

ESSENTIALS OF ISAIAH

Like most of the prophets, Isaiah records messages from God that we find difficult to read. His words make us uncomfortable. If God delivers such painful indictments to his people, then what does he want to say to us?

Fortunately, while many dark and dreary valleys exist in Isaiah's words, so do wonderful meadows that offer comfort to our souls. Beautiful mountains can lift our spirits and give us hope. From their peaks we can look ahead and see God's purpose even when dark valleys stretch to the horizon. As you read Isaiah, watch for each valley and peak: From the gloomy valley of hardship comes the unexpected peak of appreciating God's ways. From

the bleak valley of God's severe judgment comes the astonishing peak of his grace and mercy. From the desolate valley of hopelessness and sin comes the dazzling peak of the long-awaited Messiah and the promise of salvation.

AUTHOR:

The prophet Isaiah, son of Amoz

AUDIENCE:

People of Judah and Jerusalem

DATE:

Between 740 and 680 BC

SETTING:

Isaiah predicts imminent judgment—but eventual restoration—for the people of Judah and Jerusalem

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN ISAIAH

- A painstaking view of God's judgment
- Glimpses of God's glory and holiness
- The suffering Servant-Savior
- Confrontation giving way to comfort
- Stray sheep and their loving Shepherd
- The importance of thinking God's way

ISAIAH

1 The vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah son of Amoz saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

A Rebellious Nation

2 Hear me, you heavens! Listen, earth!

For the LORD has spoken:

“I reared children and brought them up,
but they have rebelled against me.

3 The ox knows its master,
the donkey its owner’s manger,
but Israel does not know,
my people do not understand.”

4 Woe to the sinful nation,
a people whose guilt is great,
a brood of evildoers,
children given to corruption!
They have forsaken the LORD;
they have spurned the Holy One of Israel
and turned their backs on him.

5 Why should you be beaten anymore?
Why do you persist in rebellion?
Your whole head is injured,
your whole heart afflicted.

6 From the sole of your foot to the top of your head
there is no soundness —
only wounds and welts
and open sores,
not cleansed or bandaged
or soothed with olive oil.

7 Your country is desolate,
your cities burned with fire;
your fields are being stripped by foreigners
right before you,
laid waste as when overthrown by strangers.

8 Daughter Zion is left
like a shelter in a vineyard,
like a hut in a cucumber field,
like a city under siege.

9 Unless the LORD Almighty
had left us some survivors,
we would have become like Sodom,
we would have been like Gomorrah.

10 Hear the word of the LORD,
you rulers of Sodom;
listen to the instruction of our God,
you people of Gomorrah!

11 “The multitude of your sacrifices —
what are they to me?” says the LORD.

“I have more than enough of burnt offerings,
of rams and the fat of fattened animals;
I have no pleasure
in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats.

12 When you come to appear before me,
who has asked this of you,
this trampling of my courts?

13 Stop bringing meaningless offerings!
Your incense is detestable to me.
New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations —
I cannot bear your worthless assemblies.

14 Your New Moon feasts and your appointed festivals
I hate with all my being.
They have become a burden to me;
I am weary of bearing them.

15 When you spread out your hands in prayer,
I hide my eyes from you;
even when you offer many prayers,
I am not listening.
Your hands are full of blood!

16 Wash and make yourselves clean.
Take your evil deeds out of my sight;
stop doing wrong.

17 Learn to do right; seek justice.
Defend the oppressed.^a
Take up the cause of the fatherless;
plead the case of the widow.

18 “Come now, let us settle the matter,”
says the LORD.
“Though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red as crimson,
they shall be like wool.

^a *Or justice. / Correct the oppressor*

4 TIPS FOR READING PROPHECY



READ: Isaiah 1:2 | **HABIT:** Understanding Scripture

The second verse in Isaiah has a twofold message about all of the Bible's books of prophecy: they are from the mouth of God, and they are for all people to hear. Yet prophecy is one of the most difficult genres in Scripture to understand.

Here are four tips to help:

1. *Know the prophets' role*—A prophet is a spokesperson who speaks on behalf of someone else. In the Bible some prophets spoke for other humans (see Ex 4:16), but most were spokespersons for God. The prophet's role was therefore to convey God's agenda to a particular group. Most often the prophets expressed God's intention to bless or curse a nation or people.
2. *Remember that prophecy is usually about the future past*—When reading prophecy, we should keep in mind that the predictions of what was to come was in the original audience's *future* but is in our *past*. Less than 1 percent of biblical prophecy concerns events that have not yet occurred.¹ Almost all prophecy was a foretelling of the immediate future of Israel, Judah or surrounding nations.
3. *Think oracles*—Each of the 16 prophetic books include collections of prophecies, in other words, specific utterances of God that are distinct from the merely human utterances of the prophet. These sections are God's message delivered directly through a human spokesperson. To understand the epistles we have to "think paragraphs" because the message is conveyed in that form. When reading prophecy, though, we "think prophecy" as the basic unit of communication. This can be difficult because it's hard to know when a prophecy begins and ends. Use a Bible handbook or commentary to help guide you.
4. *Get outside help*—The prophetic books are some of the most difficult to understand in the Bible for one key reason: we are unfamiliar with the context. Don't get discouraged, though, because God does not expect those of us living in the twenty-first century to automatically understand the context experienced by the ancient Israelites. Before beginning a study on a book of prophecy, you might want to turn to a Bible handbook or commentary to get a firm grasp of the specific historical context.

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PRACTICAL TAKEAWAY: Learning to read the prophetic books of the Bible can help us gain a better overall understanding of God's story.

For your next reading, go to page 871.



- 19 If you are willing and obedient,
you will eat the good things of the
land;
- 20 but if you resist and rebel,
you will be devoured by the sword.”
For the mouth of the LORD
has spoken.
- 21 See how the faithful city
has become a prostitute!
She once was full of justice;
righteousness used to dwell in her —
but now murderers!
- 22 Your silver has become dross,
your choice wine is diluted with
water.
- 23 Your rulers are rebels,
partners with thieves;
they all love bribes
and chase after gifts.
They do not defend the cause of the
fatherless;
the widow’s case does not come
before them.
- 24 Therefore the Lord, the LORD Almighty,
the Mighty One of Israel, declares:
“Ah! I will vent my wrath on my foes
and avenge myself on my enemies.
- 25 I will turn my hand against you;^a
I will thoroughly purge away your
dross
and remove all your impurities.
- 26 I will restore your leaders as in days of
old,
your rulers as at the beginning.
Afterward you will be called
the City of Righteousness,
the Faithful City.”
- 27 Zion will be delivered with justice,
her penitent ones with
righteousness.
- 28 But rebels and sinners will both be
broken,
and those who forsake the LORD will
perish.
- 29 “You will be ashamed because of the
sacred oaks
in which you have delighted;
you will be disgraced because of the
gardens
that you have chosen.
- 30 You will be like an oak with fading
leaves,
like a garden without water.
- 31 The mighty man will become tinder
and his work a spark;
both will burn together,
with no one to quench the fire.”

The Mountain of the LORD

2 This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw
concerning Judah and Jerusalem:

- 2¹In the last days
the mountain of the LORD’s temple will
be established
as the highest of the mountains;
it will be exalted above the hills,
and all nations will stream to it.
- 3²Many peoples will come and say,
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of
the LORD,
to the temple of the God of Jacob.
He will teach us his ways,
so that we may walk in his paths.”
The law will go out from Zion,
the word of the LORD from
Jerusalem.
- 4³He will judge between the nations
and will settle disputes for many
peoples.
They will beat their swords into
plowshares
and their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation will not take up sword against
nation,
nor will they train for war anymore.
- 5⁴Come, descendants of Jacob,
let us walk in the light of the LORD.

The Day of the LORD

- 6⁵You, LORD, have abandoned your
people,
the descendants of Jacob.
They are full of superstitions from the
East;
they practice divination like the
Philistines
and embrace pagan customs.
- 7⁶Their land is full of silver and gold;
there is no end to their treasures.
Their land is full of horses;
there is no end to their chariots.
- 8⁷Their land is full of idols;
they bow down to the work of their
hands,
to what their fingers have made.
- 9⁸So people will be brought low
and everyone humbled —
do not forgive them.^b
- 10⁹Go into the rocks, hide in the ground
from the fearful presence of the
LORD
and the splendor of his majesty!

^a25 That is, against Jerusalem ^b9 Or not raise
them up



¹¹The eyes of the arrogant will be humbled
and human pride brought low;
the LORD alone will be exalted in that day.

¹²The LORD Almighty has a day in store
for all the proud and lofty,
for all that is exalted
(and they will be humbled),
¹³for all the cedars of Lebanon, tall and lofty,
and all the oaks of Bashan,
¹⁴for all the towering mountains
and all the high hills,
¹⁵for every lofty tower
and every fortified wall,
¹⁶for every trading ship^a
and every stately vessel.

¹⁷The arrogance of man will be brought low
and human pride humbled;
the LORD alone will be exalted in that day,
¹⁸and the idols will totally disappear.

¹⁹People will flee to caves in the rocks
and to holes in the ground
from the fearful presence of the LORD
and the splendor of his majesty,
when he rises to shake the earth.

²⁰In that day people will throw away
to the moles and bats
their idols of silver and idols of gold,
which they made to worship.

²¹They will flee to caverns in the rocks
and to the overhanging crags
from the fearful presence of the LORD
and the splendor of his majesty,
when he rises to shake the earth.

²²Stop trusting in mere humans,
who have but a breath in their nostrils.
Why hold them in esteem?

Judgment on Jerusalem and Judah

3 See now, the Lord,
the LORD Almighty,
is about to take from Jerusalem and
Judah
both supply and support:
all supplies of food and all supplies of
water,
² the hero and the warrior,
the judge and the prophet,
the diviner and the elder,
³ the captain of fifty and the man of
rank,
the counselor, skilled craftsman and
clever enchanter.

⁴“I will make mere youths their officials;
children will rule over them.”

⁵People will oppress each other—
man against man, neighbor against
neighbor.
The young will rise up against the old,
the nobody against the honored.

⁶A man will seize one of his brothers
in his father’s house, and say,
“You have a cloak, you be our leader;
take charge of this heap of ruins!”

⁷But in that day he will cry out,
“I have no remedy.
I have no food or clothing in my house;
do not make me the leader of the
people.”

⁸Jerusalem staggers,
Judah is falling;
their words and deeds are against the
LORD,
defying his glorious presence.

⁹The look on their faces testifies against
them;
they parade their sin like Sodom;
they do not hide it.
Woe to them!
They have brought disaster upon
themselves.

¹⁰Tell the righteous it will be well with
them,
for they will enjoy the fruit of their
deeds.

¹¹Woe to the wicked!
Disaster is upon them!
They will be paid back
for what their hands have done.

¹²Youths oppress my people,
women rule over them.
My people, your guides lead you astray;
they turn you from the path.

¹³The LORD takes his place in court;
he rises to judge the people.

¹⁴The LORD enters into judgment
against the elders and leaders of his
people:
“It is you who have ruined my
vineyard;
the plunder from the poor is in your
houses.

¹⁵What do you mean by crushing my
people
and grinding the faces of the poor?”
declares the Lord,
the LORD Almighty.

^a16 Hebrew *every ship of Tarshish*



¹⁶The LORD says,
 “The women of Zion are haughty,
 walking along with outstretched
 necks,
 flirting with their eyes,
 strutting along with swaying hips,
 with ornaments jingling on their
 ankles.
¹⁷Therefore the Lord will bring sores on
 the heads of the women of Zion;
 the LORD will make their scalps
 bald.”

¹⁸In that day the Lord will snatch away
 their finery: the bangles and headbands
 and crescent necklaces, ¹⁹the earrings and
 bracelets and veils, ²⁰the headdresses and
 anklets and sashes, the perfume bottles
 and charms, ²¹the signet rings and nose
 rings, ²²the fine robes and the capes and
 cloaks, the purses ²³and mirrors, and the
 linen garments and tiaras and shawls.

²⁴Instead of fragrance there will be a
 stench;
 instead of a sash, a rope;
 instead of well-dressed hair, baldness;
 instead of fine clothing, sackcloth;
 instead of beauty, branding.

²⁵Your men will fall by the sword,
 your warriors in battle.

²⁶The gates of Zion will lament and
 mourn;
 destitute, she will sit on the ground.

4 ¹In that day seven women
 will take hold of one man
 and say, “We will eat our own food
 and provide our own clothes;
 only let us be called by your name.
 Take away our disgrace!”

The Branch of the LORD

²In that day the Branch of the LORD will
 be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of
 the land will be the pride and glory of the
 survivors in Israel. ³Those who are left in
 Zion, who remain in Jerusalem, will be
 called holy, all who are recorded among
 the living in Jerusalem. ⁴The Lord will
 wash away the filth of the women of Zion;
 he will cleanse the bloodstains from Jeru-
 salem by a spirit^a of judgment and a spirit^a
 of fire. ⁵Then the LORD will create over all
 of Mount Zion and over those who assem-
 ble there a cloud of smoke by day and a
 glow of flaming fire by night; over every-
 thing the glory^b will be a canopy. ⁶It will
 be a shelter and shade from the heat of the
 day, and a refuge and hiding place from the
 storm and rain.

The Song of the Vineyard

5 I will sing for the one I love
 a song about his vineyard:
 My loved one had a vineyard
 on a fertile hillside.
²He dug it up and cleared it of
 stones
 and planted it with the choicest
 vines.
 He built a watchtower in it
 and cut out a winepress as well.
 Then he looked for a crop of good
 grapes,
 but it yielded only bad fruit.
³“Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and
 people of Judah,
 judge between me and my vineyard.
⁴What more could have been done for
 my vineyard
 than I have done for it?
 When I looked for good grapes,
 why did it yield only bad?
⁵Now I will tell you
 what I am going to do to my
 vineyard:
 I will take away its hedge,
 and it will be destroyed;
 I will break down its wall,
 and it will be trampled.
⁶I will make it a wasteland,
 neither pruned nor cultivated,
 and briars and thorns will grow
 there.
 I will command the clouds
 not to rain on it.”
⁷The vineyard of the LORD Almighty
 is the nation of Israel,
 and the people of Judah
 are the vines he delighted in.
 And he looked for justice, but saw
 bloodshed;
 for righteousness, but heard cries of
 distress.

Woes and Judgments

⁸Woe to you who add house to house
 and join field to field
 till no space is left
 and you live alone in the land.
⁹The LORD Almighty has declared in my
 hearing:
 “Surely the great houses will become
 desolate,
 the fine mansions left without
 occupants.

^a Or the Spirit ^b Or over all the glory there



- ¹⁰ A ten-acre vineyard will produce only a bath^a of wine;
a homer^b of seed will yield only an ephah^c of grain.”
- ¹¹ Woe to those who rise early in the morning
to run after their drinks,
who stay up late at night
till they are inflamed with wine.
- ¹² They have harps and lyres at their banquets,
pipes and timbrels and wine,
but they have no regard for the deeds of the LORD,
no respect for the work of his hands.
- ¹³ Therefore my people will go into exile for lack of understanding;
those of high rank will die of hunger
and the common people will be parched with thirst.
- ¹⁴ Therefore Death expands its jaws,
opening wide its mouth;
into it will descend their nobles and masses
with all their brawlers and revelers.
- ¹⁵ So people will be brought low
and everyone humbled,
the eyes of the arrogant humbled.
- ¹⁶ But the LORD Almighty will be exalted by his justice,
and the holy God will be proved holy by his righteous acts.
- ¹⁷ Then sheep will graze as in their own pasture;
lambs will feed^d among the ruins of the rich.
- ¹⁸ Woe to those who draw sin along with cords of deceit,
and wickedness as with cart ropes,
- ¹⁹ to those who say, “Let God hurry;
let him hasten his work
so we may see it.
The plan of the Holy One of Israel —
let it approach, let it come into view,
so we may know it.”
- ²⁰ Woe to those who call evil good
and good evil,
who put darkness for light
and light for darkness,
who put bitter for sweet
and sweet for bitter.
- ²¹ Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes
and clever in their own sight.
- ²² Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine
and champions at mixing drinks,
- ²³ who acquit the guilty for a bribe,
but deny justice to the innocent.
- ²⁴ Therefore, as tongues of fire lick up straw
and as dry grass sinks down in the flames,
so their roots will decay
and their flowers blow away like dust;
for they have rejected the law of the LORD Almighty
and spurned the word of the Holy One of Israel.
- ²⁵ Therefore the LORD’s anger burns against his people;
his hand is raised and he strikes them down.
The mountains shake,
and the dead bodies are like refuse in the streets.
Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away,
his hand is still upraised.
- ²⁶ He lifts up a banner for the distant nations,
he whistles for those at the ends of the earth.
Here they come,
swiftly and speedily!
- ²⁷ Not one of them grows tired or stumbles,
not one slumbers or sleeps;
not a belt is loosened at the waist,
not a sandal strap is broken.
- ²⁸ Their arrows are sharp,
all their bows are strung;
their horses’ hooves seem like flint,
their chariot wheels like a whirlwind.
- ²⁹ Their roar is like that of the lion,
they roar like young lions;
they growl as they seize their prey
and carry it off with no one to rescue.
- ³⁰ In that day they will roar over it like the roaring of the sea.
And if one looks at the land,
there is only darkness and distress;
even the sun will be darkened by clouds.

Isaiah’s Commission

6 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled

^a¹⁰ That is, about 6 gallons or about 22 liters

^b¹⁰ That is, probably about 360 pounds or about

160 kilograms ^c¹⁰ That is, probably about 36

pounds or about 16 kilograms ^d¹⁷ Septuagint;

Hebrew / *strangers will eat*



the temple. ²Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³And they were calling to one another:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”

⁴At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

⁵“Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.”

⁶Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”

⁸Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”

And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

⁹He said, “Go and tell this people:

“Be ever hearing, but never understanding;

be ever seeing, but never perceiving.”

¹⁰Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes.^a

Otherwise they might see with their eyes,

hear with their ears, understand with their hearts,

and turn and be healed.”

¹¹Then I said, “For how long, Lord?” And he answered:

“Until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant, until the houses are left deserted and the fields ruined and ravaged,

¹²until the LORD has sent everyone far away

and the land is utterly forsaken.

¹³And though a tenth remains in the land,

it will again be laid waste.

But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down,

so the holy seed will be the stump in the land.”

The Sign of Immanuel

7 When Ahaz son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, was king of Judah, King Rezin

of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel marched up to fight against Jerusalem, but they could not overpower it.

²Now the house of David was told, “Aram has allied itself with^b Ephraim”; so the hearts of Ahaz and his people were shaken, as the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind.

³Then the LORD said to Isaiah, “Go out, you and your son Shear-Jashub,^c to meet Ahaz at the end of the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the road to the Launderer’s Field. ⁴Say to him, ‘Be careful, keep calm and don’t be afraid. Do not lose heart because of these two smoldering stubs of firewood — because of the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and of the son of Remaliah. ⁵Aram, Ephraim and Remaliah’s son have plotted your ruin, saying, ⁶‘Let us invade Judah; let us tear it apart and divide it among ourselves, and make the son of Tabeel king over it.’ ⁷Yet this is what the Sovereign LORD says:

“It will not take place, it will not happen,

⁸for the head of Aram is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is only Rezin.

Within sixty-five years

Ephraim will be too shattered to be a people.

⁹The head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is only Remaliah’s son.

If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.”

¹⁰Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, ¹¹“Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights.”

¹²But Ahaz said, “I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test.”

¹³Then Isaiah said, “Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? ¹⁴Therefore the Lord himself will give you^d a sign: The virgin^e will conceive and give birth to a son, and^f will

^a9,10 Hebrew; Septuagint ‘You will be ever hearing, but never understanding; / you will be ever seeing, but never perceiving.’ / ¹⁰This people’s heart has become calloused; / they hardly hear with their ears, / and they have closed their eyes

^b2 Or has set up camp in ^c3 Shear-Jashub means a remnant will return. ^d14 The Hebrew is plural. ^e14 Or young woman

^f14 Masoretic Text; Dead Sea Scrolls, and he or son, and they



call him Immanuel.^a ¹⁵He will be eating curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, ¹⁶for before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste. ¹⁷The LORD will bring on you and on your people and on the house of your father a time unlike any since Ephraim broke away from Judah — he will bring the king of Assyria.”

Assyria, the LORD's Instrument

¹⁸In that day the LORD will whistle for flies from the Nile delta in Egypt and for bees from the land of Assyria. ¹⁹They will all come and settle in the steep ravines and in the crevices in the rocks, on all the thornbushes and at all the water holes. ²⁰In that day the LORD will use a razor hired from beyond the Euphrates River — the king of Assyria — to shave your head and private parts, and to cut off your beard also. ²¹In that day, a person will keep alive a young cow and two goats. ²²And because of the abundance of the milk they give, there will be curds to eat. All who remain in the land will eat curds and honey. ²³In that day, in every place where there were a thousand vines worth a thousand silver shekels,^b there will be only briars and thorns. ²⁴Hunters will go there with bow and arrow, for the land will be covered with briars and thorns. ²⁵As for all the hills once cultivated by the hoe, you will no longer go there for fear of the briars and thorns; they will become places where cattle are turned loose and where sheep run.

Isaiah and His Children as Signs

8 The LORD said to me, “Take a large scroll and write on it with an ordinary pen: Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz.”^c ²So I called in Uriah the priest and Zechariah son of Jeberekiah as reliable witnesses for me. ³Then I made love to the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. And the LORD said to me, “Name him Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz. ⁴For before the boy knows how to say ‘My father’ or ‘My mother,’ the wealth of Damascus and the plunder of Samaria will be carried off by the king of Assyria.”

⁵The LORD spoke to me again:

⁶“Because this people has rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloah and rejoices over Rezin and the son of Remaliah,

⁷therefore the Lord is about to bring against them the mighty floodwaters of the Euphrates — the king of Assyria with all his pomp. It will overflow all its channels, run over all its banks ⁸and sweep on into Judah, swirling over it, passing through it and reaching up to the neck. Its outspread wings will cover the breadth of your land, Immanuel^d!”

⁹Raise the war cry,^d you nations, and be shattered! Listen, all you distant lands. Prepare for battle, and be shattered! Prepare for battle, and be shattered! ¹⁰Devise your strategy, but it will be thwarted; propose your plan, but it will not stand, for God is with us.^e

¹¹This is what the LORD says to me with his strong hand upon me, warning me not to follow the way of this people:

¹²“Do not call conspiracy everything this people calls a conspiracy; do not fear what they fear, and do not dread it. ¹³The LORD Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread. ¹⁴He will be a holy place; for both Israel and Judah he will be a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap and a snare.

¹⁵Many of them will stumble; they will fall and be broken, they will be snared and captured.”

¹⁶Bind up this testimony of warning and seal up God's instruction among my disciples.

¹⁷I will wait for the LORD, who is hiding his face from the descendants of Jacob.

I will put my trust in him.

^a14,8 Immanuel means God with us. ^b23 That is, about 25 pounds or about 12 kilograms

^c1 Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz means quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil; also in verse 3.

^d9 Or Do your worst ^e10 Hebrew Immanuel

¹⁸Here am I, and the children the LORD has given me. We are signs and symbols in Israel from the LORD Almighty, who dwells on Mount Zion.

The Darkness Turns to Light

¹⁹When someone tells you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? ²⁰Consult God's instruction and the testimony of warning. If anyone does not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn. ²¹Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land; when they are famished, they will become enraged and, looking upward, will curse their king and their God. ²²Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness.

9^a Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan —

²The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of deep
darkness
a light has dawned.

³You have enlarged the nation
and increased their joy;
they rejoice before you
as people rejoice at the harvest,
as warriors rejoice
when dividing the plunder.

⁴For as in the day of Midian's defeat,
you have shattered
the yoke that burdens them,
the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor.

⁵Every warrior's boot used in battle
and every garment rolled in blood
will be destined for burning,
will be fuel for the fire.

⁶For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his
shoulders.

And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷Of the greatness of his government and
peace

there will be no end.

He will reign on David's throne
and over his kingdom,

establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.
The zeal of the LORD Almighty
will accomplish this.

The LORD's Anger Against Israel

⁸The Lord has sent a message against
Jacob;
it will fall on Israel.

⁹All the people will know it —
Ephraim and the inhabitants of
Samaria —
who say with pride
and arrogance of heart,

¹⁰"The bricks have fallen down,
but we will rebuild with dressed
stone;
the fig trees have been felled,
but we will replace them with
cedars."

¹¹But the LORD has strengthened Rezin's
foes against them
and has spurred their enemies on.

¹²Arameans from the east and Philistines
from the west
have devoured Israel with open
mouth.

Yet for all this, his anger is not turned
away,
his hand is still upraised.

¹³But the people have not returned to
him who struck them,
nor have they sought the LORD
Almighty.

¹⁴So the LORD will cut off from Israel both
head and tail,
both palm branch and reed in a
single day;

¹⁵the elders and dignitaries are the head,
the prophets who teach lies are the
tail.

¹⁶Those who guide this people mislead
them,
and those who are guided are led
astray.

¹⁷Therefore the Lord will take no
pleasure in the young men,
nor will he pity the fatherless and
widows,
for everyone is ungodly and wicked,
every mouth speaks folly.

Yet for all this, his anger is not turned
away,
his hand is still upraised.

^a In Hebrew texts 9:1 is numbered 8:23, and 9:2-21 is numbered 9:1-20.

WHY YOU NEED TO KNOW BIBLICAL GEOGRAPHY



READ: Isaiah 9:1 | **HABIT:** Understanding Scripture

Zebulun. Naphtali. Galilee. The eyes of most readers of the Bible glide over Isaiah 9:1 (or verses like it) without any comprehension of where the mentioned places are located or why they might matter. Some might know this passage is a prophecy about where Jesus will set up the base of operations for his earthly ministry (see Mt 4:13–14), but even that doesn't help too much if you have to ask, "Where exactly is Capernaum?"

Our unfamiliarity with the geography of the Bible can impede our understanding of Scripture. Without a mental map of where cities and countries are located, we fail to grasp some of the essential elements of the big story. It's difficult to fully understand the story of God's people when we lack basic knowledge about the location where the drama unfolded.

Our unfamiliarity with the geography of the Bible can impede our understanding of Scripture.

So how can we solve this problem? By brushing up on the basics of the historical geography. It's easier and more exciting than it sounds! Let's get started with these three tips:

1. *Choose reference markers*—There's no need to learn the location of every mountain, river and town. A few key reference markers are often sufficient to quickly improve our understanding. For example, because Jesus often traveled to and from Capernaum, knowing that city's location can broaden our geographic frame of reference.
2. *Ask, "How far is that?"*—Using a good Bible atlas, or an online resource, you can quickly find the distance between any points mentioned in the Bible. For instance, when Jesus traveled from Nazareth to Capernaum he traveled 30 miles, about 8–10 hours on foot.
3. *Draw to learn*—By making a hand-drawn map, you can get a better grasp of the relation of geographic elements to one another. Sketch out the boundaries (don't worry about being perfect) and then, without looking at a map, label 5–10 reference points (e.g., the Red Sea, Jerusalem, Jordan River). Compare your drawing to a map and correct your errors. Make frequent drawings, adding more reference points each time.

PRACTICAL TAKEAWAY: Learning the basics of biblical geography can improve our appreciation and understanding of Scripture.

For your next reading, go to page 885.

¹⁸ Surely wickedness burns like a fire;
it consumes briars and thorns,
it sets the forest thickets ablaze,
so that it rolls upward in a column of
smoke.

¹⁹ By the wrath of the LORD Almighty
the land will be scorched
and the people will be fuel for the fire;
they will not spare one another.

²⁰ On the right they will devour,
but still be hungry;
on the left they will eat,
but not be satisfied.
Each will feed on the flesh of their own
offspring^a:

²¹ Manasseh will feed on Ephraim, and
Ephraim on Manasseh;
together they will turn against
Judah.

Yet for all this, his anger is not turned
away,
his hand is still upraised.

10 Woe to those who make unjust laws,
to those who issue oppressive
decrees,

² to deprive the poor of their rights
and withhold justice from the
oppressed of my people,
making widows their prey
and robbing the fatherless.

³ What will you do on the day of
reckoning,
when disaster comes from afar?
To whom will you run for help?
Where will you leave your riches?

⁴ Nothing will remain but to cringe
among the captives
or fall among the slain.

Yet for all this, his anger is not turned
away,
his hand is still upraised.

God's Judgment on Assyria

⁵ "Woe to the Assyrian, the rod of my
anger,
in whose hand is the club of my
wrath!

⁶ I send him against a godless nation,
I dispatch him against a people who
anger me,
to seize loot and snatch plunder,
and to trample them down like mud
in the streets.

⁷ But this is not what he intends,
this is not what he has in mind;
his purpose is to destroy,
to put an end to many nations.

⁸ 'Are not my commanders all kings?' he
says.

⁹ 'Has not Kalno fared like
Carchemish?

Is not Hamath like Arpad,
and Samaria like Damascus?

¹⁰ As my hand seized the kingdoms of the
idols,
kingdoms whose images excelled
those of Jerusalem and
Samaria —

¹¹ shall I not deal with Jerusalem and her
images
as I dealt with Samaria and her
idols?"

¹² When the Lord has finished all his
work against Mount Zion and Jerusalem,
he will say, "I will punish the king of As-
syria for the willful pride of his heart and
the haughty look in his eyes. ¹³For he says:

"By the strength of my hand I have
done this,
and by my wisdom, because I have
understanding.

I removed the boundaries of nations,
I plundered their treasures;
like a mighty one I subdued^b their
kings.

¹⁴ As one reaches into a nest,
so my hand reached for the wealth
of the nations;
as people gather abandoned eggs,
so I gathered all the countries;
not one flapped a wing,
or opened its mouth to chirp."

¹⁵ Does the ax raise itself above the
person who swings it,
or the saw boast against the one
who uses it?

As if a rod were to wield the person
who lifts it up,
or a club brandish the one who is
not wood!

¹⁶ Therefore, the Lord, the LORD
Almighty,
will send a wasting disease upon
his sturdy warriors;
under his pomp a fire will be kindled
like a blazing flame.

¹⁷ The Light of Israel will become a
fire,
their Holy One a flame;
in a single day it will burn and
consume
his thorns and his briars.

^a20 Or arm ^b13 Or treasures; / I subdued the
mighty,

18 The splendor of his forests and fertile fields
it will completely destroy,
as when a sick person wastes away.
19 And the remaining trees of his forests
will be so few
that a child could write them down.

The Remnant of Israel

20 In that day the remnant of Israel,
the survivors of Jacob,
will no longer rely on him
who struck them down
but will truly rely on the LORD,
the Holy One of Israel.
21 A remnant will return,^a a remnant of
Jacob
will return to the Mighty God.
22 Though your people be like the sand by
the sea, Israel,
only a remnant will return.
Destruction has been decreed,
overwhelming and righteous.
23 The Lord, the LORD Almighty, will carry
out
the destruction decreed upon the
whole land.
24 Therefore this is what the Lord, the
LORD Almighty, says:
“My people who live in Zion,
do not be afraid of the Assyrians,
who beat you with a rod
and lift up a club against you, as
Egypt did.
25 Very soon my anger against you will
end
and my wrath will be directed to
their destruction.”
26 The LORD Almighty will lash them with
a whip,
as when he struck down Midian at
the rock of Oreb;
and he will raise his staff over the
waters,
as he did in Egypt.
27 In that day their burden will be lifted
from your shoulders,
their yoke from your neck;
the yoke will be broken
because you have grown so fat.^b
28 They enter Aiath;
they pass through Migron;
they store supplies at Mikmash.
29 They go over the pass, and say,
“We will camp overnight at Geba.”
Ramah trembles;
Gibeath of Saul flees.

30 Cry out, Daughter Gallim!
Listen, Laishah!
Poor Anathoth!
31 Madmenah is in flight;
the people of Gebim take cover.
32 This day they will halt at Nob;
they will shake their fist
at the mount of Daughter Zion,
at the hill of Jerusalem.
33 See, the Lord, the LORD Almighty,
will lop off the boughs with great
power.
The lofty trees will be felled,
the tall ones will be brought low.
34 He will cut down the forest thickets
with an ax;
Lebanon will fall before the Mighty
One.

The Branch From Jesse

11 A shoot will come up from the stump
of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear
fruit.
2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on
him —
the Spirit of wisdom and of
understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of might,
the Spirit of the knowledge and fear
of the LORD —
3 and he will delight in the fear of the
LORD.
He will not judge by what he sees with
his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his
ears;
4 but with righteousness he will judge
the needy,
with justice he will give decisions for
the poor of the earth.
He will strike the earth with the rod of
his mouth;
with the breath of his lips he will slay
the wicked.
5 Righteousness will be his belt
and faithfulness the sash around his
waist.
6 The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the
goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling^c
together;
and a little child will lead them.

^a21 Hebrew *shear-jashub* (see 7:3 and note); also
in verse 22 ^b27 Hebrew; Septuagint *broken /
from your shoulders* ^c6 Hebrew; Septuagint
lion will feed

⁷The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.

⁸The infant will play near the cobra's
den,
and the young child will put its hand
into the viper's nest.

⁹They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be filled with the
knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.

¹⁰In that day the Root of Jesse will stand
as a banner for the peoples; the nations
will rally to him, and his resting place
will be glorious. ¹¹In that day the Lord will
reach out his hand a second time to re-
claim the surviving remnant of his people
from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Up-
per Egypt, from Cush,^a from Elam, from
Babylonia,^b from Hamath and from the
islands of the Mediterranean.

¹²He will raise a banner for the nations
and gather the exiles of Israel;
he will assemble the scattered people of
Judah
from the four quarters of the earth.

¹³Ephraim's jealousy will vanish,
and Judah's enemies^c will be
destroyed;

Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah,
nor Judah hostile toward Ephraim.

¹⁴They will swoop down on the slopes of
Philistia to the west;
together they will plunder the people
to the east.

They will subdue Edom and Moab,
and the Ammonites will be subject to
them.

¹⁵The LORD will dry up
the gulf of the Egyptian sea;
with a scorching wind he will sweep his
hand
over the Euphrates River.

He will break it up into seven streams
so that anyone can cross over in
sandals.

¹⁶There will be a highway for the
remnant of his people
that is left from Assyria,
as there was for Israel
when they came up from Egypt.

Songs of Praise

12 In that day you will say:

"I will praise you, LORD.
Although you were angry with me,

your anger has turned away
and you have comforted me.

²Surely God is my salvation;
I will trust and not be afraid.
The LORD, the LORD himself, is my
strength and my defense^d;
he has become my salvation."

³With joy you will draw water
from the wells of salvation.

⁴In that day you will say:

"Give praise to the LORD, proclaim his
name;
make known among the nations
what he has done,
and proclaim that his name is
exalted.

⁵Sing to the LORD, for he has done
glorious things;
let this be known to all the world.

⁶Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of
Zion,
for great is the Holy One of Israel
among you."

A Prophecy Against Babylon

13 A prophecy against Babylon that Isa-
iah son of Amoz saw:

²Raise a banner on a bare hilltop,
shout to them;
beckon to them
to enter the gates of the nobles.

³I have commanded those I prepared
for battle;
I have summoned my warriors to
carry out my wrath —
those who rejoice in my triumph.

⁴Listen, a noise on the mountains,
like that of a great multitude!
Listen, an uproar among the
kingdoms,

like nations massing together!
The LORD Almighty is mustering
an army for war.

⁵They come from faraway lands,
from the ends of the heavens —
the LORD and the weapons of his
wrath —
to destroy the whole country.

⁶Wail, for the day of the LORD is near;
it will come like destruction from the
Almighty,^e

⁷Because of this, all hands will go limp,
every heart will melt with fear.

^a11 That is, the upper Nile region ^b11 Hebrew
Shinar ^c13 Or hostility ^d2 Or song
^e6 Hebrew Shaddai

⁸Terror will seize them,
pain and anguish will grip them;
they will writhe like a woman in
labor.

They will look aghast at each other,
their faces aflame.

⁹See, the day of the LORD is coming
— a cruel day, with wrath and fierce
anger —

to make the land desolate
and destroy the sinners within it.

¹⁰The stars of heaven and their
constellations
will not show their light.

The rising sun will be darkened
and the moon will not give its light.

¹¹I will punish the world for its evil,
the wicked for their sins.

I will put an end to the arrogance of the
haughty
and will humble the pride of the
ruthless.

¹²I will make people scarcer than pure
gold,

more rare than the gold of Ophir.

¹³Therefore I will make the heavens
tremble;
and the earth will shake from its
place

at the wrath of the LORD Almighty,
in the day of his burning anger.

¹⁴Like a hunted gazelle,
like sheep without a shepherd,
they will all return to their own people,
they will flee to their native land.

¹⁵Whoever is captured will be thrust
through;
all who are caught will fall by the
sword.

¹⁶Their infants will be dashed to pieces
before their eyes;
their houses will be looted and their
wives violated.

¹⁷See, I will stir up against them the
Medes,
who do not care for silver
and have no delight in gold.

¹⁸Their bows will strike down the young
men;
they will have no mercy on infants,
nor will they look with compassion
on children.

¹⁹Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms,
the pride and glory of the
Babylonians,^a
will be overthrown by God
like Sodom and Gomorrah.

²⁰She will never be inhabited
or lived in through all generations;
there no nomads will pitch their tents,
there no shepherds will rest their
flocks.

²¹But desert creatures will lie there,
jackals will fill her houses;
there the owls will dwell,
and there the wild goats will leap
about.

²²Hyenas will inhabit her strongholds,
jackals her luxurious palaces.
Her time is at hand,
and her days will not be prolonged.

14 The LORD will have compassion on
Jacob;
once again he will choose Israel
and will settle them in their own
land.

Foreigners will join them
and unite with the descendants of
Jacob.

²Nations will take them
and bring them to their own place.

And Israel will take possession of the
nations
and make them male and female
servants in the LORD's land.

They will make captives of their captors
and rule over their oppressors.

³On the day the LORD gives you relief
from your suffering and turmoil and from
the harsh labor forced on you, ⁴you will
take up this taunt against the king of Bab-
ylon:

How the oppressor has come to an end!
How his fury^b has ended!

⁵The LORD has broken the rod of the
wicked,
the scepter of the rulers,

⁶which in anger struck down peoples
with unceasing blows,
and in fury subdued nations
with relentless aggression.

⁷All the lands are at rest and at peace;
they break into singing.

⁸Even the junipers and the cedars of
Lebanon
gloat over you and say,
“Now that you have been laid low,
no one comes to cut us down.”

⁹The realm of the dead below is all astir
to meet you at your coming;

^a19 Or *Chaldeans* ^b4 Dead Sea Scrolls,
Septuagint and Syriac; the meaning of the word
in the Masoretic Text is uncertain.

it rouses the spirits of the departed to
greet you —
all those who were leaders in the
world;
it makes them rise from their
thrones —
all those who were kings over the
nations.

¹⁰ They will all respond,
they will say to you,
“You also have become weak, as we are;
you have become like us.”

¹¹ All your pomp has been brought down
to the grave,
along with the noise of your harps;
maggots are spread out beneath you
and worms cover you.

¹² How you have fallen from heaven,
morning star, son of the dawn!
You have been cast down to the earth,
you who once laid low the nations!

¹³ You said in your heart,
“I will ascend to the heavens;
I will raise my throne
above the stars of God;
I will sit enthroned on the mount of
assembly,
on the utmost heights of Mount
Zaphon.^a”

¹⁴ I will ascend above the tops of the
clouds;
I will make myself like the Most
High.”

¹⁵ But you are brought down to the realm
of the dead,
to the depths of the pit.

¹⁶ Those who see you stare at you,
they ponder your fate:
“Is this the man who shook the earth
and made kingdoms tremble,
¹⁷ the man who made the world a
wilderness,
who overthrew its cities
and would not let his captives go
home?”

¹⁸ All the kings of the nations lie in state,
each in his own tomb.

¹⁹ But you are cast out of your tomb
like a rejected branch;
you are covered with the slain,
with those pierced by the sword,
those who descend to the stones of
the pit.
Like a corpse trampled underfoot,
²⁰ you will not join them in burial,
for you have destroyed your land
and killed your people.

Let the offspring of the wicked
never be mentioned again.

²¹ Prepare a place to slaughter his
children
for the sins of their ancestors;
they are not to rise to inherit the land
and cover the earth with their cities.

²² “I will rise up against them,”
declares the LORD Almighty.
“I will wipe out Babylon’s name and
survivors,
her offspring and descendants,”
declares the LORD.

²³ “I will turn her into a place for owls
and into swampland;
I will sweep her with the broom of
destruction,”
declares the LORD Almighty.

²⁴ The LORD Almighty has sworn,
“Surely, as I have planned, so it will be,
and as I have purposed, so it will
happen.”

²⁵ I will crush the Assyrian in my land;
on my mountains I will trample him
down.
His yoke will be taken from my people,
and his burden removed from their
shoulders.”

²⁶ This is the plan determined for the
whole world;
this is the hand stretched out over all
nations.

²⁷ For the LORD Almighty has purposed,
and who can thwart him?
His hand is stretched out, and who
can turn it back?

A Prophecy Against the Philistines

²⁸ This prophecy came in the year King
Ahaz died:

²⁹ Do not rejoice, all you Philistines,
that the rod that struck you is
broken;
from the root of that snake will spring
up a viper,
its fruit will be a darting, venomous
serpent.

³⁰ The poorest of the poor will find
pasture,
and the needy will lie down in safety.
But your root I will destroy by famine;
it will slay your survivors.

³¹ Wail, you gate! Howl, you city!
Melt away, all you Philistines!

^a13 Or of the north; Zaphon was the most sacred
mountain of the Canaanites.

A cloud of smoke comes from the north,
and there is not a straggler in its ranks.

- ³²What answer shall be given to the envoys of that nation?
“The LORD has established Zion,
and in her his afflicted people will find refuge.”

A Prophecy Against Moab

15 A prophecy against Moab:

Ar in Moab is ruined,
destroyed in a night!
Kir in Moab is ruined,
destroyed in a night!
²Dibon goes up to its temple,
to its high places to weep;
Moab wails over Nebo and Medeba.
Every head is shaved
and every beard cut off.

- ³In the streets they wear sackcloth;
on the roofs and in the public squares
they all wail,
prostrate with weeping.
⁴Heshbon and Elealeh cry out,
their voices are heard all the way to Jahaz.
Therefore the armed men of Moab cry out,
and their hearts are faint.

- ⁵My heart cries out over Moab;
her fugitives flee as far as Zoar,
as far as Eglath Shelishiyah.
They go up the hill to Luhith,
weeping as they go;
on the road to Horonaim
they lament their destruction.
⁶The waters of Nimrim are dried up
and the grass is withered;
the vegetation is gone
and nothing green is left.
⁷So the wealth they have acquired and
stored up
they carry away over the Ravine of the Poplars.
⁸Their outcry echoes along the border of Moab;
their wailing reaches as far as Eglaim,
their lamentation as far as Beer Elim.
⁹The waters of Dimon^a are full of blood,
but I will bring still more upon Dimon^a —
a lion upon the fugitives of Moab
and upon those who remain in the land.

16 Send lambs as tribute to the ruler of the land,
from Sela, across the desert,
to the mount of Daughter Zion.

- ²Like fluttering birds pushed from the nest,
so are the women of Moab at the fords of the Arnon.
³“Make up your mind,” Moab says.
“Render a decision.
Make your shadow like night —
at high noon.
Hide the fugitives,
do not betray the refugees.
⁴Let the Moabite fugitives stay with you;
be their shelter from the destroyer.”

The oppressor will come to an end,
and destruction will cease;
the aggressor will vanish from the land.

- ⁵In love a throne will be established;
in faithfulness a man will sit on it —
one from the house^b of David —
one who in judging seeks justice
and speeds the cause of righteousness.
⁶We have heard of Moab’s pride —
how great is her arrogance! —
of her conceit, her pride and her insolence;
but her boasts are empty.
⁷Therefore the Moabites wail,
they wail together for Moab.
Lament and grieve
for the raisin cakes of Kir Hareseth.
⁸The fields of Heshbon wither,
the vines of Sibmah also.
The rulers of the nations
have trampled down the choicest vines,
which once reached Jazer
and spread toward the desert.
Their shoots spread out
and went as far as the sea.^c
⁹So I weep, as Jazer weeps,
for the vines of Sibmah.
Heshbon and Elealeh,
I drench you with tears!
The shouts of joy over your ripened fruit
and over your harvests have been stilled.

^{a9} Dimon, a wordplay on Dibon (see verse 2), sounds like the Hebrew for blood. ^{b5} Hebrew tent ^{c8} Probably the Dead Sea



¹⁰ Joy and gladness are taken away from
the orchards;
no one sings or shouts in the
vineyards;
no one treads out wine at the presses,
for I have put an end to the shouting.
¹¹ My heart laments for Moab like a harp,
my inmost being for Kir Hareseth.
¹² When Moab appears at her high place,
she only wears herself out;
when she goes to her shrine to pray,
it is to no avail.

¹³ This is the word the LORD has already
spoken concerning Moab. ¹⁴ But now the
LORD says: "Within three years, as a servant
bound by contract would count them, Mo-
ab's splendor and all her many people will
be despised, and her survivors will be very
few and feeble."

A Prophecy Against Damascus

17 A prophecy against Damascus:

"See, Damascus will no longer be a city
but will become a heap of ruins.
² The cities of Aroer will be deserted
and left to flocks, which will lie down,
with no one to make them afraid.
³ The fortified city will disappear from
Ephraim,
and royal power from Damascus;
the remnant of Aram will be
like the glory of the Israelites,"
declares the LORD Almighty.
⁴ "In that day the glory of Jacob will fade;
the fat of his body will waste away.
⁵ It will be as when reapers harvest the
standing grain,
gathering the grain in their arms —
as when someone gleanes heads of grain
in the Valley of Rephaim.
⁶ Yet some gleanings will remain,
as when an olive tree is beaten,
leaving two or three olives on the
topmost branches,
four or five on the fruitful boughs,"
declares the LORD, the God
of Israel.

⁷ In that day people will look to their
Maker
and turn their eyes to the Holy One
of Israel.

⁸ They will not look to the altars,
the work of their hands,
and they will have no regard for the
Asherah poles^a
and the incense altars their fingers
have made.

⁹ In that day their strong cities, which
they left because of the Israelites, will be
like places abandoned to thickets and un-
dergrowth. And all will be desolation.

¹⁰ You have forgotten God your Savior;
you have not remembered the Rock,
your fortress.
Therefore, though you set out the finest
plants
and plant imported vines,
¹¹ though on the day you set them out,
you make them grow,
and on the morning when you plant
them, you bring them to bud,
yet the harvest will be as nothing
in the day of disease and incurable
pain.

¹² Woe to the many nations that rage —
they rage like the raging sea!
Woe to the peoples who roar —
they roar like the roaring of great
waters!
¹³ Although the peoples roar like the roar
of surging waters,
when he rebukes them they flee far
away,
driven before the wind like chaff on the
hills,
like tumbleweed before a gale.
¹⁴ In the evening, sudden terror!
Before the morning, they are gone!
This is the portion of those who loot us,
the lot of those who plunder us.

A Prophecy Against Cush

18 Woe to the land of whirring wings^b
along the rivers of Cush,^c
² which sends envoys by sea
in papyrus boats over the water.

Go, swift messengers,
to a people tall and smooth-skinned,
to a people feared far and wide,
an aggressive nation of strange speech,
whose land is divided by rivers.

³ All you people of the world,
you who live on the earth,
when a banner is raised on the
mountains,
you will see it,
and when a trumpet sounds,
you will hear it.

⁴ This is what the LORD says to me:
"I will remain quiet and will look on
from my dwelling place,

^a8 That is, wooden symbols of the goddess
Asherah ^b1 Or of locusts ^c1 That is, the
upper Nile region



like shimmering heat in the sunshine,
like a cloud of dew in the heat of
harvest.”

⁵For, before the harvest, when the
blossom is gone
and the flower becomes a ripening
grape,
he will cut off the shoots with pruning
knives,
and cut down and take away the
spreading branches.
⁶They will all be left to the mountain
birds of prey
and to the wild animals;
the birds will feed on them all summer,
the wild animals all winter.

⁷At that time gifts will be brought to the
LORD Almighty

from a people tall and smooth-skinned,
from a people feared far and wide,
an aggressive nation of strange speech,
whose land is divided by rivers —

the gifts will be brought to Mount Zion, the
place of the Name of the LORD Almighty.

A Prophecy Against Egypt

19 A prophecy against Egypt:

See, the LORD rides on a swift cloud
and is coming to Egypt.
The idols of Egypt tremble before him,
and the hearts of the Egyptians melt
with fear.

²“I will stir up Egyptian against
Egyptian —
brother will fight against brother,
neighbor against neighbor,
city against city,
kingdom against kingdom.

³The Egyptians will lose heart,
and I will bring their plans to
nothing;
they will consult the idols and the
spirits of the dead,
the mediums and the spiritists.

⁴I will hand the Egyptians over
to the power of a cruel master,
and a fierce king will rule over them,”
declares the Lord, the LORD
Almighty.

⁵The waters of the river will dry up,
and the riverbed will be parched
and dry.

⁶The canals will stink;
the streams of Egypt will dwindle
and dry up.

The reeds and rushes will wither,

⁷ also the plants along the Nile,
at the mouth of the river.
Every sown field along the Nile
will become parched, will blow away
and be no more.

⁸The fishermen will groan and lament,
all who cast hooks into the Nile;
those who throw nets on the water
will pine away.

⁹Those who work with combed flax will
despair,
the weavers of fine linen will lose
hope.

¹⁰The workers in cloth will be dejected,
and all the wage earners will be sick
at heart.

¹¹The officials of Zoan are nothing but
fools;

the wise counselors of Pharaoh give
senseless advice.

How can you say to Pharaoh,
“I am one of the wise men,
a disciple of the ancient kings”?

¹²Where are your wise men now?
Let them show you and make known
what the LORD Almighty
has planned against Egypt.

¹³The officials of Zoan have become fools,
the leaders of Memphis are deceived;
the cornerstones of her peoples
have led Egypt astray.

¹⁴The LORD has poured into them
a spirit of dizziness;
they make Egypt stagger in all that she
does,
as a drunkard staggers around in his
vomit.

¹⁵There is nothing Egypt can do —
head or tail, palm branch or reed.

¹⁶In that day the Egyptians will become
weaklings. They will shudder with fear at
the uplifted hand that the LORD Almighty
raises against them. ¹⁷And the land of Ju-
dah will bring terror to the Egyptians; ev-
eryone to whom Judah is mentioned will
be terrified, because of what the LORD Al-
mighty is planning against them.

¹⁸In that day five cities in Egypt will
speak the language of Canaan and swear
allegiance to the LORD Almighty. One of
them will be called the City of the Sun.^a

¹⁹In that day there will be an altar to the

^a18 Some manuscripts of the Masoretic Text,
Dead Sea Scrolls, Symmachus and Vulgate; most
manuscripts of the Masoretic Text *City of
Destruction*



LORD in the heart of Egypt, and a monument to the LORD at its border. ²⁰It will be a sign and witness to the LORD Almighty in the land of Egypt. When they cry out to the LORD because of their oppressors, he will send them a savior and defender, and he will rescue them. ²¹So the LORD will make himself known to the Egyptians, and in that day they will acknowledge the LORD. They will worship with sacrifices and grain offerings; they will make vows to the LORD and keep them. ²²The LORD will strike Egypt with a plague; he will strike them and heal them. They will turn to the LORD, and he will respond to their pleas and heal them.

²³In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. ²⁴In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing^a on the earth. ²⁵The LORD Almighty will bless them, saying, “Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance.”

A Prophecy Against Egypt and Cush

20 In the year that the supreme commander, sent by Sargon king of Assyria, came to Ashdod and attacked and captured it— ²at that time the LORD spoke through Isaiah son of Amoz. He said to him, “Take off the sackcloth from your body and the sandals from your feet.” And he did so, going around stripped and barefoot.

³Then the LORD said, “Just as my servant Isaiah has gone stripped and barefoot for three years, as a sign and portent against Egypt and Cush,^b ⁴so the king of Assyria will lead away stripped and barefoot the Egyptian captives and Cushite exiles, young and old, with buttocks bared— to Egypt’s shame. ⁵Those who trusted in Cush and boasted in Egypt will be dismayed and put to shame. ⁶In that day the people who live on this coast will say, ‘See what has happened to those we relied on, those we fled to for help and deliverance from the king of Assyria! How then can we escape?’”

A Prophecy Against Babylon

21 A prophecy against the Desert by the Sea:

Like whirlwinds sweeping through the southland,
an invader comes from the desert,
from a land of terror.

²A dire vision has been shown to me:

The traitor betrays, the looter takes loot.

Elam, attack! Media, lay siege!

I will bring to an end all the groaning she caused.

³At this my body is racked with pain,
pangs seize me, like those of a woman in labor;

I am staggered by what I hear,
I am bewildered by what I see.

⁴My heart falters,
fear makes me tremble;
the twilight I longed for
has become a horror to me.

⁵They set the tables,
they spread the rugs,
they eat, they drink!

Get up, you officers,
oil the shields!

⁶This is what the Lord says to me:

“Go, post a lookout
and have him report what he sees.

⁷When he sees chariots
with teams of horses,
riders on donkeys
or riders on camels,
let him be alert,
fully alert.”

⁸And the lookout^c shouted,

“Day after day, my lord, I stand on the watchtower;
every night I stay at my post.

⁹Look, here comes a man in a chariot
with a team of horses.

And he gives back the answer:
‘Babylon has fallen, has fallen!
All the images of its gods
lie shattered on the ground!’”

¹⁰My people who are crushed on the threshing floor,
I tell you what I have heard
from the LORD Almighty,
from the God of Israel.

A Prophecy Against Edom

¹A prophecy against Dumah^d:

Someone calls to me from Seir,
“Watchman, what is left of the night?
Watchman, what is left of the night?”

^a24 Or *Assyria, whose names will be used in blessings* (see Gen. 48:20); or *Assyria, who will be seen by others as blessed* ^b3 That is, the upper Nile region; also in verse 5 ^c8 Dead Sea Scrolls and Syriac; Masoretic Text *A lion* ^d11 *Dumah, a wordplay on Edom, means silence or stillness.*

