloud and sing for joy. From the west they praise the Lord's majesty.¹⁵ From the east they glorify the Lord; from the sea shores they praise the name of the Lord, the God of Israel.¹⁶ We hear songs coming from the ends of the earth, singing, “Glory to the God who does right.”

But I'm miserable, miserable. Pity me! Deceitful people go on betraying, again and again.^x ¹⁷ Terrors and pit-traps and snares are waiting for you, people of the earth.¹⁸ Those who run away in terror will fall into a pit-trap, and those who escape from the pit-trap will be caught in a snare. Heaven's windows^y are opened; earth's foundations shake.¹⁹ The earth is completely broken up; the earth is ripped apart, the earth is violently shaken.²⁰ The earth staggers to and fro like a drunk, and sways this way and that like a shelter. The guilt of its rebelliousness weighs heavily on it, and it collapses—it won't rise again.

²¹ At that time the Lord will punish all the high heavenly beings and the kings of the earth.²² They will be brought together, prisoners in a pit. They will be imprisoned, and eventually they will be punished.²³ The moon will be embarrassed and the sun will be ashamed,^z for the Lord Almighty will reign in glory on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem in the presence of its leaders.

25¹ Lord, you are my God. I will honor you and praise who you are, because you have done wonderful things that you planned long ago. You are faithful and trustworthy!² You have turned the

^x24:16. In the Hebrew this line is literally, “The treacherous deal treacherously, with treachery the treacherous deal treacherously.”

^y24:18. “Heaven's windows”: usually associated with rainfall/floods.

^z24:23. Because their light will seem so dim in comparison to the Lord's glory.

city^a into a pile of rubble; the fortified town is now a ruin; the foreigner palace is gone. It is no longer a city and it will never be rebuilt. ³ Because of this powerful nations will honor you; cities of brutal nations will be in awe of you.

⁴ But you have protected the poor and needy when they were in trouble, you shielded them from storms and shaded them from the heat. For the actions of brutal people are like rain beating against a wall, ⁵ like heat in a desert. You end the noisy uprising of foreigners. In the same way that a cloud's shadow cools down the heat of the day, so the song sung by brutal people is silenced.

⁶ On this mountain^b the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast for all nations, a lavish feast of aged wines, rich food, and the best meat. ⁷ On this mountain he will destroy the veil that covers all the nations, the sheet that is over everyone. ⁸ He will destroy death forever. The Lord God will wipe away all tears, and everywhere he will take away the humiliation suffered by his people. The Lord has spoken.

⁹ At that time his people will say, “Look! This is our God; we have trusted in him and he has saved us! This is the Lord we have been looking for. Now we can be happy and celebrate the salvation he brings!” ¹⁰ The Lord's hand of protection will be on this mountain. But the Moabites will be trampled underfoot like straw into the water of a manure pit. ¹¹ They will reach out their hands to try and save themselves, like swimmers using their hands to swim, but their pride will be humbled however much they thrash about. ¹² Moab,^c he will demolish your fortress with the high walls, bringing it down to the ground, into the dust.

26 ¹ At that time, this will be the song that is sung in the land of Judah: “Ours is a strong city! Its walls and defenses are our salvation! ² Open the gates so the nation who follows the right can come in, the nation that stays faithful. ³ You will keep in complete peace those who keep their minds focused on you, because they trust in you. ⁴ Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is the eternal Rock. ⁵ He brings down those who live so high and mighty; he demolishes the proud city with its high walls, bringing it down to the

^a25:2. Though no specific city is named, it is probable that Babylon is meant. Certainly it is an enemy city (having a foreigner's palace).

^b25:6. Referring to Mount Zion.

^c25:12. “Moab”: supplied for clarity.

ground, into the dust. ⁶ The poor tread it underfoot; the oppressed walk on top of it.

⁷ You God, do what is right, and you straighten out the way for those who live right; you smooth out their path. ⁸ Yes, we follow your instructions, Lord, we put our hope in you. What we most want is to remember you and your wonderful character. ⁹ I look for you in the night; deep inside me I long for you. When your laws are shown to the earth, then the people of the world learn what is right. ¹⁰ Though grace is shown to the wicked, they don't learn to do right. Even in a country where people do what's right, they continue to do evil and they don't think about how great the Lord is. ¹¹ Lord, you are holding your hand up, but they don't see it. Let them see your passionate commitment for your people, and be embarrassed; may the fire reserved for your enemies destroy them!

¹² Lord, you give us peace and prosperity; everything we've achieved you have done for us. ¹³ Lord our God, there have been other lords besides you who have ruled us, but you are the only one we worship. ¹⁴ They are dead, they will not live again;^d they will not rise from the grave. Lord, you punished them and destroyed them—even wiping out every memory about them. ¹⁵ You have made the nation grow, Lord, you have made the nation grow. You have expanded our borders of the land, and we honored you. ¹⁶ Lord, when we were suffering we came to you, pouring out our prayers like whispers as you disciplined us. ¹⁷ Just as a pregnant woman giving birth tosses about and cries out in pain, that's what we were like in your presence, Lord. ¹⁸ However, even though we became pregnant and we tossed about in pain, we gave birth to nothing but air. We did not bring about the salvation of the earth, and the people of the world have not become alive.^e

¹⁹ But those who died in you, Lord, will live! Their bodies will rise again! Wake up, and sing for joy, you people sleeping in the dust, for the dew you receive is like the dew of the morning giving life to those in the grave.

^d26:14. Probably referring to those enemies of Judah who at times ruled them. Alternatively some see this as a reference to previous idol worship—the pagan gods who “ruled” over them.

^e26:18. “Become alive”: the word is actually “fall,” but is taken to mean “to be born.”

²⁰ My people, go inside your homes and close your doors behind you. Hide there for a little while until the fury has passed. ²¹ Watch out! The Lord is coming from where he lives to punish the people of the earth for their sins. The earth will reveal the blood that has been shed on it; the earth won't hide those who have been killed any no longer.”

27 ¹ At that time the Lord will take his sharp, large, and strong sword, and punish Leviathan, the slithering serpent, and Leviathan, the coiled serpent, and he will kill the sea dragon.^f

² At that time, sing about a beautiful vineyard. ³ I, the Lord, take care of it, watering it often. I guard it night and day so that nobody can damage it. ⁴ I'm not angry anymore.^g If there are thorns and brambles I would go and fight them, burning them all up, ⁵ Otherwise they should come to me for protection. They should make their peace with me, yes, make their peace with me.

⁶ In the future the descendants of Jacob will be like a tree taking root. Israel will flower and send out shoots, and fill the whole world with fruit! ⁷ Has the Lord hit Israel as he hit those that attacked them? Were they killed like their killers were killed?^h ⁸ You dealt with them by sending them into exile, by banishing them. He drove them away with his powerful force, like when the east wind blows. ⁹ Through this experience Jacob's guilt will be forgiven. The removal of their sins will come to fruition when they take all the pagan altar stones and crush them to pieces like chalk—no Asherah poles or altars of incense will be left standing.

¹⁰ The fortified city will be abandoned, its houses as empty and lonely as a desert. Cattle will graze and rest there, stripping bare the branches of its trees. ¹¹ Their dry branches are broken off and used by women to make fires. This is a people that doesn't have any sense, so their Maker won't feel sorry for them, and their Creator won't help them.

¹² At that time the Lord will thresh the grain harvested from the Euphrates River to the Wadi of Egypt, and you Israelites will be

^f27:1. Leviathan and the sea dragon come from pagan mythology, and are personifications of evil.

^g27:4. “Not angry anymore”: unlike the Lord's anger with his vineyard recorded in chapter 5.

^h27:7. The implied answer is “No.”

gathered up one by one. ¹³ At that time a loud trumpet will sound, and those who were dying in Assyria will return along with those exiled in Egypt. They will come and worship the Lord on the holy mountain in Jerusalem.

28 ¹ Tragedy is coming to the city of Samaria,ⁱ the crowning glory of Ephraim's drunks, to the fading flower of wonderful beauty, sitting above a fertile valley, and beloved by those hammered by wine. ² Watch out, for the Lord has someone who is strong and powerful! He is going to smash it to the ground like a hailstorm and a tornado, like a torrential rain and an overwhelming flood. ³ That crowning glory of Ephraim's drunks will be trampled underfoot. ⁴ That fading flower of wonderful beauty, sitting above a fertile valley, will be like figs ripe before the summer harvest—as soon as people discover them, they grab and eat them.

⁵ At that time the Lord Almighty will be a beautiful, glorious crown that brings pride to those of his people who are left. ⁶ He will be an inspiration to the judges to do what's right, and he will encourage those who fight off the attacks on the gate.

⁷ But these people also drink so much wine and beer that they sway from side to side and stumble over. Even priests and prophets stagger along, their minds muddled by beer and wine. Because of the drink they are confused about visions and make mistakes when they give decisions. ⁸ All their tables are full of vomit—filth is everywhere.

⁹ “Just who is he trying to teach knowledge to?” they ask.^j “Who is he explaining his message to? To children just weaned from milk, to babies just removed from the breast?” ¹⁰ He tells us this blah and that blah, blah upon blah, and again blah and blah, and even more blah and blah!^k It's a bit here and a bit there.” ¹¹ Fine—so now the Lord will talk to this people in foreign languages that sound strange to them!^l ¹² He had told them, “You can rest here. Let those who are

ⁱ28:1. “The city of Samaria”: supplied for clarity.

^j28:9. “They ask.” Supplied for clarity.

^k28:10. There are indeed eight “blahs” in the Hebrew. The word was also used to describe idols, because they are also “blah”!

^l28:11. Since the people had said that God was talking nonsense to them, he now will reveal his truth through other languages in order that he might communicate with them—even though these languages would sound like “blah” to them! Also verse 13.

tired rest. This is the place where you can safely relax.” But they refused to listen.

¹³ Therefore the Lord's message to them will become, “This blah and that blah, blah upon blah, and again blah and blah, and even more blah and blah, a bit here and a bit there,” so that they'll fall over backwards, and they'll be wounded, trapped, and captured.^m

¹⁴ So pay attention to the Lord's message, you scornful rulers who lead these people in Jerusalem. ¹⁵ You claim, “We've made an agreement with death; we've got a contract with the grave. When the terrible disaster rushes by, it won't affect us, because our lies protect us and we hide in our own deceptions.”

¹⁶ Consequently, listen to what the Lord God says, Look! I'm laying a foundation stone in Jerusalem, a strong, well-tested stone. It's a valuable cornerstone that provides a firm foundation. Anyone who trusts in it won't be shaken loose.ⁿ ¹⁷ I will make justice as straight as a measuring line, and doing what's right the standard rule. Hail will destroy the protection of your lies, and water will flood the place where you're hiding. ¹⁸ Your agreement with death will be canceled; your contract with the grave will be revoked. When the terrible disaster rushes by, it will trample you underfoot. ¹⁹ It will rush by time after time, dragging you away morning upon morning, day and night, rushing on and on. Once you understand this message you will be absolutely terrified.

²⁰ The bed is too short so you can't stretch out; the blanket is too narrow so you can't cover yourself. ²¹ The Lord will come on the attack like he did to the Philistines at Mount Perazim, like he shook them in the Valley of Gibeon,^o coming to do what he has to do, his strange work; coming to act as he must, his unusual action. ²² So don't mock, or your imprisonment will be even worse, for the Lord, the Lord Almighty, has explained to me his decision to destroy the whole country.

²³ Listen to what I'm saying! Listen and pay attention! Hear what I have to say! ²⁴ Does the farmer spend all his time ploughing? Does

^m28:13. In other words, since they treat the Lord's message so contemptuously, they will reap the painful consequences of dismissing the Lord's advice.

ⁿ28:16. “Shaken loose”: the word used normally means “hurry,” but can also have the meaning “disturbed.”

^o28:21. “Philistines”: supplied for clarity. See 1 Chronicles 14:8-16.

he spend all his time preparing the soil? ²⁵ Once he has everything ready doesn't he sow seeds like dill and cumin, doesn't he plant wheat and barley in rows, with spelt grain as a border? ²⁶ His God gives him instructions and teaches him the right thing to do. ²⁷ You don't use a heavy tool to thresh dill! You don't use the wheel of a cart to thresh cumin! Instead you use a stick to beat out the dill, and a rod to beat out the cumin. ²⁸ Grain used for bread is easily damaged so you don't thresh it forever. When you drive your cart wheels over it with your horses, you don't crush it. ²⁹ This is also from the Lord Almighty who is very wise and gives great advice.

29 ¹ Tragedy is coming to you Ariel, Ariel the city where David lived! Year after year you have your festivals. ² But I'm going to cause trouble for Ariel; the city will cry and mourn, it will be like an altar hearth^p to me. ³ I will surround you, I will besiege you with towers and build ramps to attack you. ⁴ You will be brought down, you will speak from where you're lying on the ground, mumbling in the dust. Your words will come like a ghost from the grave; your voice will be a whisper from the dust.

⁵ But then all your enemies will become like fine dust; all your cruel oppressors like chaff that's blown away. Then suddenly, in no time at all, ⁶ the Lord Almighty will arrive with thunder, earthquake, and tremendous noise, with whirlwind, storm, and flames of fire that burn everything up. ⁷ The nations besieging Ariel, attacking its fortifications and tormenting the people, they will all disappear as if it was a dream! ⁸ It will be like someone hungry dreaming that they're eating but who wakes up still hungry. It will be like someone thirsty dreaming of drinking but who wakes up still weak and thirsty. This is what it will be like for all your enemies, the ones attacking Mount Zion.

⁹ Be shocked and amazed! Make yourselves blind so you can't see! Get drunk, but not from wine! Stagger around, but not from beer!

¹⁰ For the Lord has made you very sleepy, and he has shut the eyes and covered the heads of those who speak for God and see visions.

¹¹ This entire vision is like words in a scroll that is sealed shut. If you give it to someone who knows how to read and say, "Please read

P29:2. "Altar hearth": the part where the sacrifice was burned, generally a messy area of animal remains and ash. In Hebrew the word Ariel can mean "altar" (Ezekiel 43:15-16) or "lion of God."

it,” they'll say, “I can't read it because it's sealed shut.”¹² If you give it to someone who doesn't know how to read and say, “Please read it,” they'll say, “I don't know how to read.”

¹³ The Lord says, “These people come and praise me with their words, and honor me with lip service, but their thoughts are miles away. Their worship of me only consists of them following rules people have taught them. ¹⁴ So once again I will surprise these people with miracle upon miracle. The wisdom of the wise will die, and the insight of the insightful will disappear.”

¹⁵ Tragedy is coming to people who take such trouble to hide their plans from the Lord. They work in the dark and say to themselves, “Nobody can see us, can they? Nobody will know, will they?”

¹⁶ How perverse you are! It's as if the clay was thought of as making the potter! Should something made say to its maker, “You didn't make me”? Can the pot tell the potter, “You don't understand anything”?

¹⁷ It won't be long and the forests of Lebanon will be turned into a productive field, and a productive field will seem like a forest. ¹⁸ At that time the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and the eyes of the blind will see through the gloomy darkness what's written there.^q ¹⁹ The humble will be even happier in the Lord, and the poor will find their joy in the Holy One of Israel. ²⁰ Cruel people will no longer exist, the scornful will vanish, and those looking to do evil will be destroyed— ²¹ those who say things to trick others into sin, those who trap people by legal arguments in court, those who lie to mislead the innocent.

²² So this is what the Lord, who redeemed Abraham, says to the descendants of Jacob: “You don't need to be ashamed anymore; your faces won't grow pale with fright any longer. ²³ When you see all your children and everything I've done for you, then you will regard my character as holy, and you will respect the Holy One of Jacob. You will have reverence for the God of Israel. ²⁴ Those who've gone astray will understand their mistakes; those who grumble will learn how to receive instruction.”

30¹ Tragedy is coming to my defiant children, declares the Lord. You make plans that don't come from me; you make alliances against my wishes, adding sin to sin. ² You go to Egypt

^q29:18. “What's written there”: supplied for clarity.

without asking me, looking to Pharaoh for protection, hoping to find safety hiding behind Egypt. ³ But the protection of Pharaoh will be an embarrassment to you; hiding behind Egypt will only bring you humiliation. ⁴ Even though he has officials at Zoan and his messengers reach Hanes, ⁵ the Egyptians will offend everyone because they are useless—they're no help and good for nothing, except for causing shame and bringing disgrace.

⁶ A message about the animals of the Negev. The messengers travel through a harsh and hostile land where lions and lionesses live, vipers and vicious snakes too. Their donkeys are burdened down with valuable gifts, their camels are loaded with treasure, to give to a worthless people that can't help. ⁷ Egypt's support is an empty breath of wind. That's why I call her *Pride Sitting Down*.^f

⁸ Now go and write all this down on a tablet and on a scroll so that it will last forever and ever. ⁹ For they are a rebellious people, deceitful children, who refuse to listen to the Lord's instructions. ¹⁰ They tell people who see visions, “Stop seeing visions!” and to the prophets, “Don't give us prophecies about doing right—just tell us pleasant things and give us fake prophecies. ¹¹ Stop telling us straight; go a different direction! We don't want to hear any more about the Holy One of Israel.”

¹² So this is how the Holy One of Israel replies, Since you have rejected this message, and since you trust in oppression and believe in dishonesty, ¹³ your punishment will suddenly fall on you, like a high wall that bulges out and collapses in an instant. ¹⁴ You will be smashed like a clay pot, broken into such tiny pieces that there won't be a big enough piece to pick up coals from a hearth or a little bit of water from a well.

¹⁵ This is what the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, said, If you repent and patiently trust in me, you would be saved; you would be strong if you had such calm confidence. But you refused to do it.

¹⁶ You replied, “No! We'll escape on horseback! We'll get away on fast horses!”

But the fast ones will be the ones chasing you! ¹⁷ Just one of them will chase after a thousand of you. Just five of them will make

^f**30:7.** “Sitting Down”: in other words, Egypt still speaks with arrogance, but it is so weak it does nothing but sit. The word for pride/arrogance also referred to a mythical sea-monster, Rahab.

you all run away. All that will be left of you will look like a flag fluttering on the top of a mountain, a banner waving on a hill.

¹⁸ So the Lord waits, wanting to be kind to you, ready to act to show you mercy, for the Lord is a God who does what is right. All who wait for him are blessed.

¹⁹ People of Zion, you who live in Jerusalem, you won't have to weep any more. When you cry for help he will be kind to you. He will answer you immediately he hears you. ²⁰ Even though the Lord will give you the bread of hardship to eat and the water of suffering to drink, your teacher will no longer hide himself from you—you will see him with your own eyes. ²¹ When you walk to the right or to the left, you will hear this command coming from behind you: “This is the way to follow.”

²² You will defile your silver-coated idols coated with silver and your gold-covered images. You will throw them away like a dirty cloth used for periods, and say to them, “out of here!” ²³ He will send rain when you sow, and the land will produce great harvests. At that time your cattle will feed in rich pastures. ²⁴ The oxen and donkeys that help cultivate the earth will eat good greens and grain, spread with fork and shovel. ²⁵ At that time when your enemies are killed and the fortresses fall, streams of water will flow down every mountain and hill. ²⁶ The moon will shine as bright as the sun, and the sun will shine seven times brighter, like having seven days light in one. This is the way it will be when the Lord bandages the injuries of his people and heals the wounds he caused them.

²⁷ Look how the Lord arrives from far away, burning with anger and accompanied by thick clouds of smoke! What he says shows his anger—it's like a fire that burns everything up. ²⁸ His breath rushes out like a flood that comes up to the neck. He shakes the nations in a sieve that destroys them; he puts bridles in the mouths of the different peoples to lead them away.

²⁹ But you will have a song to sing like you do on the night of a holy festival. You will celebrate in happiness like those who play pipes as they go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the Rock of Israel. ³⁰ The Lord will shout so everyone hears him he will reveal his great power. He will hit out in his anger and fury, with a fire that burns everything up, and with torrential rain, storm, and hail.

³¹ At the Lord's command the Assyrians will be shattered, knocked

down by his scepter. ³² Every time the Lord hits them with his rod of punishment it will be accompanied by the music of tambourines and harps as he fights them, swinging into them in battle. ³³ The place of burning^s has been prepared a long time ago, ready for the king. Its funeral pyre is deep and wide, and has plenty of fire and wood. The breath of the Lord, like a flood of burning sulfur, sets it on fire.

31 ¹ Tragedy is coming to those who appeal to Egypt for help, depending on their horses and trusting in all their chariots and charioteers! They don't look to the Holy One of Israel for help; they don't ask the Lord for advice. ² Yet he's also wise! He will bring disaster and won't withdraw his orders. He will take action against this wicked nation^t and the evil people who help them. ³ The Egyptians are only human beings—they're not God! Their horses are only physical, not spiritual. When the Lord lifts up his hand to attack, those who came to help will stumble, and those who are helped will fall. They will all die together.

⁴ This is what the Lord told me: It's like a young lion growling as it stands over its prey. Even though a lot of shepherds come to protest, it's not frightened off by their shouting or intimidated by all their noise. In the same way the Lord Almighty will come down to fight on Mount Zion. ⁵ Like birds that hover above, so the Lord Almighty will take care of Jerusalem. He will protect it and save it; he will pass over^u it and rescue it.

⁶ Come back, Israelites, to the one you so blatantly rebelled against. ⁷ For at that time every one of you will throw away all the idols of silver and gold made by your own sinful hands. ⁸ The Assyrians will be killed by the sword of one who is not a man. They will be destroyed by the sword of one who is not mortal. They will run away at the sight of the sword,^v and the young Assyrian men will be taken away as slave laborers. ⁹ Their “rock”^w will be scared to death, and their officers will be terrified and in panic at the sight of

^s30:33. Literally “Topheth,” a place in the Valley of Ben-hinnom.

^t31:2. “Wicked nation”: literally, “house of evil”—referring particularly to the royal house who led the nation in seeking an alliance with Egypt.

^u31:5. “Pass over”: the same word as used for the Passover.

^v31:8. The sword of the Lord.

^w31:9. Thought to refer to the Assyrian king.

the battle flag, declares the Lord, who has his fire in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem.

32 ¹ Watch! A king is coming who does what's right when he rules, and those who rule under him will act fairly. ² Each one will be like a shelter from the wind, like a protection from the storm, like rivers of water in the dry desert, like the shade of a large rock in a sun-baked^x land.

³ Then everyone with eyes will be able to truly see, and everyone who has ears will be able to truly hear. ⁴ Those whose minds are impulsive will be sensible and think things through; those who stammer will speak clearly. ⁵ No longer will fools be called respectable or crooks highly-regarded. ⁶ For fools only talk foolishness, thinking evil things. They act in opposition to the Lord, misrepresenting him in what they say. They refuse to give food to the hungry and deny water to the thirsty. ⁷ Cheats use evil methods; they devise schemes to ruin the poor with lies, even when right is on the side of the poor. ⁸ But noble people act unselfishly; they keep to their principles of generosity.

⁹ Get up, you women who are lying around relaxing, and pay attention to what I'm saying! You ladies without a care in the world, listen to me! ¹⁰ In just over a year, you who think yourselves so safe will tremble with fear. The grape harvest is going to fail and there'll be no harvest. ¹¹ Shudder, you women relaxing! Tremble, you ladies who feel so safe! Strip off your clothes, bare yourselves and put on sackcloth around your waists. ¹² Beat your breasts in sadness over the loss of your lovely fields, your productive vines, ¹³ over the loss of the land of my people. Mourn because it's now overgrown with thorns and brambles, mourn because of the loss of all the happy homes and joyful towns. ¹⁴ The palace is abandoned, the crowded town is deserted. Castles and watch towers will forever become homes loved by wild donkeys, and places where sheep graze, ¹⁵ until the Spirit is poured out on us from above, and the desert becomes like a good field full of crops, and a good field will grow like a forest.

¹⁶ Then people living in the desert will practice justice, and those living among the fields will do what is right. ¹⁷ Living right will

^x32:2. "Sun-baked": literally, "faint, weary"—in other words an oppressively hot climate that causes fatigue.

bring peace and security that endures. ¹⁸ My people will live in peace, safe and secure in their homes. ¹⁹ Even though hail can destroy a forest, and a town can be demolished, ²⁰ you will be happy as you sow your crops beside the waters and let your cattle and donkeys roam freely.

33 ¹ Tragedy is coming to you, you destroyer who has not experienced destruction yourself, you deceiver who has not experienced deception yourself! When you have finished with your destroying, you will be destroyed yourself. Then you are finished with your deceiving, you will be deceived yourselves.

² Lord, please be kind to us; we put our confidence in you. Be the strength we rely on every morning; be our salvation in times of trouble. ³ When you roar, the peoples run away; when you prepare for action, the nations scatter! ⁴ You plunder defeated enemy armies^Y like caterpillars eating up plants; like an attack of swarming locusts.

⁵ The Lord is praised for he lives in highest heaven; he has filled Zion with justice and right. ⁶ He will be your constant support throughout your lives an abundant source of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge. Reverence for the Lord is what makes Zion rich.

⁷ But look! Even your bravest soldiers are crying loudly in the street; the messengers you sent to ask for peace are weeping bitterly. ⁸ Your highways are deserted; nobody's traveling on your roads anymore. He breaks the treaty;^Z he despises the witnesses;^a he doesn't care about anybody. ⁹ Israel^b is in mourning and fades away; Lebanon withers in shame; the fields of Sharon have become a desert; the forests of Bashan and Carmel have shed their leaves.

¹⁰ “But now I'm going to intervene!” says the Lord. “I'm prepared to act! I will show myself to be above all others! ¹¹ All you give birth to is only dry grass, all you deliver is just stubble. Your breath is a fire that will burn you up. ¹² You people will be burned to ashes like thorns that are cut down and thrown into the fire. ¹³ Those of you

^Y33:4. “Defeated enemy armies”: supplied for clarity. This is usually taken to refer to the defeat of the Assyrians under Sennacherib.

^Z33:8. “Treaty”: or “covenant.” In the context here it probably refers to a treaty between Israel and Assyria that the Assyrians have broken, not caring what anybody thinks.

^a33:8. “Witnesses”: Dead Sea Scrolls reading. Hebrew MT reads “cities.”

^b33:9. “Israel”: literally, “The land.”

who are far away, recognize what I have accomplished; those of you who are nearby, recognize how powerful I am.”

¹⁴ The sinners who live in Zion tremble with fear; those who are irreligious are overcome with terror. They ask,^c “Who can live with this fire that consumes everything? Who can live among such everlasting burning?”

¹⁵ Those who live right and speak the truth, those who refuse to profit from extortion and refuse to take bribes, who don't listen to plots to kill people, who close their eyes rather than look at evil.

¹⁶ They will live on high; they will be protected by the mountain fortresses; they will always be provided with food and will always have water.

¹⁷ You will see the king in his wonderful appearance, and you will view a land that stretches into the distance. ¹⁸ In your mind you will think about the terrifying things that were expected, and then ask yourself, “Where are the enemy officials—the scribes who were to record events, the treasurers who were to weigh the looted money, the surveyors who were to count and destroy the towers?”^d

¹⁹ You won't see these offensive people anymore with their barbaric language that sounds like someone stammering and is impossible to understand.

²⁰ On the contrary, you'll see Zion as a festival city. You will view Jerusalem as a quiet and peaceful place. It will be like a tent that's never taken down, whose tent-pegs are never pulled up, whose guy ropes never snap. ²¹ Right here our majestic Lord will be like a place of broad rivers and waters that no enemy ship with oars can cross—no great ship can pass. ²² For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king. He is the one who will save us. ²³ The rigging on your ship hangs loose so the mast isn't secure and the sail can't be spread. Then all the looted treasure you're carrying will be divided among the victors^e—even those who are lame will have their share. ²⁴ Nobody in Israel will say, “I'm sick,” and those who live there will have their guilt removed.

^c33:14. “They ask”: supplied for clarity.

^d33:18. This verse has been expanded to supply clarity to what seems to be the intended meaning—that the Assyrian officials who had been brought in expectation of a victory over Jerusalem have all disappeared.

^e33:23. “Among the victors”: supplied for clarity.

34¹ Come close, you nations, and listen! You peoples, pay attention! Hear these words everyone who lives on earth, and all that comes from it! ² The Lord's anger is against all the nations and his fury is against all their armies. He will completely destroy them; he will have them slaughtered. ³ Those who are killed won't be buried; the stink of their bodies will rise; mountains will be washed away with their blood. ⁴ The sun, moon, and stars of heaven will fade away,^f and the skies will be rolled up like a scroll. All the stars will fall like dried-up leaves from a vine, like dried-up figs from a fig tree.

⁵ After my sword has finished what it has to do^g in the heavens, it will come down on Edom, on the people I have doomed for destruction. ⁶ The sword of the Lord is coated in blood and covered with fat—the blood of lambs and goats, and the fat of rams' kidneys. For there is a sacrifice for Lord happening in Bozrah,^h a great slaughter in the land of Edom. ⁷ Wild ox will fall with them, the young bulls along with the mature ones. Their land will be soaked with blood, and their soil soaked with fat.

⁸ For the Lord has a day of punishment, a year of retribution, for the trouble caused to Zion. ⁹ Edom's streams will be turned into tar, its soil into sulfur, and her land will become burning tar! ¹⁰ The fire will burn day and night, and will never go out, its smoke will rise forever. From one generation to the next it will remain desolate—people won't ever go there again. ¹¹ The desert owl and screech owl will take it over, and the eagle owl and raven will live there. The Lord will stretch out over Edom a measuring line of destruction and a plumb line of desolation. ¹² Its nobles won't have anything to call a kingdom;ⁱ all its princes will be gone. ¹³ Thorns will grow over its palaces; weeds and thistles will take over its fortresses. It will be a place where jackals live, a home for owls. ¹⁴ It will be a meeting place for desert animals and hyenas, and wild goats will call to each other there. Night animals will settle there and find a place to rest. ¹⁵ There the owl will build its nest, lay and hatch

^f34:4. The Dead Sea Scrolls have “The depths will be split open.”

^g34:5. “After my sword has finished what it has to do in the heavens”: the Dead Sea Scrolls have “My sword will appear in the sky.”

^h34:6. Bozrah was an important Edomite town.

ⁱ34:12. The Hebrew of this line is unclear.

its eggs, and raise its chicks in the shade of its wings. It has become a roost for birds of prey, each one with its mate.

¹⁶ Look in the scroll of the Lord and read what it says: Not a single one of these will be missing its mate, for the Lord has ordered this to happen, and his Spirit has gathered them together. ¹⁷ He assigns them their territories, he divides up the land for them using a measuring line. These birds and animals^j will own it forever, from one generation to the next.

35 ¹ The wilderness and dry land will celebrate; the desert will blossom like the crocus. ² Bloom profusely, celebrate and sing! The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the splendor of our God. ³ Make the weak hands strong, and make the trembling knees firm! ⁴ Tell those who are frightened, “Be strong! Don’t be afraid! Look, your God is coming to punish his enemies, with divine retribution he will come to save you.”

⁵ When that happens, the blind will see, and the deaf will hear. ⁶ The lame will jump like a deer, and the dumb will sing for joy. Springs will gush in the wilderness; streams will flow in the desert. ⁷ The dried-up ground will become like a pool, the arid land like water springs. In the place where jackals^k used to live, there will be grass and reeds and rushes.

⁸ There will be a highway there, a road called “The Way of Holiness.” Nobody bad^l will travel on it, only those who follow the Way. Fools will not go there. ⁹ No lions or other dangerous animals will be found there on the road—only the redeemed will walk along it. ¹⁰ Those the Lord has set free will return, singing as they enter Jerusalem, wearing crowns of everlasting joy. They are overcome with thankfulness and happiness; sorrow and sadness simply disappear.

36 ¹ In the fourteenth year of the reign of Hezekiah, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, attacked and conquered all the fortified towns

^j34:17. “Birds and animals”: supplied for clarity.

^k35:7. Jackals are animals of the desert.

^l35:8. “Bad”: literally, “unclean.”

of Judah.^m ² The king of Assyria sent his army general,ⁿ along with a large army, from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. He stopped by the aqueduct of the upper pool, on the road to the Launderer's Field. ³ Eliakim, son of Hilkiyah, the palace manager, Shebna the scribe, and Joah, son of Asaph, the record-keeper, went out to speak with him.

⁴ The Assyrian army general said to them, “Tell Hezekiah this is what the great king, the king of Assyria, says: What are you trusting in that gives you such confidence? ⁵ You say you have a strategy and are ready for war, but these are empty words. Who are you relying on, now that you have rebelled against me? ⁶ Now look! You're trusting in Egypt, a walking stick that's like a broken reed that will cut the hand of anyone leaning on it. That's what Pharaoh, king of Egypt, is like to everyone who trusts in him. ⁷ If you tell me, ‘We're trusting in the Lord our God,’ well didn't Hezekiah remove his high places and his altars, telling Judah and Jerusalem: ‘You have to worship at this altar in Jerusalem’? ⁸ Why don't you accept a challenge from my master, the king of Assyria? He says, I'll give you two thousand horses, if you can find enough riders for them! ⁹ How could you defeat even a single officer in charge of the weakest of my master's men when you're trusting in Egypt for chariots and horsemen? ¹⁰ More than that—would I have come to attack this place without the Lord's encouragement? It was the Lord himself who told me, ‘Go and attack this land and destroy it.’”

¹¹ Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah, said to the army general, “Please speak to us, your servants, in Aramaic, for we understand it. Don't speak to us in Hebrew while the people on the wall are listening.”

¹² But the army general replied, “Did my master only send me to say these things to your master and to you, and not to the people sitting on the wall? They too, just like you, are going to have to eat their own excrement and drink their own urine!”

¹³ Then the army general shouted out in Hebrew, “Listen to this from the great king, the king of Assyria! ¹⁴ This is what the king says: Don't let Hezekiah trick you! He can't save you! ¹⁵ Don't believe Hezekiah when he tells you to trust in the Lord, saying, ‘I'm

^m36:1. Much of the next three chapters parallel 2 Kings 18 to 2 Kings 20.

ⁿ36:2. Literally, “the Rabshakeh.” However, this is an Assyrian title, not a personal name.

certain the Lord will save us. This city will never fall into the hands of the king of Assyria.’¹⁶ Don't listen to Hezekiah. This is what the king says: Make a peace treaty with me and surrender to me. That way everyone will eat from their own vine and their own fig tree, and drink water from their own well!¹⁷ I will come and take you to a land that's like your own, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards.¹⁸ But don't let Hezekiah trick you when he says, ‘The Lord will deliver us.’ Have any of the gods of any nation ever saved their land from the power of the king of Assyria?¹⁹ Where were the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where were the gods of Sepharvaim? Were they able to save Samaria from me?²⁰ Which one of all the gods of these countries has saved their land from me? How then could the Lord save Jerusalem from me?”

²¹ But the people remained silent and didn't say anything, for Hezekiah had given the order, “Don't answer him.”

²² Then Eliakim, son of Hilkiyah, the palace manager, Shebna the scribe, and Joah, son of Asaph, the record-keeper, went to Hezekiah with their clothes torn, and they told him what the Assyrian army general had said.

37¹ When Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, and went into the Lord's Temple.² He sent Eliakim the palace manager, Shebna, the scribe, and the leading priests, all wearing sackcloth, to see the prophet Isaiah, son of Amoz.³ They told him, “This is what Hezekiah says: Today is a day of trouble and of punishment. It's like when babies arrive at the entrance to the birth canal but there's no strength to deliver them.⁴ Maybe the Lord your God, hearing the message the army commander delivered on behalf of his master, the king of Assyria—a message sent to insult the living God—will punish him for his words. Please say a prayer for the remnant of us who still survive.”

⁵ After Hezekiah's officials delivered his message to Isaiah,⁶ Isaiah replied to them, “Tell your master, This is what the Lord says: Don't be frightened by the words that you have heard, the words used by the servants of the king of Assyria to blaspheme me.⁷ Look, I'm going to scare him—he'll hear a rumor, and he'll have to return to his own country. When he's there I'll have him killed by the sword.”

⁸ The Assyrian army commander left and went back to join the king of Assyria, having heard the king had left Lachish and was attacking Libnah.

⁹ Sennacherib had received a message about Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, that said, “Watch out! He is coming to attack you.” So Sennacherib sent messengers again to Hezekiah, saying, ¹⁰ “Tell Hezekiah, king of Judah: ‘Don’t let your God, the one you’re trusting in, fool you by saying that Jerusalem won’t fall into the hands of the king of Assyria. ¹¹ Look! You’ve heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the countries they’ve invaded^o— they destroyed them completely! Do you really think you’ll be saved? ¹² Did the gods of the nations my forefathers destroyed save them—the gods of Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and the people of Eden who lived in Telassar? ¹³ Where today is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, the king of Hena, or the king of Ivvah?’”

¹⁴ Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers and read it. Then he went up to the Lord’s Temple and opened it out before the Lord. ¹⁵ Hezekiah prayed to the Lord, saying, ¹⁶ “Lord Almighty, God of Israel, you who live above the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth, you are Creator of heaven and earth. ¹⁷ Please listen with your ears, Lord, and hear; open your eyes, Lord, and see. Listen to the message that Sennacherib has sent to insult the living God.

¹⁸ Yes, it’s true, Lord, that the Assyrian kings have destroyed these nations and their lands. ¹⁹ They have thrown their gods into the fire because they are not really gods—they are just the work of human hands, made of wood and stone so they could destroy them. ²⁰ Now, Lord our God, please save us from him, in order that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that only you, Lord, are God.”

²¹ Then Isaiah, son of Amoz, sent a message to Hezekiah, saying, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Because you’ve prayed to me about Sennacherib, king of Assyria, ²² this is the word of the Lord condemning him: The virgin daughter of Zion scorns you and mocks you; the daughter of Jerusalem shakes her head as you run away. ²³ Who have you been insulting and ridiculing? Who did you raise your voice against? Who did you look at with so proud

^o37:11. “They’ve invaded”: implied.

eyes? It was against the Holy One of Israel! ²⁴ By your servants you have mocked the Lord. You said: ‘With my many chariots I have ascended to the high mountains, to the farthest peaks of Lebanon. I have chopped down its tallest cedars, the best of its cypress trees. I have reached its most distant heights, its deepest forests. ²⁵ I have dug wells and drunk water in foreign lands. With the soles of my feet I dried up all the rivers in Egypt.’”

²⁶ The Lord replies,^p “Haven’t you heard? I decided it long ago; I planned it in the olden days. Now I am making sure it happens—that you are to knock down fortified towns into piles of rubble. ²⁷ Their people, powerless, are terrified and humiliated. They’re like plants in a field, like soft green shoots, like grass that sprouts on the rooftop—scorched before it can even grow.

²⁸ But I know you very well—where you live, when you come in, when you leave, and your furious anger against me. ²⁹ Because of your furious anger against me, and because I know how you disrespect me, I’m going to put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth, and I will force you to return the same way you came.”

³⁰ “Hezekiah, this will be a sign to prove this is true:^q This year you’ll eat what grows by itself. The second year you’ll eat what grows from that. But in the third year you’ll sow and reap, you’ll plant vineyards and eat their fruit. ³¹ The remnant that’s left of Judah will revive again, sending roots below and bearing fruit above. ³² For a remnant will come out of Jerusalem, and survivors will come from Mount Zion. The intense determination of the Lord will make sure this happens. ³³ This is what the Lord says about the king of Assyria: He shall not enter this city or shoot an arrow at it. He shall not advance towards it with a shield, or build a siege ramp against it. ³⁴ He shall return the same way he came, and he shall not enter this city, says the Lord. ³⁵ I will defend this city and save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David.”

³⁶ Then the angel of the Lord went to the Assyrian camp and killed 185,000 of them. When the survivors woke up in the morning, they were surrounded by dead bodies. ³⁷ Sennacherib, king of Assyria, gave up and left. He returned home to Nineveh and stayed there. ³⁸ While he was worshiping in the temple of his god Nisroch, his

^p37:26. “The Lord replies”: supplied for clarity.

^q37:30. “To prove this is true”: implied.

sons Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with the sword and then ran away to the land of Ararat. His son Esar-haddon succeeded him as king.

38¹ About this time Hezekiah fell very sick and was about to die. The prophet Isaiah, son of Amoz, went to him and said, “This is what the Lord says: Put your affairs in order, because you are going to die. You won’t recover.”

² When Hezekiah heard this, he went to pray privately^r to the Lord, saying ³ “Please remember Lord how I have followed you faithfully with all my heart. I have done what is good in your sight.” Then Hezekiah cried and cried.

⁴ Then the Lord sent a message to Isaiah, saying, ⁵ “Go and tell Hezekiah, This is what the Lord, the God of your forefather David, says: I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears. I will add fifteen years to your life. ⁶ I will save you and this city from the king of Assyria. I will defend this city.

⁷ This is the sign from the Lord to you that the Lord will do what he promised: ⁸ Look, I will make the shadow made by the sun go back the ten steps that it has gone down on the stairway of Ahaz. So the sun went back the ten steps that it had gone down on the stairway of Ahaz.”

⁹ This is what Hezekiah, king of Judah, wrote after he recovered from his sickness:

¹⁰ I said to myself, “Do I have to go to my death^s just as my life is going well? Why can’t I count on the rest of my years?”

¹¹ I said, “I will never again see the Lord, the Lord, in the land of the living. I won’t see anyone else again, none of the inhabitants of this world. ¹² Like a shepherd’s tent, the place where I live^t has been pulled up and taken away from me. Like a weaver I have rolled up the cloth of my life and cut it from the loom. Day and night you bring me to an end. ¹³ I lie there patiently until the morning, but I feel like there’s a lion breaking every bone in my body. Day and

^r38:2. “Privately”: literally, “turned his face to the wall.”

^s38:10. “Death” literally, “gates of Sheol.”

^t38:12. “The place where I live”: referring to his body.

night you bring me to an end. ¹⁴ I scream like a swift or a songbird,^u I moan like a dove. My eyes grow dim as I look heavenwards. I'm being attacked, Lord, please come and support me!

¹⁵ Yet what can I say? He told me what was going to happen, and he himself did it.^v I will walk quietly for the rest of my life because of the painful experience I went through. ¹⁶ Lord, we live by what you say and do, and I find life in all of this. You have given me back my health and allowed me to live. ¹⁷ It was definitely for my own good I went through this bitter experience. You in your love saved me from the pit of destruction and you have forgiven all my sins. ¹⁸ Those in the grave cannot praise you, the dead cannot praise you. Those who go down into the pit can no longer hope in your faithfulness. ¹⁹ It's only the living who can praise you as I'm doing today. Parents explain to their children how you can be trusted. ²⁰ The Lord saved me! We will sing my songs with stringed instruments all the days of our lives in the Lord's Temple.”

²¹ Isaiah had said, “Prepare a dressing of figs and spread it on the skin sores so he may recover.” ²² Hezekiah had asked, “What is the sign to confirm that I will go to the Lord's Temple?”

39 ¹ At the same time Merodach-baladan, son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a gift to Hezekiah, because he had heard that Hezekiah was sick and had recovered. ² Hezekiah happily welcomed the visitors and showed them what he had in his treasury—all the silver, the gold, the spices, and the expensive oils. He also showed them his whole armory and all that he had in his storehouses. In fact there wasn't anything in his palace or in the whole of his kingdom that Hezekiah didn't show them.

³ Then the prophet Isaiah went to King Hezekiah and asked him, “Where did those men come from, and what did they tell you?”

“They came to see me from a long way away, from Babylon,” Hezekiah replied.

⁴ “What did they see in your palace?” Isaiah asked.

“They saw everything in my palace,” replied Hezekiah. “There wasn't anything in all my storehouses I didn't show them.”

^u**38:14.** “Songbird”: some have suggested “thrush,” but the meaning is uncertain. It was certainly meant to reflect a plaintive, sad cry, and therefore the common translation of “crane” is certainly incorrect.

^v**38:15.** Referring to his illness.

⁵ Isaiah told Hezekiah, “Listen to what the Lord says: ⁶ You can be certain that the time is coming when everything in your palace, and everything that your forefathers have saved up until now, will be taken away to Babylon. There will be nothing left, says the Lord. ⁷ Some of your sons, your own offspring, will be taken to serve as eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.”

⁸ Hezekiah said to Isaiah, “The message from the Lord that you have told me is fine.” For he said to himself, “There’ll definitely be peace and safety in my lifetime.”

40 ¹ “Comfort, yes comfort my people!” says your God. ² “Speak lovingly to the people of Jerusalem, telling them that their hard times are over, that their sins have been forgiven, and that the Lord has paid them twice over for their sins.”

³ A voice is heard calling, “Prepare the way for the Lord in the wilderness, make a straight highway for our God through the desert. ⁴ Fill in all the valleys; level all the mountains and hills; smooth out the uneven ground; make the rough places flat. ⁵ The Lord’s glory will be revealed, and everyone will see it together. This is what the Lord has declared.”

⁶ A voice is heard saying, “Shout it out.” I asked, “What shall I shout?” “All human beings are like grass, and all their trustworthiness is like the flowers of the field. ⁷ The grass wilts and the flower fades when the Lord’s breathes on them. Yes, the people are grass! ⁸ However, even though the grass wilts and the flower fades, the word of our God will endure forever.”

⁹ Zion, bringer of good news, go up a high mountain. Jerusalem, bringer of good news, raise your voice and shout out loud. Don’t be afraid to shout really loud! Tell the towns of Judah, “Here is your God!” ¹⁰ Look! The Lord God is coming with power! He will rule with a firm hand. Look! He’s bringing his reward with him, coming to give his gift. ¹¹ He looks after his flock like a shepherd. He picks up the lambs in his arms and holds them close to his chest. He leads those that are nursing young.

¹² Who has measured the waters he holds in the palm of his hand? Who has marked off the heavens with the span of his hand? Who has worked out the amount of dust of the earth? Who has weighed the mountains on a scale and the hills with a balance? ¹³ Who has measured the Spirit of the Lord, or taught him what to do as

his counselor? ¹⁴ Who did the Lord go to for advice to help him understand? Who taught him right from wrong? Who gave him knowledge and showed him the way of wisdom?

¹⁵ It's obvious that the nations are just a drop in a bucket. They're like dust on a set of scales. He can pick up islands as if they weigh next to nothing. ¹⁶ All the wood in Lebanon for a fire and all its animals as a sacrifice wouldn't be enough a burnt offering. ¹⁷ To him all the nations are like nothing. He counts them as less than nothing—like they don't exist.

¹⁸ Who do you think is like God? What image do you think he looks like? ¹⁹ Is he a metal idol that a craftsman casts in a mold, and then a goldsmith overlays it with gold and makes silver chains for it? ²⁰ Those who are too poor to pay for that choose wood that won't rot, then they look for a skilled wood-carver to make an idol that won't fall over.

²¹ Don't you know? Haven't you heard? Hasn't it been explained to you from the very beginning? Haven't you understood from the time the world was created?^w ²² God sits on his throne above the horizon of the earth; the people that live there are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a curtain, spreading them out like a tent to live in. ²³ He brings leaders down; he makes the rulers of the world like nothing. ²⁴ In fact they are hardly even planted, hardly even sown, hardly even taken root, when he blows on them and they wither, and the wind carries them away like straw.

²⁵ “Who are you going to compare me with? Who is equal to me?” asks the Holy One.

²⁶ Look at the heavens. Who created all this? He leads the stars like an army, and calls each one by name. Because he has great power and incredible strength, not a single one of them is missing.

²⁷ Why do you speak like this, Jacob, and why do you say, Israel, “The Lord doesn't see what's happening to me, and he's ignoring my rights!”

²⁸ Don't you know? Haven't you heard? The Lord is the eternal God, the Creator of the whole earth. He's never weak or tired; you can't find out all he knows. ²⁹ He gives strength to the weary and power the powerless. ³⁰ Even young people grow weak and tired—they fall down when they're exhausted. ³¹ But those who trust

^w40:21. “The world was created”: literally, “the foundations of the world.”

in the Lord will have their strength renewed. They will fly high with wings like eagles. They will run and not be tired. They will walk and not be worn out.

41¹ Listen to me in silence, you people who live in lands beyond the sea. Let the nations regain their strength. Then let them come and speak, and let us join together for judgment.^x

² Who has encouraged this one from the east who is called into God's service^y to do what is right?^z He gives him nations, and helps him trample kings underfoot. He makes them like dust with his sword, and turns them into chaff with his bow, blown before him on the wind. ³ He chases them down, and goes on unharmed, not following the usual routes. ⁴ Who has achieved and done this, calling into existence each generation from the beginning of time? I, the Lord, the first and the last, I am the one.

⁵ The islands watch in fear, the distant lands tremble. They get together and consult. ⁶ They all help each other, encouraging one another to “Be strong!” ⁷ The craftsman encourages the goldsmith; the one who beats out the metal with a hammer encourages the one hitting the anvil, saying the soldering is good. They nail the idol down so it won't fall over.

⁸ But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, the ones I have chosen, descendants of my friend Abraham, ⁹ I brought you back from distant lands, I called you back from faraway places, telling you, “You are my servants.” I have chosen you, and I have not abandoned you. ¹⁰ Don't be afraid, for I am with you! Don't be frightened for I, your God, will make you strong, and I will certainly help you. I will support you with my strong hand, acting for what is right.

¹¹ See—everyone who is angry with you will be ashamed and disgraced. Those who fight against you will end up as nothing and die. ¹² Even though you look for your enemies, you won't find them. Those who attack you will become absolutely nothing. ¹³ For I the Lord will grab you by the hand and tell you, “Don't be afraid! I myself will help you. ¹⁴ Don't be frightened, Jacob, you little worm, you people of Israel, for I will help you,” declared the Lord your

^x41:1. From what follows, and the context of previous verses, this chapter appears to be a call to decide between the true God and idols.

^y41:2. “Into God's service”: literally, “to his feet.”

^z41:2. The prophecy is usually taken to refer to King Cyrus.

Savior, the Holy One of Israel. ¹⁵ Look! I will make you into a new and sharp threshing device,^a with many pointed teeth. You will thresh the mountains and crush the hills, turning them into chaff.

¹⁶ You will throw them into the air, the wind will carry them away, and a storm will scatter them. Then you will be happy in the Lord, and boast about the Holy One of Israel.

¹⁷ The poor and needy search for water, but don't find any—their tongues are dry with thirst. I, the Lord, will respond to them; I, the God of Israel, won't abandon them. ¹⁸ I will open up rivers in the desolate highlands and springs in the valleys. I will make pools in the wilderness and springs in the desert. ¹⁹ I will plant cedars, acacias, myrtles, and olive trees in the desert. I will place evergreens in the desert, firs and box trees together. ²⁰ In this way everyone can see and know, they can think about it and draw the conclusion that the it is the Lord who has done this, that the Holy One of Israel made it happen.

²¹ “Now you submit your case,”^b says the Lord. “Present your evidence,” says the King of Jacob. ²² “Let them^c come and tell us what's about to happen. Let them explain the things of the past, so that we can think about them and discover the final outcome. Or they can tell us about the future. ²³ Predict what's coming so we can know for sure that you are gods. At least do something, good or bad, to impress us when we see it. ²⁴ But look at you! You're nothing, and you can't do anything! Anyone who chooses you is disgusting!

²⁵ I have encouraged the one who comes from the north. He is from the east,^d and will respect me.^e He will tread on rulers as if they were mortar, like a potter treading on clay.^f

^a41:15. “Threshing device”: used for processing grain.

^b41:21. Regarding the abilities of idols in contrast to the evidence of the actions of God already mentioned

^c41:22. Referring to the idols, the false gods.

^d41:25. If this prophecy is taken to refer to Cyrus (see verse 2), then he comes from the east (literally “the rising sun”), but his entrance into Palestine would be from the north.

^e41:25. “Respect me”: literally, “call on my name,” often associated with the idea of worship.

^f41:25. Both mortar and clay were mixed using the feet.

²⁶ Who announced this beforehand so that we could know about it? Who let us know in the past, so that now we could say: ‘He was right’? None of you announced it, none of you predicted it, and nobody heard you say a word!^g ²⁷ I was the first to announce to Zion: ‘Look, here they are!’ I was the one who brought to Jerusalem the good news. ²⁸ I look at these idols, and find there is no one who can say anything.^h None of them can give advice; when I ask them something, they can’t even answer. ²⁹ Look at them! They’re all evil, deceptive things. They can’t do anything! They’re just idols full of hot air!ⁱ”

42 ¹ Look! Here is my servant, the one I support; my chosen one who pleases me.^j I have placed my Spirit on him, and he will show the nations what is right. ² He won’t shout or cry out; he won’t raise his voice in the street. ³ He won’t break a damaged reed; he won’t snuff out a smoldering wick. He will faithfully make sure everyone is treated fairly. ⁴ He won’t give up or become discouraged until he has made sure that justice is upheld throughout the world. Even lands overseas will look forward to his teachings.

⁵ This is what God the Lord says, the one who created the heavens and stretched them out, who made the earth and everything in it, who gives breath to the people on it, and life to those who live there: ⁶ “I, the Lord, have called you to demonstrate what’s right, and I will hold your hand. I will take care of you, and give you as a sign of my agreement with the people and as a light to the nations. ⁷ You will make the blind see, set free those who are locked up, and lead those who sit in darkness out from prison.

⁸ I am the Lord—that is my name! I do not give my honor to anyone else; I do not give my praise to idols. ⁹ Notice that what I foretold has come true, as will the new things I’m saying to you now. I tell you what will happen before it does.”

¹⁰ Sing a new song to the Lord! Sing praise from everywhere on earth, you who sail on the sea and everything in it, you islands and everyone who lives in them. ¹¹ Let the people in the desert and its towns shout; let the people of the villages of Kedar cry out loud. Let

^g41:26. Referring to the inability of idols to predict the future.

^h41:28. Expanded for clarity.

ⁱ41:29. “Hot air”: literally, “wind and emptiness.”

^j42:1. Matthew applies this passage to Jesus: Matthew 12:18-21.

the people of Sela sing for joy; let them shout from the mountaintops. ¹² Let them glorify the Lord and praise him in the islands. ¹³ Like a mighty warrior the Lord will march out, like a seasoned soldier he goes out with courage. He gives his war-cry, shouting as he battles and defeats his enemies.

¹⁴ “I didn't say anything for a long time, I kept quiet and restrained myself. But now like a woman giving birth, I will moan and gasp and pant. ¹⁵ I will dry up the mountains and the hills, and make all their greenery wither. I will turn rivers into islands and dry up the pools. ¹⁶ I will lead the blind along a road they don't know; I will guide them along paths they don't know. I will turn darkness into light before them, and smooth out the rough places. This is what I'm going to do for them; I won't let them down. ¹⁷ But those who trust in idols and say to images, ‘You are our gods!’ will be rejected in humiliation and shame.

¹⁸ Listen, you deaf people! Look and see, you blind people! ¹⁹ Who is blind like my servant? Who is deaf like my messenger that I send? Who is as blind as the people of the agreement? Who is as blind as the servant of the Lord?^k ²⁰ You've looked at many things but have not really seen; you've heard but never really listened.”

²¹ Because the Lord does what is right he wanted to show how important and wonderful his instructions were. ²² But this people ended up robbed and raided, all of them trapped in holes or hidden in prisons. They have been stolen like loot, with no one to save them from being someone's prize, no one to say “Give them back!”

²³ Who of you is going to listen to this, or pay attention later on? ²⁴ Who let Jacob be taken as loot; who let Israel be taken by robbers? Wasn't it the Lord who we sinned against? The people weren't willing to follow his ways, and they refused to obey his law. ²⁵ So he poured out his furious anger on them, and the violence of war. Even though they were surrounded by flames, but they still didn't understand. The fire burned them up, but they still did not take the situation seriously.

43 ¹ But now this is what the Lord says to Jacob, the one who created you; to Israel, the one who formed you: “Don't be afraid! I have saved you! I have called you by name; you are mine!

^k42:19. This verse and the following seem to apply to God's people rather than the “Messianic” servant.

² When you walk through the water, I will be with you; and when you go through the rivers, they won't flood over you. When you walk through fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you on fire. ³ For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I gave Egypt to pay for your freedom; I traded Ethiopia and Seba for you. ⁴ Because you are so valuable to me, because I honor you, and because I love you, I give people in exchange for you, nations in exchange for your lives.

⁵ Don't be afraid, for I am with you! I will bring you and your children from the east and the west, and gather you together. ⁶ I will tell the north, 'Hand them over!' and the south, 'Don't stop them!' Bring my sons back from far away and my daughters from distant lands. ⁷ Bring back everyone who bears my name, those I created for my honor, those I formed and made.

⁸ Bring back those who have eyes but are blind, those who have ears but are deaf. ⁹ Have all the nations gather together! Have all the peoples assemble! Who among them could have said this, and predict what was going to happen? Have them bring their witnesses to prove that they're right. Then have them listen, and say, 'It's true!'¹

¹⁰ However, you are my witnesses, the Lord declares, and my chosen servant, so that you can think about it, and believe me and understand that I am God.^m No god preceded me, and none will come after me. ¹¹ I, yes I am the Lord, and there is no Savior apart from me. ¹² I predicted what was going to happen, then I saved you, then I announced it—there was no foreign god among you that did this. You are my witnesses that I am God, declares the Lord. ¹³ I am God from the beginning.ⁿ No one can snatch anybody from my hand. No one can reverse what I do.

¹⁴ This is what the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, says: For your sake I will send attackers against Babylon and bring them down. All the Babylonians will be like fugitives, escaping in the ships they're so proud of.^o ¹⁵ I am the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, and your King. ¹⁶ This is what the Lord says, the

¹43:9. This refers back to the previous chapter and the inability of the idols to predict the future, as God has just done. Clearly nobody could meet God's challenge.

^m43:10. "I am God": literally, "I am he." Also in verse 25.

ⁿ43:13. "I am God from the beginning": literally, "Before the day was I am he."

^o43:14. The Hebrew of the last part of this verse is obscure.

one who makes a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters; ¹⁷ the one who brought out a great army with it horses and chariots and lay them down, never to rise again, snuffed out like a burning wick.

¹⁸ But don't dwell on the past; don't concentrate on what happened back then. ¹⁹ Just look at something new I'm going to do now! In fact it's started already. Can't you see it? Yes, I'm making a way through the wilderness, rivers in the desert! ²⁰ The wild animals will be grateful to me, the jackals and the owls, because I'm providing water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, so my people, my chosen people, can drink. ²¹ I made this people for myself so that through their praise for me they could make me known.

²² But you haven't called on me for help, Jacob. You've grown tired of me, Israel. ²³ You haven't brought me sheep for burnt offerings; you haven't honored me with your sacrifices. I haven't burdened you by asking for grain offerings; I haven't tired you out by demanding incense. ²⁴ You haven't used your money to buy scented calamus;^p you have not pleased me with the fat of your sacrifices. Instead you have burdened me with your sins, and tired me out with your guilt. ²⁵ I, yes I am the God who wipes out your sins because of who I am, and who doesn't remember your sins any more. ²⁶ Remind me of the evidence so we can come to a decision together! Present your case to prove that you're right! ²⁷ Your very first father sinned, and your leaders rebelled against me. ²⁸ So I treated the priests of the sanctuary with contempt, and I handed Jacob over to be destroyed, and Israel to be scorned.”

44 ¹ But now listen, Jacob, my servant, Israel, the one I've chosen. ² This is what the Lord says, the one who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you: Don't be afraid, Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun,^q the one I've chosen. ³ For I'm going to pour out water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground. I'm going to pour out my Spirit on your descendants, and my blessing on your children. ⁴ They will grow up among the grass, like willows beside streams. ⁵ One of them will say, “I belong to the Lord,” while another will call himself by the name Jacob, and yet

^p43:24. “Calamus”: a sweet-smelling plant used in perfumes and ancient medicines.

^q44:2. “Jeshurun”: another name for Israel.

another will write on his hand, “Belonging to the Lord,” and will name himself Israel.

⁶ This is what the Lord says, the King and Redeemer of Israel, the Lord Almighty: I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides me. ⁷ Who is like me? Let them announce it, make a declaration, and demonstrate it before me. For I was the one who long ago established a people and predicted its future. Let them predict what's going to happen. ⁸ Don't tremble, don't be afraid! Didn't I tell you long ago what I was going to do? Didn't I explain it? You are my witnesses. Is there any God besides me? There is no other Rock—I don't know any!

⁹ All those who make idols are stupid; these things they love so much don't bring them any benefit. Those people who believe in idols can't see this, and they don't know anything, making them look foolish. ¹⁰ Who makes a god, who molds an idol that's no use to them? ¹¹ Everyone who makes idols should be ashamed of themselves. Idol-makers are just human beings! Bring them all together and have them stand up, trembling in shame.

¹² The blacksmith makes an iron tool for woodcarving. Working over hot coals, he hammers it into shape as hard as he can. He gets hungry and loses his strength, and because he doesn't drink he grows weak. ¹³ The woodworker measures out a piece of wood, and draws an image on it. He carves it with a chisel and uses a compass to make an outline. He creates an idol that looks like a person, someone beautiful, to be put in a shrine. ¹⁴ He chops down cedars, or takes a cypress or an oak. He lets them grow strong in the forest. He plants a fir tree, and the rain makes it grow. ¹⁵ Some wood he burns, to keep him warm and to bake his bread. Then he uses some of the same wood to make a god to worship, an idol he bows down to! ¹⁶ So he burns part of the wood to roast his meat to eat, and to warm him up, and says, “Ah! Look at that fire that keeps me warm!” ¹⁷ Then he uses the rest of the wood to make himself a god, an idol he bows down to in worship and prays to, saying, “Save me, for you are my god!”

¹⁸ How ignorant they are, how dumb! Their eyes have been plastered over so they can't see, their minds closed so they don't have insight. ¹⁹ They can't think things over, they don't have the wisdom or the understanding to say, “Some of the wood I burned

in the fire—I used it to bake my bread and roast my meat to eat. The rest of it I used to make a disgusting idol, and I bow down in worship to a block of wood.”²⁰ He is feeding on ashes, seduced by the deceptive thinking of his mind. He can't save himself, and he doesn't even ask, “Isn't this idol I'm holding just a lie?”

²¹ “Remember all this, Jacob and Israel, for you are my servant. I made you, Israel, you are my servant. I won't forget you. ²² I have wiped away your acts of rebellion as if they were like a cloud, your sins as if they were like the mist. Come back to me, for I have set you free.”

²³ Sing in celebration, you heavens, for the Lord has done this; cry out loud, you depths of the earth. Shout with joy, you mountains, you forests and every tree. For the Lord has set Jacob free, and his glory is shown in Israel!

²⁴ This is what the Lord says, your Redeemer, who shaped you in the womb: “I am the Lord, the Creator of everything. I alone made the heavens, and I myself formed the earth.”^r ²⁵ I am the one who proves the signs of false prophets are wrong. I am the one who makes fools of fortune-tellers. I turn the wisdom of the wise upside-down, and make their knowledge ridiculous.^s ²⁶ But I confirm the messages given by my servants, and fulfill what my messengers say. They state, ‘Jerusalem will be inhabited again, the towns of Judah will be rebuilt, your ruins will be repaired.’ ²⁷ When I order deep waters, ‘Dry up!’ I will make sure the rivers dry up! ²⁸ When I say to Cyrus, ‘You are my shepherd,’ he will carry out everything I wish. He will give the order, ‘Jerusalem shall be rebuilt,’ and he will say, ‘the Temple shall be restored.’”

45¹ This is what the Lord says to Cyrus, the one he has anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped to direct him to defeat nations and to make kings weak, to open doors before him and gates that will not be shut. ² I will go ahead of you and level the mountains.^t I will break down bronze gates and cut through iron bars. ³ I will give you hidden treasure, treasure concealed in secret

^r44:24. Isaiah poetically speaks of the heavens being “stretched out,” and the earth being “spread out.”

^s44:25. “Ridiculous”: or “nonsensical.”

^t45:2. Dead Sea Scrolls and Septuagint reading.

places, so that you can know for sure that I am the Lord, the God of Israel, the one who calls you by name.

⁴I call you by name and I have given you a title of honor, for the sake of Jacob my servant, and Israel the one I chose, even though you don't know me. ⁵I am the Lord, there is no God apart from me. Apart from me there is no God. I will make you strong, even though you don't know me, ⁶so that everyone, from the east to the west, will know that there is no God apart from me, that I am the Lord, and there is none apart from me. ⁷I create light, and I make darkness, I bring peace and I bring about disaster. I am the Lord and I do all this. ⁸Let the rain fall from the sky above, let goodness fall from the clouds, let the earth open up to receive goodness and salvation so they can grow together. I, the Lord, created them.

⁹What trouble people face when they fight with their Creator—they're just pots among all the other pots on earth! Does the clay tell the potter who is shaping it, "What are you doing?" or "What you're making is so bad it's like you have no hands!" ¹⁰How bad it would be if you said to your father, "Why did you have me?" or to your mother, "Why was I ever born?"!

¹¹This is what the Lord says, the Holy One of Israel, your Creator: You can ask me about things to come. But are you going to lecture me about my children and what I do? ¹²I'm the one who made the earth, and I created human beings to live there. It was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I ordered all the stars to come into being.^u

¹³Because I do what's right, I will encourage him^v and smooth out all the roads he takes. He will rebuild my city and will set my exiles free without being paid or bribed to do so, says the Lord Almighty.

¹⁴This is what the Lord says: "The productive Egyptians and the Ethiopian traders, as well as the tall Sabeian people, will come over to you and will belong to you. They will walk behind you in chains and bow down to you, pleading with you, saying, 'God is certainly with you, and there is no other God besides him.'"

¹⁵Yet you are a God who hides himself, God of Israel, Savior. ¹⁶Everyone who makes idols are ashamed and humiliated, all of them are disgraced. ¹⁷But Israel will be saved by the Lord with a

^u45:12. "To come into being": supplied for clarity.

^v45:13. Referring back to Cyrus mentioned in verse 1.

salvation that lasts forever. You will never be ashamed or disgraced for all eternity.

¹⁸ For this is what the Lord says, the God who created the heavens, who formed and made the earth, he founded it. He didn't make it to be left empty, but formed it to be inhabited. He is the one who says, I am the Lord, and there is no God apart from me. ¹⁹ I haven't been talking in secret in an obscure place. I didn't tell the descendants of Jacob: Look for me in a place where no one can be found.^w I, the Lord, tell the truth—I say what's right.

²⁰ Gather yourselves together, and come, come close, you refugees of the nations. Aren't they stupid, these people who carry around their wooden idols, and who pray to a god that can't save them?

²¹ Discuss this together, and then speak up, present your case. Who predicted this long ago? Who said what would happen in the future back in the past? Wasn't that me, the Lord? There is no other God except me, no other God who does what is right, and who saves. There is no God apart from me. ²² Everyone on earth, come to me and be saved, for I am God and there is no God apart from me. ²³ I have sworn by my own self, I have spoken what is right, and I won't ever go back on it. Everyone shall bow before me; everyone shall acknowledge me. ²⁴ They will say about me, “Salvation and strength can only be found in the Lord.” Everyone who has fought against him will come to him and will be ashamed. ²⁵ But in the Lord all the descendants of Israel will be made right, and they will glory in him.

46¹ Bel bows down, Nebo bends low;^x their idols are carried off on beasts of burden, a heavy weight for the tired animals.

² They bend low and bow down together—they can't help rescue their idols, and they themselves go off into captivity.

³ Listen to me, descendants of Jacob, all those who are left of the people of Israel. I have looked after you since you were born, carrying you from birth. ⁴ Even when you're old, I will still be your God; even when your hair turns white, I will still support you. I made you, I will carry you, I will support you, and I will save you.

⁵ Who will you liken me to? Who will you reckon to be my equal? Who will you compare me with, as if we were alike?

^w45:19. “In a place where no one can be found”: literally, “emptiness.”

^x46:1. Bel and Nebo were Babylonian gods. The picture here is of the conqueror dragging away the idols of a defeated people.

⁶ There are those who extravagantly tip out gold from their bags, and weigh out silver on the scales, and hire a goldsmith to make them a god they can bow down to and worship. ⁷ They lift the idol onto their shoulders, carry it along, and then put it in place. It stays there and doesn't move. Even when people cry out to it for help, it doesn't answer—it can't save them from their troubles.

⁸ Remember this, and act like men! Think about it, you rebels! ⁹ Remember what I've done for you since the beginning, for I am God, and there is no God apart from me. I am God, and there is none like me. ¹⁰ I am the one who can predict what will happen in the end from the very beginning, declaring from ancient times what the future will bring. Whatever I plan will take place; I will accomplish everything I wish. ¹¹ I'm calling a bird of prey from the east, a man from a distant country who will carry out my plan.^y I have spoken, and I will make sure it happens. I have made my plan, and I will carry it out.

¹² Listen to me, you stubborn people, who are such a long way from doing what's right! ¹³ Very shortly I am going to make things right—it won't be long. I will come with my salvation without delay—I will save Zion to demonstrate my glory to Israel.

47 ¹ Go down and sit in the dust, virgin daughter of Babylon. Sit on the ground without a throne, daughter of Babylonia!^z No longer will people call you gentle and delicate. ² Go to work grinding flour with millstones. Remove your veil. Strip off your skirt, bare your legs, wade through rivers. ³ You will be seen naked; what should be kept private will be shamefully exposed. I will take vengeance—I won't spare anyone.

⁴ Our Redeemer—his name is the Lord Almighty—is the Holy One of Israel.

⁵ Sit quietly, and go into the darkness, daughter of Babylonia. Never again will you be called queen of all kingdoms. ⁶ I was angry with my people, and I abandoned those who belonged to me.^a I handed them over to you. But you didn't show them mercy—you

^y46:11. Once again this is taken to refer to Cyrus.

^z47:1. “Babylonia”: literally, “Chaldea,” another name for Babylonia. Also verse 5, and 48:14.

^a47:6. “I abandoned those who belonged to me”: literally, “I profaned my inheritance.”

even mistreated old people. ⁷ You said, “I will reign forever as the eternal queen.” But you didn't think about what was coming; you didn't remember what would happen to you in the end.

⁸ Now listen to this, you sensual woman,^b sitting there so sure of yourself, saying to yourself, “I am supreme^c—there's nobody besides me. I shall never be a widow or experience the loss of my children.”

⁹ But both these things will happen to you in quick succession! In just one day you will lose your children and become a widow. You will have this experience in its totality, in spite of all your witchcraft, in spite of all your magic spells. ¹⁰ You put your trust in your evil actions, saying “No one can see what I'm doing.” Your wisdom and knowledge seduced you, and you told yourself, “I am supreme—there's nobody besides me.” ¹¹ Evil^d is going to strike you, and you won't be able to magic it away. Disaster will fall on you that you can't stop by paying a ransom. Destruction will suddenly hit you that you weren't expecting.

¹² So keep going with your magic spells and all your witchcraft, which you have worked at since you were young. Maybe you'll be successful, maybe you'll terrify people! ¹³ All the advice you've received has worn you out! Where are your astrologers, those who look to the stars for guidance, who give you their predictions every month? Let them stand up and save you from what's coming down on you! ¹⁴ But look at them! They're like stubble that fire burns up completely—they can't even save their own lives from the flames. This is no fire to sit beside and grow warm! ¹⁵ All those people you've worked with, all those you've traded with from when you were young—they will all go their own way, nobody will come and save you.

48 ¹ Listen to this, descendants of Jacob, called by the name of Israel, and who come from the lineage^e of Judah. Listen, you people who swear by the name of the Lord, or who invoke the God of Israel, but not truly or sincerely. ² You say you're from the “Holy City,” and claim you're trusting in the God of Israel, whose

^b47:8. Though the image of a woman continues, the subject is the kingdom of Babylon.

^c47:8. “I am supreme”: the Hebrew simply has the emphatic “I.”

^d47:11. The same word is used here as in verse 10.

^e48:1. “Lineage”: literally, “waters.”

name is the Lord Almighty. ³ I predicted long ago what was going to happen—I said it and let people know. Then suddenly I decided to act, and it all came true. ⁴ I know how stubborn you are, with necks as unbending as iron and foreheads as hard as bronze. ⁵ I predicted these things to you long ago, before they happened. I explained them to you so that you couldn't say “My idol did this,” or “My image and my metal god ordered this to happen.” ⁶ You've heard all I predicted, and seen it happen. Won't you admit it? Now I'm going to tell you new things, secrets you don't know anything about. ⁷ These are brand-new, not something from the past. Before today you won't have heard anything about them, so you can't say, “Oh yes, I know about that.”

⁸ No, you've never heard that, and you've never known that! Nobody's told you about that before! I know how deviously you operate—you're called “rebels from birth!” ⁹ But because of my nature^f I am delaying my punishment; and because of my reputation, I'm not going to destroy you. ¹⁰ Look how I've refined you, but not like silver—I chose you in the furnace of trouble. ¹¹ The reason I'm doing this is because of who I am, yes, because of my very nature. I won't let my reputation be damaged—I won't let anyone else have it.

¹² Listen to me, Jacon, and Israel, the one I called. Only I am God. I am the first, and I am the last. ¹³ I laid the foundations of the earth with my own hands; I personally spread out the heavens. When I call the stars, they all take their positions.

¹⁴ Everyone gather round and listen. Which of your “gods”^g told you anything like this? The one the Lord loves will carry out the Lord's wishes against Babylon—he will attack the Babylonians. ¹⁵ I myself have spoken. I have called him to do this, and he will be successful in what he does. ¹⁶ Come close to me, and listen to this. From the very beginning I haven't spoken in secret; I am always there right when it happens. Now the Lord God and his Spirit has sent me to tell you this:

¹⁷ This is what the Lord says, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, I am the Lord your God. I am the one who teaches you what is good for you, who leads you along the way you should

^f48:9. “Nature”: literally, “name.”

^g48:14. “Of your ‘gods’”: literally, “among you,” but the reference in context is clearly to idol.

go. ¹⁸ If you had only listened carefully to what I told you! Then your blessings would have flowed like a river, and goodness would have washed over you like the waves of the sea. ¹⁹ Your children, your descendants, would have been like all those grains of sand. They wouldn't have had to be destroyed, wiped out before me. ²⁰ Leave Babylon! Run away from Babylonia with happy shouts! Let everyone know, telling the whole earth, “The Lord has redeemed his servant Jacob!” ²¹ They weren't thirsty when he led them through the desert—he made water come out of the rock for them. He split the rock open and water poured out.

²² The wicked have no peace, says the Lord.

49 ¹ Listen to me, you people of the islands!^h Pay attention, you who live far away! The Lord called me before I was born; he gave me my name while I was still in my mother's womb. ² The words he gave me to speak are like a sharp sword. He has protected me by covering me with his hand. He put me in his quiver like a sharp arrow, keeping me safe there.

³ He told me, “You are my servant, Israel, and I will reveal my glory through you.”

⁴ But I replied, “I've worked for nothing! I've exhausted myself, and for what? Even so, I leave it with the Lord to do what's right, and my reward is with my God.”

⁵ Now my Lord is going to speak, the one who formed me in the womb as his servant to bring Jacob back to him, to gather Israel to himself.ⁱ I am honored in the Lord's sight, and my God has given me strength. ⁶ He says, “It's nothing much for you to be my servant to bring back the tribes of Jacob, those people of Israel that I've preserved. I'm also going to make you a light for the foreigners so that my salvation may reach everybody.”

⁷ This is what the Lord says, the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel, to the one who was despised and detested by the nation, to the one who is the servant of rulers: Kings will see you and stand up, and princes will bow down to you, because the Lord, who is trustworthy, the Holy One of Israel, has chosen you.

^h49:1. “Islands”: or, “coastlands.”

ⁱ49:5. “To gather Israel to himself”: Dead Sea Scrolls and some Hebrew manuscripts; the Hebrew text includes the word “not.”

⁸ This is what the Lord says: I will answer you at the proper time; I will help you on the day of salvation. I will take care of you, and I will give you to the people as my agreement with them, to restore the land and to reassign the parts that have been abandoned. ⁹ Tell the prisoners, “Come out!” Tell those living in darkness, “Come into the light!” Like sheep they will feed along the roads and in the pastures on hills that once were barren. ¹⁰ They won’t be hungry or thirsty, and they won’t get hot in the sun, for the one who loves them will lead them to springs, and guide them to water. ¹¹ I will turn all my mountains into a road; my highways will be really high! ¹² Look at these people coming from far away! Look at these people coming from the north, and from the west, and from Upper Egypt.^j ¹³ Heavens, shout for joy! Earth, celebrate! Mountains, sing out in happiness! The Lord has come to care for his people, and he will treat his suffering people kindly.

¹⁴ But Zion said, “The Lord has given up on me; the Lord has forgotten about me.”

¹⁵ Really? Can a mother forget her nursing baby? Can she forget to be kind to the child she carried in her womb? Even if she could forget, I will never forget you! ¹⁶ Look at your names I’ve written on the palms of my hands! I’m always thinking about your walls.^k ¹⁷ Soon your children will come running back. Your destroyers, those that devastated your land, will be gone. ¹⁸ Take a look around. See all your children gathering and coming back to you. As I live, declares the Lord, you will wear them all as jewelry, proudly putting them on like a bride. ¹⁹ Your ruined towns and abandoned places and devastated lands will be crowded with people, while those who took over your country will be long gone. ²⁰ The children born during your time of mourning in exile will say, “This place is too crowded for me! Make room so I have a place to live!” ²¹ Then you will say to yourself, “Who gave birth to all these children for me? My children were killed and I was unable to have more; I was exiled and thrown aside—so who brought these children up? Look, I was abandoned, so where did they come from?”

^j49:12. “Upper Egypt”: following the reading from the Dead Sea Scrolls which appears to indicate Aswan. The Septuagint reads “Persia,” while the Hebrew reads “Sinim,” an unknown place.

^k49:16. Presumably the walls of Jerusalem that were knocked down.

²² This is what the Lord God says, Watch as I give the signal to the nations, as I raise my flag to let everyone know. They will bring them back, carrying your sons in their arms, and lifting your daughters onto their shoulders. ²³ Kings will be your child-minders; queens will be your nurses. They will bow low before you, and lick the dust from your feet. Then you will know that I am the Lord, and that those who put their trust in me will never be ashamed.

²⁴ Can loot be taken from a warrior? Can prisoners be rescued from a dictator?¹ ²⁵ But this is what the Lord says: Even the prisoners of warriors will be won back; even loot will be recovered from a dictator. I will fight with your enemies, and I will rescue your children. ²⁶ I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh and drink their own blood like wine. Then everyone will know that I, the Lord, am your Savior and Redeemer, the Mighty One of Israel.

50 ¹ This is what the Lord says: Where's your mother's divorce certificate I gave her when I sent her away? Which of my creditors did I sell you to? Now look! You were sold because of your sins, and your mother was sent away because of your wrongdoing.

² When I came, why wasn't anyone there? When I called, why didn't anyone answer? Is it because I don't have the strength to save you, or the power to rescue you? Can't you see that if I order it, the sea will dry up? I can turn rivers into a desert. Their fish stink because they've died of thirst since there's no water. ³ I can make the heavens go dark, covering them with sackcloth like they're in mourning.

⁴ The Lord God has given me the ability to teach others, to know how to encourage those who are exhausted with a word. He wakes me up every morning; he helps me listen as a disciple. ⁵ The Lord God has instructed me, and I haven't been rebellious and I haven't turned away. ⁶ I offered my back for people to beat me and my cheeks for people to pull my beard. I didn't hide my face from their mocking and spitting.

⁷ The Lord God helps me, so I haven't been disgraced. That's why I'm so determined, setting my face hard as stone, knowing I won't be humiliated. ⁸ The one who vindicates me is close by, so who will bring charges against me? Let's stand to oppose one another! Come on, anyone who wants to accuse me! ⁹ The Lord God defends me.

¹49:24. "Dictator": Dead Sea Scrolls reading.

Who is going to declare me guilty? Look! Those who try will fall apart like old clothing, eaten up by moths.

¹⁰ Who among you respects the Lord and obeys what his servant says? Who among you walks in darkness and doesn't have light? Let them trust in the Lord and put their confidence in God. ¹¹ Beware all you who start a fire, who pick up blazing torches! Go ahead, walk in the light of your own fire and of the torches you yourselves have set alight! This is what you will receive from me: You are going to lie down in a place of suffering.

51 ¹ Listen to me, those of you who follow what is right, and who worship the Lord. Think about the rock from which you were cut, and to the quarry from which you were chiseled. ² Look back at Abraham your father, and Sarah who gave birth to you. When I called him, he was only one man, but then I blessed him and he had many descendants.

³ The Lord will care for Zion and feel sorry about all her ruined places. He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert areas like the garden of the Lord. People there will have joy and happiness, giving thanks and singing sweet songs. ⁴ Pay attention to me, my people; listen to me, my nation: I will send out my law, and my justice will be a light to the nations. ⁵ My rule of right will arrive soon. My salvation is coming. My power will bring judgment to the nations. The distant lands are waiting for me and my power. ⁶ Look up at the heavens, and look down at the earth beneath. The heavens will disappear like smoke, the earth will wear out like old clothes. The people living there will die like flies, but my salvation will last forever, and my way of goodness and right will never be destroyed.

⁷ Listen to me, you who know what's right, and who have really accepted my teachings. Don't be afraid of people's insults—they're just human—or be terrified by their abusive language. ⁸ Moths will eat them up like clothing; bugs will chew through them like wool. But my goodness will last forever, my salvation will endure for all generations.

⁹ Please wake up, wake up! Use your strength, powerful Lord! Act as you used to in olden days, in former generations. Weren't you the one who cut Rahab^m to pieces, who killed that sea monster?

¹⁰ Weren't you the one who dried up the sea, making a way through

^m51:9. "Rahab": a monster used as a poetic description for Egypt.

the deep waters for the redeemed to cross over? ¹¹ Those the Lord has set free will return, singing as they enter Jerusalem, wearing crowns of everlasting joy. They are overcome with thankfulness and happiness; sorrow and sadness simply disappear.

¹² It's me, yes, I am the one who comforts you. Why should you be afraid of mortals who die just like grass? ¹³ You have forgotten the Lord, your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and who laid the foundations of the earth! That's why you shake with fear all day long, because you're threatened by the anger of those who oppress you, wanting to destroy you. But where are your oppressors and their anger now? ¹⁴ The prisoners that are bowed down will soon be set free. They're not going to die; they won't go on being hungry.

¹⁵ For I am the Lord your God who whips up the sea so its waves roar. The Lord Almighty is his name. ¹⁶ I have told you what to say, and I have protected you with my hand. I created the heavens and founded the earth, and told Zion, "You are my people."

¹⁷ Wake up, wake up! Get up, Jerusalem! You have drunk from the cup of the Lord's anger he handed to you. You have drained it down to the bottom of the cup, the drink that makes people stagger around.

¹⁸ Of all your children you had, there's not one left to guide you. Of all the children you raised, there's not one to take you by the hand.

¹⁹ Two tragedies have struck you: devastation caused by famine, and destruction caused by war.ⁿ Who is going to sympathize with you? Who is going to comfort you? ²⁰ Your children have collapsed, lying in every street like antelopes caught in a trap. They experienced the full anger of the Lord, the condemnation of your God.

²¹ So please listen to this, you poor people, sitting there in a drunken state, but not from drinking wine. ²² This is what your Lord God says, your God, who defends his people's cause: Look! I have taken away from you the cup that made you stagger around. You will never again have to drink from that cup, the cup of my anger.

²³ Instead I will give that cup to the people who tormented you, to those who said to you, "Lie face down so we can walk all over you." You had to make your backs like the ground, like a street to be walked on.

52 ¹ Wake up, wake up, Zion! Be strong! Put on your best clothes, Jerusalem, the holy city. Heathen foreigners won't ever enter

ⁿ51:19. "War": literally, "the sword."

you again. ² Shake yourself free from the dust and get up. Sit on your throne, Jerusalem. Throw off the chains around your neck, captive daughter of Zion. ³ This is what the Lord says: You were sold for nothing, and you will be bought back without money.

⁴ This is what the Lord God says: First of all, my people went to live in Egypt, then Assyria conquered them for no reason. ⁵ What do have I to do now? asks the Lord. My people have been taken into captivity for no reason. Those who rule them mock them, and I'm treated with contempt that whole time, says the Lord. ⁶ So I'm going to make sure my people know me; at that time they will know that I am the one who means what he says. Yes, it's me!

⁷ What a wonderful sight in the mountains is the one running to bring good news, announcing peace and good news, announcing salvation, telling Zion, “Your God reigns!” ⁸ The city watchmen shout loudly and sing for joy together; they all see the Lord returning to Jerusalem. ⁹ Let Jerusalem's ruins all sing for joy for the Lord has come to care for his people; he has set Jerusalem free. ¹⁰ The Lord has demonstrated his holy power to all the nations; the whole world will see our God's salvation.

¹¹ Leave, leave, get out of there! Don't bring anything pagan;^o come out and leave it all behind. Those of you who carry the Lord's sacred articles are to purify yourselves. ¹² But don't leave in a hurry, don't be in a rush as if you're running away, for the Lord will go ahead of you, and he will also protect those at the back.

¹³ Look: my servant will act wisely; he will be praised highly, he will be elevated in position, and seen as someone people look up to. ¹⁴ But many were horrified by him,^p so disfigured in appearance, no longer looking like a man, so unlike anyone human. ¹⁵ He will surprise many nations, and kings will keep quiet because of him—for they'll see what they haven't been told, and they'll understand what they hadn't heard.

^o52:11. “Pagan”: literally “unclean,” likely referring to anything associated with idol worship.

^p52:14. “Him”: This is the reading of the Syriac and the Targums. Hebrew has “you.”

53¹ Has anyone believed our news? Who has the Lord shown his power to?^q ² Like a young shoot he grew up before him, like a root growing up from dry ground. He had no beauty or glory to make us look at him; nothing about his appearance attracted us to him. ³ People despised him and rejected him. He was a man who really suffered and who experienced the deepest pain. We treated him like someone you turn away from in disgust—we despised him and had no respect for him.

⁴ However, he was the one who carried our weaknesses, he was loaded down with our pain—but we assumed he was being hit, beaten, and humiliated by God. ⁵ But he was wounded because of our rebellious acts, he was crushed because of our guilt. He experienced the discipline that brings us peace,^r and his wounds heal us. ⁶ All of us have wandered off, just like sheep. Each of us has gone our own way, and the Lord allowed all our guilt to fall on him.^s

⁷ He was persecuted and mistreated, but he didn't say anything. He was led like a lamb to be killed, and in the same way that a sheep about to be sheared is silent, he didn't say a word. ⁸ Through force and a death sentence he was killed^t—who cared what happened to him? He was executed, removed from the land of the living; he was killed because of my people's wickedness. ⁹ They buried him as if he was someone evil, giving him a grave among the rich, even though he hadn't done anything wrong, and he hadn't told any lies.

¹⁰ However, it was the Lord's will for him to be crushed and to suffer, for when he gives his life as a guilt offering he will see his descendants,^u he will have a long life, and what the Lord wants will be achieved through him. ¹¹ After his suffering, he will see the

^q53:1. The way these questions are framed, they expect a negative response: “No one.” The verses that follow explain why nobody paid attention to the news.

^r53:5. “Peace”: often in the sense of “well-being” rather than the absence of war. In addition, the word “discipline” in this verse is more to do with training a child than punishment, as the Septuagint translators recognized.

^s53:6. The Septuagint ends this verse “the Lord gave him up for our sins.” The word translated “fall on” is variously translated, for example: approach, came, met, touched, pray to, interceded, pleaded etc.

^t53:8. The Septuagint has: “In humiliation his judgment was taken away.” See Acts 8:33. Taken away refers to being taken away in death.

^u53:10. “Descendants”: literally, “seed,” or better, “posterity.” This is to be taken in the wider view of the many who become “children of God.”

results and be satisfied. Through his knowledge my servant who does what is right will set many right,^v and he will bear their sins. ¹² That's why I'm going to grant him a place among the great, and give him the prize of the victorious, because he poured out his life in death and was counted as one of the rebels. He took on himself the sins of many and asked forgiveness for the rebels.

54 ¹ Sing for joy, childless woman, you who have had a baby! Shout aloud, and sing happily, Jerusalem, you who have never given birth! For the abandoned woman now has more children than the married woman, says the Lord. ² Make the tent where you live bigger; stretch the fabric to enlarge your home. Don't try and save space—extend your tent cords and make your tent pegs stronger. ³ You're going to be spreading out right and left; your descendants will take over the land of other nations and live in towns that were once abandoned.

⁴ Do not be afraid, for you won't be humiliated; don't be upset, for you won't be disgraced. You will forget about the shame of your youth, and you won't remember the embarrassment of your widowhood any longer. ⁵ For your Maker is your husband, the Lord Almighty is his name the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, he is called the God of the whole earth. ⁶ The Lord has called you to come back, like a wife who's been abandoned and deeply hurt, a wife who was married when she was young, only to be rejected, says your God. ⁷ I deserted you for just a little while, but I will bring you back, showing you a great deal of kindness. ⁸ In a moment of anger I turned my face away from you, but now with trustworthy love I will always be kind to you, says the Lord, your Redeemer.

⁹ To me this is just like Noah's time, when I promised on oath that a flood would never cover the earth again. In the same way I promise on oath that I won't be angry with you or tell you off. ¹⁰ Though the mountains cease to exist and the hills disappear, yet my trustworthy love for you won't cease to exist and my agreement of peace won't disappear, says the Lord, who shows you kindness.

¹¹ My poor storm-damaged city that can't be comforted! Look, I'm going to reset your stones in cement made of antimony,^w I will use sapphires to lay your foundations. ¹² I will make your fortifications

^v53:11. Right before God.

^w54:11. A dark substance often used in cosmetics, particularly eye-liner.

out of rubies; I will make your gates out of sparkling beryl. All your walls will be made of precious stones,¹³ and all your children will be students of the Lord, and they will live in complete peace.¹⁴ Your society will operate from principles of goodness and right; nobody will be there to oppress you. You won't be afraid; you won't have to face any kind of terror.¹⁵ If any invader comes to attack you, I didn't send them; you will defeat anyone who attacks you.

¹⁶ Look—I have created a blacksmith who blows the coals into a hot flame and forges a suitable weapon; and I have created the destroyer who brings destruction.¹⁷ None of the weapons forged against you will succeed, and you will condemn anyone who accuses you. This is how the servants of the Lord are blessed, and I am the one who vindicates them, declares the Lord.

55¹ Come, everyone of you who's thirsty, come and drink the water! You who don't have money, come—you can buy and eat! Come and buy wine and milk—you don't need money; there's no cost!² Why are you spending money on what isn't food, and why work for something that doesn't satisfy you? Listen carefully to me: eat what is good, and you'll enjoy the very best food.

³ Come here, and pay attention, so you can truly live. I'm going to make an agreement with you that will last forever, based on the trustworthy love I showed to David.⁴ See how I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for them.⁵ You will call nations you don't even know, and nations who don't know you will come running to you. For the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, I made you glorious.

⁶ Look for the Lord while you can still find him; call out to him while he's nearby.⁷ Wicked people should change their ways and get rid of even the thought of doing something wrong. They should turn to the Lord so he can be merciful to them. Come back to our God, because he's generous with his forgiveness.

⁸ For your thoughts are not my thoughts; and your ways are not my ways, declares the Lord.⁹ In the same way the heavens are higher than the earth, my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.

¹⁰ It's like the rain and snow that fall from heaven. They don't go back there until they've watered the earth, making plants grow and flower, providing seeds for the sower and food to eat.¹¹ In the

same way the words I say don't come back to me unfulfilled, they accomplish what I want—they successfully achieve my purpose.

¹² You will live happily, taught the ways of peace. Mountains and hills will celebrate, singing beside you; and all the trees will clap their hands! ¹³ Cypress trees will grow instead of thorn bushes; myrtle trees will grow instead of brambles. This is to confirm the Lord's reputation—an everlasting sign, never to be destroyed.

56 ¹ This is what the Lord says: Follow the law, and do what is right, for my salvation will soon arrive, and my goodness will be revealed. ² Blessed is everyone who does this—those who keep to it, who observe the Sabbath without violating it, and who don't do anything wrong.

³ Don't allow foreigners who have dedicated themselves to the Lord say, “The Lord will definitely exclude me from his people.” And don't allow eunuchs to say, “Look at me—I'm as worthless as a dried-up tree because I'm childless.”

⁴ For this is what the Lord says: To the eunuchs who observe my Sabbaths, who choose to do what pleases me, and to keep my agreement, ⁵ I will give them, in my house and within my walls, a place to remember them and a reputation better than that of sons and daughters. I will give them an everlasting reputation that will never fade.

⁶ About the foreigners who have dedicated themselves to the Lord, who worship him, who love the Lord, and who are his servants, everyone who observes the Sabbath without violating it and who keep to my agreement— ⁷ I will bring these foreigners to my holy mountain and make them happy 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 This is what the Lord God says, who brought back the scattered people of Israel: I will bring back still others^x to join you.

⁹ Come, wild animals, wild animals of the countryside and forests, come and eat my people! ¹⁰ For all the watchmen are blind. None of them know what's going on. They're all silent—they can't bark. They spend their time lying down, dreaming, loving to sleep. ¹¹ They're greedy dogs that are never satisfied. They're sheepdogs who don't

^x56:8. “Others”: referring to the foreigners.

know their job. All of them go their own way, each of them looking out for themselves.

¹² “Come on,” they say, “I’ll get some wine and let’s get drunk! We’ll do this today, and tomorrow we’ll drink so much more!”

57 ¹ Good people die, and nobody cares; the faithful pass away, and nobody thinks that they were being protected from evil. ² Those who follow what’s right rest in peace; they find rest as they lie down in death.

³ But as for you, children of fortune-tellers, the product of adultery and prostitution—come here! ⁴ Who are you making fun of when you make sneering faces and stick out your tongues? Aren’t you the children of sin and lies? ⁵ You’re the ones having pagan orgies under the oak trees, under every green tree. You sacrifice your children in the valleys and among the rocky peaks. ⁶ You have chosen to worship the smooth stones from the streams of the valleys—that’s the choice you’ve made! You have poured out drink offerings to these idols—you have presented them with grain offerings. Should that make me happy? ⁷ You have committed adultery^y by idol worship on every high mountain; you went there to offer pagan sacrifices. ⁸ You’ve placed your pagan signs behind your doors and on your doorposts. Deserting me, you took off your clothes and climbed into bed, committing yourselves to those you love to be in bed with. You’ve seen them naked.^z ⁹ You went to offer Molech^a olive oil, covering yourself with many perfumes. You sent your messengers to distant places; you even went down into the world of the dead.^b ¹⁰ You wore yourselves out by such running around, but you didn’t give up and say, “It’s hopeless!” You found new strength^c and so didn’t become weak.

¹¹ Who were you scared of, who frightened you so much that you lied to me, didn’t remember me, didn’t even think about me? Is it

^y57:7. “Committed adultery”: literally, “made your bed.”

^z57:8. “You’ve seen them naked.” The Hebrew is literally “You have seen a hand.” In this case it is usually thought to be a euphemism for the genitals.

^a57:9. A Canaanite god associated with child sacrifice.

^b57:9. “The world of the dead”: literally, “Sheol.”

^c57:10. “New strength”: literally, “life of your hand,” an expression whose meaning is uncertain. “Hand” is often used to mean strength or power, however in this context it is also possible it may have the same indecent meaning as given in verse 8.

because I've been quiet for so long that you don't even fear me? ¹² I'm going to let everyone know about how you're so good and the things you do—but they won't help you! ¹³ When you cry out for help, let's see if your collection of idols will save you! The wind will blow them all away, just a breath and they're gone! But whoever comes to me for help will own the land and possess my holy mountain.

¹⁴ He^d will say, Build a highway, remove anything that's in the way of my people. ¹⁵ This is what the one who is high above all says, he who lives in eternity, whose name is holy: I live in a high and holy place, together with those who repent and who act humbly, restoring their spirits and encouraging them. ¹⁶ I won't fight with you forever; I won't be angry with you forever. Otherwise you'd lose heart, the very people I gave life to.

¹⁷ Yes, I was angry with these sinful, greedy people so I punished them. I was angry, so I hid myself from them, but they went on their own rebellious way, doing whatever they wanted. ¹⁸ I know what they're doing, but I will heal them. I will lead them and comfort those who mourn, ¹⁹ so they will be able to say thank you. The Lord declares, Peace, peace, to those who are far away and those who are near. I will heal you. ²⁰ But the wicked are like the sea that is tossed about, never keeping still, churning up the mud and muck with its waves. ²¹ There's no peace for the wicked, says my God.

58 ¹ Give a roar from the throat! Don't hold back! Shout out like a trumpet! Announce to my people how rebellious they are; denounce to the descendants of Jacob their sins. ² Every day they come to me, pleased to know my ways as if they were a nation that does what is right and follow the laws of their God! They ask me to treat them right; they like to be close to their God.

³ “Didn't you see that we fasted?” they ask. “Didn't you notice how we denied ourselves?”

That's because whenever you fast you still do whatever you want, and you treat your workers badly. ⁴ Can't you see that when you're fasting you quarrel and argue, and end up having a vicious fist-fight? When you fast like this you can't expect your prayers to be heard on high! ⁵ Is this the kind of fast I want when people act out their humility by bowing their heads down like a reed and by lying around in sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day the Lord

^d57:14. Referring to the Lord.

appreciates? ⁶No, this is the fast I want: set free those who have been unjustly imprisoned, untie the cords of the yoke used to burden people, set free those who are oppressed, and get rid of every form of abuse. ⁷Share your food with the hungry, take the poor and homeless into your house. When you see people naked, give them clothes, and don't reject your own relatives.

⁸Then your light^e will shine out like the dawn, and you will be healed quickly; your salvation will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will go behind you. ⁹Then when you call, the Lord will answer; when you cry out for help, the Lord will say, "I'm here." If you get rid of oppression among you, if you stop pointing the finger and slandering others, ¹⁰if you dedicate yourselves to helping the hungry and give the poor what they need, then your light will shine out in the darkness, and your night will be like the sun at noon. ¹¹The Lord will always lead you; he will give you all you need in you in a desolate land; he will make you strong again. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring that never runs dry. ¹²Some among you will rebuild the ancient ruins; you will restore generations-old foundations. You will be called the Repairer of the Break in the Wall, the Restorer of Life's Pathways.

¹³If you make sure you don't break^f the Sabbath by doing whatever you please on my holy day, if you say the Sabbath brings you pleasure and the Lord's day is to be honored, and if you honor it by leaving aside your own ways, by not doing whatever you please, and by avoiding everyday chatting,^g ¹⁴then you'll find the Lord is the one who truly makes you happy, and I will give you high positions on the earth and give you what I promised to Jacob, your forefather. I, the Lord, have spoken.

59 ¹Don't you see? The Lord's arm isn't too weak to save you, and his ear isn't too deaf to hear you! ²It's your guilt that has created a barrier between you and your God; your sins have hidden his face from you so he can't hear you. ³Your hands are covered in

^e58:8. Israel was meant to be a light to the world.

^f58:13. "If you make sure you don't break," literally, "If you keep your foot from."

^g58:13. "Everyday chatting": the Hebrew is literally "the speaking of a word," but clearly this does not mean that nothing at all is to be said on the Sabbath, as this would preclude worship services. What seems to be the concept is that conversation of little value is to be avoided.

blood and your fingers tainted with guilt, your lips speak lies and your mouth whispers evil things.

⁴Nobody wants justice, nobody pleads their case with honesty. They rely on false testimony, and tell lies. They conceive evil plans, and give birth to trouble. ⁵They hatch viper's eggs, and weave a spider's web. If you eat their eggs you'll die; if you crush their eggs you'll only hatch snakes. ⁶Their webs can't be made into clothes; they can't cover themselves by what they produce. What they do is wicked; they use their hands to commit violence. ⁷They run to do evil; they're quick to murder innocent people. Their minds are full of sinful thoughts; they only cause havoc and destruction. ⁸They don't know how to live in peace; they're not straight and fair with others. Their way is totally crooked, and anyone who follows them won't experience any peace.

⁹So that's why we don't have justice, and we don't do what's right. We look for the light, but only find the dark; we look for bright light, but we walk in deep darkness. ¹⁰We grope like blind people along a wall, feeling with our hands as if we have no eyes. We stumble at noon as if it were the evening. Among those who are full of life,^h we are like the dead. ¹¹All of us growl like bears and coo like doves as we wait for justice to be done, but it never happens; we wait for salvation, but never receive it. ¹²You are aware of all our rebellious acts; our sins witness against us. Yes, we acknowledge our rebellious acts; we know all about our sins. ¹³We have disobeyed and denied you, Lord; we have turned our backs on our God. We have encouraged oppression and rebellion, telling lies we've carefully thought out. ¹⁴Justice is rejected, and doing right never happens. Truth falls down in the street, and honesty is banned. ¹⁵There's no truth anywhere, and anyone who does give up evil is robbed. The Lord saw what was going on, and was upset that there was no justice. ¹⁶He looked around, and he was appalled to find there was no one who would do anything about it, so he intervened himself, and his sense of what was right kept him going. ¹⁷He put on integrity as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head. He put on clothes of vengeance and wrapped himself with determination as a cloak. ¹⁸He will repay everyone for what they've done: fury

^h59:10. "Full of life": the word so translated only occurs once in Scripture and its meaning is uncertain.

to his enemies, revenge to those who oppose him, payback to the distant lands. ¹⁹ Those in the west will be in awe of the Lord, and those in the east will be amazed at his glory, for he will arrive like a raging flood, driven by the Spirit of the Lord.

²⁰ The Redeemer will come to Zion, to Jacob's descendants who turn from their sins, declares the Lord. ²¹ This is my agreement with them, says the Lord. My Spirit, who is upon you, won't leave you, and my words that I have given you to speak will always be on your lips, on the lips of your children, and on the lips of your descendants, from now until forever, says the Lord.

60 ¹ Stand up and shine, for your light has come; the glory of the Lord has risen on you. ² Even though darkness covers the earth, and deep darkness covers the people, the Lord has risen to shine on you, and his glory appears over you. ³ Nations will come to your light, and kings will come to the brightness of your shining dawn.

⁴ Look all around you, and see everyone gathering and coming to you—your sons returning from far away, your young daughters being carried on the hip. ⁵ Then you will see and shine brilliantly, your heart will beat wildly for joy, for the riches that cross the sea, the wealth of the nations, will be brought to you. ⁶ Long caravans of camels will cover the land, young camels of Midian and Ephah. All the people of Sheba will come to you carrying gold and frankincense, shouting praises to the Lord. ⁷ All the flocks of Kedar will be brought to you, the rams of Nebaioth will be placed at your disposal. I will accept them as they are sacrificed on my altar, and I will glorify the Temple where I'm honored.

⁸ What are these flying like a cloud, flying like pigeons returning to their roost? ⁹ Coming from the islands that trust in me, these are ships led by those of Tarshish, bringing your children home from far away, carrying with them silver and gold. They come to honor of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has made you glorious.

¹⁰ Foreigners will rebuild your walls, and their kings will work for you. Even though I did hit you when I was angry with you, now I will be kind and merciful to you. ¹¹ Your gates will always be kept open. They won't ever be shut, day or night, so the wealth of the nations can be brought to you, with their kings being led along in a

procession. ¹² Any nation or kingdom that does not serve you will be completely destroyed. ¹³ The glory of Lebanon will come to you: cedars, acacias, and myrtle trees, to make my Temple beautiful and to honor the place I choose to live. ¹⁴ The children of those who persecuted you will come and bow before you; everyone who looked down on you will bow down at your feet and will call you the City of the Lord, Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

¹⁵ Once you were abandoned and despised, somewhere people didn't go, but now I will make you a place to be proud of forever, a joy to every generation. ¹⁶ Nations will provide you with what you need, kings will take care of you as if you were their own children.ⁱ You will know that I, the Lord, am your Savior and Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. ¹⁷ I will bring you gold instead of bronze, silver instead of iron, bronze instead of wood, and iron instead of stone. I will appoint Peace as your watchman, and Goodness as your leader. ¹⁸ There won't be any more violence in your land, no more devastation and destruction within your borders. You will call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise.

¹⁹ You won't need the light of the sun during the day, or the light of the moon at night, for the Lord your God will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. ²⁰ Your sun will never set, and your moon will never wane, for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your time of mourning will end. ²¹ All your people will be good, and they will own the land forever. They are the shoot I have planted with my hands, and they will reveal my glory. ²² The smallest of your families will increase to a thousand, and the most insignificant will become a great nation. I am the Lord; at the right time I will do this quickly.

61 ¹ The Spirit of the Lord God is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to announce liberation to the captives, to set the prisoners free, ² to declare the year of the Lord's grace and the day of our God's punishment,^j to comfort those who mourn. ³ The Lord will give to everyone who mourns in Zion a crown instead of

ⁱ60:16. Literally, "You will suck the milk of nations, you will nurse at the breast of kings."

^j61:2. Notice that the Lord's grace lasts for a year, while his punishment lasts for just one day.

ashes on their head, the oil of happiness instead of mourning, clothes of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of integrity, planted by the Lord to reveal his glory.

⁴ They will rebuild the old ruins; they will restore places abandoned long ago; they will restore towns that were destroyed, places left desolate for generation after generation. ⁵ Foreigners will shepherd your flocks, and take care of your fields, and look after your vineyards. ⁶ You will be called priests of the Lord, identified as ministers of our God. You will enjoy the wealth of nations and be proud that you have it. ⁷ Instead of shame you will receive a double blessing; instead of insults, you will be happy to have a double amount of land given to you, and your joy will last forever.

⁸ I, the Lord, love what is right. I hate robbery and injustice. I will faithfully reward my people and make an everlasting agreement with them. ⁹ Their descendants will be acknowledged among the nations, and their children among the peoples. Everyone who sees them will agree that they are people that the Lord has blessed.

¹⁰ I will happily celebrate in the Lord! My whole being will shout praises to my God. For he has dressed me with the clothing of salvation, and has wrapped around me in a robe of goodness. I am like a bridegroom dressed for the wedding,^k like a bride wearing her jewels. ¹¹ Just as the earth sends up shoots, and plants grow in a garden, so the Lord makes goodness and praise grow before all nations.

62 ¹ I can't remain silent because of my love for Zion, I can't keep quiet because of my love for Jerusalem, until her integrity shines like a beam of light, until her salvation blazes like a burning torch. ² The nations will see the way you live right, and all the kings will see how you are blessed, and you will be called by a new name that the Lord gives you. ³ You will be a crown of beauty in the Lord's hand; a royal head-dress in the hand of your God. ⁴ You won't be called Abandoned anymore; your land won't be called Desolate. Instead you will be called She Makes Me Happy, and your land will be called Married, because you make the Lord happy, and your land will be married.¹ ⁵ For just like a young man marries a young

^k61:10. "Dressed for the wedding": literally, "wearing a head-dress like a priest."

¹62:4. The literal names are Hephzibah and Beulah. Hephzibah was actually the name of Hezekiah's queen, and Beulah became a symbolic name for Jerusalem.

woman, so your sons will marry you; and like a groom is happy with his bride, so your God will be happy with you.

⁶I have placed watchmen on your walls, Jerusalem; they won't ever be silent, day or night.^m You who pray to the Lord, don't ever stop and take a rest. ⁷Don't give the Lord a rest either, until he finishes his work, until he makes Jerusalem the most praiseworthy place on earth. ⁸The Lord has made a solemn promise, swearing by his power and might: I won't ever again let your enemies have your grain to eat, or let foreigners drink the new wine you worked hard for.

⁹Instead, those who harvest the grain will eat it and praise the Lord, and those who harvest the grapes for the wine will drink it in the courts of my Temple.

¹⁰Exit! Exit through the gates! Clear the way for the people! Build the highway! Get rid of any rocks on the road! Lift up a flag so the nations can see!ⁿ ¹¹See! The Lord has announced to everyone on earth, Tell the Daughter of Zion: Look! Your Savior is coming. He's bringing his reward with him, coming to give his gift! ¹²They will be called the Holy People, the Redeemed of the Lord; and you will be called the Sought-After Place, A City No Longer Abandoned.

63 ¹Who is this coming from Edom, from the town of Bozrah^o with clothes stained crimson? Who is this wearing robes of splendor, leaning forward in his great strength as he marches?^p

It is me, the one who always speaks goodness and truth, the one who has the power to save.

²Why are your clothes red, like you've been treading grapes in a winepress?

³I've been treading the winepress by myself; from the nations around no one came to help me. So in my anger I trod them down

^m62:6. It was the duty of watchmen to regularly give a report by calling out. In this case it could be the prophets who are represented as Jerusalem's watchmen.

ⁿ62:10. The imagery of this verse is taken to represent the people leaving Babylon.

^o63:1. Bozrah was an important Edomite town.

^p63:1. Once again, quotation marks are avoided in translating the books of the prophets due to the problems of deciding which are the prophet's own words and which are the Lord's. Since the prophets were speaking for the Lord, the distinction is a minor one. In this passage where there appears to be a dialogue going on, the change in speaker is represented by a new paragraph.

as if they were grapes, in my fury I trampled them. It's their blood that has stained my clothes. ⁴ For I decided this was the day of my vengeance; the year of my redemption has come. ⁵ I looked around, but no one came to help; I was shocked that there was no one to assist me. So I saved them through my own strength alone, and my own anger kept me going. ⁶ I trampled down the nations in my anger; in my fury I made them drunk, and spilled their blood upon the ground.

⁷ I want to tell everyone about the Lord's trustworthy love. I will praise the Lord for everything he's done for us—all the good things he has done for the descendants of Israel because of his kindness and his infinite trustworthy love. ⁸ He said, “Aren't they my people, children who wouldn't lie to me?” So he became their Savior. ⁹ He suffered with them in all their suffering, and the angel of his presence⁹ saved them. In his love and kindness he redeemed them. He picked them up and carried them all throughout those years long ago. ¹⁰ But they rebelled against him, and caused his Holy Spirit grief, so to them he became like an enemy and he fought against them.

¹¹ Then they^r thought back to the days of old when Moses led his people out of Egypt. They shouted out, “Where is the one who took Israel through the sea, along with the shepherds of his flock? Where is the one who placed his Holy Spirit among his people? ¹² Where is the one who lifted Moses' right hand, and who used his amazing power to divided the sea in front of them, giving him such a wonderful, enduring reputation? ¹³ Where is the one who led them through the depths of the sea?” They were like a horse running through the desert, they didn't stumble. ¹⁴ Like cattle descending into a valley, the Lord's Spirit gave them rest. This is how you led your people, earning a glorious reputation for yourself.

¹⁵ Lord, look down on us from heaven! Watch from your high home, in your holiness and glory! Where is your enthusiasm and

⁹**63:9.** “The angel of his presence”: the exact implications of this phrase have been debated so is left as usually translated. Angel means messenger. In whatever case, it is God who is the “agent of salvation.”

^r**63:11.** “They”: the Hebrew text reads “he” at this point, and so could refer to the Lord. However, in the context of what follows, it is more likely that this refers to the Israelites.

power? You're not showing me your feelings of sympathy and kindness! ¹⁶ But you are still our Father, even though Abraham wouldn't know us and Israel wouldn't acknowledge us. You, Lord, are our Father; you have always been called our Redeemer from long ago. ¹⁷ Lord, why do you make us wander from your ways, and make us stubborn so we don't respect you? Come back to us for the sake of your servants, the tribes that belong to you. ¹⁸ Your Temple belonged to us for a little while, but then our enemies invaded and destroyed it. ¹⁹ We were yours from ancient times, but we've ended up like people you've never ruled, never identified as yours.

64 ¹ If only you would rip the heavens apart and come down! The mountains would tremble in your presence!^s ² In the same way that fire burns wood and makes the water boil, make your reputation known to your enemies, so that nations will tremble in your presence! ³ In the past you did things we weren't anticipating. You came down and the mountains trembled in your presence! ⁴ Since the beginning, no one has heard about, no one has paid attention to, and no one has seen any God except you, the one who helps those who place their confidence in you. ⁵ You join with those who are glad, and with those who do what's right and remember to follow your ways. But when we went on sinning, you became angry. How can we be saved if we go on like this?^t ⁶ We've all become unclean, and all the good things we do are like dirty rags. We wither and die like autumn leaves, and our sins, like the wind, blow us away. ⁷ There's no one who calls for you or really wants to hold onto you, because you have hidden your face from us and let us drown in our own sins.

⁸ But you, Lord, are our Father. We're the clay, you're the potter. You made us all with your own hands. ⁹ Please limit your anger, Lord, and don't remember our sins forever. Look at us, and see that we are all your people. ¹⁰ Your holy cities have been turned into a wilderness; Zion has become a desert; yes, even Jerusalem is an abandoned ruin. ¹¹ Our beautiful, holy Temple where our forefathers praised you has been burned down, and all that we treasured has been destroyed. ¹² In view of all this, are you still going to refuse to help us? Are you going to stay quiet and punish us so severely?

^s64:1. This verse is included in the previous chapter in the Hebrew text.

^t64:5. The Hebrew of the end of this verse is unclear.

65 ¹I let myself be consulted by people who weren't even asking me questions; I let myself be found by people who weren't even looking for me. To a nation that wasn't even calling for me, I said, "I'm here, I'm here!" ²I spread out my hands all day long, pleading with a stubborn people who follow bad ways, doing whatever they choose. ³These people are always making me angry, because they present sacrifices to idols in their sacred gardens, and offer incense on pagan altars made of brick. ⁴They spend the night among the graves and in caves, eating pork and cooking other unclean meats. ⁵They tell others, "Keep your distance! Don't come close to me as I'm too holy to be touched by you!" These people are like smoke in my nostrils, a stink burning all day long!

⁶Look—it's all written down right in front of me! I'm not going to keep quiet. I'm going to pay them back by throwing their punishment into their laps. ⁷I'm going to pay you back for both your own sins and the sins of your forefathers, says the Lord, because they burned incense on the mountains and ridiculed me on the hills. I'm going to measure into their laps full payment for what they've done.

⁸This is what the Lord says: It's like when there's a bit of juice left in a bunch of grapes and people say, "Don't get rid of it all; there's still some good in it," I'll do the same for my servants—I won't destroy them all. ⁹I will make sure Jacob has descendants, and people from Judah who can take ownership of my mountain. My chosen ones, my servants, will own the land and live there. ¹⁰Sharon will become a pasture for flocks, and the Valley of Achor a place for herds to rest, for my people who follow me.

¹¹But those of you who desert the Lord and forget about my holy mountain, who prepare feasts for the god of good luck,^u who fill jugs of mixed wine for the god of destiny,^v ¹²I will make sure your destiny is to be killed by the sword. All of you will bow down to be slaughtered, because I called out to you but you didn't answer; I spoke to you, but you didn't listen. Instead you did what's evil in my sight, choosing to do what I hate.

^u**65:11.** "The god of good luck": literally, "Gad," a pagan god of good fortune. The name Baal-Gad occurs in Joshua 11:17 and Joshua 12:7, meaning "Lord Gad."

^v**65:11.** "The god of destiny": literally, "Meni," a pagan god of fate. It is thought that the name comes from the Semitic word "to apportion," meaning that this god determined the fates of human beings.

¹³ So this is what the Lord says, My servants will eat, but you will go hungry. My servants will drink, but you will go thirsty. My servants will celebrate, but you will feel ashamed. ¹⁴ Listen! My servants will shout because they're so happy inside, but you will cry out in deepest pain, howling because your spirit is broken. ¹⁵ Your name will only be used as a curse by my chosen ones, for the Lord God will kill you and give his servants another name. ¹⁶ Whoever asks a blessing or takes an oath in the land will do so by the one true God, for I have forgotten the troubles of the past—I don't look on them anymore.

¹⁷ Look! I'm going to create new heavens and a new earth. The former things won't be remembered—they won't cross anyone's mind! ¹⁸ Be glad, and be happy forever and ever in what I'm going to create, for I will make Jerusalem a delightful place, and its people a real joy. ¹⁹ I will be so happy over Jerusalem; I will celebrate among my people. The sound of weeping and cries for help won't ever be heard there again.

²⁰ No babies will die after just a few days, and no adults will die without having lived a long life.^w Those who reach a hundred will be thought of as just a child, and anyone who doesn't reach a hundred will be seen as being under a curse. ²¹ They will build houses and live in them; they will eat the fruit of the vineyards they themselves planted. ²² No longer will they build houses for others to live in; no longer will they plant for others to eat. For my people will live as long as trees do; my chosen ones will live long enough to enjoy all they've worked for. ²³ They won't work for nothing, and they won't have children destined for disaster. For they are people living under the blessing of the Lord, and their children will be too. ²⁴ I will reply even before they ask me. While they are still speaking, I will answer them! ²⁵ The wolf and the lamb will eat together. The lion will eat straw like the ox. The snakes will eat dust. Nothing will cause any harm or damage anywhere on my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord in the same way that water fills the sea.^x

66 ¹ This is what the Lord says: Heaven is my throne, and the earth is where I place my feet. So where will this house be

^w65:20. But see 25:8.

^x65:25. See 11:9.

that you're going to build for me? Where will I lie down to rest?

² I made everything; that's how it all came into existence, says the Lord. Those I look favorably on are humble and repentant, and they tremble when I speak.

³ When someone sacrifices a bull it's like human sacrifice, and when someone sacrifices a lamb, it's like breaking the neck of a dog.^y When they present a grain offering it's like presenting pig's blood, and when they burn incense it's like worshiping an idol. Since they have chosen to act like this and to love such disgusting things, ⁴ I will also choose to punish them severely and to terrify them, because I called out to them but no one answered; I spoke to them, but no one listened. Instead they did what's evil in my sight, choosing to do what I hate.

⁵ Listen to what the Lord has to say, those of you who tremble when he speaks.^z This is what some of your people who hate you and throw you out have said, “Let the Lord be glorified, so we can see how happy you are!”^a but it's them who are going to be humiliated.

⁶ Hear all the shouting from the city! Hear all the noise from the Temple! It's the sound of the Lord giving his enemies back what they deserve.

⁷ She^b gave birth before she went into labor, she delivered a boy before the pains came. ⁸ Who has ever heard of anything like this? Who has seen this kind of thing before? Can a country be delivered in a day, can a nation be born in a moment? Yet as soon as Zion went into labor, she gave birth to her children. ⁹ Would I bring a baby to the point of birth and then not deliver it? the Lord asks. Would I who deliver the baby stop it from being born? the Lord asks again.

¹⁰ Celebrate with Jerusalem and be happy for her, everyone who loves her; celebrate with her and sing for joy, everyone who mourns over her. ¹¹ Like a baby you can nurse at her breasts that bring comfort, drinking deeply and being satisfied by all she has to give.

¹² This is what the Lord says: Watch! I'm going to give her peace and prosperity like a flowing river, the wealth of nations like an overflowing stream. You will nurse and be carried on her hip and

^y66:3. A dog was considered both unclean and a low form of animal life.

^z66:5. Referring back to verse 2.

^a66:5. Clearly said with sarcasm.

^b66:7. Referring to Jerusalem as a woman.

played with on her knees. ¹³ Like a mother comforting her child, I will comfort you. You will be comforted in Jerusalem.

¹⁴ When you see this happening, you'll be happy deep inside, and you'll prosper like growing grass. The Lord's power will be recognized as blessing his servants and cursing his enemies. ¹⁵ Look! The Lord is coming surrounded by fire, his chariots whirling like the wind, to express his anger with fury, to give his reprimand in flames of fire. ¹⁶ The Lord will execute judgment on everyone by fire and by his sword. There will be many killed by the Lord.

¹⁷ Those who dedicate themselves and make themselves pure in order^c to enter the sacred gardens, to worship the idol placed in the center, and to eat pork and vermin and rats and other disgusting things—they will all die together, says the Lord. ¹⁸ I know^d what they're doing and what they're thinking. I will soon come to gather all nations and peoples of different languages. They will come and see my glory. ¹⁹ I will give them a sign, and I will send some who survive to the nations. They will go to Tarshish, to the Libyans and Lydians^e (who are famous as archers), to Tubal and Greece, and to the distant lands that haven't heard about me or seen my glory. They will announce my glory among the nations. ²⁰ They will bring back all your people from every nation to my holy mountain in Jerusalem as an offering to the Lord. They will come on horses, in chariots and wagons, and on mules and camels, says the Lord. They will bring them in the same way the Israelites bring their grain offerings to the Lord's Temple using vessels that are ceremonially clean. ²¹ I will choose some of them as priests and Levites, says the Lord.

²² As the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, will last forever, so your descendants and your reputation will also last forever, says the Lord. ²³ Everyone will come and worship me, from one New Moon to the next, and from one Sabbath to the next, says the Lord. ²⁴ They will go out and see the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me. The worms that eat them won't die, the fire that burns them won't go out, and everyone who sees them will be horrified.

^c66:17. “Dedicate themselves and make themselves pure”: this is referring to pagan practice, not to the worship of the true God.

^d66:18. “Know”: Septuagint reading.

^e66:19. “Libyans and Lydians”: literally “Pul and Lud.”