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Table of contents

introduction	4
isaiah 1.²⁻⁴	6
isaiah 1.⁵⁻⁶	8
isaiah 1.⁷⁻⁹	11
isaiah 1.¹⁰⁻¹⁵	13
isaiah 1.¹⁶⁻²⁰ — just scripture	16
isaiah 1.²¹⁻²³ — just scripture	19
isaiah 1.²⁴⁻²⁶ — just scripture	23
isaiah 1.²⁷⁻³¹ — just scripture	25
isaiah 2.¹⁻⁵	27
isaiah 2.⁶⁻⁹ — just scripture	30
isaiah 2.¹⁰⁻¹⁶ — just scripture	32
isaiah 2.¹⁷⁻²¹	34
isaiah 2.^{22-3.3}	36
isaiah 3.^{4-5, 12-15} — just scripture	38
isaiah 3.⁴⁻⁸	40
isaiah 3.⁹⁻¹¹	42
isaiah 3.¹²⁻¹⁵	44
isaiah 3.¹⁶⁻²⁴	46
isaiah 3.^{25-4.1}	49
isaiah 4.²⁻⁶	50
isaiah 5	52
questionary 1— isaiah 5. ¹⁻⁷	52
questionary 2— isaiah 5. ¹⁻⁷	55
questionary 3— isaiah 5. ⁸⁻¹⁰	57

questionary 4— isaiah 5. ¹¹⁻¹⁷	59
questionary 5— isaiah 5. ¹⁸⁻¹⁹	62
questionary 6— isaiah 5. ²⁰	64
questionary 7— isaiah 5. ²¹	66
questionary 8— isaiah 5. ²²⁻²⁴	68
questionary 9— isaiah 5. ²⁵⁻³⁰	70
isaiah 9.³⁻⁷	74
isaiah 10.¹⁻² — just scripture	76
isaiah 25.⁴ — just scripture.....	77
isaiah 30.⁹⁻¹³ — just scripture	78
isaiah 31.¹ — just scripture.....	80
isaiah 32.¹⁻² — just scripture	81
isaiah 32.³⁻⁴ — just scripture	82
isaiah 32.⁵⁻⁸ — just scripture	83
isaiah 40.¹⁻²	85
isaiah 40.¹⁵⁻¹⁸ — just scripture.....	86
isaiah 40.²⁹ — just scripture	87
isaiah 41.¹⁷⁻¹⁸	88
isaiah 42.¹⁶	89
isaiah 43.²⁵	90
isaiah 44.²²⁻²³	91
isaiah 45.³	92
isaiah 49.⁸⁻¹⁰	93
isaiah 49.¹³	94
isaiah 49.²⁴⁻²⁵	95
isaiah 51.³	96
isaiah 51.¹¹⁻¹³	97
isaiah 52.⁷	98
isaiah 54.⁷⁻⁸	99
isaiah 54.¹⁰	100
isaiah 55.¹⁻³	101
isaiah 55.⁶⁻¹²	102
isaiah 56.¹⁰⁻¹² — just scripture.....	104
isaiah 57.¹⁵	105
isaiah 58.⁶⁻⁷ — just scripture	106
isaiah 58.⁹⁻¹¹ — just scripture	107

isaiah 59.³⁻⁸ — just scripture	109
isaiah 59.¹²⁻¹⁵ — just scripture	111
isaiah 60.¹⁻²	112
isaiah 61.¹⁻³	113
isaiah 61.⁴	115
isaiah 63.⁹	116
isaiah 64.⁶	117

Introduction



The image of a small portion of Michelangelo's fresco, "Creation," found above serves as metaphor for this page's means and ends.

- ? How would you characterize God's arm in the fresco?
- ? How would you characterize Adam's arm?
- ? What is the message in Adam's limp wrist? In the fact that his arm rests on his knee?
- ? How does Adam, as painted in Michelangelo's fresco, represent all of us as we engage in scripture study and seek to understand scripture, scripture's divine author and our relationship to Him?
- ? How does Adam, as painted in Michelangelo's fresco, represent all of us as we seek God's enlivening, strengthening, and saving influence and presence in our daily lives?

Michelangelo reminds us of our desperate need for God's presence in our lives if we are to follow Him and be all that He hopes us to be. In relation to this page and its purposes, we are in need of God's help as we seek to understand and apply scripture.

The questions we posed and our brief commentary concerning the fresco represent an example of our approach to each scripture reading.

Scripture readings are accompanied by general and passage-specific questions to ponder along with brief comments. In addition to the passage-specific questions associated with each reading, the reader can apply the following **general questions** to most readings. These questions come from the purposes of scripture as identified in the introduction to our site, ponderthescriptures.com, found on the site's home page

- What does this reading reveal about the character of God?
- How and what does this reading testify of Christ?
- What wisdom and knowledge does this reading provide?
- How does this reading direct the way you think and act?
- Of what dangers does this reading warn? How does it help you avoid these dangers?
- How does this reading gladden your heart, encourage you, and give you hope?
- How does this reading expand your vision and increase your expectations of the possible?
- What does this reading discern or "read" about you?
- How will you apply this reading to your life, to how you relate with others, and to how you relate to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

It is not intended that the reader ponder every question. We introduce numerous and varied questions in hopes that readers will find a question or two that catches their imagination and interest, seems pertinent to their lives, and provides an opportunity for meaningful pondering and further spiritual insight. In addition, if the reader wishes, the many and varied ponder questions allow the reader to spend additional time to consider passages from various perspectives.

Finally, we suggest that during and after your reading and pondering experience you consider how you can incorporate your thoughts and feelings from the scripture reading into your personal prayer life. As you pray, share with Heavenly Father what you thought and felt as you studied and pondered. In your prayer, seek further insight from a God who is anxious to reveal himself, his will, and his interest in our lives. Incorporating your reading and pondering into your prayers can, we think, enliven a prayer life that can all too easily become mundane, mechanical, and rote.

Isaiah 1.²⁻⁴

²Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth:
for the LORD hath spoken,
I have nourished and brought up children,
and they have rebelled against me.

³The ox knoweth his owner,
and the ass his master's crib:
but Israel doth not know,
my people doth not consider.

⁴Ah sinful nation,
a people laden with iniquity,
a seed of evildoers,
children that are corrupters:
they have forsaken the LORD,
they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger,
they are gone away backward.

Questionary

After Isaiah's superscription (1.¹), Isaiah 1.^{2-2.5} may be viewed as an introduction to the book of Isaiah. It forms a literary unit with a chiasmic structure. As is done in the course of Isaiah's entire book, the introduction looks honestly at Israel's current pathetic plight, brought on by her rebellion. But this real time reality does not cause Isaiah to lose sight of another, more potent reality—the reality of God's power and mercy and His desire and capacity to redeem Israel. Following is one way of structuring Isaiah's "introduction."

	a 1. ²⁻⁹ The Rebellious Child
The	b 1. ¹⁰⁻¹⁵ Condemnation Of The Cult
Present Disappointment	c 1. ¹⁶⁻²⁰ The Redemptive Effects Of Justice
& Shattered Hopes	d 1. ²¹⁻²³ A Faithful City turned Harlot
	d' 1. ²⁴⁻²⁶ A City Faithful Once More
The	c' 1. ²⁷⁻²⁸ The Redemptive Effects Of Justice
Future Hope	b' 1. ²⁹⁻³¹ Removal Of The Cult
	a' 2. ¹⁻⁵ Walking in Yahweh's Light

The first half of the chiasm (vs. 1.¹⁻²³) describes the real and current situation as it existed in Isaiah's time. The second half (vs. 1.^{24-2.5}) describes a potential future situation. No matter how pessimistic Isaiah may be about the present, he never gives up on Yahweh's potential to repair, redeem, and emancipate.

After this introduction, Isaiah explores the two themes of the introduction—The present disappointments and shattered hopes/ The future hope—in detail as outlined here.

The Present Disappointment and Shattered Hopes (2.^{6-10.34})

- The Delusion of Institutions is Revealed—2.⁶⁻²¹
- The Delusion of Prestige is Revealed—2.^{22-3.15}
- The Delusion of Materialism is Revealed—3.^{16-4.1}
- The Nation's Diminished Status is Revealed—4.²⁻⁶
- Shattered Hopes of God Revealed in a Sad Love Song—5.¹⁻⁷
- The Woes of the Wicked are Revealed—5.⁸⁻²⁵
 - First Woe—5.⁸⁻¹⁰
 - Second Woe—5.¹¹⁻¹⁷

- Third Woe—5.¹⁸⁻¹⁹
- Fourth Woe—5.²⁰
- Fifth Woe—5.²¹
- Sixth Woe—5.²²⁻²⁵
- God's Agent of Woe—5.²⁶⁻³⁰
- Isaiah's Call—6.¹⁻¹³
- The Failure of the Israel/Syrian Confederation—7.¹⁻⁹.⁷
 - The Sign of the Child, Immanuel—7.¹⁰⁻²⁵
 - The Sign of the Child, Maher-shalal-hash-baz—8.¹⁻²²
 - The Sign of the Child, Wonderful—9.¹⁻⁷
- Return to the Woes of the Wicked—9.⁸-10.⁴
 - Seventh Woe—10.¹⁻⁴
 - God's Agent of Woe—10.⁵⁻³⁴
- The Future Hope (11.¹-12.⁶)
 - The Branch—11.¹⁻¹⁶
 - A Hymn of Praise—12.¹⁻⁶

Today's reading is the first of nine exploring Isaiah's introduction.

1. Isaiah begins his introduction and his description of the present disappointment with a metaphor in 1.²⁻⁶. It is at once a tender and a sad, horrifying metaphor. Yahweh likens the nation of Israel to a rebellious child. In 2-4, he describes the nature of the child's rebellion. In 5-6, he describes the punishment inflicted upon the rebellious child.
 - ? Why do you think Yahweh resorted to this imagery?
 - ? How effective is this imagery in helping you understand Yahweh's feelings about Israel and its rebelliousness?
2. In the seven lines comprising verse 4, Yahweh describes Israel and its rebellion with the following words and phrases. The nation of Israel is...
 - sinful
 - iniquitous
 - evildoers
 - corrupters
 - Israel has
 - forsaken God
 - provoked God
 - gone away backward from God
 - ? What feelings does this very long and intense list leave with you?
 - ? In your readings and understanding of the Old Testament, what actions of the nation confirm Yahweh's estimation of Israel as rebellious?
3. Even unthinking animals such as oxen and donkeys, Yahweh says, sense who cares for them and where to go for food. But "Israel does not know or understand" the source that meets their needs.
 - ? What, exactly, do you hear Yahweh saying about Israel?
 - ? How does this apply to Yahweh's spiritual support of Israel?
 - ? How does this apply to Yahweh's temporal or economic support of Israel?

Isaiah 1.⁵⁻⁶

⁵Why should ye be stricken any more?

ye will revolt more and more:
the whole head is sick,
and the whole heart faint.

⁶From the sole of the foot even unto the head
there is no soundness in it;
but wounds, and bruises,
and putrifying sores:
they have not been closed, neither bound up,
neither mollified with ointment.

Questionary

After Isaiah's superscription (1.¹), Isaiah 1.^{2-2.5} may be viewed as an introduction to the book of Isaiah. It forms a literary unit with a chiasmic structure. As is done in the course of Isaiah's entire book, the introduction looks honestly at Israel's current pathetic plight, brought on by her rebellion. But this real time reality does not cause Isaiah to lose sight of another, more potent reality—the reality of God's power and mercy and his desire and capacity to redeem Israel. Following is one way of structuring Isaiah's "introduction."

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Shattered Hopes of God Revealed in a Sad Love Song—5.¹⁻⁷

The Woes of the Wicked are Revealed—5.⁸⁻²⁵

First Woe—5.⁸⁻¹⁰

Second Woe—5.¹¹⁻¹⁷

Third Woe—5.¹⁸⁻¹⁹

Fourth Woe—5.²⁰

Fifth Woe—5.²¹

Sixth Woe—5.²²⁻²⁵

God's Agent of Woe—5.²⁶⁻³⁰

Isaiah's Call—6.¹⁻¹³

The Failure of the Israel/Syrian Confederation—7.^{1-9.7}

The Sign of the Child, Immanuel—7.¹⁰⁻²⁵

The Sign of the Child, Maher-shalal-hash-baz—8.¹⁻²²

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Return to the Woes of the Wicked—9.⁸-10.⁴

Seventh Woe—10.¹⁻⁴

God's Agent of Woe—10.⁵⁻³⁴

The Future Hope (11.¹-12.⁶)

The Branch—11.¹⁻¹⁶

A Hymn of Praise—12.¹⁻⁶

Today's is the second of nine readings exploring this introduction.

In our previous reading from Isaiah 1 (verses 2-4), we introduced the metaphor God uses for the nation of Israel. It is one that every Israelite could relate to and easily understand. Yahweh likened the nation of Israel to a child, who, having been tenderly raised by a loving parent, selfishly rebels against the parent. In today's reading, we look at the continued metaphor, which moves from the rebelliousness itself to the punishment inflicted upon the rebellious child.

We will begin with the metaphor itself. After doing so, we will move on to the "interpretation." So, first for the metaphor itself.

For today's reading, we are going to have to suspend our modern sensibilities and approach to family discipline, and recognize that society in Isaiah's time had a very different view of "child abuse" than we do today. If we cannot get past this reality, we may miss part or all of Isaiah's, admittedly, brutal message.

Proverbs advises parents,

"Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell" (23.¹³⁻¹⁴).

1. We must not, as we are so often inclined to do, turn away our eyes because of the discomfort produced by the text. So, just to be clear, we will render the KJV's translation of Yahweh's question posed to Israel, "Why should ye be stricken any more?" as "Why do you continue to be beaten?"
 - ? How do you feel about this, perhaps, clearer translation?
 - ? What do you do with the apparent comfort Isaiah feels about speaking of the beating, severe beating of a child?
 - ? What is the answer to Isaiah's question: "Why do you continue to be beaten"?
 - ? Reading verse 6, how badly has the child been beaten?
2. Not only has the child been beaten, badly, but he has received no consolation or treatment.
 - ? What language reflects this reality?
 - ? Within the metaphor, what does it mean that "the whole head is sick"?
 - ? If wounds go untended, what is likely to happen to them?
 - ? What happens if the wounds become infected?
 - ? How would you feel about understanding "the whole head is sick" to mean that the beaten party has become feverish through infection?
 - ? Though it is an ugly picture, do with each line what we just did with "the whole head is sick."
 - ? Does the imagery suggest anything about how long the beating has been going on? Why do you answer as you do?
3. We now turn to the "interpretation."

- ? Having been chastened by Yahweh, Israel is now “wholly sick in the head.” What might this mean?
- ? Of what might “the head” be representative within Israel society?
- ? What is the meaning of Israel being wounded “from head to toe”?
- ? What is the meaning of Israel being “faint hearted”?
- ? What individuals and societal institutions have been affected? How do you think they have been affected?

- ? In today’s reading, Isaiah utilizes an analogy to describe the consequences of Israel’s apostasy from God. What is the nature of that analogy?
- ? What do you see and how do you feel when you read Isaiah’s likening the consequences of Israel’s apostasy to the corrective beating of a child and the wounds that cover their bodies as a result of the beating?
- ? All in all, after reading about the child’s rebellion and the ensuing punishment, what are you thinking about and feeling toward the child?
- ? What are you thinking about and feeling toward God?

Isaiah 1.⁷⁻⁹

- ⁷Your country is desolate,
your cities are burned with fire:
your land, strangers devour it in your presence,
and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers.
⁸And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard,
as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers,
as a besieged city.
⁹Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant,
we should have been as Sodom,
and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

Questionary

After Isaiah's superscription (1.¹), Isaiah 1.^{2-2.5} may be viewed as an introduction to the book of Isaiah. It forms a literary unit with a chiasmic structure. As is done in the course of Isaiah's entire book, the introduction looks honestly at Israel's current pathetic plight, brought on by her rebellion. But this real time reality does not cause Isaiah to lose sight of another, more potent reality—the reality of God's power and mercy and his desire and capacity to redeem Israel. Following is one way of structuring Isaiah's "introduction."

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1. In today's reading, we leave the initial metaphor of 1.²⁻⁶ behind, and turn to Judah's national rebellion itself and the historical consequences of that rebellion.
 - ? What do you learn in today's reading about what was historically happening in Judah during Isaiah's lifetime?
 - ? Who are the "strangers" who are devouring, overthrowing, and laying siege to the nation?
2. In discussing the siege against Jerusalem, Isaiah describes Jerusalem as a lone hut sitting in the middle of a field of crops or vineyard.
 - ? What do you see in your mind's eye when you consider this metaphor?
3. Isaiah likens Judah's experience to that of Sodom and Gomorrah.
 - ? What is the significance of Isaiah's illusion to these two wicked cities?

Isaiah 1.¹⁰⁻¹⁵

- ¹⁰Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom;
give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.
- ¹¹To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me?
saith the LORD:
I am full of the burnt offerings of rams,
and the fat of fed beasts;
and I delight not
in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.
- ¹²When ye come to appear before me,
who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?
- ¹³Bring no more vain oblations;
incense is an abomination unto me;
the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies,
I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.
- ¹⁴Your new moons and your appointed feasts
my soul hateth:
they are a trouble unto me;
I am weary to bear them.
- ¹⁵And when ye spread forth your hands,
I will hide mine eyes from you:
yea, when ye make many prayers,
I will not hear:
your hands are full of blood.

Questionary

After Isaiah's superscription (1.¹), Isaiah 1.^{2-2.5} may be viewed as an introduction to the book of Isaiah. It forms a literary unit with a chiastic structure. As is done in the course of Isaiah's entire book, the introduction looks honestly at Israel's current pathetic plight, brought on by her rebellion. But this real time reality does not cause Isaiah to lose sight of another, more potent reality—the reality of God's power and mercy and his desire and capacity to redeem Israel. Following is one way of structuring Isaiah's "introduction."

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- God's Agent of Woe—5.²⁶⁻³⁰
- Isaiah's Call—6.¹⁻¹³
- The Failure of the Israel/Syrian Confederation—7.^{1-9.7}
 - The Sign of the Child, Immanuel—7.¹⁰⁻²⁵
 - The Sign of the Child, Maher-shalal-hash-baz—8.¹⁻²²
 - The Sign of the Child, Wonderful—9.¹⁻⁷
- Return to the Woes of the Wicked—9.^{8-10.4}
 - Seventh Woe—10.¹⁻⁴
- God's Agent of Woe—10.⁵⁻³⁴
- The Future Hope (11.^{1-12.6})
 - The Branch—11.¹⁻¹⁶
 - A Hymn of Praise—12.¹⁻⁶

Today's is the fourth of nine readings exploring this introduction.

In our previous readings from Isaiah 1 (verses 2-4), we introduced the metaphor God uses for the nation of Israel. It is one that every Israelite could relate to and easily understand. Yahweh likened the nation of Israel to a child, who, having been tenderly raised by a loving parent, selfishly rebels against the parent. In the second reading, (verses 5-6), we explored the brutal continuation of the metaphor, which moved from the rebelliousness itself to the punishment inflicted upon the rebellious child.

Today's reading is the 4th from the first chapter of Isaiah. In the first reading (2-4) Isaiah introduced his metaphor of Judah as a rebellious child. In the second (5-6), Isaiah continued the metaphor by exploring the harsh punishment Yahweh inflicted upon the rebellious child. In the third (7-9), Isaiah turned his attention from the metaphor of punishment to the historical reality of the nation's punishment—punishment that involved the attack and siege of Jerusalem.

1. In today's reading, Isaiah explores the historical nature of the metaphorical rebellious child's (Judah) rebellion against Yahweh.
? After reading today's passage, how would you describe Judah's sin? Of what did it consist?
2. Yahweh describes his feelings about the Jerusalem temple and its rituals with a number of verbs.

- I am full of...
- I delight not in...
- I cannot away with... (I cannot stand...)
- I hate...
- I am weary of...

In addition, Yahweh uses the following words to describe the temple and its rituals

- Abomination
- Iniquity
- Trouble

- ? Are you surprised that God would possess such negative feelings about his temple? If so,

- why? If not, why?
- ? To what do you attribute his negative feelings about the temple?
 - ? How does a passage such as Jeremiah 7.⁴⁻¹¹ help in understanding Yahweh's feelings?
3. The principle reason Yahweh gives for rejecting the people's rituals and prayers offered in the temple is that their "hands are covered with blood."
- ? How do you understand the sins to which this refers?
 - ? How might it refer to blood that was shed in the temple (that of sacrifices)?
 - ? How might it refer to blood that was shed outside the temple through violence?
 - ? What light does the following passage found later in Isaiah 1 shed light on this question?
- "How is the faithful city
 become an harlot!
 It was full of judgment;
 righteousness lodged in it;
 but now murderers.
 Thy silver is become dross,
 thy wine mixed with water:
 Thy princes are rebellious,
 and companions of thieves:
 every one loveth gifts,
 and followeth after rewards:
 they judge not the fatherless,
 neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them" (Isaiah 1.²¹⁻²³).
- ? How does our ethical behavior outside the temple effect the value of what we do inside the temple and our relationship with God?
 - ? How is our society doing in regard to keeping its hands free of blood (an absence of violence) and thus maintaining a meaningful and healthy relationship to God?

Isaiah 1.¹⁶⁻²⁰— just scripture

¹⁶Wash you,
make you clean;
put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes;
cease to do evil;
¹⁷Learn to do well;
seek judgment,
relieve the oppressed,
judge the fatherless,
plead for the widow.
¹⁸Come now, and let us reason together,
saith the LORD:
though your sins be as scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they be red like crimson,
they shall be as wool.
¹⁹If ye be willing and obedient,
ye shall eat the good of the land:
²⁰But if ye refuse and rebel,
ye shall be devoured with the sword:
for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

Questionary

After Isaiah's superscription (1.¹), Isaiah 1.^{2-2.5} may be viewed as an introduction to the book of Isaiah. It forms a literary unit with a chiasmic structure. As is done in the course of Isaiah's entire book, the introduction looks honestly at Israel's current pathetic plight, brought on by her rebellion. But this real time reality does not cause Isaiah to lose sight of another, more potent reality—the reality of God's power and mercy and his desire and capacity to redeem Israel. Following is one way of structuring Isaiah's "introduction."

	a 1. ²⁻⁹ The Rebellious Child
The	b 1. ¹⁰⁻¹⁵ Condemnation Of The Cult
Present Disappointment	c 1. ¹⁶⁻²⁰ The Redemptive Effects Of Justice
& Shattered Hopes	d 1. ²¹⁻²³ A Faithful City turned Harlot
	d' 1. ²⁴⁻²⁶ A City Faithful Once More
The	c' 1. ²⁷⁻²⁸ The Redemptive Effects Of Justice
Future Hope	b' 1. ²⁹⁻³¹ Removal Of The Cult
	a' 2. ¹⁻⁵ Walking in Yahweh's Light

The first half of the chiasm (vs. 1.¹⁻²³) describes the real and current situation as it existed in Isaiah's time. The second half (vs. 1.^{24-2.5}) describes a potential future situation. No matter how pessimistic Isaiah may be about the present, he never gives up on Yahweh's potential to repair, redeem, and emancipate.

After this introduction, Isaiah explores the two themes of the introduction—The present disappointments and shattered hopes/ The future hope—in detail as outlined here.

The Present Disappointment and Shattered Hopes (2.^{6-10.34})

The Delusion of Institutions is Revealed—2.⁶⁻²¹
The Delusion of Prestige is Revealed—2.^{22-3.15}
The Delusion of Materialism is Revealed—3.^{16-4.1}

The Nation's Diminished Status is Revealed—4.²⁻⁶
 Shattered Hopes of God Revealed in a Sad Love Song—5.¹⁻⁷
 The Woes of the Wicked are Revealed—5.⁸⁻²⁵
 First Woe—5.⁸⁻¹⁰
 Second Woe—5.¹¹⁻¹⁷
 Third Woe—5.¹⁸⁻¹⁹
 Fourth Woe—5.²⁰
 Fifth Woe—5.²¹
 Sixth Woe—5.²²⁻²⁵
 God's Agent of Woe—5.²⁶⁻³⁰
 Isaiah's Call—6.¹⁻¹³
 The Failure of the Israel/Syrian Confederation—7.¹⁻⁹.⁷
 The Sign of the Child, Immanuel—7.¹⁰⁻²⁵
 The Sign of the Child, Maher-shalal-hash-baz—8.¹⁻²²
 The Sign of the Child, Wonderful—9.¹⁻⁷
 Return to the Woes of the Wicked—9.⁸⁻¹⁰.⁴
 Seventh Woe—10.¹⁻⁴
 God's Agent of Woe—10.⁵⁻³⁴
 The Future Hope (11.¹⁻¹².⁶)
 The Branch—11.¹⁻¹⁶
 A Hymn of Praise—12.¹⁻⁶

Today's reading is the fifth of nine exploring this introduction. In the first reading (2-4) Isaiah introduced his metaphor of Judah as a rebellious child. In the second (5-6), Isaiah continued the metaphor by exploring the harsh punishment Yahweh inflicted upon the rebellious child. In the third (7-9), Isaiah turned his attention from the metaphor of punishment to the historical reality of the nation's punishment—punishment that involved the attack and siege of Jerusalem. In the fourth reading (10-15), Isaiah, revealed Yahweh's distaste for the temple, suggesting that part of Judah's sin stemmed from the temple itself.

1. In today's well-known passage, Isaiah indirectly discusses other of Judah's sins and stipulates that only societal justice could clean Judah of its sins.
 - ? What is the nature of Judah's sins?
 - ? How would reading "seek justice" rather than "seek judgment" alter your reading and understanding of today's passage?
 - ? What do the orphans and widows have in common?
 - ? How are these vulnerable populations taken advantage of and oppressed?
2. This passage is often quoted in relation to the Atonement of Jesus Christ and our need to apply his Atonement. This is of questionable interpretation.

Isaiah does indeed directly discuss how Judah's sin of oppression against vulnerable populations can be forgiven. Judah believed that temple ordinances such as sacrifices could atone for sin. But in verses 10-16, Yahweh made it clear that Judah's temple ordinances were unacceptable.

- ? According to Isaiah, what will the nation need to do to find the cleansing that is so desirable?
 - ? How do you feel about Judah's forgiveness being contingent on society conducting itself with justice, especially toward vulnerable populations?
 - ? Why, do you think, would God base an individual's and a nation's forgiveness upon the justice they showed to vulnerable populations?
 - ? Given that social justice is required for a nation to live in a healthy relationship with God, how healthy is your nation's relationship with God?
- ? King Benjamin makes a clear connection between "maintaining a remission of sins" and how one treats the vulnerable (Mosiah 4.²⁶) Isaiah makes a clear connection between the initial cleansing

from sin and showing justice and protection to vulnerable individuals and populations. Based upon such connections, how “clean” is America?

? How “clean” are you?

Isaiah 1.²¹⁻²³— just scripture

²¹How is the faithful city
become an harlot!

it was full of judgment;
righteousness lodged in it;
but now murderers.

²²Thy silver is become dross,
thy wine mixed with water:

²³Thy princes are rebellious,
and companions of thieves:
every one loveth gifts,
and followeth after rewards:

they judge not the fatherless,
neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them (author's translation).

Questionary

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

²¹How is the faithful city
become an harlot!

it was full of judgment;
righteousness lodged in it;
but now murderers.

²²Thy silver is become dross,
thy wine mixed with water:

²³Thy princes are rebellious,
and companions of thieves:
every one loveth gifts,
and followeth after rewards:

they judge not the fatherless,
neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.

After Isaiah's superscription (1.¹), Isaiah 1.^{2-2.5} may be viewed as an introduction to the book of Isaiah. It forms a literary unit with a chiastic structure. As is done in the course of Isaiah's entire book, the introduction looks honestly at Israel's current pathetic plight, brought on by her rebellion. But this real time reality does not cause Isaiah to lose sight of another, more potent reality—the reality of God's power and mercy and his desire and capacity to redeem Israel. Following is one way of structuring Isaiah's "introduction."

The
Present Disappointment
& Shattered Hopes

The
Future Hope

a 1.²⁻⁹ The Rebellious Child

b 1.¹⁰⁻¹⁵ Condemnation Of The Cult

c 1.¹⁶⁻²⁰ The Redemptive Effects Of Justice

d 1.²¹⁻²³ A Faithful City turned Harlot

d' 1.²⁴⁻²⁶ A City Faithful Once More

c' 1.²⁷⁻²⁸ The Redemptive Effects Of Justice

b' 1.²⁹⁻³¹ Removal Of The Cult

a' 2.¹⁻⁵ Walking in Yahweh's Light

The first half of the chiasm (vs. 1.¹⁻²³) describes the real and current situation as it existed in Isaiah's time. The second half (vs. 1.^{24-2.5}) describes a potential future situation. No matter how pessimistic Isaiah may be about the present, he never gives up on Yahweh's potential to repair, redeem, and emancipate.

After this introduction, Isaiah explores the two themes of the introduction—The present disappointments and shattered hopes/ The future hope—in detail as outlined here.

The Present Disappointment and Shattered Hopes (2.⁶-10.³⁴)

- The Delusion of Institutions is Revealed—2.⁶⁻²¹
- The Delusion of Prestige is Revealed—2.²²-3.¹⁵
- The Delusion of Materialism is Revealed—3.¹⁶-4.¹
- The Nation's Diminished Status is Revealed—4.²⁻⁶
- Shattered Hopes of God Revealed in a Sad Love Song—5.¹⁻⁷
- The Woes of the Wicked are Revealed—5.⁸⁻²⁵
 - First Woe—5.⁸⁻¹⁰
 - Second Woe—5.¹¹⁻¹⁷
 - Third Woe—5.¹⁸⁻¹⁹
 - Fourth Woe—5.²⁰
 - Fifth Woe—5.²¹
 - Sixth Woe—5.²²⁻²⁵
- God's Agent of Woe—5.²⁶⁻³⁰
- Isaiah's Call—6.¹⁻¹³
- The Failure of the Israel/Syrian Confederation—7.¹⁻⁹.⁷
 - The Sign of the Child, Immanuel—7.¹⁰⁻²⁵
 - The Sign of the Child, Maher-shalal-hash-baz—8.¹⁻²²
 - The Sign of the Child, Wonderful—9.¹⁻⁷
- Return to the Woes of the Wicked—9.⁸-10.⁴
 - Seventh Woe—10.¹⁻⁴
- God's Agent of Woe—10.⁵⁻³⁴

The Future Hope (11.¹-12.⁶)

- The Branch—11.¹⁻¹⁶
- A Hymn of Praise—12.¹⁻⁶

We can consider Isaiah 1.²-2.⁵ as an introduction to the entire book of Isaiah. Today's reading is the sixth of nine exploring this introduction. In the first reading (1.²⁻⁴) Isaiah introduced his metaphor of Judah as a rebellious child. In the second (1.⁵⁻⁶), Isaiah continued the metaphor by exploring the harsh punishment Yahweh inflicted upon the rebellious child. In the third (1.⁷⁻⁹), Isaiah turned his attention from the metaphor of punishment to the historical reality of the nation's punishment—punishment that involved the attack and siege of Jerusalem. In the fourth reading (1.¹⁰⁻¹⁵), Isaiah revealed Yahweh's distaste for the temple, suggesting that part of Judah's sin stemmed from the temple itself. In the fifth reading (1.¹⁶⁻²⁰) Isaiah reveals that it is moral and ethical lapses in regard to social justice outside the temple that make what goes on inside the temple such an abomination to Yahweh. He stipulates that only societal justice could clean Judah of its sins.

In today's reading, Isaiah goes into detail concerning the immoral and unethical behavior prevalent in Judah.

1. The Hebrew Bible often symbolically portray the nations of Israel and Judah as the wives of Yahweh.
 - ? In light of this, what do you think and feel when you contemplate that the nations, once living with Yahweh in complete fidelity, are not prostituting themselves
 - ? To whom are they prostituting themselves?
 - ? What is idolatry, and how is it like marital infidelity and, worse, prostitution?
2. Verse 22 contains this imagery,
 - “Your silver has become slag.
 - Your beer is diluted with water.”

Consider this metaphor from the literal perspective. Imagine a wine dealer. He sells you diluted wine, and “in making change” gives you impure silver.

- ? How do you feel about the wine dealer?
- ? What does such a business practice tell you about the dealer and his priorities?
- ? What does the existence of such business practices tell you about those responsible for overseeing and regulating economic practices?

Now consider this metaphor from the symbolic perspective.

- ? What does this metaphor say about Judah’s population, and especially about its leadership—political, economic, religious, etc.?
- ? How do governmental leaders offer things and allow business leaders to offer things that are not what they claim to be, and offer things and allow things to be bought and sold for more than they are worth?

We know from the prophet Amos, a contemporary of Isaiah, that such economic practices were common. Amos quotes a merchant as asking the following:

“When will the new moon be gone,
that we may sell corn?
and the sabbath,
that we may set forth wheat,
making the ephah small,
and the shekel great,
and falsifying the balances by deceit?” (Amos 8.⁵)

- ? How do you feel about such merchants?
- ? What does this tell you about their “worship” experiences and their true feelings about God?

3. In speaking of Israel’s political leaders, Isaiah declares,

“Thy princes are rebellious,
and companions of thieves:
every one loveth gifts,
and followeth after rewards:
they judge not the fatherless,
neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.”

- ? Who is it that has the resources to offer government officials bribes?
- ? According to the last two lines of verse 23, what is the net effect of government corruption?
- ? How would you feel about the contention that when one sees the vulnerable portions of society being taken advantage of, one can simply assume that some form of bribery is at work among government and economic leaders?

4. In relation to the collusion between the wealthy and government officials, Isaiah speaks of “murder” in verse 21.

- ? How should we think of “murder” in this context?
- ? Is murder only the active and physical taking of another life?

Let’s go back to our earlier scenario. The merchant provides diluted wine and corrupted wheat at inflated prices (due to his corruption of the monetary system). This means the poor are paying more for less. After a time, the children become malnourished. Perhaps one dies. Perhaps a parent dies.

- ? Are we justified in saying that the merchant has murdered the child or parent?
- ? Why do you answer as you do?
- ? How would you feel if we contended that the Bible would indeed call this murder?
- ? How would you feel if we went further, and contended that many businesses and industries

today (remember: the U.S. supreme court has designated corporations as “persons”), along with their managers are engaged in murderous economic practices?

- ? What can the individual citizen do so as not to be implicated in such murderous practices and come under the sort of condemnation leveled by Isaiah against ancient Judah?

Isaiah 1.²⁴⁻²⁶— just scripture

²⁴Therefore saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts,
the mighty One of Israel,
Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries,
and avenge me of mine enemies:
²⁵And I will turn my hand upon thee,
and purely purge away thy dross,
and take away all thy tin:
²⁶And I will restore thy judges as at the first,
and thy counsellors as at the beginning:
afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness,
the faithful city.

Questionary

After Isaiah's superscription (1.¹), Isaiah 1.^{2-2.5} may be viewed as an introduction to the book of Isaiah. It forms a literary unit with a chiasmic structure. As is done in the course of Isaiah's entire book, the introduction looks honestly at Israel's current pathetic plight, brought on by her rebellion. But this real time reality does not cause Isaiah to lose sight of another, more potent reality—the reality of God's power and mercy and his desire and capacity to redeem Israel. Following is one way of structuring Isaiah's "introduction."

	a 1. ²⁻⁹ The Rebellious Child
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The	d' 1. ²⁴⁻²⁶ A City Faithful Once More
Future Hope	c' 1. ²⁷⁻²⁸ The Redemptive Effects Of Justice
	b' 1. ²⁹⁻³¹ Removal Of The Cult
	a' 2. ¹⁻⁵ Walking in Yahweh's Light

The first half of the chiasm (vs. 1.¹⁻²³) describes the real and current situation as it existed in Isaiah's time. The second half (vs. 1.^{24-2.5}) describes a potential future situation. No matter how pessimistic Isaiah may be about the present, he never gives up on Yahweh's potential to repair, redeem, and emancipate.

After this introduction, Isaiah explores the two themes of the introduction—The present disappointments and shattered hopes/ The future hope—in detail as outlined here.

The Present Disappointment and Shattered Hopes (2.^{6-10.34})

- The Delusion of Institutions is Revealed—2.⁶⁻²¹
- The Delusion of Prestige is Revealed—2.^{22-3.15}
- The Delusion of Materialism is Revealed—3.^{16-4.1}
- The Nation's Diminished Status is Revealed—4.²⁻⁶
- Shattered Hopes of God Revealed in a Sad Love Song—5.¹⁻⁷
- The Woes of the Wicked are Revealed—5.⁸⁻²⁵
 - First Woe—5.⁸⁻¹⁰
 - Second Woe—5.¹¹⁻¹⁷
 - Third Woe—5.¹⁸⁻¹⁹
 - Fourth Woe—5.²⁰
 - Fifth Woe—5.²¹
 - Sixth Woe—5.²²⁻²⁵

God's Agent of Woe—5.²⁶⁻³⁰

Isaiah's Call—6.¹⁻¹³

The Failure of the Israel/Syrian Confederation—7.¹⁻⁹.⁷

The Sign of the Child, Immanuel—7.¹⁰⁻²⁵

The Sign of the Child, Maher-shalal-hash-baz—8.¹⁻²²

The Sign of the Child, Wonderful—9.¹⁻⁷

Return to the Woes of the Wicked—9.⁸-10.⁴

Seventh Woe—10.¹⁻⁴

God's Agent of Woe—10.⁵⁻³⁴

The Future Hope (11.¹-12.⁶)

The Branch—11.¹⁻¹⁶

A Hymn of Praise—12.¹⁻⁶

Today's reading is the seventh of nine exploring this introduction. In the first reading (2-4) Isaiah introduced his metaphor of Judah as a rebellious child. In the second (5-6), Isaiah continued the metaphor by exploring the harsh punishment Yahweh inflicted upon the rebellious child. In the third (7-9), Isaiah turned his attention from the metaphor of punishment to the historical reality of the nation's punishment—punishment that involved the attack and siege of Jerusalem. In the fourth and fifth reading, Isaiah, discussed one of Judah's real and historical sins—heretofore only mentioned metaphorically. This sin involved a dedication to temple ritual (10-15) without moral and ethical behavior outside the temple (16-20). He stipulates that only societal justice could cleanse Judah of its sins. In the sixth reading (21-23), Isaiah identifies the nation's specific unethical oppression of vulnerable peoples.

1. In today's reading, Isaiah describes the Lord's response to the present disappointment Judah represents to Yahweh hopes for the nation and his solution to Judah's out-of-control rebellion.
 - ? What does Yahweh plan to do to reverse Judah's rebellion?
 - ? What does it suggest to you that in dealing with the nation's rebellion, Yahweh intends to begin by removing corrupt leaders, and replacing them with moral leaders.
2. In today's reading Judah's leaders are likened to impure silver.
 - ? Why is this imagery appropriate to the leaders' unethical behavior?
3. In the previous reading from 21-23 and today's reading, Isaiah utilizes a metaphor. In the metaphor, the city, Jerusalem, was once a faithful wife, turned prostitute. With the removal of unethical leaders, Jerusalem becomes, once more, a faithful wife.
 - ? How do you feel about this intense and intimate metaphor?

Isaiah 1.²⁷⁻³¹— just scripture

- ²⁷Zion shall be redeemed with judgment,
and her converts with righteousness.
²⁸And the destruction of the transgressors
and of the sinners shall be together,
and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed.
²⁹For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired,
and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen.
³⁰For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth,
and as a garden that hath no water.
³¹And the strong shall be as tow,
and the maker of it [what he produces] as a spark,
and they shall both burn together,
and none shall quench them.

Questionary

After Isaiah's superscription (1.¹), Isaiah 1.^{2-2.5} may be viewed as an introduction to the book of Isaiah. It forms a literary unit with a chiastic structure. As is done in the course of Isaiah's entire book, the introduction looks honestly at Israel's current pathetic plight, brought on by her rebellion. But this real time reality does not cause Isaiah to lose sight of another, more potent reality—the reality of God's power and mercy and his desire and capacity to redeem Israel. Following is one way of structuring Isaiah's "introduction."

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Future Hope	b' 1. ²⁹⁻³¹ Removal Of The Cult
	a' 2. ¹⁻⁵ Walking in Yahweh's Light

The first half of the chiasm (vs. 1.¹⁻²³) describes the real and current situation as it existed in Isaiah's time. The second half (vs. 1.^{24-2.5}) describes a potential future situation. No matter how pessimistic Isaiah may be about the present, he never gives up on Yahweh's potential to repair, redeem, and emancipate.

After this introduction, Isaiah explores the two themes of the introduction—The present disappointments and shattered hopes/ The future hope—in detail as outlined here.

The Present Disappointment and Shattered Hopes (2.^{6-10.34})

- The Delusion of Institutions is Revealed—2.⁶⁻²¹
- The Delusion of Prestige is Revealed—2.^{22-3.15}
- The Delusion of Materialism is Revealed—3.^{16-4.1}
- The Nation's Diminished Status is Revealed—4.²⁻⁶
- Shattered Hopes of God Revealed in a Sad Love Song—5.¹⁻⁷
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 - First Woe—5.⁸⁻¹⁰
 - Second Woe—5.¹¹⁻¹⁷
 - Third Woe—5.¹⁸⁻¹⁹
 - Fourth Woe—5.²⁰

- Fifth Woe—5.²¹
- Sixth Woe—5.²²⁻²⁵
- God’s Agent of Woe—5.²⁶⁻³⁰
- Isaiah’s Call—6.¹⁻¹³
- The Failure of the Israel/Syrian Confederation—7.¹⁻⁹.⁷
 - The Sign of the Child, Immanuel—7.¹⁰⁻²⁵
 - The Sign of the Child, Maher-shalal-hash-baz—8.¹⁻²²
 - The Sign of the Child, Wonderful—9.¹⁻⁷
- Return to the Woes of the Wicked—9.⁸-10.⁴
 - Seventh Woe—10.¹⁻⁴
 - God’s Agent of Woe—10.⁵⁻³⁴
- The Future Hope (11.¹⁻¹².⁶)
 - The Branch—11.¹⁻¹⁶
 - A Hymn of Praise—12.¹⁻⁶

Today’s reading is the eighth of nine exploring this introduction. In the first reading (2-4) Isaiah introduced his metaphor of Judah as a rebellious child. In the second (5-6), Isaiah continued the metaphor by exploring the harsh punishment Yahweh inflicted upon the rebellious child. In the third (7-9), Isaiah turned his attention from the metaphor of punishment to the historical reality of the nation’s punishment—punishment that involved the attack and siege of Jerusalem. In the fourth and fifth readings, Isaiah, discussed one of Judah’s real and historical sins—heretofore only mentioned metaphorically. This sin involved a dedication to temple ritual (10-15) without moral and ethical behavior outside the temple (16-20). He stipulates that only societal justice could cleanse Judah of its sins. In the sixth reading (21-23), Isaiah identified the nation’s specific unethical oppression of vulnerable peoples. In the seventh reading (24-26), Isaiah described the Lord’s response and solution to Judah’s out-of-control rebellion.

1. In today’s reading, Isaiah returns to two themes he has already addressed in the chapter.
 - ? Can you identify these two themes? What are they?
 - ? Where have we previously found Isaiah’s contention that only societal justice can “redeem” Judah?
 - ? Isaiah alludes to Judah’s idolatry in today’s reading. Where has Isaiah previously alluded to idolatry?
 - ? How had the temple become a form of idolatry earlier in the chapter?
2. Isaiah 1 ends, as it began, with metaphor—two metaphors, in fact.
 - ? What are the two metaphors?
 - ? Take a moment to picture them. What do you see?
 - ? How do you feel about Isaiah likening social elites to something as insignificant and seemingly harmless as kindling?
 - ? How does what they produce (think of this in terms of societal norms and practices) cause a spark that sets them on fire?
 - ? What do you hear Isaiah saying to and about society’s elite?

Isaiah 2.¹⁻⁵

¹The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.
²And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.
³And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
⁴And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.
⁵O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD.

Questionary

After Isaiah's superscription (1.¹), Isaiah 1.^{2-2.5} may be viewed as an introduction to the book of Isaiah. It forms a literary unit with a chiastic structure. As is done in the course of Isaiah's entire book, the introduction looks honestly at Israel's current pathetic plight, brought on by her rebellion. But this real time reality does not cause Isaiah to lose sight of another, more potent reality—the reality of God's power and mercy and his desire and capacity to redeem Israel. Following is one way of structuring Isaiah's "introduction."

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The	c' 1. ²⁷⁻²⁸ The Redemptive Effects Of Justice
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The first half of the chiasm (vs. 1.¹⁻²³) describes the real and current situation as it existed in Isaiah's time. The second half (vs. 1.^{24-2.5}) describes a potential future situation. No matter how pessimistic Isaiah may be about the present, he never gives up on Yahweh's potential to repair, redeem, and emancipate.

After this introduction, Isaiah explores the two themes of the introduction—The present disappointments and shattered hopes/ The future hope—in detail as outlined here.

The Present Disappointment and Shattered Hopes (2.^{6-10.34})

The Delusion of Institutions is Revealed—2.⁶⁻²¹

The Delusion of Prestige is Revealed—2.^{22-3.15}
 The Delusion of Materialism is Revealed—3.^{16-4.1}
 The Nation's Diminished Status is Revealed—4.²⁻⁶
 Shattered Hopes of God Revealed in a Sad Love Song—5.¹⁻⁷
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 First Woe—5.⁸⁻¹⁰
 Second Woe—5.¹¹⁻¹⁷
 Third Woe—5.¹⁸⁻¹⁹
 Fourth Woe—5.²⁰
 Fifth Woe—5.²¹
 Sixth Woe—5.²²⁻²⁵
 God's Agent of Woe—5.²⁶⁻³⁰
 Isaiah's Call—6.¹⁻¹³
 The Failure of the Israel/Syrian Confederation—7.^{1-9.7}
 The Sign of the Child, Immanuel—7.¹⁰⁻²⁵
 The Sign of the Child, Maher-shalal-hash-baz—8.¹⁻²²
 The Sign of the Child, Wonderful—9.¹⁻⁷
 Return to the Woes of the Wicked—9.^{8-10.4}
 Seventh Woe—10.¹⁻⁴
 God's Agent of Woe—10.⁵⁻³⁴
 The Future Hope (11.^{1-12.6})
 The Branch—11.¹⁻¹⁶
 A Hymn of Praise—12.¹⁻⁶

Today's reading is the last of nine exploring this introduction. In the first reading (2-4) Isaiah introduced his metaphor of Judah as a rebellious child. In the second (5-6), Isaiah continued the metaphor by exploring the harsh punishment Yahweh inflicted upon the rebellious child. In the third (7-9), Isaiah turned his attention from the metaphor of punishment to the historical reality of the nation's punishment—punishment that involved the attack and siege of Jerusalem. In the fourth and fifth readings, Isaiah, discussed one of Judah's real and historical sins—heretofore only mentioned metaphorically. This sin involved a dedication to temple ritual (10-15) without moral and ethical behavior outside the temple (16-20). He stipulates that only societal justice could cleanse Judah of its sins. In the sixth reading (21-23), Isaiah identified the nation's specific unethical oppression of vulnerable peoples. In the seventh reading (24-26), Isaiah described the Lord's response and solution to Judah's out-of-control rebellion. In the eighth reading (27-31), Isaiah comes back to the punishment Israel is to suffer for its idolatry and the accompanying social injustice.

Following is the author's translation of today's passage.

¹This is what Y^eša'yāhû ben 'āmô ş perceived about Y^ehûdâ and Y^erûšālāyim.

²In days to come
 the Mountain on which stands Yahweh's temple
 will be fixed above any other Mountain;
 lifted above any other height.
 All nations will come streaming to it;
 ³many peoples will come, saying:
 Come! Let's go up to Yahweh's mountain;
 to the temple of the God of Ya'qōb.
 He will teach us his ways,
 and we shall walk in his paths.
 For Torah will come out of Şîyôn,
 and the word of Yahweh from Y^erûšālāyim.

⁴Then will He mediate between nations;
He will reconcile many peoples,
so that they will retool their swords into plow blades
and their spears into pruning instruments.
One nation will no longer lift the sword against another,
nor will they any longer train for warfare.

⁵Come, Oh House of Ya‘qōb,
and let us walk in Yahweh’s light.

1. Today’s reading informs us how Yahweh intends not only to reverse the disappointment that Judah has represented to his hopes, but how he intends to reverse the disappointment that the entire world has represented to his hopes.
 - ? How will he reverse the disappointments?
 - ? How does the establishment of his temple with its teachings help in reversing the disappointment?
 - ? In establishing his temple and its instruction as a means of reversing the disappointment, what will the nations be taught and learn in the temple?
2. Note the different translations of verse 4, first the KJV, then the author’s.

“And he shall judge among the nations,
and shall rebuke many people:
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruninghooks:
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.”
“Then will He mediate between nations;
He will reconcile many peoples,
so that they will retool their swords into plow blades
and their spears into pruning instruments.

One nation will no longer lift the sword against another,
nor will they any longer train for warfare.”

- ? How do you feel about one of the main purposes of the temple being to bring peace and the end of hostility and war to the nations of the world?
- ? How could the teachings of the temple do this, if they were heeded?
- ? For example, how could the Lord’s economic law of consecration put an end to conflict and war?

We associate the temple most strongly with proxy work for the dead. However, consider the following passage.

“Therefore, renounce war and proclaim peace, and seek diligently to turn the hearts of the children to their fathers, and the hearts of the fathers to the children...” (DC 98.¹⁶).

- ? How does this passage demonstrate the connection between forming family linkage and linkage among the nations?
- ? What do you think and feel when you consider that the temple’s primary purpose is to teach the interconnectedness of everyone, not just nuclear and extended families, in order to do away with hostility, competition, etc., and establish peace and cooperation?

Isaiah 2.⁶⁻⁹— just scripture

⁶When you turned your people loose,
the House of Ya‘qob—
such that it was filled with those from the east
and hummed with those from the west,
foreigners everywhere;
⁷its land affluent in silver and gold,
with no end to its wealth;
its land abounding with horses,
with no end to its chariots;
⁸its land was, in fact, crammed with emptiness
while they worshiped the work of their own hands,
that which their fingers made—
⁹then man was devalued,
each person debased,
no value was credited to anyone.

Q

uestionary

After Isaiah’s superscription (1.¹) and introduction (1.²-2.⁵), lunches into the first unit of his book (2.⁶-12.⁶). Here, Isaiah explores in detail the two themes presented in the introduction: “The Present Disappointment and Shattered Hopes” and “The Future Hope” as outlined here.

The Present Disappointment and Shattered Hopes (2.⁶-10.³⁴)

The Delusion of Institutions is Revealed—2.⁶⁻²¹
The Delusion of Prestige is Revealed—2.^{22-3.15}
The Delusion of Materialism is Revealed—3.^{16-4.1}
The Nation’s Diminished Status is Revealed—4.²⁻⁶
Shattered Hopes of God Revealed in a Sad Love Song—5.¹⁻⁷
The Woes of the Wicked are Revealed—5.⁸⁻²⁵
 First Woe—5.⁸⁻¹⁰
 Second Woe—5.¹¹⁻¹⁷
 Third Woe—5.¹⁸⁻¹⁹
 Fourth Woe—5.²⁰
 Fifth Woe—5.²¹
 Sixth Woe—5.²²⁻²⁵
God’s Agent of Woe—5.²⁶⁻³⁰
Isaiah’s Call—6.¹⁻¹³
The Failure of the Israel/Syrian Confederation—7.^{1-9.7}
 The Sign of the Child, Immanuel—7.¹⁰⁻²⁵
 The Sign of the Child, Maher-shalal-hash-baz—8.¹⁻²²
 The Sign of the Child, Wonderful—9.¹⁻⁷
Return to the Woes of the Wicked—9.^{8-10.4}
 Seventh Woe—10.¹⁻⁴
God’s Agent of Woe—10.⁵⁻³⁴

The Future Hope (11.¹-12.⁶)

The Branch—11.¹⁻¹⁶
A Hymn of Praise—12.¹⁻⁶

Today’s reading from Isaiah represents the author’s translation. These verses are universally acknowledged as corrupt. Here is the KJV translation for those who wish to compare.

⁶Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people
the house of Jacob,
because they be replenished from the east,
and are soothsayers like the Philistines,
and they please themselves in the children of strangers.

⁷Their land also is full of silver and gold,
neither is there any end of their treasures;
their land is also full of horses,
neither is there any end of their chariots:

⁸Their land also is full of idols;
they worship the work of their own hands,
that which their own fingers have made:

⁹And the mean man boweth down,
and the great man humbleth himself:
therefore forgive them not.

1. Yahweh has allowed Israel to act according to its desires. As a result, Israel is experiencing an economic boom. People from every corner of the Near East, are buying and selling in Israel. Money is flowing into government coffers such that there is sufficient to purchase expensive horses trained for warfare and chariots. But from Yahweh's perspective, all the money, horses, and chariots are "nothing." All Israel's accumulations are idols.
 - ? What are the materialistic idols in our society?
2. One of the evils that Israel's materialism produces is the objectification of individuals. Monied interests view others only as tools to be used for further gain.
 - ? In what ways do businesses and corporations today use, abuse, and dehumanize their employees, seeing them only for the profit they can bring to the company?
 - ? What can individuals do to express their objection to such idolatrous objectification, and to bring an end to such immoral behavior?
 - ? What can individuals do to avoid being guilty of such attitudes and behaviors?
- ? At what point does a focus on "good economy"—represented here by "silver and gold" and "treasures"—become idolatrous?
- ? At what point does trust in and a sense of security from a national military complex—represented here by "horses" and "chariots"—become idolatrous?
- ? How idolatrous or none-idolatrous is America in regard to economic concerns and militarism?

Isaiah 2.¹⁰⁻¹⁶— just scripture

- ¹⁰Enter into the rock,
and hide thee in the dust,
for fear of the LORD,
and for the glory of his majesty.
- ¹¹The lofty looks of man shall be humbled,
and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down,
and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.
- ¹²For the day of the LORD of hosts
shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty,
and upon every one that is lifted up;
and he shall be brought low:
- ¹³And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up,
and upon all the oaks of Bashan,
- ¹⁴And upon all the high mountains,
and upon all the hills that are lifted up,
- ¹⁵And upon every high tower,
and upon every fenced wall,
- ¹⁶And upon all the ships of Tarshish,
and upon all pleasant pictures.

Questionary

After Isaiah's superscription (1.¹) and introduction (1.²-2.⁵), lunches into the first unit of his book (2.⁶-12.⁶). Here, Isaiah explores in detail the two themes presented in the introduction: "The Present Disappointment and Shattered Hopes" and "The Future Hope" as outlined here.

The Present Disappointment and Shattered Hopes (2.⁶-10.³⁴)

- The Delusion of Institutions is Revealed—2.⁶⁻²¹
- The Delusion of Prestige is Revealed—2.²²-3.¹⁵
- The Delusion of Materialism is Revealed—3.¹⁶-4.¹
- The Nation's Diminished Status is Revealed—4.²⁻⁶
- Shattered Hopes of God Revealed in a Sad Love Song—5.¹⁻⁷
- The Woes of the Wicked are Revealed—5.⁸⁻²⁵
 - First Woe—5.⁸⁻¹⁰
 - Second Woe—5.¹¹⁻¹⁷
 - Third Woe—5.¹⁸⁻¹⁹
 - Fourth Woe—5.²⁰
 - Fifth Woe—5.²¹
 - Sixth Woe—5.²²⁻²⁵
- God's Agent of Woe—5.²⁶⁻³⁰
- Isaiah's Call—6.¹⁻¹³
- The Failure of the Israel/Syrian Confederation—7.¹⁻⁹.⁷
 - The Sign of the Child, Immanuel—7.¹⁰⁻²⁵
 - The Sign of the Child, Maher-shalal-hash-baz—8.¹⁻²²
 - The Sign of the Child, Wonderful—9.¹⁻⁷
- Return to the Woes of the Wicked—9.⁸-10.⁴
 - Seventh Woe—10.¹⁻⁴
- God's Agent of Woe—10.⁵⁻³⁴

The Future Hope (11.¹-12.⁶)

- The Branch—11.¹⁻¹⁶

A Hymn of Praise—12.¹⁻⁶

In our previous reading from Isaiah 2 (verses 6-9) we heard Isaiah's criticism concerning the idolatry and accompanying dehumanization that was brought about because of an economic boom.

1. In today's reading, Isaiah predicts the negative personal and societal consequences that will flow from the idolatry and its attendant dehumanization.
 - ? In what ways do economic booms create and strengthen "haughtiness"?
 - ? How does a proper relationship with God keep such "haughtiness" from erupting in our lives?
 2. Isaiah speaks of "cedars," "oaks," "high mountains," "hills," "high towers," "fenced walls," "ships of Tarshish," and "tall ships" (rather than "pleasant pictures?").
 - ? What is the symbolic meaning of these?
 3. Cedars and oaks are the most expensive of building materials. Only the wealthy could afford such extravagances, which they used in building their palaces.
 - ? Do we have analogous building practices in our day?
 - ? How do they create "haughtiness" that God must then correct through chastisement?
 4. "High towers" and "fenced walls" represent the military.
 - ? How can the military become an idol?
 - ? Are we in danger of placing our trust in our military rather than in God? How is this reflected in our day?
 5. The "ships of Tarshish" and "tall ships" represent the international trade, or, in other words, "economic concerns."
 - ? How do economic concerns become an idol?
 - ? Are we in danger of placing our trust in a good economy rather than in God? How is this reflected in our day?
 6. "High mountains" and "hills" represent places where religious structures are established. In fact, temples and other religious shrines can come to be thought of as "mountains." The mountain and hill, then, represents the "religious establishment."
 - ? "How might "religion" actually turn into "idolatry"?"
 - ? How might the structures of our religion become a source of haughtiness and idolatry?
- ? Are there adjustments you need to make in your personal attitudes toward any of these potential sources of idolatry?
 - ? Are there societal tendencies in these areas that lead to idolatry that you could influence in even small ways?

Isaiah 2.¹⁷⁻²¹

¹⁷And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down,
and the haughtiness of men shall be made low:
and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.

¹⁸And the idols
he shall utterly abolish.

¹⁹And they shall go into the holes of the rocks,
and into the caves of the earth,
for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty,
when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

²⁰In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver,
and his idols of gold,
which they made each one for himself to worship,
to the moles and to the bats;

²¹To go into the clefts of the rocks,
and into the tops of the ragged rocks,
for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty,
when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

Q

uestionary

After Isaiah's superscription (1.¹) and introduction (1.^{2-2.5}), lunches into the first unit of his book (2.^{6-12.6}). Here, Isaiah explores in detail the two themes presented in the introduction: "The Present Disappointment and Shattered Hopes" and "The Future Hope" as outlined here.

The Present Disappointment and Shattered Hopes (2.^{6-10.34})

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The Delusion of Prestige is Revealed—2.^{22-3.15}

The Delusion of Materialism is Revealed—3.^{16-4.1}

The Nation's Diminished Status is Revealed—4.²⁻⁶

Shattered Hopes of God Revealed in a Sad Love Song—5.¹⁻⁷

The Woes of the Wicked are Revealed—5.⁸⁻²⁵

First Woe—5.⁸⁻¹⁰

Second Woe—5.¹¹⁻¹⁷

Third Woe—5.¹⁸⁻¹⁹

Fourth Woe—5.²⁰

Fifth Woe—5.²¹

Sixth Woe—5.²²⁻²⁵

God's Agent of Woe—5.²⁶⁻³⁰

Isaiah's Call—6.¹⁻¹³

The Failure of the Israel/Syrian Confederation—7.^{1-9.7}

The Sign of the Child, Immanuel—7.¹⁰⁻²⁵

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The Sign of the Child, Wonderful—9.¹⁻⁷

Return to the Woes of the Wicked—9.^{8-10.4}

Seventh Woe—10.¹⁻⁴

God's Agent of Woe—10.⁵⁻³⁴

The Future Hope (11.^{1-12.6})

The Branch—11.¹⁻¹⁶

A Hymn of Praise—12.¹⁻⁶

In Isaiah 2.¹⁻⁵, Yahweh revealed his intention to reconcile individuals and nations through the

instruction that he provided at his temple. In 2.⁶⁻⁹, this future hope is contrasted with Israel's present (8th century B.C.), in which idolatrous economic, materialistic, and militaristic conditions cause the dehumanization and objectification of the individual. Isaiah 2.⁶⁻⁹, then, provides clues as to the instruction that will come from the temple for the purpose of reconciling individuals and nations. In 2.¹⁰⁻¹⁶, Isaiah reports that as Yahweh makes himself known the false security found in materialism, militarism, and even religion will be exposed for the lie that it is. All that seems haughtily impressive will be shaken, lose its luster, and come crashing down.

In today's reading, Isaiah continues his theme of idolatry's demise and loss of appeal.

1. Consider Isaiah's imagery of gold and silver being thrown to rodents. First, close your eyes and envision this happening.
 - ? What do you see?
 - ? How do you feel?
 - ? How does the silver and gold look in that subterranean nest of rats?
 - ? How do those feel about the metal and those who once worshiped it? What are their thoughts as they watch the rodents scurry over the hateful metal?
 - ? Do they perceive how like the rats they are—Isaiah says that they too, will hide in subterranean places?
- ? So what do we do about this now, before it is too late?
- ? What is the warning to our grossly materialistic culture?

Isaiah 2.²²⁻³.

²²Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils:
for wherein is he to be accounted of?

¹For, behold, the Lord,
the LORD of hosts,
doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff,
the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water,

²The mighty man, and the man of war,
the judge, and the prophet,
and the prudent, and the ancient,

³The captain of fifty, and the honourable man,
and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator.

Questionary

After Isaiah's superscription (1.¹) and introduction (1.^{2-2.5}), lunches into the first unit of his book (2.^{6-12.6}). Here, Isaiah explores in detail the two themes presented in the introduction: "The Present Disappointment and Shattered Hopes" and "The Future Hope" as outlined here.

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Third Woe—5.¹⁸⁻¹⁹

Fourth Woe—5.²⁰

Fifth Woe—5.²¹

Sixth Woe—5.²²⁻²⁵

God's Agent of Woe—5.²⁶⁻³⁰

Isaiah's Call—6.¹⁻¹³

The Failure of the Israel/Syrian Confederation—7.^{1-9.7}

The Sign of the Child, Immanuel—7.¹⁰⁻²⁵

The Sign of the Child, Maher-shalal-hash-baz—8.¹⁻²²

The Sign of the Child, Wonderful—9.¹⁻⁷

Return to the Woes of the Wicked—9.^{8-10.4}

Seventh Woe—10.¹⁻⁴

God's Agent of Woe—10.⁵⁻³⁴

The Future Hope (11.^{1-12.6})

The Branch—11.¹⁻¹⁶

A Hymn of Praise—12.¹⁻⁶

In our previous readings from Isaiah 2 (2.⁶⁻⁹; 2.¹⁰⁻¹⁶; 2.¹⁷⁻²¹), Isaiah identified Israel's idolatry. This idolatry took many forms, but he mentioned particularly Israel's trust in materialism—gold, silver, palaces, trade, etc.—and militarism—chariots, war horses, fortifications, etc.—as sources of happiness and security. Such idolatry always leads to objectification of people. Isaiah also testified that eventually such idolatry will be exposed for the lie it is and be abandoned—often painfully.

1. In today's reading, Isaiah reminds us that idolatry takes forms other than trust in objects and

institutions. Idolatry includes trusting in other individuals. Isaiah lists some of these individuals.

? What individuals (positions/titles/offices) does Isaiah mention?

? Are such individuals a source of false trust or idolatry today?

? How do we avoid such idolatry?

2. Isaiah mentions “prophet” as one of the offices that can become idolatrous.

? How do you feel and what do you think about this observation?

? How can prophets become idolatrous distractions from the true and living God?

Isaiah 3.^{4-5, 12-15}— just scripture

⁴And I will give children to be their princes,
and babes shall rule over them.

⁵And the people shall be oppressed,
every one by another, and every one by his neighbour:
the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient,
and the base against the honourable.

¹²As for my people, children are their oppressors,
and women rule over them.

O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err,
and destroy the way of thy paths.

¹³The LORD standeth up to plead,
and standeth to judge the people.

¹⁴The LORD will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people,
and the princes thereof:

for ye have eaten up the vineyard;
the spoil of the poor is in your houses.

¹⁵What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces,
and grind the faces of the poor?
saith the Lord GOD of hosts.

Questionary

After Isaiah's superscription (1.¹) and introduction (1.²-2.⁵), lunches into the first unit of his book (2.⁶-12.⁶). Here, Isaiah explores in detail the two themes presented in the introduction: "The Present Disappointment and Shattered Hopes" and "The Future Hope" as outlined here.

The Present Disappointment and Shattered Hopes (2.⁶-10.³⁴)

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The Delusion of Prestige is Revealed—2.²²-3.¹⁵

The Delusion of Materialism is Revealed—3.¹⁶-4.¹

The Nation's Diminished Status is Revealed—4.²⁻⁶

Shattered Hopes of God Revealed in a Sad Love Song—5.¹⁻⁷

The Woes of the Wicked are Revealed—5.⁸⁻²⁵

First Woe—5.⁸⁻¹⁰

Second Woe—5.¹¹⁻¹⁷

Third Woe—5.¹⁸⁻¹⁹

Fourth Woe—5.²⁰

Fifth Woe—5.²¹

Sixth Woe—5.²²⁻²⁵

God's Agent of Woe—5.²⁶⁻³⁰

Isaiah's Call—6.¹⁻¹³

The Failure of the Israel/Syrian Confederation—7.¹⁻⁹.⁷

The Sign of the Child, Immanuel—7.¹⁰⁻²⁵

The Sign of the Child, Maher-shalal-hash-baz—8.¹⁻²²

The Sign of the Child, Wonderful—9.¹⁻⁷

Return to the Woes of the Wicked—9.⁸-10.⁴

Seventh Woe—10.¹⁻⁴

God's Agent of Woe—10.⁵⁻³⁴

The Future Hope (11.¹-12.⁶)

The Branch—11.¹⁻¹⁶

A Hymn of Praise—12.¹⁻⁶

In our previous readings from Isaiah 2 and 3, we found that Israel was guilty of idolatry as they sought security through materialism, expansion of military/national security measures, and through prestigious societal leaders rather than in Yahweh. As a result, Yahweh, in hopes that the nation would return to him, exposed the deficiencies of all these institutions and individuals.

1. In today's reading, we see that with the demise of its normal leadership, Israel turns to a new class of leaders.

- ? What is the meaning and significance of Israel having children and women as their leaders? What do the two groups have in common?

Children, obviously, are inexperienced, without leadership skills, and thus unqualified to lead a nation. While we know today that women can lead and govern as well as men, in ancient Israel's patriarchal and sexist world, women would never be given the opportunities to develop skills necessary to national leadership. Thus, sheltered and suppressed as they were, women would have been considered as poorly prepared for a national leadership role as children.

- ? Do we see, today, trends in which the normal classes of leaders are rejected by a frustrated society, only to be replaced by unqualified leaders who only make matters worse?

2. We have already seen that Israel's attitude toward its leaders was idolatrous. In today's reading Isaiah summarizes the fundamental evils in which that leadership was engaged.

- ? What are those evils?

- ? How do you feel about the extreme language to which Isaiah resorts to describe the principle sin of Israel's leadership?

- They have "eaten up [devoured] the vineyard"
- They have built themselves up and created their comforts by means of "the spoil of the poor."
- They have "beat my people to pieces."
- They "grind the faces of the poor?"
- They devour, spoil, beat, grind.

- ? Are we who lead and live comfortable lifestyles today, doing so by the same means?
- ? How do these sins against the poor, and thus against God, relate to Isaiah's earlier charge that Israel's materialistic obsessions were leading it to objectify, dehumanize, and misuse others?
- ? In what ways does our society treat people as mere tools that can be used to enrich the more powerful and "skilled" classes of society?
- ? What can you do to be sure you are not guilty of such contemptible behavior and to stand against such behavior when you see it in society?

Isaiah 3.⁴⁻⁸

- ⁴And I will give children to be their princes,
and babes shall rule over them.
- ⁵And the people shall be oppressed,
every one by another, and every one by his neighbour:
the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient,
and the base against the honourable.
- ⁶When a man shall take hold of his brother of the house of his father,
saying, “Thou hast clothing, be thou our ruler,
and let this ruin be under thy hand:”
- ⁷In that day shall he swear, saying,
“I will not be an healer;
for in my house is neither bread nor clothing:
make me not a ruler of the people.”
- ⁸For Jerusalem is ruined,
and Judah is fallen:
because their tongue and their doings are against the LORD,
to provoke the eyes of his glory.

Q

uestionary

After Isaiah’s superscription (1.¹) and introduction (1.²-2.⁵), lunches into the first unit of his book (2.⁶-12.⁶). Here, Isaiah explores in detail the two themes presented in the introduction: “The Present Disappointment and Shattered Hopes” and “The Future Hope” as outlined here.

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- The Delusion of Prestige is Revealed—2.^{22-3.15}
- The Delusion of Materialism is Revealed—3.^{16-4.1}
- The Nation’s Diminished Status is Revealed—4.²⁻⁶
- Shattered Hopes of God Revealed in a Sad Love Song—5.¹⁻⁷
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 - First Woe—5.⁸⁻¹⁰
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- God’s Agent of Woe—5.²⁶⁻³⁰
- Isaiah’s Call—6.¹⁻¹³
- The Failure of the Israel/Syrian Confederation—7.^{1-9.7}
 - The Sign of the Child, Immanuel—7.¹⁰⁻²⁵
 - The Sign of the Child, Maher-shalal-hash-baz—8.¹⁻²²
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- Return to the Woes of the Wicked—9.^{8-10.4}
 - Seventh Woe—10.¹⁻⁴
- God’s Agent of Woe—10.⁵⁻³⁴

The Future Hope (11.¹-12.⁶)

- The Branch—11.¹⁻¹⁶
- A Hymn of Praise—12.¹⁻⁶

In our previous readings from Isaiah 2 and 3, we found that Israel was guilty of idolatry as they sought security through materialism, expansion of military/national security measures, and through prestigious societal leaders —political, military, economic, and religious—rather than in Yahweh. As a result, Yahweh, in hopes that the nation would return to him, exposed the deficiencies of all these institutions and individuals, going so far as to remove his support and allowing them to fail under the weight of their own presumption.

1. In today's reading, we see that with the demise of its normal leadership, Israel continued their stubborn insistence on trusting in the arm of flesh by turning to new, if inferior, classes of leaders rather than trust Yahweh's perfect leadership.
 - ? To what individuals and classes did Israel turn?
 - ? How does Isaiah focus our attention on the incompetence and reluctance of the leaders that Israel chose?
 - ? What is the meaning and significance of Israel having children and women as their leaders? What do the two groups have in common?

Children, obviously, are inexperienced, without leadership skills, and thus unqualified to lead a nation. While we know today that women can lead and govern as well as men, in ancient Israel's patriarchal world, women were never given legitimate opportunities to develop skills necessary to national leadership.

- ? What are the consequences of incompetent leadership?
- ? How does incompetent leadership create an environment in which "people shall be oppressed every one by another, and every one by his neighbour?"
- ? Do we see, today, trends in which the normal classes of leaders are rejected by a frustrated society, only to be replaced by unqualified leaders who only make matters worse?

Isaiah 3.⁹⁻¹¹

⁹The shew of their countenance doth witness against them;
and they declare their sin as Sodom,
they hide it not.

Woe unto their soul!

for they have rewarded evil unto themselves.

¹⁰Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him:
for they shall eat the fruit of their doings.

¹¹Woe unto the wicked! It shall be ill with him:
for the reward of his hands shall be given him.

Questionary

After Isaiah's superscription (1.¹) and introduction (1.²-2.⁵), lunches into the first unit of his book (2.⁶-12.⁶). Here, Isaiah explores in detail the two themes presented in the introduction: "The Present Disappointment and Shattered Hopes" and "The Future Hope" as outlined here.

The Present Disappointment and Shattered Hopes (2.⁶-10.³⁴)

The Delusion of Institutions is Revealed—2.⁶⁻²¹

The Delusion of Prestige is Revealed—2.²²-3.¹⁵

The Delusion of Materialism is Revealed—3.¹⁶-4.¹

The Nation's Diminished Status is Revealed—4.²⁻⁶

Shattered Hopes of God Revealed in a Sad Love Song—5.¹⁻⁷

The Woes of the Wicked are Revealed—5.⁸⁻²⁵

First Woe—5.⁸⁻¹⁰

Second Woe—5.¹¹⁻¹⁷

Third Woe—5.¹⁸⁻¹⁹

Fourth Woe—5.²⁰

Fifth Woe—5.²¹

Sixth Woe—5.²²⁻²⁵

God's Agent of Woe—5.²⁶⁻³⁰

Isaiah's Call—6.¹⁻¹³

The Failure of the Israel/Syrian Confederation—7.¹⁻⁹.⁷

The Sign of the Child, Immanuel—7.¹⁰⁻²⁵

The Sign of the Child, Maher-shalal-hash-baz—8.¹⁻²²

The Sign of the Child, Wonderful—9.¹⁻⁷

Return to the Woes of the Wicked—9.⁸-10.⁴

Seventh Woe—10.¹⁻⁴

God's Agent of Woe—10.⁵⁻³⁴

The Future Hope (11.¹-12.⁶)

The Branch—11.¹⁻¹⁶

A Hymn of Praise—12.¹⁻⁶

1. Isaiah charges that the people "declare their sins as Sodom, they hide it not."
? What does this mean to you?
? What does it say about Jewish individuals and society that, like Sodom, they felt no shame about and no need to hide their sin?
2. Isaiah warns that "they have rewarded evil unto themselves" rather than "they will be punished by another, God, for their sins." On the other hand, "the righteous... shall eat the fruit of their doings" rather than "they will be reward by another, God, for their goodness."
? What is the significance of these observations?

- ? How do evil and good actions contain punishments and rewards within themselves without external intervention.

Isaiah 3.¹²⁻¹⁵

- ¹²As for my people, children are their oppressors,
and women rule over them.
O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err,
and destroy the way of thy paths.
- ¹³The LORD standeth up to plead,
and standeth to judge the people.
- ¹⁴The LORD will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people,
and the princes thereof:
for ye have eaten up the vineyard;
the spoil of the poor is in your houses.
- ¹⁵What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces,
and grind the faces of the poor?
saith the Lord GOD of hosts.

Q

uestionary

After Isaiah's superscription (1.¹) and introduction (1.²-2.⁵), lunches into the first unit of his book (2.⁶-12.⁶). Here, Isaiah explores in detail the two themes presented in the introduction: "The Present Disappointment and Shattered Hopes" and "The Future Hope" as outlined here.

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- The Delusion of Prestige is Revealed—2.²²⁻³.¹⁵
- The Delusion of Materialism is Revealed—3.¹⁶⁻⁴.¹
- The Nation's Diminished Status is Revealed—4.²⁻⁶
- Shattered Hopes of God Revealed in a Sad Love Song—5.¹⁻⁷
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 - The Sign of the Child, Wonderful—9.¹⁻⁷
- Return to the Woes of the Wicked—9.⁸⁻¹⁰.⁴
 - Seventh Woe—10.¹⁻⁴
- God's Agent of Woe—10.⁵⁻³⁴

The Future Hope (11.¹-12.⁶)

- The Branch—11.¹⁻¹⁶
- A Hymn of Praise—12.¹⁻⁶

1. Isaiah already addressed the inexperience and incompetence of Judah's leaders in verses 3-8.
? Why, do you suppose, does he return to this theme?
2. From a moral and ethical point of view, Judah's new leadership is no better than the old. Isaiah summarizes the fundamental evils in which Judah's leadership was engaged.

- ? What are those evils?
- ? How do you feel about the extreme language—they devour, spoil, beat, grind—Isaiah uses to describe the violent and principal sins of Israel’s leadership?
 - They have “*eaten up* [devoured] the vineyard”
 - They have built themselves up and created their comforts by means of “the *spoil* of the poor.”
 - They have “*beat* my people *to pieces*.”
 - They “*grind* the faces of the poor?”
- ? To what degree do we who lead and live comfortable lifestyles today, do so by the same means—violence against the poor and vulnerable?
- ? How do these sins against the poor, and thus against God, relate to Isaiah’s earlier charge that Israel’s materialistic obsessions were leading it to objectify, dehumanize, and misuse others?
- ? In what ways does our society treat people as mere tools that can be used to enrich the more powerful and “skilled” classes of society?
- ? What can you do to be sure you are not guilty of such contemptible behavior and to stand against such behavior when you see it in society?

Isaiah 3.¹⁶⁻²⁴

¹⁶Moreover the LORD saith,
Because the daughters of Zion are haughty,
and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes,
walking and mincing as they go,
and making a tinkling with their feet:

¹⁷Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab
the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion,
and the LORD will discover their secret parts.

¹⁸In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet,
and their cauls, and their round tires like the moon,¹⁹The chains, and the bracelets, and the
mufflers,²⁰The bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and
the earrings,²¹The rings, and nose jewels,²²The changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles,
and the wimples, and the crisping pins,²³The glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the
vails.

²⁴And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell
there shall be stink;
and instead of a girdle a rent;
and instead of well set hair baldness;
and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth;
and burning instead of beauty.

Questionary

After Isaiah's superscription (1.¹) and introduction (1.^{2-2.5}), lurches into the first unit of his book (2.^{6-12.6}). Here, Isaiah explores in detail the two themes presented in the introduction: "The Present Disappointment and Shattered Hopes" and "The Future Hope" as outlined here.

The Present Disappointment and Shattered Hopes (2.^{6-10.34})

The Delusion of Institutions is Revealed—2.⁶⁻²¹

The Delusion of Prestige is Revealed—2.^{22-3.15}

The Delusion of Materialism is Revealed—3.^{16-4.1}

The Nation's Diminished Status is Revealed—4.²⁻⁶

Shattered Hopes of God Revealed in a Sad Love Song—5.¹⁻⁷

The Woes of the Wicked are Revealed—5.⁸⁻²⁵

First Woe—5.⁸⁻¹⁰

Second Woe—5.¹¹⁻¹⁷

Third Woe—5.¹⁸⁻¹⁹

Fourth Woe—5.²⁰

Fifth Woe—5.²¹

Sixth Woe—5.²²⁻²⁵

God's Agent of Woe—5.²⁶⁻³⁰

Isaiah's Call—6.¹⁻¹³

The Failure of the Israel/Syrian Confederation—7.^{1-9.7}

The Sign of the Child, Immanuel—7.¹⁰⁻²⁵

The Sign of the Child, Maher-shalal-hash-baz—8.¹⁻²²

The Sign of the Child, Wonderful—9.¹⁻⁷

Return to the Woes of the Wicked—9.^{8-10.4}

Seventh Woe—10.¹⁻⁴

God's Agent of Woe—10.⁵⁻³⁴

The Future Hope (11.¹-12.⁶)
The Branch—11.¹⁻¹⁶
A Hymn of Praise—12.¹⁻⁶

1. Isaiah takes us on quite the journey through the female fashion industry of his day. While we cannot always be sure of the exact nature of each item, we might have some sense about what the over all purpose of fashion design was and is.
 - ? What is that purpose?
 - ? While Isaiah here focuses on female fashions, are the *reasons* for male fashion choices any different than those of females? Why do you answer as you do?

Consider the following passage.

“Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price” (1 Pet. 3.³⁻⁴).

- ? How do you feel about individuals—male or female—who find a sense of self-worth by means of external and materialistic resources such as fashion?
 - ? To what extent do you fall into this trap of false self-worth?
2. In the Book of Mormon, apparel fashion is viewed as more than an unwise and false means of establishing a sense of self-worth, it is viewed as a sign of apostacy.

“Behold, O God, they cry unto thee, and yet their hearts are swallowed up in their pride. Behold, O God, they cry unto thee with their mouths, while they are puffed up, even to greatness, with the vain things of the world. Behold, O my God, their costly apparel, and their ringlets, and their bracelets, and their ornaments of gold, and all their precious things which they are ornamented with; and behold, their hearts are set upon them, and yet they cry unto thee and say—‘We thank thee, O God, for we are a chosen people unto thee, while others shall perish’” (Al. 31.²⁷⁻²⁸).

“And now, in this two hundred and first year there began to be among them those who were lifted up in pride, such as the wearing of costly apparel, and all manner of fine pearls, and of the fine things of the world” (4 Ne. 1.²⁴).

*“In the first year of the reign of Alma in the judgment-seat, there was a man brought before him to be judged, a man who was large, and was noted for his much strength. And he had gone about among the people, preaching to them that which he termed to be the word of God, bearing down against the church; declaring unto the people that every priest and teacher ought to become popular; and they ought not to labor with their hands, but that they ought to be supported by the people.... And *he did teach these things so much that many did believe on his words, even so many that they began to support him and give him money. And he began to be lifted up in the pride of his heart, and to wear very costly apparel, yea, and even began to establish a church after the manner of his preaching” (Al. 1.^{2-3, 5-6}).

*“In the eighth year of the reign of the judges, that the people of the church began to wax proud, because of their exceeding riches, and their fine silks, and their fine-twined linen, and because of their many flocks and herds, and their gold and their silver, and all manner of precious things, which they had obtained by their industry; and in all these things were they lifted up in the pride of their eyes, for they began to wear very costly apparel. Now this was the cause of much affliction to Alma, yea, and to many of the people whom Alma had consecrated to be teachers, and priests, and elders over the church; yea, many of them were sorely grieved for the wickedness which they saw had begun to be among their people” (Al. 4.⁶⁻⁷).

- ? What do you think and feel when you contemplate that Isaiah and Book of Mormon authors/editors viewed this form of fashion materialism as a sign of societal decay and individual apostacy?
- ? How would you judge the world around you today in this regard?
- ? How are the consequences found in verse 24 appropriate to the “crime” found in verses 16-23?

Isaiah 3.²⁵-4.¹

- ²⁵Thy men shall fall by the sword,
and thy mighty in the war.
²⁶And her gates shall lament and mourn;
and she being desolate shall sit upon the ground.
⁴¹And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying,
“We will eat our own bread,
and wear our own apparel:
only let us be called by thy name,
to take away our reproach.”

Questionary

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- The Delusion of Prestige is Revealed—2.²²-3.¹⁵
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- The Nation’s Diminished Status is Revealed—4.²⁻⁶
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 - First Woe—5.⁸⁻¹⁰
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- Isaiah’s Call—6.¹⁻¹³
- The Failure of the Israel/Syrian Confederation—7.¹⁻⁹.⁷
 - The Sign of the Child, Immanuel—7.¹⁰⁻²⁵
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The Future Hope (11.¹-12.⁶)

- The Branch—11.¹⁻¹⁶
- A Hymn of Praise—12.¹⁻⁶

1. Most of Isaiah 3 has been dedicated to warnings Isaiah gave to Israel because of the nation’s rebellion against God.
 - ? What additional consequences of Israel’s apostasy does today’s reading describe?
 - ? How do you feel about Israel’s suffering due to its apostasy?
 - ? What do you think and feel when you read of the women’s desperation to attach themselves to strange men and households?
 - ? What do you think and feel when you consider the reduced male population found in the city due to death in battle?
 - ? What is the nature of the women’s “reproach”?

Isaiah 4.²⁻⁶

The diminished circumstance of jerusalem's survivors

²Under such circumstances any new growth brought forth by YHWH will become a thing doted on and consequential. The land's produce will become a source of pride and a cause for celebration among Yisrā'ēli survivors. ³One who survives in Şiyyôn and remains in Y^erûšālāyim will be under special care. This will be said of all who are recorded as living in Y^erûšālāyim ⁴after my Lord has washed the stinking excrement off Şiyyôn's citizenry and washed the blood from Y^erûšālāyim's streets through judgment and extermination. ⁵YHWH will create over each of Mount Şiyyôn's dwellings and public gathering places a cloud of smoke by day and a bright light of blazing fire by night that hover over every part of the city. ⁶It will be a cover for daytime shade from the heat, and a shelter and hideaway from heavy rainstorms (author's translation).

Questionary

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

²In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. ³And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: ⁴When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning. ⁵And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence. ⁶And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.

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God's Agent of Woe—10.⁵⁻³⁴

The Future Hope (11.^{1-12.6})

The Branch—11.¹⁻¹⁶

A Hymn of Praise—12.¹⁻⁶

1. Obviously, my translation is very different from that of the King James.
 - ? What are some of those differences?
 - ? How do you feel about those differences?
 - ? What messages do glean from the two different translations?
2. With my “under such circumstances,” in place of the KJV “in that day” at the beginning of verse 2, I understand today’s reading to be a continuation of Isaiah’s description of the vulnerabilities of the defeated and reduced population remaining in Jerusalem after its defeat by the Babylonians (See 1.⁷⁻⁸, 2.¹⁰⁻²¹, 3.¹⁻⁸, 3.^{12-4.1}). It describes the same “day” as all these passages.
 - ? With this in mind, what are the vulnerabilities of the survivors?
 - ? What does the attention given to and the joy in seeing newly budding crops tell you about the state of Judah’s agriculture and the availability of food?
3. Even though Judah has sinned against God in ways that Isaiah has described in the first three chapters, God will watch over those who survived the catastrophe.
 - ? What language is indicative of God’s care over the survivors?
 - ? How do you feel about his fidelity toward the survivors?
 - ? What comes to your mind when you read that God will place “a cloud of smoke by day and a bright light of blazing fire by night” over the city so that it can act as “cover for daytime shade from the heat, and a shelter and hideaway from heavy rainstorms.”
 - ? What does this mean to you?

In describing latter-day Zion’s sins (DC 101.⁶), not all together so very different from those of ancient Zion’s sins, and warning of the negative consequences of those sins, the Lord promises, “Notwithstanding their sins, my bowels are filled with compassion towards them. I will not utterly cast them off; and in the day of wrath I will remember mercy” (DC 101.⁹).

Earlier in the same section the Lord said, “I, the Lord, have suffered the affliction to come upon them, wherewith they have been afflicted, in consequence of their transgressions; yet I will own them, and they shall be mine in that day when I shall come to make up my jewels” (DC 101.²⁻³).

- ? How do these passages relate to today’s reading?
- ? What are your thoughts and feelings when you consider that God’s fidelity did not and could not stop negative consequences, in DC 101 spoken of as “affliction” and a “day of wrath” and in Isaiah described as a “washing away” of “the stinking excrement off Siyyôn’s citizenry and washed the blood from Yêrûšâlâyim’s streets through judgment and extermination.”
- ? What do you think and feel when you read Isaiah liken Jerusalem’s sins in terms of “excrement” and spilt “blood.”

Isaiah 5

Questionary 1 — isaiah 5.¹⁻⁷

a song about a loved one's dashed hopes

¹Let me, if you please, sing about my beloved;
a song about my beloved's vineyard.
"My beloved owned a vineyard
on a hill he knew was fertile.
²He dug holes, removed stones,
and planted red grape vines.
He built a tower in it,
and even went so far as to hew out a wine press.
He then eagerly waited for it to yield juicy grapes,
but it yielded only horrible ones.

Yahweh's response to his dashed hopes

³And now, you inhabitants of Y^erûšālayim, and you people of Y^ehûdâ;
you decide, if you please, the case between me and my vineyard.
⁴What more is there to do for my vineyard
that I have not already done?
Why have I expectantly waited for it to produce juicy grapes
only to have it produce foul ones?
⁵So now, let me tell you, if you please,
what I am going to do to my vineyard.
I am going to remove its hedge and it will be burnt.
And I am going to tear down its walls and it will be trampled.
⁶I will make it desolate.
It will not be pruned or hoed.
Thorny weeds and scrub will come up.
I will direct the storm clouds
not to rain a drop of rain upon it.

Interpretation

⁷In like manner, Yahweh Šebā'ôt's vineyard is the nation of Yisrā'ēl,
and Y^ehûdâ's people, plantings in which he delighted.
He hoped for justice. But, look! Violence!
He hoped for the rule of law. But, look! Shouts of distress! (author's translation).

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

¹Now will I sing to my wellbeloved
a song of my beloved touching his vineyard.
My wellbeloved hath a vineyard
in a very fruitful hill:
²And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof,
and planted it with the choicest vine,
and built a tower in the midst of it,
and also made a winepress therein:
and he looked that it should bring forth grapes,

and it brought forth wild grapes.
³And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem,
and men of Judah,
judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.
⁴What could have been done more to my vineyard,
that I have not done in it?
wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes,
brought it forth wild grapes?
⁵And now go to;
I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard:
I will take away the hedge thereof,
and it shall be eaten up;
and break down the wall thereof,
and it shall be trodden down:
⁶And I will lay it waste:
it shall not be pruned, nor digged;
but there shall come up briars and thorns:
I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.
⁷For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel,
and the men of Judah his pleasant plant:
and he looked for judgment,
but behold oppression;
for righteousness,
but behold a cry.

Because of the length and density of this reading, we have divided it into two separate reading exercises, the first focusing on the sad love song found in verses 1-2.

To begin this questionnaire, please consider the following two narratives. In 2 Kings 3, Israel's King Jehoram and Judah's King Jehoshaphat were preparing to go to war against their mutual enemy, Moab. Before going to war, Jehoshaphat wished to have a prophet summoned to prophecy concerning the outcome. Elisha was summoned. Before prophesying, Elisha requested, "Bring me a minstrel." We are then informed that "when the minstrel played...the hand of the Lord came upon him." He then uttered his oracle (See 2 Kg. 3).

After anointing a hesitant Saul as king, Samuel offered Saul three signs as proof that the Lord had called him as king. The third sign was that as Saul approached "the hill of God... thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place with psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall prophesy." Samuel then prophesied "the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them" (See 1 Sam. 10).

1. These two narratives remind us that ancient Near Eastern prophets, like all ancient prophets, uttered their oracles to musical accompaniment. It is near certain that Isaiah, along with all the Hebrew prophets uttered their public oracles with musical accompaniment. Their oracles would have sung.
 - ? What do these insights into ancient prophecy have to do with today's reading?
 - ? Why, do you think, were prophetic oracles sang rather than simply spoken in common speech?
 - ? How does music impact one's response to a message as opposed to common speech?
2. Verses 1-2 represent a sad love song. As was true of all his oracles, it is likely that Isaiah did actually sing this oracle to some mournful tune or other.
 - ? Close your eyes and imagine the sights and sounds that might have accompanied the singing of this sad love song.
 - ? What do you feel as you consider the mournful nature of the sad love song and read about the shattered hopes of the vineyard's owner?
3. We have suggested that much of Isaiah's book alternates between descriptions of the hopes God had

for ancient Israel, how ancient Israel shattered God's hopes, how God responded to those ancient disappointments, and the hopes God possessed for a better future for Israel.

? What does this sad song contribute to these themes?

4. The song relates the great efforts that the owner undertook in preparing his vineyard so it could produce according to his wishes.

? What were those efforts and what do you see when you picture them in your mind?

Questionary 2— isaiah 5.¹⁻⁷

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you decide, if you please, the case between me and my vineyard.
⁴What more is there to do for my vineyard
that I have not already done?
Why have I expectantly waited for it to produce juicy grapes
only to have it produce foul ones?
⁵So now, let me tell you, if you please,
what I am going to do to my vineyard.
I am going to remove its hedge and it will be burnt.
And I am going to tear down its walls and it will be trampled.
⁶I will make it desolate.
It will not be pruned or hoed.
Thorny weeds and scrub will come up.
I will direct the storm clouds
not to rain a drop of rain upon it.

Īnterpretation

⁷In like manner, Yahweh Šebā'ôt's vineyard is the nation of Yiśrā'ēl,
and Y^ehûdâ's people, plantings in which he delighted.
He hoped for justice. But, look! Violence!
He hoped for the rule of law. But, look! Shouts of distress! (author's translation).

Because of the length and density of this reading, we have divided it into two separate reading exercises, the first focusing on the sad love song found in verses 1-2.

To begin this questionary, please consider the following two narratives. In 2 Kings 3, Israel's King Jehoram and Judah's King Jehoshaphat were preparing to go to war against their mutual enemy, Moab. Before going to war, Jehoshaphat wished to have a prophet summoned to prophecy concerning the outcome. Elisha was summoned. Before prophesying, Elisha requested, "Bring me a minstrel." We are then informed that "when the minstrel played... the hand of the Lord came upon him." He then uttered his oracle (See 2 Kg. 3).

After anointing a hesitant Saul as king, Samuel offered Saul three signs as proof that the Lord had called him as king. The third sign was that as Saul approached "the hill of God... thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place with psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before

them; and they shall prophesy.” Samuel then prophesied “the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them” (See 1 Sam. 10).

1. It is unusual for scripture writers to provide an interpretation to their own writings.
 - ? What insights do you have as a result of Isaiah’s interpretation of his own song?
2. The sad love song had mentioned the preparatory efforts the owner of the vineyard had gone to in hopes of a good harvest.
 - ? What had God done for his people in hopes that they would fulfill their mission?
3. The owner of the vineyard asks, “What more is there to do for my vineyard that I have not already done?”
 - ? What are the implications of this question?
 - ? What do you think and feel when you read that after doing everything possible for his vineyard it is worthless and that there is nothing more that can be done?
4. In verses 5-6, the owner of the vineyard announces what he is about to do with the worthless vineyard
 - ? How do you feel about his intended actions?
 - ? What historical events took place in Israel and Judah that are represented by the metaphors found in verses 5-6?
 - ? What do you see in your mind when you compare the way the vineyard looked (the way Israel and Judah looked) when it was new and how it looked after the devastations that came upon it?
5. In verse 7, the Lord is said to have hoped for “justice” but found only “violence. He had hoped for the “rule of law” but found “shouts of distress. The Hebrew words for “justice” (*mišpāt*) and “violence” (*mišpah*) look and sound similar. The Hebrew words “rule of law” (*s^edaqah*) and “shout of distress” (*s^e‘aqah*) also look and sound similar.

Isaiah could have chosen other words to represent Israel’s social injustices, but he chose words that look and sound similar.

- ? What message could Isaiah be sending with his selection of words that look and sound the same but are completely opposite in meaning.
- ? What kind of ethical and legal types of policies and procedures does society engage in thinking and claiming that they are “just” but are really a form of violence?
- ? What kind of ethical and legal types of policies and procedures does society engage in thinking and claiming that they are lawful but that really distress and oppress?

Questionary 3— isaiah 5.⁸⁻¹⁰

⁸What a tragic warning! There are those who merge homestead after homestead,
combine property after property
until there's nothing left
and you dwell by yourselves in the heart of the property.

⁹Into my ears, YHWH Š^ebā'ôt speaks:

“It is certain that many an estate will become wasteland.

Large and profitable ones will be uninhabited

¹⁰such that a ten-acre vineyard will yield but six gallons
and three bushels of seed will yield a quarter bushel” (author's translation).

Isaiah 5 began with a love song (5.¹⁻²) commemorating God's love for His vineyard (Israel, 5.⁷) and the disappointment He felt when it yielded poor quality grapes (social injustice, 5.⁷). Isaiah then describes the ravishing and destructive consequences that will come upon the vineyard as a result of its poor yield (5.³⁻⁶). Isaiah then interprets the song so that its application to the relationship between God and Israel is clear. In this interpretation, Isaiah makes clear that God's disappointment with Israel is centered on the social injustice that He finds in the nation (5.⁷). With this, Isaiah launches into six blistering warnings. Each warning is based on the injustice mentioned in verse 7 and each warning should be read in light of the others, as building one upon another. This reading explores the first warning.

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

⁸Woe unto them that join house to house,
that lay field to field,
till there be no place,
that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!

⁹In mine ears said the LORD of hosts,
Of a truth many houses shall be desolate,
even great and fair, without inhabitant.

¹⁰Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath,
and the seed of an homer shall yield an ephah.”

1. In the KJV, “houses” are being purchased and “joined.” In my translations, “homesteads” are being consolidated.
 - ? What, in your mind is the difference between “house” and “homestead”?
 - ? What does the latter suggest that the former obscures?
 - ? How does the choice of “homestead” indicate that purchasers are engaged in more than simple real estate transactions, but are involved in activities that impact and alter individuals' lives?
 - ? How much regard do our modern real estate laws and investor practices have for individuals' need not only for shelter from the elements but for “homes” with the security they bring?
2. As a result of the buying frenzy, “there's nothing left.”
 - ? What is the mood of this prophetic observation?
3. As a result of the buying frenzy, purchasers “dwell by yourselves in the heart of the property.”
 - ? What does this mean and what does it look like to you?
 - ? How does this reflect not only physical distance, but personal and relational distance?
4. In the verse immediately before this warning, we read

“He hoped for justice. But, look! Violence!
He hoped for the rule of law. But, look! Shouts of distress!”

- ? How do the real estate practices of verse 8 relate to the observation made in verse 7?
 - ? How are modern American real estate laws and property investors' behavior similar to the behavior Isaiah condemns?
 - ? How do they show respect for the value of property and possession, but show a lack of respect for human beings and the value of the individual?
5. In verses 9 and 10, God informs Isaiah that there will be consequences for the avaricious behavior of the "property developers."
- ? What are those consequences?
 - ? How are they appropriate to the unjust nature of the behavior?
 - ? What comes to your mind if we suggest that the poor harvests represent a "negative tithe" to the investment?

Questionary 4— isaiah 5.¹¹⁻¹⁷

¹¹What a tragic warning! There are those who rise early in the morning,
pursue drunkenness until nighttime,
wine inflaming them,

¹²lyre and harp, tambourine and flute,
and yet more wine being part of their carousing.

But they will not consider what YHWH does
and won't acknowledge what his power has accomplished.

¹³So then, my people are exiled
because of the lack of understanding.
Also, the nation's reputable die of hunger;

its boisterous parched with thirst.

¹⁴So then, Še'ôl increases its appetite
and opens its mouth without limit
so the nation's honored and boisterous descend,
as well as its raucous and festive, into it.

¹⁵People will be brought low.
and individuals humiliated,
and the confident bearing brought down.

¹⁶But YHWH Šebā'ôt is exalted because of His justice
and the incomparable God is seen to be preeminent because of His rectitude.

¹⁷Lambs will graze as if in their pastures,
and foreigners consume the ruins of the well-fed. (author's translation).

Isaiah 5 began with a love song (5.¹⁻²) commemorating God's love for His vineyard (Israel, 5.⁷) and the disappointment He felt when it yielded poor quality grapes (social injustice, 5.⁷). Isaiah then describes the ravishing and destructive consequences that will come upon the vineyard as a result of its poor yield (5.³⁻⁶). Isaiah then interprets the song so that its application to the relationship between God and Israel is clear. In this interpretation, Isaiah makes clear that God's disappointment with Israel is centered on the social injustice that He finds in the nation (5.⁷).

With this, Isaiah launches into six blistering warnings. Each warning is based on the injustice mentioned in verse 7 and each warning should be read in light of the others, as building one upon another. The first warning with its social injustice and the consequences was found in 5.⁸⁻¹⁰. This reading contains the second warning with its social injustice and the consequences thereof.

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

¹¹Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning,
that they may follow strong drink;
that continue until night,
till wine inflame them!

¹²And the harp, and the viol,
the tabret, and pipe, and wine,
are in their feasts:

but they regard not the work of the LORD,
neither consider the operation of his hands.

¹³Therefore my people are gone into captivity,
because they have no knowledge:

and their honourable men are famished,
 and their multitude dried up with thirst.
¹⁴Therefore hell hath enlarged herself,
 and opened her mouth without measure:
 and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp,
 and he that rejoiceth,
 shall descend into it.
¹⁵And the mean man shall be brought down,
 and the mighty man shall be humbled,
 and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled:
¹⁶But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment,
 and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness.
¹⁷Then shall the lambs feed after their manner,
 and the waste places of the fat ones shall strangers eat.

1. Verses 11 and 12 describe the nature of the next sinful injustice found in Israel.
 - ? How do the actions condemned in today's reading relate to those condemned in the first warning (5.⁸⁻¹⁰)?
 - ? How do you feel about the suggestion that the gluttony and leisure described in this reading were taking place on the fraudulently acquire estates of the first warning?
 - ? What is the nature of Israel's sinful injustice as found in this second warning?
 - ? What is sinful and unjust about gluttony and leisure as described in these verses?
 - ? How does the following passage relate to and enhance your understanding of verses 11-12?

“Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me...” (Ezek. 16.⁴⁹⁻⁵⁰).
 - ? How were the resources wasted in such easy living likely acquired?
 - ? How does the mention of the treatment of the “poor and needy” assist in answering the previous question?
- Isaiah's first warning was,
- “What a tragic warning! There are those who merge homestead after homestead,
 combine property after property
 until there's nothing left
 and you dwell by yourselves in the heart of the property” (5.⁸).
- ? How likely is it that this behavior did not make the behavior of today's reading possible? Why do you answer as you do?
 - ? How is the behavior found in today's reading manifest in society today?
2. After describing the uncaring and gluttonous behavior, certainly made possible through taking advantage of others, Isaiah adds,

“But they will not consider what YHWH does
 and won't acknowledge what his power has accomplished.”

 - ? How does this disregard for God contribute to and even make possible the nation's injustices?
 - ? What is found in the word of God, the scriptures, that might have checked the unjust behavior?
 3. We have suggested many times that the consequences of bad behavior can add to our understanding of the bad behavior itself.
 - ? How do the consequences found in verses 13-15, 17 add to your understanding of the behavior described in verses 11-12?
 - ? If a consequence is going hungry, what does that tell you about the behavior?

- ? What would you think and feel if we suggested that this consequence suggests that not only was there gluttony on the part of the offenders, but that their gluttony caused hunger in others?
- ? What does the mention of Še'ôl (hell) having an appetite and consuming the revelers tell you about the revelers themselves and the consumption they practiced on others?
- ? How do unchecked appetites of all kinds cause abuse and injustice toward others both at the private level and at the societal level?

4. Isaiah ends his description of the consequences with this:

“And as lambs graze in their pastures,
foreigners consume the ruins of the well-fed.”

- ? What does this mean to you?
- ? What does it suggest if animals are grazing among ruins where there were previous dwellings in which people were well-fed?
- ? What do you see when you close your eyes and imagine this imagery?
- ? How does the mention of “ruins” and of “the well-fed” tie this warning to the previous warning in which the injustice was,

“What a tragic warning! There are those who merge homestead after homestead,
combine property after property
until there’s nothing left
and you dwell by yourselves in the heart of the property” (5.⁸).

And the consequence was?

“It is certain that many an estate will become wasteland.
Large and profitable ones will be uninhabited
¹⁰such that a ten-acre vineyard will yield but six gallons
and three bushels of seed will yield a quarter bushel” (9-10).

- ? After reading these first two warnings (8-10 and 11-17), what is your estimation of Israelite society in Isaiah’s day?
- ? How would you compare it with society today?

Questionary 5— isaiah 5.¹⁸⁻¹⁹

¹⁸What a tragic warning! There are those who drag along injustice with ropes of deceit,
And wrongdoing with the lead rope of a wagon;

¹⁹those who say, “He should act now.

He should quickly do what He’s going to do
so that we can observe it.”

The decision of Israel’s Holy One should arrive and happen
that we believe it” (author’s translation).

Isaiah 5 began with a love song (5.¹⁻²) commemorating God’s love for His vineyard (Israel, 5.⁷) and the disappointment He felt when it yielded poor quality grapes (social injustice, 5.⁷). Isaiah then describes the ravishing and destructive consequences that will come upon the vineyard as a result of its poor yield (5.³⁻⁶). Isaiah then interprets the song so that its application to the relationship between God and Israel is clear. In this interpretation, Isaiah makes clear that God’s disappointment with Israel is centered on the social injustice that He finds in the nation (5.⁷).

With this, Isaiah launches into six blistering warnings. Each warning is based on the injustice mentioned in verse 7 and each warning should be read in light of the others, as building one upon another. The first warning with its social injustice and the consequences was found in 5.⁸⁻¹⁰. The second warning with its social injustice and the consequences thereof was found in 5.¹¹⁻¹⁷. This reading contains the third warning, though without any specific consequences mentioned.

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

¹⁸Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity,
and sin as it were with a cart rope:

¹⁹That say, Let him make speed,
and hasten his work,
that we may see it:

and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come,
that we may know it!

1. We have suggested that each of the warnings should be read in light of the others as if they build on each other.

? How does this warning relate to the previous two?

The KJV, along with many other translations, speak of drawing “iniquity.” “Iniquity” is a common translation of the Hebrew word, *’āwôn*. If this common translation is to be accepted, however, we must bear in mind that the English word, “iniquity,” comes from Latin *iniquitas* (verb, *iniquitatem*), “unequalness, unevenness,” figuratively “unfavorableness, unfairness, injustice” (*in-*, “not” + *aequus* “just, equal” = “not equal,” “not just,” and thus “unjust.”

? How does the understanding that Isaiah is speaking of “injustice” and “wrongdoing” in today’s reading, tie this warning together with the previous two warnings (5.⁸⁻¹⁰ and 5.¹¹⁻¹⁷)?

2. Isaiah uses the imagery of “drawing” or “dragging” injustice and criminality with ropes.

? What do you see when you envision this imagery?

? What is the meaning of this imagery?

When one, “draws,” “drags,” or “leads” something with a rope, they give momentum and direction to whatever is at the other end of the rope.

? How do the individuals criticized in the previous two warnings give momentum and direction to injustice and wrongdoing?

3. Those who provide draw injustice and wrongdoing with ropes (given momentum and direction to injustice and wrongdoing?) address God as follows,

“He should act now.

He should quickly do what He’s going to do
so that we can observe it.”

The decision of Israel’s Holy One should arrive and happen
that we believe it.”

- ? What is the tone and meaning of this challenge?
- ? What decisions did God come to and what did He say He was about to do in the first two warnings?
- ? How might the following passages relate to the response to God found in today’s reading?

“And now, I, Moroni, would speak somewhat concerning these things; I would show unto the world that faith is things which are hoped for and not seen; wherefore, dispute not because ye see not, for ye receive no witness until after the trial of your faith” (Ether 12.⁶).

“O ye that are bound down under a foolish and a vain hope, why do ye yoke yourselves with such foolish things? Why do ye look for a Christ? For no man can know of anything which is to come” (Alma 30.¹³).

Questionary 6— isaiah 5.²⁰

²⁰What a tragic warning! There are those who speak of evil as good,
and of good as evil;
who present darkness as light,
and light as darkness;
who present bitterness as sweetness,
and sweetness as bitterness (author's translation).

Isaiah 5 began with a love song (5.¹⁻²) commemorating God's love for His vineyard (Israel, 5.⁷) and the disappointment He felt when it yielded poor quality grapes (social injustice, 5.⁷). Isaiah then describes the ravishing and destructive consequences that will come upon the vineyard as a result of its poor yield (5.³⁻⁶). Isaiah then interprets the song so that its application to the relationship between God and Israel is clear. In this interpretation, Isaiah makes clear that God's disappointment with Israel is centered on the social injustice that He finds in the nation (5.⁷).

With this, Isaiah launches into six blistering warnings. Each warning is based on the injustice mentioned in verse 7 and each warning should be read in light of the others, as building one upon another. The first warning with its social injustice and the consequences was found in 5.⁸⁻¹⁰. The second warning with its social injustice and the consequences thereof was found in 5.¹¹⁻¹⁷. The third warning, without any mention of consequences, was found in 5.¹⁸⁻¹⁹. Today's reading contains the fourth warning, again without the mention of specific consequences.

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

²⁰Woe unto them that call evil good,
and good evil;
that put darkness for light,
and light for darkness;
that put bitter for sweet,
and sweet for bitter!

1. We have suggested that each of the warnings should be read in light of the others as if they build on each other.
 - ? How does this warning relate to the previous three?
 - ? In what ways do those who create economic inequalities by buying up and consolidating real estate holdings (1st warning), become rich so as to live a life of luxury and ease (2nd warning), and then challenge those who claim such activities to be immoral to prove it (3rd warning) claim that their actions and lifestyle is actually "good"?
 - ? In addition to the denying of reality and the invention of delusion in relation to economic matters, how does our society replace fact with fiction, good with evil, etc.
 - ? What would you think and feel if we suggested that just as "the love of money is the root of all evil," as Paul teaches, lies that turn economic immorality into some inevitable and moral are the soil out of which most of society's other lying reversals originate?
2. So, with all of this in mind, here is a fun exercise. Below are true statements of economy made either by God, Himself/ true prophets, and others made or by false prophets of Capitalism. Can you pick out the truths (which are good) and the lies (which are evil) that are inconsistent with the character or God and the sort of attitudes and behaviors he expects of His children—and the vast chasm that exists between them?

“If there were ‘no [social] classes... there would be no competition ... It is an error that society gains more by equality than it does by a class differentiation allowing of higher organization and greater efficiency.”

“And now, in this two hundred and first year there began to be among them those who were lifted up in pride, such as the wearing of costly apparel, and all manner of fine pearls, and of the fine things of the world. And from that time forth they did have their goods and their substance no more common among them. And they began to be divided into classes; and they began to build up churches unto themselves to get gain, and began to deny the true church of Christ.”

“In the twenty and ninth year there began to be some disputings among the people; and some were lifted up unto pride and boastings because of their exceedingly great riches, yea, even unto great persecutions; for there were many merchants in the land, and also many lawyers, and many officers. And the people began to be distinguished by ranks, according to their riches and their chances for learning; yea, some were ignorant because of their poverty, and others did receive great learning because of their riches.... And thus there became a great inequality in all the land...”

“They believe... that men were inherently unequal: it was right and just for workers to be paid far less than managers and managers far less than owners.”

“Blending the classic conservatism of Edmund Burke with contemporary social Darwinism, Butler believed liberty and equality were incompatible, and where they conflicted liberty must prevail. A review of his 1907 work *True and False Democracy* quoted Butler as having written: “Destroy inequality of talent and capacity, and life as we know it stops ... The corner-stone of democracy is natural inequality, its ideal is the selection of the most fit. Liberty is far more precious than equality, and the two are mutually destructive.”

“It is not given that one man should possess that which is above another, wherefore the world lieth in sin.”

“[They] shared... conviction that capitalism functioned because of inequalities. Like natural selection, it was propelled by differences of ability (and therefore of recompense). To them, this was no failing; on the contrary, it showed capitalism’s consistency with the natural inequality of men.”

“True equality ... can never exist ... unless the gifted minority are coerced and limited by the majority. Equality in achievement and reward can be secured only by compulsion, or in other words, at the sacrifice of liberty.”

“Nevertheless, in your temporal things you shall be equal, and this not grudgingly, otherwise the abundance of the manifestations of the Spirit shall be withheld.”

[He] insisted that “the capitalist maintains as a basic principle that men are of unequal ability and hence deserve and should receive unequal reward—in other words, that there are scientific, practical, and ethical considerations which both necessitate and justify inequality of pay and income.”

? What is the nature of the lies?

Questionary 7— isaiah 5.²¹

²¹What a tragic warning! There are those who are wise in their own opinion, and view themselves as perceptive (author's translation).

Isaiah 5 began with a love song (5.¹⁻²) commemorating God's love for His vineyard (Israel, 5.⁷) and the disappointment He felt when it yielded poor quality grapes (social injustice, 5.⁷). Isaiah then describes the ravishing and destructive consequences that will come upon the vineyard as a result of its poor yield (5.³⁻⁶). Isaiah then interprets the song so that its application to the relationship between God and Israel is clear. In this interpretation, Isaiah makes clear that God's disappointment with Israel is centered on the social injustice that He finds in the nation (5.⁷).

With this, Isaiah launches into six blistering warnings. Each warning is based on the injustice mentioned in verse 7 and each warning should be read in light of the others, as building one upon another. The first warning with its social injustice and the consequences was found in 5.⁸⁻¹⁰. The second warning with its social injustice and the consequences thereof was found in 5.¹¹⁻¹⁷. The third warning, without any mention of consequences, was found in 5.¹⁸⁻¹⁹. The fourth warning, again without any specific mention of consequences, was found in 5.²⁰. Today's reading contains the fifth warning, this one also without mention of consequences.

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

“Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes,
and prudent in their own sight!

1. We have suggested that each of the warnings should be read in light of the others as if they build on each other.
? How does this warning relate to the previous warnings?
2. We are informed that those who created economic inequalities by buying up and consolidating real estate holdings (1st warning), became rich so as to live a life of luxury and ease (2nd warning), challenge those who claim such activities to be immoral to prove it (3rd warning), and claimed that their actions and lifestyle were actually “good” (4th warning), now claim that they are wise and perceptive. We should understand, first, that on one level they are wise and perceptive.
? About what are they wise and perceptive?
3. Through his imagery of the great and spacious building, Nephi identifies the “pride” and “wisdom” of this world (see 1 Ne. 11.³⁵⁻³⁶). The word takes pride in wealth, power, and influence. It possesses the wisdom and know-how to acquire these things.
? How does the acquisition of large, landed estates and the owners' life of ease and luxury as depicted in the first two warnings demonstrate that they possessed pride in and a strong desire for the things of this world?
? How does the acquisition of large, landed estates and the owners' life of ease and luxury as depicted in the first two warnings demonstrate that they possessed the wisdom and know-how to acquire the things of this world?
4. Consider Cain's “insight” or “perceptiveness” about the acquisition of those things in which this world takes pride.
“Truly I am Mahan, the master of this great secret, that I may murder and get gain” (Moses 5.³¹).
? How does the acquisition of large, landed estates and the owners' life of ease and luxury as depicted in the first two warnings demonstrate that they too have discovered Cain's “secret” that violence is key to acquiring the things of this world?

- ? Why is it called a “secret”?
 - ? How do we keep the violence by which the things of this world are acquired a “secret” or unrecognized? How is this related to the previous warning about calling what is evil, “good”?
5. The claim of wisdom and perceptiveness found in this fifth warning also suggests a sense of superiority and entitlement.
- ? How do the wealthy, the powerful, and the influential who lives luxurious lives of ease express their sense of superiority and entitlement?
 - ? What makes their claims of superiority and entitlement a lie?
 - ? Are there legitimate reasons for some (the wealthy and gifted) to think themselves superior to others? Why do you answer as you do?
 - ? How does the following passage relate to this question and the wealthy’s claim of superiority?
 “‘Let them repent of all their sins, and of all their covetous desires, before me,’ saith the Lord; ‘for what is property unto me?’ saith the Lord” (DC 117.⁴).
6. This are other senses in which those who acquire much and live lives of luxury and ease are not, contrary to their claims, wise or perceptive.
- ? How do the wealthy with their lives of luxury and ease show themselves to be unwise and unperceptive?

Questionary 8— isaiah 5.²²⁻²⁴

²²What a tragic warning! There are those who are powerful, imbibing wine,
and are influential individuals, mixing alcoholic drinks,
²³who declare the guilty, “innocent,” as a result of bribery
and subvert the vindication of the innocent.

²⁴Therefore as a lick of fire consumes straw
and a flaming fire devours dry grass
their root will turn to rot
and their bud will go up in dust
because they have rejected YHWH Š^ebā’ôt’s teachings
and abhorred the word of Yisrā’ēl’s Incomparable One (author’s translation).

Isaiah 5 began with a love song (5.¹⁻²) commemorating God’s love for His vineyard (Israel, 5.⁷) and the disappointment He felt when it yielded poor quality grapes (social injustice, 5.⁷). Isaiah then describes the ravishing and destructive consequences that will come upon the vineyard as a result of its poor yield (5.³⁻⁶). Isaiah then interprets the song so that its application to the relationship between God and Israel is clear. In this interpretation, Isaiah makes clear that God’s disappointment with Israel is centered on the social injustice that He finds in the nation (5.⁷).

With this, Isaiah launches into six blistering warnings. Each warning is based on the injustice mentioned in verse 7 and each warning should be read in light of the others, as building one upon another. The first warning with its social injustice and the consequences was found in 5.⁸⁻¹⁰. The second warning with its social injustice and the consequences thereof was found in 5.¹¹⁻¹⁷. The third warning, without any mention of consequences, was found in 5.¹⁸⁻¹⁹. The fourth warning, again without any specific mention of consequences, was found in 5.²⁰. The fifth warning, also without mention of consequences, was found in 5.²¹. Today’s reading is the sixth warning. This one returns to the form of including consequences for wicked attitudes and behaviors.

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

²²Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine,
and men of strength to mingle strong drink:
²³Which justify the wicked for reward,
and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!
²⁴Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble,
and the flame consumeth the chaff,
so their root shall be as rottenness,
and their blossom shall go up as dust:
because they have cast away the law of the LORD of hosts,
and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

²⁵Therefore is the anger of the LORD kindled against his people,
and he hath stretched forth his hand against them,
and hath smitten them:
and the hills did tremble,
and their carcasses were torn in the midst of the streets.
For all this his anger is not turned away,
but his hand is stretched out still.

1. We have suggested that each of the warnings should be read in light of the others as if they build on each other.
 - ? How does this warning relate to the previous warnings?

2. We are informed that those who created economic inequalities by buying up and consolidating real estate holdings (1st warning), became rich so as to live a life of luxury and ease (2nd warning), challenge those who claim such activities to be immoral to prove it (3rd warning), claimed that their actions and lifestyle were actually “good” (4th warning), and claimed that they wise and perceptive (5th warning).
 - ? What do we learn about the unjust behavior of Judah in today’s reading?
 - ? How has bribery in the subversion of justice for the innocent likely assisted the powerful and influential in obtaining the properties mentioned in the first warning?
 - “What a tragic warning! There are those who merge homestead after homestead, combine property after property until there’s nothing left and you dwell by yourselves in the heart of the property” (5.⁸).
 - ? How does the bribery that allows their injustices to sail through the courts give their claims of wisdom and perception as found in the 5th warning a certain justification in their eyes?
 - ? How does the bribery that allows their injustices to sail through the courts make it possible for them to claim that their evil is really good as was found in the 4th warning?

3. Heavy drinking was mentioned in the second warning (vss. 11-17) as a sign of decadently luxurious life styles procured on the backs of others, their labors and sufferings.
 - ? What is the nature of the criticism about drinking in today’s reading?
 - ? What do you think and feel when you consider that society’s powerful who have the ability to influence other’s attitudes and behaviors have their thinking abilities impaired by alcohol?
 - ? What role is drinking likely to play in the ability of the powerful to influence judges and their courts?
 - ? How do social gatherings, which inevitably include alcohol, in which litigants and judges comingle, influence the relationships between those who seek the courts’ injunctions and the judges who oversee cases?
 - ? How do you respond to our observation that Americans have recently seen evidence of justice being perverted because of the relationships that high court officials have developed with those who appear before their court—think Clarence Thomas and those with whom he parties, vacations, and, inevitably drinks?

4. Verse 24, describe the consequences of the wicked behavior described in 22-23.
 - ? What are those consequences and how are they appropriate to the crimes committed not only in verses 22-23, but throughout chapter 5?

Questionary 9— isaiah 5.²⁵⁻³⁰

Warning: this reading contains graphic language that might offend some.

²⁵Therefore, YHWH's anger burns hot against His people,
He raises His hand against them, and strikes them
so that the mountains tremble
while their corpses are like shit on the street.
After all this, His anger is not over,
but still His hand is raised.

²⁶He will raise a signal to distant nations
and whistle for them from the farthest reaches of the earth.

How promptly they respond! How swiftly they come!

²⁷None among them tire, and none among them falter.

Not a one dozes off and not a one falls sleep.

Not a single belt around the waist is loose,
and not a single shoe strap is undone.

²⁸The force's arrows are sharpened,
and all its bows tightly strung.

Its horses' hooves are hard as flint,
and its chariot wheels are as a windstorm.

²⁹Its roar is like that of a lioness or lion.

It growls and seizes prey.

It secures its prey.

There is no escape.

³⁰Then will it roar against it like a raging sea.

One looks to land, but there is enveloping darkness,
and the light is dim because of the thick clouds (author's translation).

Isaiah 5 began with a love song (5.¹⁻²) commemorating God's love for His vineyard (Israel, 5.⁷) and the disappointment He felt when it yielded poor quality grapes (social injustice, 5.⁷). Isaiah then describes the ravishing and destructive consequences that will come upon the vineyard as a result of its poor yield (5.³⁻⁶). Isaiah then interprets the song so that its application to the relationship between God and Israel is clear. In this interpretation, Isaiah makes clear that God's disappointment with Israel is centered on the social injustice that He finds in the nation (5.⁷).

With this, Isaiah launches into six blistering warnings. Each warning is based on the injustice mentioned in verse 7 and each warning should be read in light of the others, as building one upon another. The first warning with its social injustice and the consequences was found in 5.⁸⁻¹⁰. The second warning with its social injustice and the consequences thereof was found in 5.¹¹⁻¹⁷. The third warning, without any mention of consequences, was found in 5.¹⁸⁻¹⁹. The fourth warning, again without any specific mention of consequences, was found in 5.²⁰. The fifth warning, also without mention of consequences, was found in 5.²¹. The sixth and last warning, returning to the form of including consequences for wicked attitudes and behaviors was found in 5.²²⁻²⁴.

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

²⁵Therefore is the anger of the LORD kindled against his people,
and he hath stretched forth his hand against them,
and hath smitten them:

and the hills did tremble,
and their carcasses were torn in the midst of the streets.
For all this his anger is not turned away,
but his hand is stretched out still.

²⁶And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far,
and will hiss unto them from the end of the earth:
and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly:

²⁷None shall be weary nor stumble among them;
none shall slumber nor sleep;
neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed,
nor the latchet of their shoes be broken:

²⁸Whose arrows are sharp,
and all their bows bent,
their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint,
and their wheels like a whirlwind:

²⁹Their roaring shall be like a lion,
they shall roar like young lions:
yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey,
and shall carry it away safe, and none shall deliver it.

³⁰And in that day they shall roar against them
like the roaring of the sea:
and if one look unto the land,
behold darkness and sorrow,
and the light is darkened in the heavens thereof.

1. Today's reading can be read as a sort of climax in which the Lord describes the ultimate consequences for all the evils described in the six tragic warnings.
? What consequences do you identify in today's reading?

The Bible commonly uses euphemisms for sexual activities and for bodily functions. But Isaiah does not use a euphemism in verse 25.

- ? Why, do you suppose, did he choose to use a courser word instead of a euphemism?
? How do you feel about his choice?

2. After a historical interlude, the final two lines of verse 25 are repeated in 9.¹², 9.¹⁷, 9.²¹, and 10.⁴.

“After all this, His anger is not over,
but still His hand is raised.”

The Lord “raised” (in the KJV, “stretched out) hand is often read as an extension of God's compassion toward Israel. But I read it as the continuing suffering of the consequences of sin. I read it as a return to the metaphor with which Isaiah began his work.

“A tragic warning! It is a criminal nation,
a guilt laden people,
a wicked offspring,
ruinous children.
They have forsaken Yahweh.
They have spurned Yīsrā'ēl's Incomparable One.
They have turned their backs.
Why do you continue to be beaten?
Your defiance continues!

The head is given over to delirium;
the heartbeat grows faint.
From head to toe,
there is not a healthy spot to be found;
only bruises and welts
and open wounds
that have not, in any way, been treated or bandaged
or soothed with ointment” (1.4-6).

- ? What do you think and feel when you consider this understanding of the Lord’s raised or stretched out hand?
- ? What do you think and feel when you consider the Lord’s unrelenting “punishment” of Israel?

3. In verses 26-30, the Lord describes the soon-to-be-invading Assyrian army.

- ? What attributes of that army stand out to you?
- ? What do you think and feel when the army is compared to a pride of hunting lions?
- ? What do you think and feel when the army is compared to a violent storm coming in off the sea and enveloping the land?

Latter, in describing the Babylonian army, Jeremiah uses much the same language.

“This is what YHWH says:
‘Look at the people coming from the north,
A mighty nation rising from the earth’s distant places.

²³They grasp hold of bow and spear.

They are cruel and have no pity.
²³They shall lay hold on bow and spear;
they *are* cruel, and have no mercy;
their voice roareth like the sea;
and they ride upon horses,
set in array as men for war against thee,
O daughter of Zion.’

²⁴‘We have heard the fame thereof:
our hands wax feeble:
anguish hath taken hold of us,
and pain, as of a woman in travail” (Jeremiah 6.²²⁻²⁴).

When the American army invaded Iraq the columns of tanks, jeeps, troop carriers, etc. stirred up such a cloud of dust that for days it literally looked like night during daytime hours. In this reading, Isaiah similarly describes the environmental impact of the Assyrian army’s soldiers, chariots, horses, etc.

- ? When you close your eyes and visualize this army and the dark clouds of dust it stirs up, what do you see?

4. In verse 26, Isaiah seems to suggest that the Assyrian army turns its aggression against Israel because of the Lord’s call/ encouragement.

“He [YHWH] will raise a signal to distant nations
and whistle for them from the farthest reaches of the earth.”

- ? Given Assyria’s (or Babylon’s or Rome’s or Nazi Germany’s, or you-name-it) history, reputation, and propensity to act aggressively against surrounding nations, how likely and reasonable is it to think that Assyria needed God’s encouragement/permission to attack Israel? Why do you answer as you do?
- ? How likely is it that God really offered such encouragement? Why do you answer as you do?

In Helaman 13, the text has the Lord threaten through Samuel the Lamanite,

“I will turn the hearts of their brethren [Lamanites] against them [Nephites]” (vs. 8).

- ? Did the Nephite’s enemy of generations really need the Lord to touch their hearts for them to feel antagonistic?
- ? How likely is it that God moves any individual or nation to feel antagonism toward other individuals or nations? Why do you answer as you do?
- ? How does the following passage relate to these questions and guide how we respond to assertions such as those found in Isaiah 5.²⁶ and Helaman 13.⁸?

“For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another. Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away” (3 Ne. 11.²⁹⁻³⁰).

- ? So, how do you explain the language and assertion of Isaiah 5.²⁶ and Helaman 13.⁸?
- ? How do you feel about and respond to religious theologies that attribute all actions, human or otherwise, to God’s intervention? Why do you answer as you do?

Isaiah 9.³⁻⁷

³Thou hast multiplied the nation,
and ~~not~~ increased the joy:
they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest,
and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.
⁴For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden,
and the staff of his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian.
⁵For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise,
and garments rolled in blood;
but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire.
⁶For unto us a child is born,
unto us a son is given:
and the government shall be upon his shoulder:
and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor,
The mighty God,
The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.
⁷Of the increase of his government and peace
there shall be no end,
upon the throne of David,
and upon his kingdom,
to order it, and to establish it
with judgment and with justice
from henceforth even for ever.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts
will perform this.

Q

uestionary

This reading is the 6th in a series of Advent readings and post-Advent readings that will continue through the end of December.

1. Isaiah speaks of a “joy” comparable to “to the joy in harvest.” In a similar vein, the Psalmist confesses,

“Thou hast put gladness in my heart,
more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased” (Psalm 4.⁷).

- ? What does this mean to you?

In a more agrarian society such as ancient Israel, harvest time was a matter of life and death (It is today as well, of course. But we are a bit more removed from this recognition)

- ? How does this thought alter or magnify your appreciation for the intense joy to which Isaiah alludes?
? What was the nature of the joy at a good harvest (or the nature of sorrow and worry at a poor harvest)?
? What is the cause of the joy to which Isaiah alludes?
? To what degree do you share such sentiments?

2. Isaiah says that Yahweh has

“broken the yoke of [Israel’s] burden,
and the staff of his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor.”

- ? To what specific “yoke” and “oppressor” does Isaiah refer?
 - ? What “yoke” and oppression would you have God remove from your life?
 - ? How does Satan and his temptations represent a “yoke” and a “rod” of oppression?
 - ? What blessing/s does this reading identify as coming to Israel to “break the yoke” and “rod” of the oppressor?
 - ? How does this same blessing bring rescue to you?
3. The promised child of whom Isaiah speaks—the child that will bring redemption from the oppressor—is given several titles.
- Wonderful
 - Counsellor
 - The mighty God
 - The everlasting Father
 - The Prince of Peace
- ? Consider each of these titles and what they mean to you?
 - ? How do these titles apply to the Savior, Jesus Christ?
 - ? How do each of these titles impact your life personally?
4. As king of Israel, the promised child’s rule will be established and maintained through an increase in correctness, justice, and peace.
- ? How does this apply to the Savior’s rule in your life?
5. Isaiah says that “the zeal of the LORD of host will perform this.”
- ? What comes to mind when you read this?
 - ? What is meant by “the *zeal* of the LORD”?
 - ? How does the Lord manifest and act with “zeal” in your life?
- ? In what ways has Jesus fulfilled Isaiah’s hopes expressed in today’s reading?
 - ? In what ways might he yet fulfill Isaiah’s hopes?

Isaiah 10.¹⁻²— just scripture

¹Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees,
and that write grievousness which they have prescribed;
²To turn aside the needy from judgment,
and to take away the right from the poor of my people,
that widows may be their prey,
and that they may rob the fatherless!

Questionary

1. In today's reading, the prophet Isaiah criticizes the Jewish government of "unrighteous decrees" that he labels as "grievous."
 - ? What is the nature of these grievous and unrighteous decrees?
 - ? Who are their intended targets?
 - ? Why have governments throughout time treated their poor and vulnerable citizens unjustly?
 - ? Clearly, every government has had its "justifications" for treating the vulnerable unjustly. What do you imagine those justifications have been? Make a list.
 - ? How is our society treating our vulnerable citizens today?
 - ? Are there vulnerable classes today in addition to Isaiah's "poor," "widows," and "fatherless"?
 - ? What justifications do we use to unjustly withholding public assistance from vulnerable classes of citizens? How are these any different that those used by governments throughout time?
 - ? What can you do as an individual and as a citizen/voter to mediate for the vulnerable in society?

2. Of course, governments can pass laws that simply offer no help to the vulnerable. Worse still, they may pass laws that do active violence and harm.
 - ? How is the later reflected in Isaiah's criticism of the Jewish government of his day?
 - ? What are examples of modern laws that actively do violence and harm to vulnerable individuals and classes?

Isaiah 25.4— just scripture

For thou hast been a strength to the poor,
a strength to the needy in his distress,
a refuge from the storm,
a shadow from the heat,
when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.

Questionary

In characterizing the life of the “poor” and “needy,” the Lord speaks of “distress,” “storms,” “heat,” and “blasts.”

- ? How is this consistent or inconsistent with your own perspective concerning the life of the “poor” and “needy”?
- ? Who might be “the terrible ones” that rage as a storm against the “poor” and “needy”?

Isaiah 30.⁹⁻¹³— just scripture

⁹That this is a rebellious people, lying children,
children that will not hear the law of the LORD:

¹⁰Which say to the seers,
“See not;

and to the prophets,

Prophesy not unto us right things,
speak unto us smooth things,
prophesy deceits:

¹¹Get you out of the way,
turn aside out of the path,
cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.”

¹²Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel,
Because ye despise this word,
and trust in oppression and perverseness,
and stay thereon:

¹³Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall,
swelling out in a high wall,
whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant.

Questionary

1. Isaiah quotes the population’s desire that prophets “speak unto us smooth things.” We know from the poetic parallelism that the “smooth things” are not “right things” but “deceptive.”

? But apart from bring wrong and deceitful, what is the nature of “smooth” prophesy?

? How does the prophesying of “smooth” things relate to one of Paul’s famous statements:

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Timothy 4.³⁻⁴).

? Why would people prefer to hear what they want to hear rather than what is actual and true even though they know they are being told lies or “fables”?

? How do “lusts” lead one to wish to hear lies rather than truth?

? How do people ask their “prophets” or religious/political leaders to tell them what they want to hear, though they know what they are hearing is a lie?

? How are today’s “prophets” or religious/political leaders lying today?

? What “smooth” things are today’s “prophets” or religious/political leaders “prophesying” today?

? How do you feel and what do you think when you read that this desire to be lied to is the same as requesting, demanding even that the “Holy One of Israel... cease from before us”?

2. Isaiah charges that Judah’s citizenry “trust in oppression and perverseness [deceit], and stay thereon.

? What is the relationship between wanting to be told fables and oppressing and deceiving others?

3. Isaiah warns that as a consequence of Judah’s demand for self-serving lies and dependance upon oppression and deceit for their own advancement over others

“this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall,
swelling out in a high wall,
whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant.”

? What do you see when you picture this imagery?

? Does the following translation altar or clarify the image you have in your mind? If so, how?

“This sin will become for you
like a high wall, cracked and bulging,
that collapses suddenly, in an instant” (NIV).

Isaiah 31.¹— just scripture

Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help;
and stay on horses,
and trust in chariots, because they are many;
and in horsemen, because they are very strong;
but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel,
neither seek the LORD!

Questionary

- ? What is the Lord's concern with his peoples' reliance on armament agreements with other nations for national security?
- ? What is the balance between preparing a nation strategically in its foreign affairs and putting one's trust in God?
- ? How do you feel about the balance or imbalance of your nation's attitudes in matters surrounding militaristic resources?

Isaiah 32.¹⁻²— just scripture

¹Know this: a king should reign by acting rightly,
and rulers by ruling justly—
²he should be one who acts as a hiding place from the wind;
as a shelter from a torrential rain;
as a watersource in a parched landscape;
as the shade of an immense rock overhang (Author's translation).

Questionary

We will devote several days to Isaiah 32.¹⁻⁸. Today, we will focus on verses 1 and 2. However, the reader may want to review the entire text, all of which can be found below. For those who wish to compare translations, here is the King James Translation.

¹Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness,
and princes shall rule in judgment.
²And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind,
and a covert from the tempest;
as rivers of water in a dry place,
as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

1. As explained in endnote 'b,' I understand the Hebrew imperfect verb to indicate “mood” rather than “tense” (future) as it has traditionally been understood. Under traditional readings, the passage has been seen as “Messianic,” addressing the nature of Messiah’s future politically just administration. I, on the other hand, read the passage as speaking common political wisdom and encouragement applicable to every age, nation, and form of government.
 - ? What thoughts and feelings do you have as you consider the difference between the two translations found above?
 - ? As you consider the role prophets play in your life, what role do they play in foretelling the future as opposed to addressing current life, behaviors, and feelings and how to improve them?
2. Isaiah stipulates that a civic leader is to be a “hiding place” (from wind), a “shelter” (from torrential rains), a watersource (in a parched landscape), and shade (presumably from a hot and blazing sun).
 - ? What kind of people and sort of life do these metaphors suggest that Isaiah had in mind when he spoke of the protective responsibilities of a ruler?

We will see in future verses that these physical dangers are representative of the challenges faced by vulnerable populations: “harried,” “cautious,” “hungry,” “thirsty,” “poor,” and “needy.”

- ? How do you feel about the role civic leaders are to play in the life of vulnerable populations?
- ? How well are your local, state, and national leaders doing in fulfilling their protective role in the life of vulnerable populations?
- ? How well would vulnerable populations say they are doing in their protective role?
- ? More specifically, how well is the current U.S. president doing as a protective influence in the life of vulnerable populations—national and international?
- ? What civic responsibilities do you have to encourage your civic leaders to play this role in the lives of vulnerable populations—national and international?

Isaiah 32.³⁻⁴— just scripture

³Would not the eyes of those who see such a thing lock onto it;
the ears of those who hear such a thing perk up?

⁴The heart also of the harried, would be intent on experiencing it,
and the tongue that spoke cautiously would speak with fluent exuberance (Author's translation).

Questionary

We are devoting several days to Isaiah 32.¹⁻⁸. In our first reading (verses 1-2) we found that kings and princes—all government and civic leaders, in fact—are under a divine injunction to provide care, comfort, shelter, and protection to vulnerable populations.

In today's reading, we focus on verses 3-4. However, as with the first reading, it seems helpful to provide the entire passage in order to firmly establish context for each verse. For those who wish to compare translations, here is the King James Translation.

³And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim,
and the ears of them that hear shall hearken.

⁴The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge,
and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly.

1. Verses 3 and 4 describe the excited and enthusiastic response of vulnerable populations when they ear and witness the just and nourishing rule of government (civic) leaders.
 - ? Use your imagination. Close your eyes and picture the look on the faces of the vulnerable and that of their children, about whom the vulnerable have been so anxious, when they realize that those who have power over them seek to shelter rather than oppress them. How does it make you feel to sense the relief, joy and enthusiasm of these vulnerable people because of a just and protective government?
 - ? How do you feel when you contemplate the insecure, fearful, and stressful life these same people experience when government does not seek their welfare, but, in fact, institutes public policy that is oppressive?
 - ? What do you think and how do you feel when you contemplate the vulnerable's newfound freedom to honestly speak their minds and to enthusiastically share the hope they feel at a government that shelters rather than attacks them?
 - ? How do your government and civic leaders—local, state, national—treat the vulnerable? Do they shelter and protect or deny and oppress?
 - ? How would the vulnerable answer this question?
 - ? What are you doing privately, publicly, and politically to assure that government is a protective and nourishing influence in the lives of vulnerable populations rather than a distressing and oppressive one?

Isaiah 32.⁵⁻⁸— just scripture

⁵The social deviant would never again be spoken of positively.

Nor would the scoundrel be thought respectable.

⁶For the deviant can only utter perversions;

his intent is to do harm;

to create impiety;

and to speak falsely of YHWH

in order to void the hopes of the hungry

and deprive the thirsty of drink.

⁷Such a scoundrel uses wicked means.

He advises foul plans

that will destroy the poor through deception

and deny the just claims of the needy,

⁸while the noble counsels generosity

and thrives through liberality (Author's translation).

Q

uestionary

We have devoted several days to Isaiah 32.¹⁻⁸. In our first reading (verses 1-2) we found that kings and princes—all government and civic leaders, in fact—are under a divine injunction to provide care, comfort, shelter, and protection to vulnerable populations. In our second reading (3-4), we read of the joy, hope, and anticipation the vulnerable feel when civic leaders are unexpectedly and unusually just in their rule, and act as protectors and supports rather than oppressors and detractors.

In today's reading, we focus on verses 5-8. For those who wish to compare translations, here is the King James Translation.

⁵The vile person shall be no more called liberal,
nor the churl said to be bountiful.

⁶For the vile person will speak villany,
and his heart will work iniquity,

to practise hypocrisy,

and to utter error against the LORD,

to make empty the soul of the hungry,

and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail.

⁷The instruments also of the churl are evil:

he deviseth wicked devices

to destroy the poor with lying words,

even when the needy speaketh right.

⁸But the liberal deviseth liberal things;

and by liberal things shall he stand.

1. In verses 6, Isaiah speaks of “scoundrels” and “social deviants” and their goals and objectives?
 - ? How often, say, in just the past year, has society or societal populations spoken well of, given good press to, or trusted in modern day civic “scoundrels”—those who purposefully deviate from social norms?
 - ? How do “scoundrels” and “social deviants” vainly invoke the name of God to falsely implicate him in their deeds?
 - ? How is such social deviancy reflected in the treatment of vulnerable people and populations?
 - ? What do you think and how do you feel about Isaiah assertion that the goals of civic “social deviants” is often to disappoint and oppress those vulnerable to their unjust exercise of power?
2. In verse 8, Isaiah contrasts the “social deviant” with the generous and noble.

- ? What are the differences between these two groups?
- ? In what world could America's modern-day Caligula not be thought of as the kind of "scoundrel" and "social deviant" about which Isaiah speaks?
- ? What generous or noble sentiments has America's modern-day Caligula expressed or exhibited?
- ? What generous or noble actions has he taken in his governance?
- ? What will you do to help restore the nation to a generosity of spirit and a nobility of action?

Isaiah 40.¹⁻²

¹Comfort ye,
comfort ye my people, saith your God.
²Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem,
and cry unto her,
that her warfare is accomplished,
that her iniquity is pardoned
for she hath received of the LORD's hand
double for all her sins.

Questionary

Today's reading is the 1st in a series of Advent readings and post-Advent readings that will continue through the end of December.

Rather than thinking of verses 1-2 in terms of Israelite history and prophecy, we will consider them in terms of our own experiences.

1. Today's reading represents the opening passage of Handel's Messiah, a piece of music traditionally performed during the Christmas Season.
 - ? Why do you think Handel found it an appropriate beginning to his Christmas celebration of the Savior's birth?
2. The idea of "comfort" is repeated three times in today's reading.
 - ? What is the emotional impact of this repetition?
 - ? Who needs comfort?
 - ? What is the nature of the comfort promised in today's scripture?
 - ? Have you experienced such a comfort in your own life?
3. In parallel lines of poetry, Isaiah says that Israel's "warfare is over" and that its "iniquity is pardoned."
 - ? How is "warfare" appropriate to the idea of iniquity?
 - ? What kinds of "inner battles" does sin and weakness create?
 - ? Have you experienced an end to such "inner battles"?
 - ? What, do you think, is meant by "double for all her sins"?
 - ? Is there a "warfare," a conflict, a struggle in your life that God has already put an end to and transformed into peaceful resolution?
 - ? Is there a "warfare," a conflict, a struggle in your life that you hope he will yet put an end to and transform into peaceful resolution?

Isaiah 40.¹⁵⁻¹⁸— just scripture

¹⁵Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket,
and are counted as the small dust of the balance:
behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.

¹⁶And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn,
nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering.

¹⁷All nations before him are as nothing;
and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.

¹⁸To whom then will ye liken God?
or what likeness will ye compare unto him?

Questionary

- ? What do you learn from today's reading about God and his thoughts and feelings about the earth's nations in all their varieties and with all their supposed power?
- ? How could Isaiah's observation serve to change the conduct of the earth's nation today if they were to hear, accept, take it to heart, and apply it?

Isaiah 40.²⁹— just scripture

He giveth power to the faint;
and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.

Questionary

- ? When you read of those who “faint” and “have no might” what individuals or populations of people come to your mind?
- ? How do you feel when you read that God will strengthen the “faint” and they “that have no might”?

Isaiah 41.¹⁷⁻¹⁸

¹⁷When the poor and needy seek water,
and there is none,
and their tongue faileth for thirst,
I the LORD will hear them,
I the God of Israel will not forsake them.

¹⁸I will open rivers in high places,
and fountains in the midst of the valleys:
I will make the wilderness a pool of water,
and the dry land springs of water.

Questionary

- ? What is your “wilderness” or “dry land” in which you need the Lord to “open rivers... fountains... pools... and springs?
- ? Do you believe he can? Is willing? Will?

Isaiah 42.¹⁶

And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not;
I will lead them in paths that they have not known:
I will make darkness light before them,
and crooked things straight.
These things will I do unto them,
and not forsake them.

Questionary

- ? Noting the repeated, “I,” “I,” “I,” God seems fully engaged and active in the renewal or restorative process. Note that the one being helped is never the subject of a verb, but seems somewhat helpless and passive.
- ? What do you think of this observation concerning God’s active participation in the renewal and restoration of the helpless and passive sinner?
- ? Does it jive with your own thoughts... experiences?

Isaiah 43.²⁵

I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake,
and will not remember thy sins.

Questionary

- ? What does this “for mine own sake” mean?
- ? Surely not, “for my own good.” How would you feel about “because this is who I [God] am” [rather than who you are or what you do]?
- ? In the final analysis, what generates forgiveness—who and what he is and does or who and what we are and do?

Isaiah 44.²²⁻²³

²²I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions,
and, as a cloud, thy sins:
return unto me;
for I have redeemed thee.

²³Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it:
shout, ye lower parts of the earth:
break forth into singing, ye mountains,
O forest, and every tree therein:
for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob,
and glorified himself in Israel.

Questionary

Close your eyes and imagine a very, very cloudy gray day, the clouds so thick that the light of the sun is blocked such that the light is little more than that at dusk or dawn.

- ? What insights and feelings do you have as you consider this as a metaphor about God's ability to diminish the impact of sin?

Isaiah 45.³

I will give you hidden treasures,
riches stored in secret places,
so that you may know that I am the LORD,
the God of Israel, who summons you by name (NIV).

Questionary

- ? What do you think are the natures of the “hidden treasures” and “riches” that God promises here?

Isaiah 49.⁸⁻¹⁰

⁸Thus saith the LORD,
In an acceptable time have I heard thee,
and in a day of salvation have I helped thee:
and I will preserve thee,
and give thee for a covenant of the people,
to establish the earth,
to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;
⁹That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth;
to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves.
They shall feed in the ways,
and their pastures shall be in all high places.
¹⁰They shall not hunger nor thirst;
neither shall the heat nor sun smite them:
for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them,
even by the springs of water shall he guide them.

Questionary

- ? What are “desolate heritages” in the life of the sinner?
- ? In what ways are sinners “prisoners,” and “in darkness”?
- ? What do “pastures... in high places,” an absence of “hunger,” “thirst,” and “heat,” and the blessing of “springs of water” represent in the repentant sinner’s life?

Isaiah 49.¹³

Sing, O heavens; and be joyful,
O earth; and break forth into singing,
O mountains:
for the LORD hath comforted his people,
and will have mercy upon his afflicted.

Questionary

- ? Who comes under the rubric of “his afflicted”?
- ? How do you feel about the “afflicted” being “his people”?
- ? How did Jesus exhibit his fellowship with the “afflicted” during his earthly ministry?

Isaiah 49.²⁴⁻²⁵

²⁴Shall the prey be taken from the mighty,
or the lawful captive delivered?

²⁵But thus saith the LORD,

Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away,
and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered:
for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee,
and I will save thy children.

Questionary

- ? In what way are you “prey,” and a “lawful captive” to powers mightier than you?
- ? What are those powers?
- ? How does the Savior’s atonement/resurrection restore or rescue you from such powers?

Isaiah 51.³

For the LORD shall comfort Zion:
he will comfort all her waste places;
and he will make her wilderness like Eden,
and her desert like the garden of the LORD;
joy and gladness shall be found therein,
thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

Questionary

In considering “waste places,” “wildernesses,” and “gardens,” that will be renewed and enlivened, think beyond the literally meaning.

- ? What “waste places” are part of your life that you would have the Lord renew and enliven in such a way that there is not only an absence of emptiness, but a fulness of abundance?

Isaiah 51.¹¹⁻¹³

¹¹Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return,
and come with singing unto Zion;
and everlasting joy shall be upon their head:
they shall obtain gladness and joy;
and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.

¹²I, even I, am he that comforteth you:
who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die,
and of the son of man which shall be made as grass;

¹³And forgettest the LORD thy maker,
that hath stretched forth the heavens,
and laid the foundations of the earth;
and hast feared continually every day
because of the fury of the oppressor,
as if he were ready to destroy?
and where is the fury of the oppressor?

Questionary

One aspect of the Savior's bringing of renewal into our lives is the removal of "sorrow" and "mourning" and "fear."

- ? How is our frequent sorrow and mourning over and our fear of personal weakness and sin—a sort of "oppressor" weaker than God and his saving power—indicative of our "forgetfulness" toward God—the most powerful force in our lives?

Isaiah 52.⁷

How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings,
that publisheth peace;
that bringeth good tidings of good,
that publisheth salvation;
that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

Questionary

- ? What is the relationship between publishing “good tidings,” “peace,” and “salvation,” and the truth that “God reigneth”?
- ? What are the manifestations of God’s “reign” in your life?

Isaiah 54.⁷⁻⁸

⁷For a small moment have I forsaken thee;
but with great mercies will I gather thee.

⁸In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment;
but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee,
saith the LORD thy Redeemer.

Questionary

Isaiah's testimony that whatever God's displeasure with us might be, it is not to be compared with the pleasure he takes in us, can be found throughout scripture.

- ? Where else do you find this witness?
- ? Have you experienced this "renewal" in your own life?

Isaiah 54.¹⁰

For the mountains shall depart,
and the hills be removed;
but my kindness shall not depart from thee,
neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed,
saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.

Questionary

- ? How rock solid (pun is Isaiah's) do mountains and hills seem?
- ? How secure do the Lord's "covenant of peace" and "mercy" toward you seem?

Isaiah 55.¹⁻³

¹Ho, every one that thirsteth,
come ye to the waters,
and he that hath no money;
come ye, buy, and eat;
yea, come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price.

²Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread?
and your labour for that which satisfieth not?
Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good,
and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

³Incline your ear, and come unto me:
hear, and your soul shall live;
and I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
even the sure mercies of David.

Questionary

-
- ? What comes to your mind when you read the invitation to “let your soul delight itself in fatness,” and read the promise of the “sure mercies of David”?

Isaiah 55.⁶⁻¹²

- ⁶Seek ye the LORD while he may be found,
call ye upon him while he is near:
- ⁷Let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts:
and let him return unto the LORD,
and he will have mercy upon him;
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
- ⁸For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.
- ⁹For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways,
and my thoughts than your thoughts.
- ¹⁰For as the rain cometh down,
and the snow from heaven,
and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth,
and maketh it bring forth and bud,
that it may give seed to the sower,
and bread to the eater:
- ¹¹So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth:
it shall not return unto me void,
but it shall accomplish that which I please,
and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.
- ¹²For ye shall go out with joy,
and be led forth with peace:
the mountains and the hills
shall break forth before you into singing,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

Q

uestionary

1. In verses 10-12, Yahweh speaks of “my word” and the effects his word has in the lives of his people. “My words” might have more than one meaning or reference.
? What words might the Lord have in mind here?
“My words” might refer to
the word of God generally, as found in scripture and the words of living prophets.
the word of God as found specifically in verses 6-7, with its promises.
? What promises does Yahweh make in these verses?
2. After promising mercy and pardon in verses 6-7, Yahweh continues his thought in verse 8 with a three letter word, “for.”
? What does that “for” tell you?
? What does it tell you if we translated that “for” as “because”?
? What is the relationship between God’s mercy and pardon and the fact that he doesn’t think or act anything like we do, but at a much higher level?
3. In verse 10-11, Yahweh likens “my word” to “rain” or “snow” that “watereth” and produces “bud,” “seed,” and ultimately “bread,” or food.
? What does this signify to you?
? How do the scriptures, generally, “water” us so that we “bud,” “seed,” and grow until we produce fruit?

- ? How does the Lord's specific word of promise of mercy and pardon "water" us so that we "bud," "seed," and grow until we produce fruit?
4. In verse 12, "my word" causes "joy," "peace," "singing," and the "clap of hands."
- ? How do the scriptures, generally, serve to bring such feelings and responses into our lives?
 - ? How does the Lord's specific word of promise of mercy and pardon serve to bring such feelings and responses into our lives?

Isaiah 56.¹⁰⁻¹²— just scripture

¹⁰His watchmen are blind:

they are all ignorant,
they are all dumb dogs,
they cannot bark;
sleeping, lying down,
loving to slumber.

¹¹Yea, they are greedy dogs
which can never have enough,
and they are shepherds that cannot understand:
they all look to their own way,
every one for his gain, from his quarter.

¹²“Come ye,” say they, “I will fetch wine,
and we will fill ourselves with strong drink;
and to morrow shall be as this day,
and much more abundant.”

Questionary

1. In today’s reading, Isaiah describes Judah’s religious and political leaders using mixed metaphors.
 - ? To what does Isaiah liken Judah’s religious and political leaders?
 - ? What “obligation” do human “watchmen,” “shepherds,” and “sheep dogs” have in common?
 - ? How do Judah’s religious and political leaders fail to meet their obligation to their charges?
 - ? What comes to your mind as you consider how Judah’s religious and political leaders feed upon their charges rather than feed them?
 - ? Consider the implication and interpretation of each adjective and phrase that is used to describe the faithlessness of Judah’s religious and political leaders.
 - They are blind (what good is a “scout” who is blind?)
 - They are ignorant (what good is a “watcher” who doesn’t know what to watch for?)
 - They are silent, refusing to raise a warning concerning Judah’s evils and the harms that they will produce (what good is an alarm that doesn’t go off?)
 - They lazily sleep when they should be on guard (what good is a guard who falls asleep at their post?)
 - They are controlled by their insatiable appetite
 - They always put their own needs before those of their charges
 - They refuse to see a danger even when it is staring them in the face, in order to maintain their own prerogatives
 - They appeal to the gullible greediness of their charges to manipulate them
 - ? How do today’s religious and political leaders compare with Judah’s?
 - ? How are they remaining moot in the face of societal and political evils?
 - ? What does Isaiah teach you about the various causes of their deafening silence?
 - ? What are the sheep to do in the face of their leaders’ gross noncompliance in regard to their obligations to the society?
 - ? What are you, or should you do?
- ? Isaiah skillfully describes the plutocratic leaders of Israel. What is your impression of them?
- ? What are their attributes?
- ? How do they compare with modern day leaders?

Isaiah 57.¹⁵

For thus saith the high and lofty One
that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy;
I dwell in the high and holy place,
with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit,
to revive the spirit of the humble,
and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

Questionary

- ? Why do the scriptures so often focus on these two seemingly incongruous truths at the same time: 1) God is the greatest of beings; and 2) God ministers in the life of the very lowliest of mortals (read “oppressed” for the “domesticated” “humble”)?

Isaiah 58.⁶⁻⁷— just scripture

⁶Is not this the fast that I have chosen?
to loose the bands of wickedness,
to undo the heavy burdens,
and to let the oppressed go free,
and that ye break every yoke?

⁷Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry,
and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house?
when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him;
and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

Questionary

- ? Who is one's "own flesh"?
- ? How is America doing at this "fasting"?

Isaiah 58.⁹⁻¹¹— just scripture

⁹If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke,
the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity;

¹⁰And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry,
and satisfy the afflicted soul;

then shall thy light rise in obscurity,
and thy darkness be as the noonday:

¹¹And the LORD shall guide thee continually,
and satisfy thy soul in drought,
and make fat thy bones:

and thou shalt be like a watered garden,
and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

Questionary

-
- ? How do you feel about the very, very close correlation between one's treatment of vulnerable populations and one's wellbeing?

Isaiah 58.¹⁰⁻¹¹— just scripture

¹⁰And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry,
and satisfy the afflicted soul;
then shall thy light rise in obscurity,
and thy darkness be as the noonday:

¹¹And the LORD shall guide thee continually,
and satisfy thy soul in drought,
and make fat thy bones:
and thou shalt be like a watered garden,
and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.

Questionary

-
- ? How do you feel about discovering that your treatment of vulnerable people shapes and conditions how God treats you?

Isaiah 59.³⁻⁸— just scripture

³For your hands are defiled with blood,
and your fingers with iniquity;
your lips have spoken lies,
your tongue hath muttered perverseness.

⁴None calleth for justice,
nor any pleadeth for truth:
they trust in vanity, and speak lies;
they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.

⁵They hatch cockatrice' eggs,
and weave the spider's web:
he that eateth of their eggs dieth,
and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper.

⁶Their webs shall not become garments,
neither shall they cover themselves with their works:
their works are works of iniquity,
and the act of violence is in their hands.

⁷Their feet run to evil,
and they make haste to shed innocent blood:
their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity;
wasting and destruction are in their paths.

⁸The way of peace they know not;
and there is no judgment in their goings:
they have made them crooked paths:
whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.

Questionary

1. Today's reading lists several sins in which ancient Israel was involved.
 - ? Make a "scripture list" of these evils by annotating your margin with '1,' '2,' '3,' etc. for each sin you identify.
 - ? What stands out to you as you consider this list of societal sins?
 - ? Do you relate this list to your own society? If so, how? Consider specific modern examples of these ancient societal evils.
2. The first two parallel lines of today's passage read,

"For your hands are defiled with blood,
and your fingers with iniquity..."

 - ? What modern day societal "iniquities" cause vulnerable populations to live less than dignified lives, experience poor health, and even early death?
3. Isaiah likens Israel to a "cockatrice," and their deeds to its eggs, or reproductive powers.
 - ? What is a "cockatrice"?
 - ? How do you feel about Yahweh likening Israel to a poisonous serpent?
 - ? Given Israelite society's evils, how is this an appropriate metaphor for Israel?
4. Verse six, made up of four lines of poetry, reads,

"Their webs shall not become garments,
neither shall they cover themselves with their works:
their works are works of iniquity,
and the act of violence is in their hands."

Forming a kind of chiasmic structure, the last line's "violence" refers back to the first line's "webs." The third line's "works of iniquity" enhances our understanding of the second line's simple "works." Together, we learn that their "works of iniquity involve "acts of violence."

- ? How does the warning that their "acts of violence" will not produce "clothing" inform your understanding of the motivation that lies behind the acts of violence?
- ? "Violence," or the "violation of others" is a common means used to gain economic advantage over others and accumulate unjust riches. What other passages of scripture refer to this common human enterprise?

5. Isaiah says,

Their feet run to evil,
and they make haste to shed innocent blood...

- ? What does it tell you about ancient Israelite society that they are quick to do evil; that in their desire to get ahead, their first and unquestioned instinct is to violate another's "life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness"?
- ? How does all of this relate to modern society?

Isaiah 59.¹²⁻¹⁵— just scripture

¹²For our transgressions are multiplied before thee,
and our sins testify against us:

for our transgressions are with us;
and as for our iniquities, we know them;

¹³In transgressing and lying against the LORD,
and departing away from our God,
speaking oppression and revolt,
conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood.

¹⁴And judgment is turned away backward,
and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street,
and equity cannot enter.

¹⁵Yea, truth faileth;
and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey:
and the LORD saw it,
and it displeased him that there was no judgment.

Questionary

- ? How is truth fairing in today's American political environment?
- ? What will you do to help in restoring it?

Isaiah 60.¹⁻²

¹Arise, shine; for thy light is come,
and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.
²For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth,
and gross darkness the people:
but the LORD shall arise upon thee,
and his glory shall be seen upon thee.

Questionary

Today's reading is the 31st in a series of Advent readings (this one "post-Advent") that will continue throughout the month of December.

1. In today's reading, Isaiah invites someone to "Arise, shine."
 - ? Who is being invited to "arise"?
 - ? Why are they being invited to "arise"?
 - ? What is meant by the addition of "shine"?

Think of the look of joy that is on a child's face with the arrival of a parent or other loved one.

? How often do you "shine" at the prospects of visiting with God in prayer, for example?

2. Note the language that Isaiah uses to describe the Lord's coming.

"Thy light is come"

"The glory of YHWH is risen upon thee"

"YHWH shall arise upon thee"

"His glory shall be seen upon thee"

- ? What impression does all of this leave upon you?
- ? What do you think and feel when you contemplate the fact that the final three end with "upon thee" rather than ending just before it?
- ? How has Jesus' "glory" and even he himself arisen upon you?
- ? If the thought of having him arise more often and more powerfully in your life is appealing to you, what might you do to facilitate it?

3. Isaiah speaks of YHWH's coming in terms of "light" and "glory."

- ? What comes to you mind as you consider the imagery of YHWH being a "light" and spreading "glory"?
- ? How does Isaiah's use of contrast between the "gross darkness" of this world and the brilliance of YHWH impact the way you feel about both this world and God?
- ? How have you experienced this contrast in your own life?

Isaiah 61.¹⁻³

¹The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me;
because the LORD hath anointed me
to preach good tidings unto the meek;
he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;
²to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all that mourn;
³to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion,
to give unto them beauty for ashes,
the oil of joy for mourning,
the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;
that they might be called trees of righteousness,
the planting of the LORD,
that he might be glorified.

Q

uestionary

Today's reading is the 14th in a series of Advent readings that will continue throughout the month of December.

1. Isaiah mentions four categories of people to whom the Lord's servant would minister.
 - ? What are those four categories?
 - ? Why does Isaiah focus on vulnerable populations?
 - ? What other vulnerable populations might we add to the list today?
 - ? What is the significance in Isaiah's not mentioning non-vulnerable populations? Why would he not include them?
 - ? Do you relate to, or are you yourself one of the vulnerable to whom Jesus was sent to minister and preach?
 - ? If not, what does Jesus have to offer you, an individual without vulnerabilities?
2. Yahweh's servant comes to "proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD"?
 - ? What does the phrase, "acceptable year of the LORD" mean to you?
 - ? What are your thoughts and feelings if we suggested that this phrase means, "the time of the LORD's acceptance"?
 - ? How did Jesus fulfil this mission during his earthly ministry, proclaiming to and assisting the vulnerable in understanding and experiencing God as an accepting Being who accepted them?
 - ? How does Jesus do this today?
 - ? What part do you play, and how do you assist in this mission?
3. In the same breath that Isaiah mentions "the time of the LORD's acceptance," he also mentions "the time of God's vengeance" as if they were one and the same. This might strike one as incongruent.
 - ? How do you explain the *congruence* of these two things, "acceptance" and "vengeance" taking place at one and the same time?
 - ? We already know that it is the vulnerable who experience God's acceptance. Who is it that experiences God's vengeance?

In thinking about this question, consider the following passage from Revelation 5.⁹⁻¹⁰.

"And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain

for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: ¹⁰and they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?'"

4. In verse 3, those who mourn—the vulnerable from verses 1-2—are given a beautiful promise of renewal.
 - ? What do you feel when you read these lines?
 - ? What part can you play in the lives of the vulnerable to assist in bringing about this sort of renewal in their lives?
 - ? In what ways have you been renewed from “the spirit of heaviness,” “mourning,” and “ashes” to a life of “beauty,” “joy,” and “praise”?

Isaiah 61.⁴

And they shall build the old wastes,
they shall raise up the former desolations,
and they shall repair the waste cities,
the desolations of many generations.

Questionary

- ? What is found in your life that might be symbolized by “wasted places” and “desolations”?
- ? Have you experienced or do you believe in God’s ability to renew such aspects found in your life?

Isaiah 63.⁹

In all their affliction he was afflicted,
and the angel of his presence saved them:
in his love and in his pity he redeemed them;
and he bare them, and carried them
all the days of old.

Questionary

- ? What other scriptures come to you mind as you consider Isaiah's testimony that God is, Himself, afflicted when we are afflicted, or that he bares or carries those afflicted?

Isaiah 64.⁶

But we are all as an unclean thing,
and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;
and we all do fade as a leaf;
and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

Questionary

A more literal reading of “filthy rags” would be “menstrual cloth.” Even without this slight clarification, the passage is not very complimentary toward we humans.

- ? How do you feel about the rather bleak assessment of human nature and mankind’s “righteousnesses” (note the plural)?
- ? Have you found that even in your very best moments, there is, even then, something inadequate? How does this make you feel and what thoughts does it inspire?