



# ISAIAH

## Read Isaiah 1:1–20

This is an indictment of the Israelites for violation of the Mosaic covenant. Sacrifices are fine, if accompanied with right dispositions. If sacrifices are merely ritual, without ethical behavior, they are worthless.

**Reflect:** Covenant renewal is not just external ritual, but entails social justice. The emphasis should be upon the “little people” of society, namely widows and orphans.

**Pray:** As covenant people, we pray that we may have a deeper understanding of the real meaning of covenant.

**Act:** Teach the real meaning of covenant by example.

**1** The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

### The Wickedness of Judah

- 2** Hear, O heavens, and listen, O earth; for the LORD has spoken:  
I reared children and brought them up,  
but they have rebelled against me.
- 3** The ox knows its owner,  
and the donkey its master’s crib;  
but Israel does not know,  
my people do not understand.
- 4** Ah, sinful nation,  
people laden with iniquity,  
offspring who do evil,  
children who deal corruptly,  
who have forsaken the LORD,  
who have despised the Holy One of Israel,  
who are utterly estranged!
- 5** Why do you seek further beatings?  
Why do you continue to rebel?  
The whole head is sick,  
and the whole heart faint.
- 6** From the sole of the foot even to the head,  
there is no soundness in it,  
but bruises and sores  
and bleeding wounds;  
they have not been drained, or bound up,  
or softened with oil.

### Read Isaiah 1:21–31

This polemic is directed at Jerusalem and its rulers. Jerusalem, once so faithful, is now corrupt. Unfaithfulness to the covenant is like unfaithfulness in marriage. Repentance, a change of heart, is always an option.

**Reflect:** No matter what you've done, there is always a chance to make amends. Think of other encouraging Bible stories about a return to faithfulness.

**Pray:** We pray that we may always have the ability to change our hearts.

**Act:** A change of heart is expressed in our actions toward our sisters and brothers.

- 7 Your country lies desolate,  
your cities are burned with fire;  
in your very presence  
aliens devour your land;  
it is desolate, as overthrown by foreigners.
- 8 And daughter Zion is left  
like a booth in a vineyard,  
like a shelter in a cucumber field,  
like a besieged city.
- 9 If the LORD of hosts  
had not left us a few survivors,  
we would have been like Sodom,  
and become like Gomorrah.
- 10 Hear the word of the LORD,  
you rulers of Sodom!  
Listen to the teaching of our God,  
you people of Gomorrah!
- 11 What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices?  
says the LORD;  
I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams  
and the fat of fed beasts;  
I do not delight in the blood of bulls,  
or of lambs, or of goats.
- 12 When you come to appear before me,<sup>a</sup>  
who asked this from your hand?  
Trample my courts no more;  
bringing offerings is futile;  
incense is an abomination to me.  
New moon and sabbath and calling of  
convocation—  
I cannot endure solemn assemblies with  
iniquity.
- 14 Your new moons and your appointed festivals  
my soul hates;  
they have become a burden to me,  
I am weary of bearing them.
- 15 When you stretch out your hands,  
I will hide my eyes from you;  
even though you make many prayers,  
I will not listen;  
your hands are full of blood.
- 16 Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;  
remove the evil of your doings  
from before my eyes;  
cease to do evil,  
learn to do good;  
seek justice,  
rescue the oppressed,  
defend the orphan,  
plead for the widow.

<sup>a</sup> Or see my face

- 18 Come now, let us argue it out,  
 says the LORD:  
 though your sins are like scarlet,  
 they shall be like snow;  
 though they are red like crimson,  
 they shall become like wool.
- 19 If you are willing and obedient,  
 you shall eat the good of the  
 land;
- 20 but if you refuse and rebel,  
 you shall be devoured by the  
 sword;  
 for the mouth of the LORD has  
 spoken.

### The Degenerate City

- 21 How the faithful city  
 has become a whore!  
 She that was full of justice,  
 righteousness lodged in her—  
 but now murderers!
- 22 Your silver has become dross,  
 your wine is mixed with water.
- 23 Your princes are rebels  
 and companions of thieves.  
 Everyone loves a bribe  
 and runs after gifts.  
 They do not defend the orphan,  
 and the widow's cause does not  
 come before them.
- 24 Therefore says the Sovereign, the  
 LORD of hosts, the Mighty One  
 of Israel:
- Ah, I will pour out my wrath on my  
 enemies,  
 and avenge myself on my foes!
- 25 I will turn my hand against you;  
 I will smelt away your dross as  
 with lye  
 and remove all your alloy.
- 26 And I will restore your judges as at  
 the first,  
 and your counselors as at the  
 beginning.  
 Afterward you shall be called the  
 city of righteousness,  
 the faithful city.
- 27 Zion shall be redeemed by justice,  
 and those in her who repent, by  
 righteousness.
- 28 But rebels and sinners shall be  
 destroyed together,  
 and those who forsake the LORD  
 shall be consumed.
- 29 For you shall be ashamed of the oaks  
 in which you delighted;  
 and you shall blush for the gardens  
 that you have chosen.
- 30 For you shall be like an oak  
 whose leaf withers,  
 and like a garden without water.
- 31 The strong shall become like tinder,  
 and their work<sup>a</sup> like a spark;  
 they and their work shall burn  
 together,  
 with no one to quench them.

### The Future House of God

**2** The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning  
 Judah and Jerusalem.

- 2 In days to come  
 the mountain of the LORD's house  
 shall be established as the highest of the mountains,  
 and shall be raised above the hills;  
 all the nations shall stream to it.
- 3 Many peoples shall come and say,  
 "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,  
 to the house of the God of Jacob;  
 that he may teach us his ways  
 and that we may walk in his paths."  
 For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,  
 and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

<sup>a</sup> Or *its makers*

**Read Isaiah 2:1–5**

This is an oracle of salvation. The “house of Jacob” includes the entire nation of Israel. Jerusalem is elevated in the context of Yahweh’s universal reign of peace. The cosmic mountain, that is Jerusalem, is the object of pilgrimage for all peoples coming for instruction (“Torah”).

**Reflect:** Yahweh’s universal reign of peace is a high priority in the thoughts of all of us today.

**Pray:** We pray that we may become more aware of the importance of peace in our daily lives.

**Act:** In our own small social circles, we should make our contribution to the establishment of peace.

**Read Isaiah 2:6–22**

This is a divine judgment on idols. The “day of the Lord” is coming, and it will be a day of retribution. Judah has become a land of irresponsible luxury. Limestone caves were always a refuge in Palestine.

**Reflect:** What does the word “idol” mean in the present day?

**Pray:** In our own lives we must be certain to give priority to the things of God.

**Act:** Our daily actions should reflect this priority. What can we do to ensure that our faith takes precedence over present-day “idols”?

- 4 He shall judge between the nations,  
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;  
they shall beat their swords into plowshares,  
and their spears into pruning hooks;  
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
neither shall they learn war any more.

**Judgment Pronounced on Arrogance**

- 5 O house of Jacob,  
come, let us walk  
in the light of the LORD!
- 6 For you have forsaken the ways of<sup>a</sup> your people,  
O house of Jacob.  
Indeed they are full of diviners<sup>b</sup> from the east  
and of soothsayers like the Philistines,  
and they clasp hands with foreigners.
- 7 Their land is filled with silver and gold,  
and there is no end to their treasures;  
their land is filled with horses,  
and there is no end to their chariots.
- 8 Their land is filled with idols;  
they bow down to the work of their hands,  
to what their own fingers have made.
- 9 And so people are humbled,  
and everyone is brought low—  
do not forgive them!
- 10 Enter into the rock,  
and hide in the dust  
from the terror of the LORD,  
and from the glory of his majesty.
- 11 The haughty eyes of people shall be brought low,  
and the pride of everyone shall be humbled;  
and the LORD alone will be exalted on that day.
- 12 For the LORD of hosts has a day  
against all that is proud and lofty,  
against all that is lifted up and high;<sup>c</sup>  
13 against all the cedars of Lebanon,  
lofty and lifted up;  
and against all the oaks of Bashan;  
14 against all the high mountains,  
and against all the lofty hills;  
15 against every high tower,  
and against every fortified wall;  
16 against all the ships of Tarshish,  
and against all the beautiful craft.<sup>d</sup>
- 17 The haughtiness of people shall be humbled,  
and the pride of everyone shall be brought low;  
and the LORD alone will be exalted on that day.
- 18 The idols shall utterly pass away.
- 19 Enter the caves of the rocks  
and the holes of the ground,

<sup>a</sup> Heb lacks *the ways of*

<sup>b</sup> Cn: Heb lacks *of diviners*

<sup>c</sup> Cn Compare Gk: Heb *low*

<sup>d</sup> Compare Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain

from the terror of the LORD,  
 and from the glory of his majesty,  
 when he rises to terrify the earth.  
 20 On that day people will throw away  
 to the moles and to the bats  
 their idols of silver and their idols of  
 gold,  
 which they made for themselves  
 to worship,

21 to enter the caverns of the rocks  
 and the clefts in the crags,  
 from the terror of the LORD,  
 and from the glory of his majesty,  
 when he rises to terrify the earth.  
 22 Turn away from mortals,  
 who have only breath in their  
 nostrils,  
 for of what account are they?

### Read Isaiah 3:1–15

This passage deals with chaos and is a judgment on Judah and Jerusalem. It is an indictment of leaders who are exploiting the poor. By right, rulers are expected to protect the needy of society, but they do not do this. The collapse of the infrastructure of Judah's society has led to chaos.

**Reflect:** Judah's leadership has been totally deficient and the result has been anarchy.

**Pray:** Let us pray that rulers, both secular and religious, may be more responsible in the discharge of their duties to society.

**Act:** In our lives, we must do everything we can to stand up for the poor and the needy.

**3** For now the Sovereign, the LORD of hosts,  
 is taking away from Jerusalem and from Judah  
 support and staff—  
 all support of bread,  
 and all support of water—  
 2 warrior and soldier,  
 judge and prophet,  
 diviner and elder,  
 3 captain of fifty  
 and dignitary,  
 counselor and skillful magician  
 and expert enchanter.  
 4 And I will make boys their princes,  
 and babes shall rule over them.  
 5 The people will be oppressed,  
 everyone by another  
 and everyone by a neighbor;  
 the youth will be insolent to the elder,  
 and the base to the honorable.  
 6 Someone will even seize a relative,  
 a member of the clan, saying,  
 “You have a cloak;  
 you shall be our leader,  
 and this heap of ruins  
 shall be under your rule.”  
 7 But the other will cry out on that day, saying,  
 “I will not be a healer;  
 in my house there is neither bread nor cloak;  
 you shall not make me  
 leader of the people.”  
 8 For Jerusalem has stumbled  
 and Judah has fallen,  
 because their speech and their deeds are against  
 the LORD,  
 defying his glorious presence.  
 9 The look on their faces bears witness against them;  
 they proclaim their sin like Sodom,  
 they do not hide it.  
 Woe to them!  
 For they have brought evil on themselves.

**Read Isaiah 3:16—4:1**

Jerusalem is accused of being a haughty woman, proud and selfish, who will be punished for her vanity and for her exploitation of the poor.

**Reflect:** As they become absorbed in self-aggrandizement, all men and women are capable of exploiting the poor.

**Pray:** May I be aware of those times when I am tempted to let my own needs and goals take precedence over my dedication to helping those less fortunate than I.

**Act:** Be conscious of your actions, and be consistent in your determination to help the needy.

- 10 Tell the innocent how fortunate they are,  
for they shall eat the fruit of their labors.
- 11 Woe to the guilty! How unfortunate they are,  
for what their hands have done shall be done  
to them.
- 12 My people—children are their oppressors,  
and women rule over them.  
O my people, your leaders mislead you,  
and confuse the course of your paths.
- 13 The LORD rises to argue his case;  
he stands to judge the peoples.
- 14 The LORD enters into judgment  
with the elders and princes of his people:  
It is you who have devoured the vineyard;  
the spoil of the poor is in your houses.
- 15 What do you mean by crushing my people,  
by grinding the face of the poor? says the  
Lord GOD of hosts.
- 16 The LORD said:  
Because the daughters of Zion are haughty  
and walk with outstretched necks,  
glancing wantonly with their eyes,  
mincing along as they go,  
tinkling with their feet;
- 17 the Lord will afflict with scabs  
the heads of the daughters of Zion,  
and the LORD will lay bare their secret parts.

18 In that day the Lord will take away the finery of  
the anklets, the headbands, and the crescents; <sup>19</sup> the  
pendants, the bracelets, and the scarfs; <sup>20</sup> the head-  
dresses, the armlets, the sashes, the perfume boxes, and  
the amulets; <sup>21</sup> the signet rings and nose rings; <sup>22</sup> the  
festal robes, the mantles, the cloaks, and the handbags;  
<sup>23</sup> the garments of gauze, the linen garments, the tur-  
bans, and the veils.

- <sup>24</sup> Instead of perfume there will be a stench;  
and instead of a sash, a rope;  
and instead of well-set hair, baldness;  
and instead of a rich robe, a binding of  
sackcloth;  
instead of beauty, shame.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Your men shall fall by the sword  
and your warriors in battle.

<sup>26</sup> And her gates shall lament and mourn;  
ravaged, she shall sit upon the ground.

**4** Seven women shall take hold of one man in that  
day, saying,  
“We will eat our own bread and wear our own  
clothes;

<sup>a</sup> Q Ms: MT lacks *shame*

### Read Isaiah 4:2–6

This is a description of “Messianic Branch,” the purified Zion (Jerusalem) of the future. The prophet looks forward to the time when Jerusalem’s sufferings will have passed. “Glory” is a striking symbol of God’s presence. God’s protection of Jerusalem is symbolized by imagery from the exodus and wilderness traditions.

**Reflect:** Remind yourself of the original exodus story. What imagery is repeated here and how does it broaden your understanding of this passage?

**Pray:** May we always be worthy of being in God’s presence and having God’s protection.

**Act:** May our actions always give witness to our belief in God’s constant presence.

### Read Isaiah 5:1–7

With a wine festival as background, the prophet denounces social injustice. The vineyard is planted with great care, but produces only wild grapes, and so it is destroyed. The people of God will suffer in like manner.

**Reflect:** All of us are subject to God’s judgment.

**Pray:** We pray that we not be judged as useless servants.

**Act:** Let us attempt to be productive in life with respect to all of our daily responsibilities.

just let us be called by your name;  
take away our disgrace.”

### The Future Glory of the Survivors in Zion

2 On that day the branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and glory of the survivors of Israel. <sup>3</sup> Whoever is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem, <sup>4</sup> once the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning. <sup>5</sup> Then the LORD will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over its places of assembly a cloud by day and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night. Indeed over all the glory there will be a canopy. <sup>6</sup> It will serve as a pavilion, a shade by day from the heat, and a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain.

### The Song of the Unfruitful Vineyard

**5** Let me sing for my beloved  
my love-song concerning his vineyard:  
My beloved had a vineyard  
on a very fertile hill.  
2 He dug it and cleared it of stones,  
and planted it with choice vines;  
he built a watchtower in the midst of it,  
and hewed out a wine vat in it;  
he expected it to yield grapes,  
but it yielded wild grapes.  
3 And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem  
and people of Judah,  
judge between me  
and my vineyard.  
4 What more was there to do for my vineyard  
that I have not done in it?  
When I expected it to yield grapes,  
why did it yield wild grapes?  
5 And now I will tell you  
what I will do to my vineyard.  
I will remove its hedge,  
and it shall be devoured;  
I will break down its wall,  
and it shall be trampled down.  
6 I will make it a waste;  
it shall not be pruned or hoed,  
and it shall be overgrown with briars and thorns;  
I will also command the clouds  
that they rain no rain upon it.

**Read Isaiah 5:8–30**

These short poems—each beginning with “Ah!”—implicate the ruling class and others for addiction to alcohol, as well as acts of social injustice. These acts include the amassing (land-grabbing) of property as a way of disenfranchising fellow Judahites.

**Reflect:** What does land-grabbing refer to in our own day and age? How can increasing the size of one’s property be seen as social injustice?

**Pray:** Ask God for the grace to be unselfish.

**Act:** Consider ways in which you can include your neighbor in your successes.

- 7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts  
is the house of Israel,  
and the people of Judah  
are his pleasant planting;  
he expected justice,  
but saw bloodshed;  
righteousness,  
but heard a cry!

**Social Injustice Denounced**

- 8 Ah, you who join house to house,  
who add field to field,  
until there is room for no one but you,  
and you are left to live alone  
in the midst of the land!
- 9 The LORD of hosts has sworn in my hearing:  
Surely many houses shall be desolate,  
large and beautiful houses, without inhabitant.
- 10 For ten acres of vineyard shall yield but one bath,  
and a homer of seed shall yield a mere ephah.<sup>a</sup>
- 11 Ah, you who rise early in the morning  
in pursuit of strong drink,  
who linger in the evening  
to be inflamed by wine,  
whose feasts consist of lyre and harp,  
tambourine and flute and wine,  
but who do not regard the deeds of the LORD,  
or see the work of his hands!
- 13 Therefore my people go into exile without  
knowledge;  
their nobles are dying of hunger,  
and their multitude is parched with thirst.
- 14 Therefore Sheol has enlarged its appetite  
and opened its mouth beyond measure;  
the nobility of Jerusalem<sup>b</sup> and her multitude go  
down,  
her throng and all who exult in her.
- 15 People are bowed down, everyone is brought low,  
and the eyes of the haughty are humbled.
- 16 But the LORD of hosts is exalted by justice,  
and the Holy God shows himself holy by  
righteousness.
- 17 Then the lambs shall graze as in their pasture,  
fatlings and kids<sup>c</sup> shall feed among the ruins.
- 18 Ah, you who drag iniquity along with cords of  
falsehood,  
who drag sin along as with cart ropes,  
19 who say, “Let him make haste,  
let him speed his work  
that we may see it;

<sup>a</sup> The Heb *bath*, *homer*, and *ephah* are measures of quantity

<sup>b</sup> Heb *her nobility*

<sup>c</sup> Cn Compare Gk: Heb *aliens*



- let the plan of the Holy One of Israel  
 hasten to fulfillment,  
 that we may know it!"
- 20 Ah, you 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 Ah, you who are wise in your own  
 eyes,  
 and shrewd in your own sight!
- 22 Ah, you who are heroes in drinking  
 wine  
 and valiant at mixing drink,  
 23 who acquit the guilty for a bribe,  
 and deprive the innocent of their  
 rights!

### Foreign Invasion Predicted

- 24 Therefore, as the tongue of fire  
 devours the stubble,  
 and as dry grass sinks down in  
 the flame,  
 so their root will become rotten,  
 and their blossom go up like dust;  
 for they have rejected the instruction  
 of the LORD of hosts,  
 and have despised the word of the  
 Holy One of Israel.
- 25 Therefore the anger of the LORD was  
 kindled against his people,

and he stretched out his hand  
 against them and struck them;  
 the mountains quaked,  
 and their corpses were like refuse  
 in the streets.  
 For all this his anger has not turned  
 away,  
 and his hand is stretched out still.

- 26 He will raise a signal for a nation far  
 away,  
 and whistle for a people at the  
 ends of the earth;  
 Here they come, swiftly, speedily!
- 27 None of them is weary, none  
 stumbles,  
 none slumbers or sleeps,  
 not a loincloth is loose,  
 not a sandal-thong broken;  
 28 their arrows are sharp,  
 all their bows bent,  
 their horses' hoofs seem like flint,  
 and their wheels like the whirlwind.
- 29 Their roaring is like a lion,  
 like young lions they roar;  
 they growl and seize their prey,  
 they carry it off, and no one can  
 rescue.
- 30 They will roar over it on that day,  
 like the roaring of the sea.  
 And if one look to the land—  
 only darkness and distress;  
 and the light grows dark with clouds.

### A Vision of God in the Temple

**6** In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. <sup>2</sup> Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. <sup>3</sup> And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory."

<sup>4</sup> The pivots<sup>a</sup> on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke.

<sup>5</sup> And I said: "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"

<sup>6</sup> Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. <sup>7</sup> The seraph<sup>b</sup> touched my mouth with it and said:

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>b</sup> Heb *He*

### Read Isaiah 6

This vision is set in the heavenly court where the call and commissioning of Isaiah took place. It is a time of international crisis, with the menacing shadow of Assyria looming in the distance. “Holy, holy, holy” expresses the awful holiness of Yahweh. Holiness is the indescribable quality differentiating God from all creation. We are holy inasmuch as we are closely related to God. At the same time, Isaiah acknowledges his own unworthiness and inadequacy. The prophet is cleansed when a burning coal from the altar is placed on his tongue.

**Reflect:** Note that in this passage God’s message is not to lead to repentance, but to hardening of hearts. What is your understanding of this outcome?

**Pray:** May we grow in our appreciation for “holiness” and, at the same time, in our awareness of our own unworthiness before God.

**Act:** Let us incarnate, to the extent possible, God’s holiness in our relationships with our neighbors.

“Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.”<sup>8</sup> Then 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!”<sup>9</sup> And he said, “Go and say to this people:

‘Keep listening, but do not comprehend;  
keep looking, but do not understand.’

- <sup>10</sup> Make the mind of this people dull,  
and stop their ears,  
and shut their eyes,  
so that they may not look with their eyes,  
and listen with their ears,  
and comprehend with their minds,  
and turn and be healed.”
- <sup>11</sup> Then I said, “How long, O Lord?” And he said: “Until cities lie waste  
without inhabitant,  
and houses without people,  
and the land is utterly desolate;  
<sup>12</sup> until the LORD sends everyone far away,  
and vast is the emptiness in the midst of the  
land.
- <sup>13</sup> Even if a tenth part remain in it,  
it will be burned again,  
like a terebinth or an oak  
whose stump remains standing  
when it is felled.”<sup>a</sup>  
The holy seed is its stump.

### Isaiah Reassures King Ahaz

**7** In the days of Ahaz son of Jotham son of Uziah, king of Judah, King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah son of Remaliah of Israel went up to attack Jerusalem, but could not mount an attack against it.<sup>2</sup> When the house of David heard that Aram had allied itself with Ephraim, the heart of Ahaz<sup>b</sup> and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.

<sup>3</sup> Then the LORD said to Isaiah, Go out to meet Ahaz, you and your son Shear-jashub,<sup>c</sup> at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller’s Field,<sup>4</sup> and say to him, Take heed, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands, because of the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and the son of Remaliah.<sup>5</sup> Because Aram—with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah—has plotted evil against you, saying, <sup>6</sup>Let us go up against Judah and cut off Jerusalem<sup>d</sup> and conquer it for ourselves and make the son of Tabeel king in it;<sup>7</sup> therefore thus says the Lord GOD:

It shall not stand,  
and it shall not come to pass.

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>b</sup> Heb *his heart*

<sup>c</sup> That is *A remnant shall return*

<sup>d</sup> Heb *cut it off*

### Read Isaiah 7

The greatest resource in time of trouble is faith, that is, dependence on God. It is not an intellectual acceptance of an idea but a complete commitment of self to God. Note the name “Immanuel,” which means “God is with us.” Following the Greek tradition, the early Christians understood “the young woman” (v. 14) to be the mother of Jesus. The Hebrew text does not use the technical term for “virgin.”

**Reflect:** Faith means absolute trust in and dependence upon God.

**Pray:** May I act with faith and may I come before God with an open mind and an open heart.

**Act:** In troubling times, we should do our best to rely on our faith in God.

<sup>8</sup> For the head of Aram is Damascus,  
and the head of Damascus is Rezin.  
(Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be shattered,  
no longer a people.)

<sup>9</sup> The head of Ephraim is Samaria,  
and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah.  
If you do not stand firm in faith,  
you shall not stand at all.

### Isaiah Gives Ahaz the Sign of Immanuel

<sup>10</sup> Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, <sup>11</sup> Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. <sup>12</sup> But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test. <sup>13</sup> Then Isaiah<sup>a</sup> said: “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? <sup>14</sup> Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman<sup>b</sup> is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.<sup>c</sup> <sup>15</sup> He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. <sup>16</sup> For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted. <sup>17</sup> The LORD will bring on you and on your people and on your ancestral house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—the king of Assyria.”

<sup>18</sup> On that day the LORD will whistle for the fly that is at the sources of the streams of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. <sup>19</sup> And they will all come and settle in the steep ravines, and in the clefts of the rocks, and on all the thornbushes, and on all the pastures.

<sup>20</sup> On that day the Lord will shave with a razor hired beyond the River—with the king of Assyria—the head and the hair of the feet, and it will take off the beard as well.

<sup>21</sup> On that day one will keep alive a young cow and two sheep, <sup>22</sup> and will eat curds because of the abundance of milk that they give; for everyone that is left in the land shall eat curds and honey.

<sup>23</sup> On that day every place where there used to be a thousand vines, worth a thousand shekels of silver, will become briars and thorns. <sup>24</sup> With bow and arrows one will go there, for all the land will be briars and thorns; <sup>25</sup> and as for all the hills that used to be hoed with a hoe, you will not go there for fear of briars and thorns; but they will become a place where cattle are let loose and where sheep tread.

### Isaiah’s Son a Sign of the Assyrian Invasion

**8** Then the LORD said to me, Take a large tablet and write on it in common characters, “Belonging to

<sup>a</sup> Heb *he*

<sup>b</sup> Gk *the virgin*

<sup>c</sup> That is *God is with us*

## Read Isaiah 8

Overshadowing this text is the threat of the Syro-Ephraimite coalition. However, a promise of deliverance for Judah follows. The enemy's plan will be thwarted because of "Immanuel," or "God is with us" (v. 10).

**Reflect:** It is sometimes difficult to look beyond human power and seek guidance from God. What biblical figures are rewarded for their faith?

**Pray:** May our actions reflect the fact that "God is with us."

**Act:** Everyday actions should be guided by an awareness of the presence of God among us.

Maher-shalal-hash-baz,"<sup>a</sup> <sup>2</sup> and have it attested<sup>b</sup> for me by reliable witnesses, the priest Uriah and Zechariah son of Jeberechiah. <sup>3</sup> And I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then the LORD said to me, Name him Maher-shalal-hash-baz; <sup>4</sup> for before the child knows how to call "My father" or "My mother," the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away by the king of Assyria.

<sup>5</sup> The LORD spoke to me again: <sup>6</sup> Because this people has refused the waters of Shiloah that flow gently, and melt in fear before<sup>c</sup> Rezin and the son of Remaliah; <sup>7</sup> therefore, the Lord is bringing up against it the mighty flood waters of the River, the king of Assyria and all his glory; it will rise above all its channels and overflow all its banks; <sup>8</sup> it will sweep on into Judah as a flood, and, pouring over, it will reach up to the neck; and its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.

- <sup>9</sup> Band together, you peoples, and be dismayed;  
listen, all you far countries;  
gird yourselves and be dismayed;  
gird yourselves and be dismayed!
- <sup>10</sup> Take counsel together, but it shall be brought to naught;  
speak a word, but it will not stand,  
for God is with us.<sup>d</sup>

<sup>11</sup> For the LORD spoke thus to me while his hand was strong upon me, and warned me not to walk in the way of this people, saying: <sup>12</sup> Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what it fears, or be in dread. <sup>13</sup> But the LORD of hosts, him you shall regard as holy; let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. <sup>14</sup> He will become a sanctuary, a stone one strikes against; for both houses of Israel he will become a rock one stumbles over—a trap and a snare for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. <sup>15</sup> And many among them shall stumble; they shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken.

## Disciples of Isaiah

<sup>16</sup> Bind up the testimony, seal the teaching among my disciples. <sup>17</sup> I will wait for the LORD, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him. <sup>18</sup> See, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are signs and portents in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion. <sup>19</sup> Now if people say to you, "Consult the ghosts and the familiar spirits that chirp and mutter; should not a people consult their gods, the dead on behalf of the living, <sup>20</sup> for teaching and for instruction?" surely, those who speak like this will have no dawn! <sup>21</sup> They will pass through

<sup>a</sup> That is *The spoil speeds, the prey hastens*

<sup>b</sup> Q Ms Gk Syr: MT and I caused to be attested

<sup>c</sup> Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>d</sup> Heb *immanu el*

the land,<sup>a</sup> greatly distressed and hungry; when they are hungry, they will be enraged and will curse<sup>b</sup> their king and their gods. They will turn their faces upward,

<sup>22</sup> or they will look to the earth, but will see only distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and they will be thrust into thick darkness.<sup>c</sup>

### Read Isaiah 9:1–7

This is an oracle of promise to Judah, implying a new age and a new ruler. A transformation has come over the people and it is the reason for their great joy. Most important, there will be no more war! The child, Immanuel, will bear a series of names reflecting the nature of God: all-wise, great-warrior, God-father, and *shalom* (peace).

**Reflect:** If we firmly believe in God, we shall be well on our way to realizing “no more war.”

**Pray:** Pray fervently that in all places and on all levels war may become extinct.

**Act:** If in all of our actions we manifest universal love, then war will be no more.

### The Righteous Reign of the Coming King

**9**<sup>d</sup> But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

<sup>2e</sup> The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—  
on them light has shined.

**3** You have multiplied the nation,  
you have increased its joy;  
they rejoice before you  
as with joy at the harvest,  
as people exult when dividing plunder.

**4** For the yoke of their burden,  
and the bar across their shoulders,  
the rod of their oppressor,  
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

**5** For all the boots of the tramping warriors  
and all the garments rolled in blood  
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

**6** For a child has been born for us,  
a son given to us;  
authority rests upon his shoulders;  
and he is named  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

**7** His authority shall grow continually,  
and there shall be endless peace  
for the throne of David and his kingdom.  
He will establish and uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
from this time onward and forevermore.  
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

### Judgment on Arrogance and Oppression

- 8** The Lord sent a word against Jacob,  
and it fell on Israel;  
**9** and all the people knew it—  
Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria—  
but in pride and arrogance of heart they said:  
**10** “The bricks have fallen,  
but we will build with dressed stones;  
the sycamores have been cut down,  
but we will put cedars in their place.”

<sup>a</sup> Heb *it*

<sup>b</sup> Or *curse by*

<sup>c</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>d</sup> Ch 8.23 in Heb

<sup>e</sup> Ch 9.1 in Heb

### Read Isaiah 9:8–21

Again, this is a judgment of Israel's leaders, terminating in the fall of the northern kingdom. Social breakdown has led to anarchy and ultimately Israel's self-destruction. The leaders misled the people and neighborly love was no more.

**Reflect:** The only hope in the midst of disaster is a turning to Yahweh. Without God, we face utter destruction.

**Pray:** We pray that we seek God always, especially in times of great trial.

**Act:** Act with neighborly love in an attempt to restore a right relationship with God.

- 11 So the LORD raised adversaries<sup>a</sup> against them,  
and stirred up their enemies,  
12 the Arameans on the east and the Philistines on  
the west,  
and they devoured Israel with open mouth.  
For all this his anger has not turned away;  
his hand is stretched out still.
- 13 The people did not turn to him who struck them,  
or seek the LORD of hosts.  
14 So the LORD cut off from Israel head and tail,  
palm branch and reed in one day—  
15 elders and dignitaries are the head,  
and prophets who teach lies are the tail;  
16 for those who led this people led them astray,  
and those who were led by them were left in  
confusion.
- 17 That is why the Lord did not have pity on<sup>b</sup> their  
young people,  
or compassion on their orphans and widows;  
for everyone was godless and an evildoer,  
and every mouth spoke folly.  
For all this his anger has not turned away;  
his hand is stretched out still.
- 18 For wickedness burned like a fire,  
consuming briars and thorns;  
it kindled the thickets of the forest,  
and they swirled upward in a column of smoke.
- 19 Through the wrath of the LORD of hosts  
the land was burned,  
and the people became like fuel for the fire;  
no one spared another.
- 20 They gorged on the right, but still were hungry,  
and they devoured on the left, but were not  
satisfied;  
they devoured the flesh of their own kindred;<sup>c</sup>
- 21 Manasseh devoured Ephraim, and Ephraim  
Manasseh,  
and together they were against Judah.  
For all this his anger has not turned away;  
his hand is stretched out still.

- 10** Ah, you who make iniquitous decrees,  
who write oppressive statutes,  
2 to turn aside the needy from justice  
and to rob the poor of my people of their right,  
that widows may be your spoil,  
and that you may make the orphans your  
prey!  
3 What will you do on the day of punishment,  
in the calamity that will come from far away?

<sup>a</sup> Cn: Heb *the adversaries of Rezin*

<sup>b</sup> Q Ms: MT *rejoice over*

<sup>c</sup> Or *arm*

### Read Isaiah 10

This is a further indictment of those who oppress the poor, the widows, and the orphans. However, as the name of Isaiah's first child, Shear-jashub, denotes, "a remnant will return." Note well that only a remnant will return. Assyria is the rod of Yahweh's anger. But, just when the enemy is about to devastate Jerusalem, God intervenes and destroys the enemy.

**Reflect:** Friends of God are characterized by a lively awareness of social justice and a commitment to its practice.

**Pray:** Pray for an awareness of the needs of others.

**Act:** In all things, act according to the principles of social justice.

To whom will you flee for help,  
and where will you leave your wealth,  
4 so as not to crouch among the prisoners  
or fall among the slain?  
For all this his anger has not turned away;  
his hand is stretched out still.

### Arrogant Assyria Also Judged

5 Ah, Assyria, the rod of my anger—  
the club in their hands is my fury!  
6 Against a godless nation I send him,  
and against the people of my wrath I command  
him,  
to take spoil and seize plunder,  
and to tread them down like the mire of the  
streets.  
7 But this is not what he intends,  
nor does he have this in mind;  
but it is in his heart to destroy,  
and to cut off nations not a few.  
8 For he says:  
"Are not my commanders all kings?  
9 Is not Calno like Carchemish?  
Is not Hamath like Arpad?  
Is not Samaria like Damascus?"  
10 As my hand has reached to the kingdoms of the  
idols  
whose images were greater than those of  
Jerusalem and Samaria,  
11 shall I not do to Jerusalem and her idols  
what I have done to Samaria and her images?"  
12 When the Lord has finished all his work on Mount  
Zion and on Jerusalem, he<sup>a</sup> will punish the arrogant  
boasting of the king of Assyria and his haughty pride.  
13 For he says:  
"By the strength of my hand I have done it,  
and by my wisdom, for I have understanding;  
I have removed the boundaries of peoples,  
and have plundered their treasures;  
like a bull I have brought down those who sat  
on thrones.  
14 My hand has found, like a nest,  
the wealth of the peoples;  
and as one gathers eggs that have been forsaken,  
so I have gathered all the earth;  
and there was none that moved a wing,  
or opened its mouth, or chirped."  
15 Shall the ax vaunt itself over the one who wields it,  
or the saw magnify itself against the one who  
handles it?

<sup>a</sup> Heb /

- As if a rod should raise the one who lifts it up,  
 or as if a staff should lift the one who is not wood!
- 16 Therefore the Sovereign, the LORD of hosts,  
 will send wasting sickness among his stout warriors,  
 and under his glory a burning will be kindled,  
 like the burning of fire.
- 17 The light of Israel will become a fire,  
 and his Holy One a flame;  
 and it will burn and devour his thorns and briars in one day.
- 18 The glory of his forest and his fruitful land  
 the LORD will destroy, both soul and body,  
 and it will be as when an invalid wastes away.
- 19 The remnant of the trees of his forest will be so few  
 that a child can write them down.

### The Repentant Remnant of Israel

20 On that day the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no more lean on the one who struck them, but will lean on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. <sup>21</sup> A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God. <sup>22</sup> For though your people Israel were like the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return. Destruction is decreed, overflowing with righteousness. <sup>23</sup> For the Lord GOD of hosts will make a full end, as decreed, in all the earth.<sup>a</sup>

24 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD of hosts: O my people, who live in Zion, do

not be afraid of the Assyrians when they beat you with a rod and lift up their staff against you as the Egyptians did. <sup>25</sup> For in a very little while my indignation will come to an end, and my anger will be directed to their destruction. <sup>26</sup> The LORD of hosts will wield a whip against them, as when he struck Midian at the rock of Oreb; his staff will be over the sea, and he will lift it as he did in Egypt. <sup>27</sup> On that day his burden will be removed from your shoulder, and his yoke will be destroyed from your neck.

- He has gone up from Rimmon,<sup>b</sup>  
<sup>28</sup> he has come to Aiath;  
 he has passed through Migron,  
 at Michmash he stores his baggage;  
<sup>29</sup> they have crossed over the pass,  
 at Geba they lodge for the night;  
 Ramah trembles,  
 Gibeah of Saul has fled.
- <sup>30</sup> Cry aloud, O daughter Gallim!  
 Listen, O Laishah!  
 Answer her, O Anathoth!
- <sup>31</sup> Madmenah is in flight,  
 the inhabitants of Gebim flee for safety.
- <sup>32</sup> This very day he will halt at Nob,  
 he will shake his fist  
 at the mount of daughter Zion,  
 the hill of Jerusalem.
- <sup>33</sup> Look, the Sovereign, the LORD of hosts,  
 will lop the boughs with terrifying power;  
 the tallest trees will be cut down,  
 and the lofty will be brought low.
- <sup>34</sup> He will hack down the thickets of the forest with an ax,  
 and Lebanon with its majestic trees<sup>c</sup> will fall.

### The Peaceful Kingdom

**11** A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,  
 and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

<sup>2</sup> The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him,  
 the spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
 the spirit of counsel and might,  
 the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

<sup>3</sup> His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.

<sup>a</sup> Or land

<sup>b</sup> Cn: Heb and his yoke from your neck, and a yoke will be destroyed because of fatness

<sup>c</sup> Cn Compare Gk Vg: Heb with a majestic one



### Read Isaiah 11:1—12:6

These chapters predict Israel's return from exile and offer a vision of ideal peace. The prophet names the gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, and fear of Yahweh. A radical transformation will take place with the return of universal peace. In this radically changed situation, God will be in charge. Once again the prophet uses Exodus typology to illustrate how this transformation is to take place.

**Reflect:** The radical transformation will take place only because "God is with us" (Immanuel).

**Pray:** Ask that we have a proper attitude toward the poor and the afflicted, which is fundamental to a life of faith.

**Act:** Our daily living should embrace the gifts of the Holy Spirit as we seek the coming of God's reign of universal peace.

- He shall not judge by what his eyes see,  
or decide by what his ears hear;
- 4 but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,  
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;  
he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,  
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the  
wicked.
- 5 Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist,  
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.
- 6 The wolf shall live with the lamb,  
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,  
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,  
and a little child shall lead them.
- 7 The cow and the bear shall graze,  
their young shall lie down together;  
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
- 8 The nursing child shall play over the hole of the  
asp,  
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the  
adder's den.
- 9 They will not hurt or destroy  
on all my holy mountain;  
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the  
LORD  
as the waters cover the sea.

### Return of the Remnant of Israel and Judah

10 On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.

11 On that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that is left of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Ethiopia,<sup>a</sup> from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea.

12 He will raise a signal for the nations,  
and will assemble the outcasts of Israel,  
and gather the dispersed of Judah  
from the four corners of the earth.

13 The jealousy of Ephraim shall depart,  
the hostility of Judah shall be cut off;  
Ephraim shall not be jealous of Judah,  
and Judah shall not be hostile towards Ephraim.

14 But they shall swoop down on the backs of the  
Philistines in the west,  
together they shall plunder the people of the  
east.

They shall put forth their hand against Edom  
and Moab,  
and the Ammonites shall obey them.

<sup>a</sup> Or Nubia; Heb Cush

15 And the LORD will utterly destroy  
the tongue of the sea of Egypt;  
and will wave his hand over the  
River  
with his scorching wind;  
and will split it into seven channels,  
and make a way to cross on foot;

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

### Read Isaiah 13:1—14:23

These verses deal with oracles against foreign nations, especially Babylon, whose destruction is predicted. "The day of the LORD" concerns the overthrow of Babylon when Yahweh will come to annihilate the enemies of God and especially the king of Babylon, who declared himself to be a god. Then follows the restoration of Israel.

**Reflect:** The salvation (restoration) of Israel is affected through Yahweh. After the destruction comes the reconstruction.

**Pray:** May we avoid those issues that lead to destruction.

**Act:** We should make a sincere effort to be peacemakers at all times.

### Thanksgiving and Praise

- 12** You will say in that day:  
I will give thanks to you, O LORD,  
for though you were angry with me,  
your anger turned away,  
and you comforted me.
- 2 Surely God is my salvation;  
I will trust, and will not be afraid,  
for the LORD GOD<sup>a</sup> is my strength and my might;  
he has become my salvation.
- 3 With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. 4 And you will say in that day:  
Give thanks to the LORD,  
call on his name;  
make known his deeds among the nations;  
proclaim that his name is exalted.
- 5 Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously;  
let this be known<sup>b</sup> in all the earth.
- 6 Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal<sup>c</sup> Zion,  
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

### Proclamation against Babylon

- 13** The oracle concerning Babylon that Isaiah son of Amoz saw.
- 2 On a bare hill raise a signal,  
cry aloud to them;  
wave the hand for them to enter  
the gates of the nobles.
- 3 I myself have commanded my consecrated ones,  
have summoned my warriors, my proudly  
exulting ones,  
to execute my anger.
- 4 Listen, a tumult on the mountains  
as of a great multitude!  
Listen, an uproar of kingdoms,  
of nations gathering together!  
The LORD of hosts is mustering  
an army for battle.
- 5 They come from a distant land,  
from the end of the heavens,

<sup>a</sup> Heb for Yah, the LORD

<sup>b</sup> Or this is made known

<sup>c</sup> Or O inhabitant of

- the LORD and the weapons of his indignation,  
to destroy the whole earth.
- 6 Wail, for the day of the LORD is near;  
it will come like destruction from the Almighty!<sup>a</sup>
- 7 Therefore all hands will be feeble,  
and every human heart will melt,  
8 and they will be dismayed.  
Pangs and agony will seize them;  
they will be in anguish like a woman in labor.  
They will look aghast at one another;  
their faces will be aflame.
- 9 See, the day of the LORD comes,  
cruel, with wrath and fierce anger,  
to make the earth a desolation,  
and to destroy its sinners from it.
- 10 For the stars of the heavens and  
their constellations  
will not give their light;  
the sun will be dark at its rising,  
and the moon will not shed its light.
- 11 I will punish the world for its evil,  
and the wicked for their iniquity;  
I will put an end to the pride of the arrogant,  
and lay low the insolence of tyrants.
- 12 I will make mortals more rare than fine gold,  
and humans than the gold of Ophir.
- 13 Therefore I will make the heavens tremble,  
and the earth will be shaken out of its place,  
at the wrath of the LORD of hosts  
in the day of his fierce anger.
- 14 Like a hunted gazelle,  
or like sheep with no one to gather them,  
all will turn to their own people,  
and all will flee to their own lands.
- 15 Whoever is found will be thrust through,  
and whoever is caught will fall by the sword.
- 16 Their infants will be dashed to pieces before their eyes;  
their houses will be plundered,  
and their wives ravished.
- 17 See, I am stirring up the Medes against them,  
who have no regard for silver  
and do not delight in gold.
- 18 Their bows will slaughter the young men;  
they will have no mercy on the fruit of the womb;  
their eyes will not pity children.
- 19 And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms,  
the splendor and pride of the Chaldeans,  
will be like Sodom and Gomorrah  
when God overthrew them.
- 20 It will never be inhabited  
or lived in for all generations;  
Arabs will not pitch their tents there,  
shepherds will not make their flocks lie down there.
- 21 But wild animals will lie down there,  
and its houses will be full of howling creatures;  
there ostriches will live,  
and there goat-demons will dance.
- 22 Hyenas will cry in its towers,  
and jackals in the pleasant palaces;  
its time is close at hand,  
and its days will not be prolonged.

### Restoration of Judah

**14** But the LORD will have compassion on Jacob and will again choose Israel, and will set them in their own land; and aliens will join them and attach themselves to the house of Jacob. <sup>2</sup> And the nations will take them and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel will possess the nations<sup>b</sup> as male and female slaves in the LORD's land; they will take captive those

<sup>a</sup> Traditional rendering of Heb *Shaddai*

<sup>b</sup> Heb *them*

**Read Isaiah 14:24—16:13**

This passage is a judgment against Assyria, Philistia, and Moab. Moab had been prosperous, but eventually it became a desert. This was because of Moab's pride and arrogance. Still, Jerusalem should reach out with mercy to the suffering Moabites. The messengers from Philistia try to persuade Judah to join their revolt. Once again, Israel must be conscious of its obligation to the poor and the needy.

**Reflect:** Note the prophet's tender sympathy for Moab in her affliction. Even though Moab has been punished because of its own wrongdoings, the Israelites are asked to show Moab kindness.

**Pray:** We should always pray with sympathy for both our friends and enemies.

**Act:** All should, in their own way, work to eliminate hostility and hatred.

who were their captors, and rule over those who oppressed them.

**Downfall of the King of Babylon**

3 When the LORD has given you rest from your pain and turmoil and the hard service with which you were made to serve, <sup>4</sup> you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon:

How the oppressor has ceased!

How his insolence<sup>a</sup> has ceased!

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

6 that struck down the peoples in wrath  
with unceasing blows,  
that ruled the nations in anger  
with unrelenting persecution.

7 The whole earth is at rest and quiet;  
they break forth into singing.

8 The cypresses exult over you,  
the cedars of Lebanon, saying,  
“Since you were laid low,  
no one comes to cut us down.”

9 Sheol beneath is stirred up  
to meet you when you come;  
it rouses the shades to greet you,  
all who were leaders of the earth;  
it raises from their thrones  
all who were kings of the nations.

10 All of them will speak  
and say to you:  
“You too have become as weak as we!  
You have become like us!”

11 Your pomp is brought down to Sheol,  
and the sound of your harps;  
maggots are the bed beneath you,  
and worms are your covering.

12 How you are fallen from heaven,  
O Day Star, son of Dawn!  
How you are cut down to the ground,  
you who laid the nations low!

13 You said in your heart,  
“I will ascend to heaven;  
I will raise my throne  
above the stars of God;  
I will sit on the mount of assembly  
on the heights of Zaphon;<sup>b</sup>

14 I will ascend to the tops of the clouds,  
I will make myself like the Most High.”

15 But you are brought down to Sheol,  
to the depths of the Pit.

<sup>a</sup> Q Ms Compare Gk Syr Vg: Meaning of MT uncertain

<sup>b</sup> Or assembly in the far north

- 16 Those who see you will stare at you,  
and ponder over you:  
“Is this the man who made the earth  
tremble,  
who shook kingdoms,  
17 who made the world like a desert  
and overthrew its cities,  
who would not let his prisoners go  
home?”
- 18 All the kings of the nations lie in glory,  
each in his own tomb;  
19 but you are cast out, away from your  
grave,  
like loathsome carrion,<sup>a</sup>  
clothed with the dead, those pierced  
by the sword,  
who go down to the stones of the  
Pit,  
like a corpse trampled underfoot.
- 20 You will not be joined with them in  
burial,  
because you have destroyed your  
land,  
you have killed your people.  
May the descendants of evildoers  
nevermore be named!
- 21 Prepare slaughter for his sons  
because of the guilt of their father.<sup>b</sup>  
Let them never rise to possess the  
earth  
or cover the face of the world with  
cities.

22 I will rise up against them, says the  
LORD of hosts, and will cut off from Babylon  
name and remnant, offspring and posterity,  
says the LORD. <sup>23</sup> And I will make it a pos-  
session of the hedgehog, and pools of wa-  
ter, and I will sweep it with the broom of de-  
struction, says the LORD of hosts.

### An Oracle concerning Assyria

- 24 The LORD of hosts has sworn:  
As I have designed,  
so shall it be;

- and as I have planned,  
so shall it come to pass:  
25 I will break the Assyrian in my land,  
and on my mountains trample  
him under foot;  
his yoke shall be removed from them,  
and his burden from their  
shoulders.
- 26 This is the plan that is planned  
concerning the whole earth;  
and this is the hand that is stretched  
out  
over all the nations.
- 27 For the LORD of hosts has planned,  
and who will annul it?  
His hand is stretched out,  
and who will turn it back?

### An Oracle concerning Philistia

- 28 In the year that King Ahaz died this ora-  
cle came:
- 29 Do not rejoice, all you Philistines,  
that the rod that struck you is  
broken,  
for from the root of the snake will  
come forth an adder,  
and its fruit will be a flying fiery  
serpent.
- 30 The firstborn of the poor will graze,  
and the needy lie down in safety;  
but I will make your root die of  
famine,  
and your remnant I<sup>c</sup> will kill.
- 31 Wail, O gate; cry, O city;  
melt in fear, O Philistia, all of you!  
For smoke comes out of the north,  
and there is no straggler in its  
ranks.
- 32 What will one answer the  
messengers of the nation?  
“The LORD has founded Zion,  
and the needy among his people  
will find refuge in her.”

### An Oracle concerning Moab

**15** An oracle concerning Moab.

Because Ar is laid waste in a night,  
Moab is undone;

<sup>a</sup> Cn Compare Gk: Heb *like a loathed branch*

<sup>b</sup> Syr Compare Gk: Heb *fathers*

<sup>c</sup> Q Ms Vg: MT *he*

because Kir is laid waste in a night,  
Moab is undone.

- 2 Dibon<sup>a</sup> has gone up to the temple,  
to the high places to weep;  
over Nebo and over Medeba  
Moab wails.  
On every head is baldness,  
every beard is shorn;  
3 in the streets they bind on sackcloth;  
on the housetops and in the  
squares  
everyone wails and melts in tears.  
4 Heshbon and Elealeh cry out,  
their voices are heard as far as  
Jahaz;  
therefore the loins of Moab quiver;<sup>b</sup>  
his soul trembles.  
5 My heart cries out for Moab;  
his fugitives flee to Zoar,  
to Eglath-shelishiyah.  
For at the ascent of Luhith  
they go up weeping;

on the road to Horonaim  
they raise a cry of destruction;

- 6 the waters of Nimrim  
are a desolation;  
the grass is withered, the new  
growth fails,  
the verdure is no more.  
7 Therefore the abundance they have  
gained  
and what they have laid up  
they carry away  
over the Wadi of the Willows.  
8 For a cry has gone  
around the land of Moab;  
the wailing reaches to Eglaim,  
the wailing reaches to Beer-elim.  
9 For the waters of Dibon<sup>c</sup> are full of  
blood;  
yet I will bring upon Dibon<sup>c</sup> even  
more—  
a lion for those of Moab who escape,  
for the remnant of the land.

**16** Send lambs  
to the ruler of the land,  
from Sela, by way of the desert,  
to the mount of daughter Zion.

- 2 Like fluttering birds,  
like scattered nestlings,  
so are the daughters of Moab  
at the fords of the Arnon.  
3 “Give counsel,  
grant justice;  
make your shade like night  
at the height of noon;  
hide the outcasts,  
do not betray the fugitive;  
4 let the outcasts of Moab  
settle among you;  
be a refuge to them  
from the destroyer.”

When the oppressor is no more,  
and destruction has ceased,  
and marauders have vanished from the land,  
5 then a throne shall be established in steadfast  
love  
in the tent of David,  
and on it shall sit in faithfulness  
a ruler who seeks justice  
and is swift to do what is right.

<sup>a</sup> Cn: Heb *the house and Dibon*

<sup>b</sup> Cn Compare Gk Syr: Heb *the armed men of Moab cry aloud*

<sup>c</sup> Q Ms Vg Compare Syr: MT *Dimon*

- 6 We have heard of the pride of Moab  
—how proud he is!—  
of his arrogance, his pride, and his  
insolence;  
his boasts are false.
- 7 Therefore let Moab wail,  
let everyone wail for Moab.  
Mourn, utterly stricken,  
for the raisin cakes of Kir-hareseth.
- 8 For the fields of Heshbon languish,  
and the vines of Sibmah,  
whose clusters once made drunk  
the lords of the nations,  
reached to Jazer  
and strayed to the desert;  
their shoots once spread abroad  
and crossed over the sea.
- 9 Therefore I weep with the weeping of  
Jazer  
for the vines of Sibmah;  
I drench you with my tears,  
O Heshbon and Elealeh;  
for the shout over your fruit harvest  
and your grain harvest has ceased.
- 10 Joy and gladness are taken away  
from the fruitful field;  
and in the vineyards no songs are sung,  
no shouts are raised;  
no treader treads out wine in the  
presses;  
the vintage-shout is hushed.<sup>a</sup>
- 11 Therefore my heart throbs like a  
harp for Moab,  
and my very soul for Kir-heres.
- 12 When Moab presents himself, when  
he wearies himself upon the high place,  
when he comes to his sanctuary to pray, he  
will not prevail.
- 13 This was the word that the LORD  
spoke concerning Moab in the past. <sup>14</sup> But  
now the LORD says, In three years, like the  
years of a hired worker, the glory of Moab  
will be brought into contempt, in spite of all  
its great multitude; and those who survive  
will be very few and feeble.

### Read Isaiah 17–18

This is an oracle against Damascus, capital of Syria. The Aramean (Syrian) and Israelite nations allied against Judah in the Syro-Ephraimite war. The prophet blames Israel's idolatry for its fall, but also promises conversion.

**Reflect:** Note that Yahweh punishes as well as saves.

**Pray:** We pray fervently for a permanent end to war.

**Act:** In our personal relationships, let us act as though warfare is no more.

### An Oracle concerning Damascus

## 17 An oracle concerning Damascus.

- See, Damascus will cease to be a city,  
and will become a heap of ruins.
- 2 Her towns will be deserted forever;<sup>b</sup>  
they will be places for flocks,  
which will lie down, and no one will make them  
afraid.
- 3 The fortress will disappear from Ephraim,  
and the kingdom from Damascus;  
and the remnant of Aram will be  
like the glory of the children of Israel,  
says the LORD of hosts.
- 4 On that day  
the glory of Jacob will be brought low,  
and the fat of his flesh will grow lean.
- 5 And it shall be as when reapers gather standing  
grain  
and their arms harvest the ears,  
and as when one gleanes the ears of grain  
in the Valley of Rephaim.
- 6 Gleanings will be left in it,  
as when an olive tree is beaten—  
two or three berries  
in the top of the highest bough,

<sup>a</sup> Gk: Heb *I have hushed*

<sup>b</sup> Cn Compare Gk: Heb *the cities of Aroer are deserted*

four or five  
on the branches of a fruit tree,  
says the LORD God of Israel.

7 On that day people will regard their Maker, and their eyes will look to the Holy One of Israel; <sup>8</sup> they will not have regard for the altars, the work of their hands, and they will not look to what their own fingers have made, either the sacred poles<sup>a</sup> or the altars of incense.

9 On that day their strong cities will be like the deserted places of the Hivites and the Amorites,<sup>b</sup> which they deserted because of the children of Israel, and there will be desolation.

10 For you have forgotten the God of your salvation,  
and have not remembered the Rock of your refuge;  
therefore, though you plant pleasant plants  
and set out slips of an alien god,

11 though you make them grow on the day that you plant them,  
and make them blossom in the morning that you sow;  
yet the harvest will flee away  
in a day of grief and incurable pain.

12 Ah, the thunder of many peoples,  
they thunder like the thundering of the sea!

Ah, the roar of nations,  
they roar like the roaring of mighty waters!

13 The nations roar like the roaring of many waters,  
but he will rebuke them, and they will flee far away,  
chased like chaff on the mountains  
and whirling dust before the storm.

14 At evening time, lo, terror!  
Before morning, they are no more.  
This is the fate of those who despoil us,  
and the lot of those who plunder us.

### An Oracle concerning Ethiopia

**18** Ah, land of whirring wings  
beyond the rivers of Ethiopia,<sup>c</sup>  
<sup>2</sup> sending ambassadors by the Nile  
in vessels of papyrus on the waters!  
Go, you swift messengers,  
to a nation tall and smooth,  
to a people feared near and far,  
a nation mighty and conquering,  
whose land the rivers divide.

<sup>3</sup> All you inhabitants of the world,  
you who live on the earth,  
when a signal is raised on the mountains, look!  
When a trumpet is blown, listen!

<sup>4</sup> For thus the LORD said to me:  
I will quietly look from my dwelling  
like clear heat in sunshine,  
like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest.

<sup>5</sup> For before the harvest, when the blossom is over  
and the flower becomes a ripening grape,  
he will cut off the shoots with pruning hooks,  
and the spreading branches he will hew away.

<sup>6</sup> They shall all be left  
to the birds of prey of the mountains  
and to the animals of the earth.

<sup>a</sup> Heb *Asherim*

<sup>b</sup> Cn Compare Gk: Heb *places of the wood and the highest bough*

<sup>c</sup> Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*



And the birds of prey will summer  
on them,  
and all the animals of the earth  
will winter on them.

7 At that time gifts will be brought to

the LORD of hosts from<sup>a</sup> a people tall and  
smooth, from a people feared near and  
far, a nation mighty and conquering,  
whose land the rivers divide, to Mount  
Zion, the place of the name of the LORD of  
hosts.

### Read Isaiah 19–21

This is a doom oracle against Egypt and Babylon. The leaders of Egypt proved themselves foolish and incompetent. Yahweh will smite Egypt; later Yahweh will heal Egypt. It has been said the only gentle utterance in the Hebrew Scriptures upon Israel's hereditary enemies pertains to Dumah (21:11–12). The sympathetic tone does not close the door to future hope.

**Reflect:** There is never a time when redemption becomes impossible.

**Pray:** May we come to “know” Yahweh, that is, fidelity to Yahweh's word.

**Act:** We must always be willing to share “bread” and “water,” even with the enemy.

### An Oracle concerning Egypt

**19** An oracle concerning Egypt.

See, the LORD is riding on a swift cloud  
and comes to Egypt;  
the idols of Egypt will tremble at his presence,  
and the heart of the Egyptians will melt within  
them.

- 2 I will stir up Egyptians against Egyptians,  
and they will fight, one against the other,  
neighbor against neighbor,  
city against city, kingdom against kingdom;
- 3 the spirit of the Egyptians within them will be  
emptied out,  
and I will confound their plans;  
they will consult the idols and the spirits of the dead  
and the ghosts and the familiar spirits;
- 4 I will deliver the Egyptians  
into the hand of a hard master;  
a fierce king will rule over them,  
says the Sovereign, the LORD of hosts.
- 5 The waters of the Nile will be dried up,  
and the river will be parched and dry;
- 6 its canals will become foul,  
and the branches of Egypt's Nile will diminish  
and dry up,  
reeds and rushes will rot away.
- 7 There will be bare places by the Nile,  
on the brink of the Nile;  
and all that is sown by the Nile will dry up,  
be driven away, and be no more.
- 8 Those who fish will mourn;  
all who cast hooks in the Nile will lament,  
and those who spread nets on the water will  
languish.
- 9 The workers in flax will be in despair,  
and the carders and those at the loom will  
grow pale.
- 10 Its weavers will be dismayed,  
and all who work for wages will be grieved.
- 11 The princes of Zoan are utterly foolish;  
the wise counselors of Pharaoh give stupid  
counsel.

<sup>a</sup> Q Ms Gk Vg: MT of

- How can you say to Pharaoh,  
 “I am one of the sages,  
 a descendant of ancient kings”?  
 12 Where now are your sages?  
 Let them tell you and make known  
 what the LORD of hosts has  
 planned against Egypt.  
 13 The princes of Zoan have become  
 fools,  
 and the princes of Memphis are  
 deluded;  
 those who are the cornerstones of its  
 tribes  
 have led Egypt astray.  
 14 The LORD has poured into them<sup>a</sup>  
 a spirit of confusion;  
 and they have made Egypt stagger  
 in all its doings  
 as a drunkard staggers around in  
 vomit.  
 15 Neither head nor tail, palm branch or  
 reed,  
 will be able to do anything for  
 Egypt.

16 On that day the Egyptians will be like women, and tremble with fear before the hand that the LORD of hosts raises against them. <sup>17</sup> And the land of Judah will become a terror to the Egyptians; everyone to whom it is mentioned will fear because of the plan that the LORD of hosts is planning against them.

### Egypt, Assyria, and Israel Blessed

18 On that day there will be five cities in the land of Egypt that speak the language of Canaan and swear allegiance to the LORD of hosts. One of these will be called the City of the Sun.

19 On that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the center of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD at its border. <sup>20</sup> It will be a sign and a witness to the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt; when they cry to the LORD because of oppressors, he will send them a savior, and will defend and deliver them. <sup>21</sup> The LORD will make himself known to the Egyptians; and the Egyptians will know the LORD on that day, and will worship with sacrifice and burnt offering, and they will make vows to the LORD and perform them. <sup>22</sup> The LORD will strike Egypt, striking and healing; they will return to the LORD, and he will listen to their supplications and heal them.

23 On that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian will come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians.

24 On that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, <sup>25</sup> whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, “Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my heritage.”

### Isaiah Dramatizes the Conquest of Egypt and Ethiopia

**20** In the year that the commander-in-chief, who was sent by King Sargon of Assyria, came to Ashdod and fought against it and took it— <sup>2</sup> at that time the LORD had spoken to Isaiah son of Amoz, saying, “Go, and loose the sackcloth from your loins and take your sandals off your feet,” and he had done so, walking naked and barefoot. <sup>3</sup> Then the LORD said, “Just as my servant Isaiah has walked naked and barefoot for three years as a sign and a portent against Egypt and Ethiopia,<sup>b</sup> <sup>4</sup> so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians as captives and the Ethiopians<sup>c</sup> as exiles, both the young and the old, naked and barefoot, with buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt. <sup>5</sup> And they shall be dismayed and confounded because of Ethiopia<sup>b</sup> their hope and of Egypt their boast. <sup>6</sup> In that

<sup>a</sup> Gk Compare Tg: Heb *it*

<sup>b</sup> Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*

<sup>c</sup> Or *Nubians*; Heb *Cushites*

day the inhabitants of this coastland will say, 'See, this is what has happened to those in whom we hoped and to whom we fled for help and deliverance from the king of Assyria! And we, how shall we escape?'"

### Oracles concerning Babylon, Edom, and Arabia

## 21 The oracle concerning the wilderness of the sea.

- As whirlwinds in the Negeb sweep on,  
it comes from the desert,  
from a terrible land.
- <sup>2</sup> A stern vision is told to me;  
the betrayer betrays,  
and the destroyer destroys.  
Go up, O Elam,  
lay siege, O Media;  
all the sighing she has caused  
I bring to an end.
- <sup>3</sup> Therefore my loins are filled with anguish;  
pangs have seized me,  
like the pangs of a woman in labor;  
I am bowed down so that I cannot hear,  
I am dismayed so that I cannot see.
- <sup>4</sup> My mind reels, horror has appalled me;  
the twilight I longed for  
has been turned for me into trembling.
- <sup>5</sup> They prepare the table,  
they spread the rugs,  
they eat, they drink.  
Rise up, commanders,  
oil the shield!
- <sup>6</sup> For thus the Lord said to me:  
"Go, post a lookout,  
let him announce what he sees.
- <sup>7</sup> When he sees riders, horsemen in pairs,  
riders on donkeys, riders on camels,  
let him listen diligently,  
very diligently."
- <sup>8</sup> Then the watcher<sup>a</sup> called out:  
"Upon a watchtower I stand, O Lord,  
continually by day,  
and at my post I am stationed  
throughout the night.
- <sup>9</sup> Look, there they come, riders,  
horsemen in pairs!"  
Then he responded,  
"Fallen, fallen is Babylon;  
and all the images of her gods  
lie shattered on the ground."
- <sup>10</sup> O my threshed and winnowed one,  
what I have heard from the LORD of hosts,  
the God of Israel, I announce to you.

<sup>a</sup> Q Ms: MT a lion

11 The oracle concerning Dumah.

One is calling to me from Seir,  
 “Sentinel, what of the night?  
 Sentinel, what of the night?”

12 The sentinel says:

“Morning comes, and also the night.  
 If you will inquire, inquire;  
 come back again.”

13 The oracle concerning the desert plain.

In the scrub of the desert plain you  
 will lodge,  
 O caravans of Dedanites.

14 Bring water to the thirsty,  
 meet the fugitive with bread,  
 O inhabitants of the land of Tema.

15 For they have fled from the swords,  
 from the drawn sword,  
 from the bent bow,  
 and from the stress of battle.

16 For thus the Lord said to me: Within  
 a year, according to the years of a hired  
 worker, all the glory of Kedar will come to  
 an end; <sup>17</sup> and the remaining bows of  
 Kedar’s warriors will be few; for the LORD,  
 the God of Israel, has spoken.

### Read Isaiah 22–23

This passage contains Isaiah’s bitterest prophecy concerning Jerusalem. Jerusalemites have placed their trust in military might instead of God. An oracle against ambitious politicians is built around the story of Shebna and Eliakim. Shebna was a scribe condemned for having built a splendid tomb for himself. Because of his actions, he was demoted. The remainder of the passage contains a description of the destruction of Tyre in poetic form and of the restoration of Tyre in prose.

**Reflect:** Consider Isaiah’s view on naked ambition, whether that of cities or of individuals. The wise would place their trust in God.

**Pray:** Let us have the insight to distinguish between the eternal and the ephemeral.

**Act:** Our lifestyle should reflect our values.

### A Warning of Destruction of Jerusalem

**22** The oracle concerning the valley of vision.

- What do you mean that you have gone up,  
 all of you, to the housetops,  
<sup>2</sup> you that are full of shoutings,  
 tumultuous city, exultant town?  
 Your slain are not slain by the sword,  
 nor are they dead in battle.  
<sup>3</sup> Your rulers have all fled together;  
 they were captured without the use of a bow.<sup>a</sup>  
 All of you who were found were captured,  
 though they had fled far away.<sup>b</sup>  
<sup>4</sup> Therefore I said:  
 Look away from me,  
 let me weep bitter tears;  
 do not try to comfort me  
 for the destruction of my beloved people.  
<sup>5</sup> For the Lord GOD of hosts has a day  
 of tumult and trampling and confusion  
 in the valley of vision,  
 a battering down of walls  
 and a cry for help to the mountains.  
<sup>6</sup> Elam bore the quiver  
 with chariots and cavalry,<sup>c</sup>  
 and Kir uncovered the shield.  
<sup>7</sup> Your choicest valleys were full of chariots,  
 and the cavalry took their stand at the gates.  
<sup>8</sup> He has taken away the covering of Judah.

On that day you looked to the weapons of the House of the Forest, <sup>9</sup> and you saw that there were many breaches in the city of David, and you collected the waters of the lower pool. <sup>10</sup> You counted the houses of Jerusalem, and you broke down the houses to fortify the wall. <sup>11</sup> You made a reservoir between the two walls

<sup>a</sup> Or without their bows

<sup>b</sup> Gk Syr Vg: Heb fled from far away

<sup>c</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

for the water of the old pool. But you did not look to him who did it, or have regard for him who planned it long ago.

- 12 In that day the Lord GOD of hosts called to weeping and mourning, to baldness and putting on sackcloth;
- 13 but instead there was joy and festivity, killing oxen and slaughtering sheep, eating meat and drinking wine.  
“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”
- 14 The LORD of hosts has revealed himself in my ears:  
Surely this iniquity will not be forgiven you until you die, says the Lord GOD of hosts.

### Denunciation of Self-Seeking Officials

15 Thus says the Lord GOD of hosts: Come, go to this steward, to Shebna, who is master of the household, and say to him: 16 What right do you have here? Who are your relatives here, that you have cut out a tomb here for yourself, cutting a tomb on the height, and carving a habitation for yourself in the rock? 17 The LORD is about to

hurl you away violently, my fellow. He will seize firm hold on you, 18 whirl you round and round, and throw you like a ball into a wide land; there you shall die, and there your splendid chariots shall lie, O you disgrace to your master's house! 19 I will thrust you from your office, and you will be pulled down from your post.

20 On that day I will call my servant Eliakim son of Hilkiah, 21 and will clothe him with your robe and bind your sash on him. I will commit your authority to his hand, and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. 22 I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open, and no one shall shut; he shall shut, and no one shall open. 23 I will fasten him like a peg in a secure place, and he will become a throne of honor to his ancestral house. 24 And they will hang on him the whole weight of his ancestral house, the offspring and issue, every small vessel, from the cups to all the flagons. 25 On that day, says the LORD of hosts, the peg that was fastened in a secure place will give way; it will be cut down and fall, and the load that was on it will perish, for the LORD has spoken.

### An Oracle concerning Tyre

## 23 The oracle concerning Tyre.

Wail, O ships of Tarshish,  
for your fortress is destroyed.<sup>a</sup>  
When they came in from Cyprus  
they learned of it.

2 Be still, O inhabitants of the coast,  
O merchants of Sidon,  
your messengers crossed over the sea<sup>b</sup>

3 and were on the mighty waters;  
your revenue was the grain of Shihor,  
the harvest of the Nile;  
you were the merchant of the nations.

4 Be ashamed, O Sidon, for the sea has spoken,  
the fortress of the sea, saying:  
“I have neither labored nor given birth,  
I have neither reared young men  
nor brought up young women.”

5 When the report comes to Egypt,  
they will be in anguish over the report about Tyre.

<sup>a</sup> Cn Compare verse 14: Heb for it is destroyed, without houses

<sup>b</sup> Q Ms: MT crossing over the sea, they replenished you

- 6 Cross over to Tarshish—  
wail, O inhabitants of the coast!
- 7 Is this your exultant city  
whose origin is from days of old,  
whose feet carried her  
to settle far away?
- 8 Who has planned this  
against Tyre, the bestower of crowns,  
whose merchants were princes,  
whose traders were the honored of  
the earth?
- 9 The LORD of hosts has planned it—  
to defile the pride of all glory,  
to shame all the honored of the earth.
- 10 Cross over to your own land,  
O ships of<sup>a</sup> Tarshish;  
this is a harbor<sup>b</sup> no more.
- 11 He has stretched out his hand over  
the sea,  
he has shaken the kingdoms;  
the LORD has given command  
concerning Canaan  
to destroy its fortresses.
- 12 He said:  
You will exult no longer,  
O oppressed virgin daughter Sidon;  
rise, cross over to Cyprus—  
even there you will have no rest.

13 Look at the land of the Chaldeans!  
This is the people; it was not Assyria. They  
destined Tyre for wild animals. They erect-  
ed their siege towers, they tore down her  
palaces, they made her a ruin.<sup>c</sup>

14 Wail, O ships of Tarshish,  
for your fortress is destroyed.

15 From that day Tyre will be forgotten for  
seventy years, the lifetime of one king. At  
the end of seventy years, it will happen to  
Tyre as in the song about the prostitute:

16 Take a harp,  
go about the city,  
you forgotten prostitute!  
Make sweet melody,  
sing many songs,  
that you may be remembered.

17 At the end of seventy years, the LORD will  
visit Tyre, and she will return to her trade,  
and will prostitute herself with all the king-  
doms of the world on the face of the earth.

18 Her merchandise and her wages will be  
dedicated to the LORD; her profits<sup>d</sup> will not  
be stored or hoarded, but her merchandise  
will supply abundant food and fine clothing  
for those who live in the presence of the  
LORD.

### Impending Judgment on the Earth

**24** Now the LORD is about to lay waste the earth and  
make it desolate,  
and he will twist its surface and scatter its  
inhabitants.

2 And it shall be, as with the people, so with the  
priest;

as with the slave, so with his master;  
as with the maid, so with her mistress;  
as with the buyer, so with the seller;  
as with the lender, so with the borrower;  
as with the creditor, so with the debtor.

3 The earth shall be utterly laid waste and utterly  
despoiled;  
for the LORD has spoken this word.

4 The earth dries up and withers,  
the world languishes and withers;  
the heavens languish together with the earth.

5 The earth lies polluted  
under its inhabitants;  
for they have transgressed laws,

<sup>a</sup> Cn Compare Gk: Heb *like the Nile, daughter*

<sup>b</sup> Cn: Heb *restraint*

<sup>c</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>d</sup> Heb *it*

### Read Isaiah 24–25

These chapters deal with the apocalypse (the end time) and refer directly to the devastation of the world. At the same time, we are assured that a remnant will be saved. In this style of writing (apocalyptic) social distinctions disappear. For example, “as with the people, so with the priest, as with the slave, so with his master” (24:2). Note that the celebration of the eschatological (final) banquet, which takes place on Mt. Zion (Jerusalem), embraces all peoples. In the end, the land of Judah will be no longer a battlefield but a residence for the redeemed, who will live in peace and happiness.

**Reflect:** Do not be discouraged. As the passage assures, in the face of doom we may bear in mind that something better awaits.

**Pray:** May we remember to praise God as the redeemer of all humankind.

**Act:** Look beyond the gloom to the *eschaton* (the end time). In our daily lives, we should not allow sadness and disappointment to overwhelm our hearts.

- violated the statutes,  
broken the everlasting covenant.
- 6 Therefore a curse devours the earth,  
and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt;  
therefore the inhabitants of the earth dwindled,  
and few people are left.
- 7 The wine dries up,  
the vine languishes,  
all the merry-hearted sigh.
- 8 The mirth of the timbrels is stilled,  
the noise of the jubilant has ceased,  
the mirth of the lyre is stilled.
- 9 No longer do they drink wine with singing;  
strong drink is bitter to those who drink it.
- 10 The city of chaos is broken down,  
every house is shut up so that no one can enter.
- 11 There is an outcry in the streets for lack of wine;  
all joy has reached its eventide;  
the gladness of the earth is banished.
- 12 Desolation is left in the city,  
the gates are battered into ruins.
- 13 For thus it shall be on the earth  
and among the nations,  
as when an olive tree is beaten,  
as at the gleaning when the grape harvest is  
ended.
- 14 They lift up their voices, they sing for joy;  
they shout from the west over the majesty of  
the LORD.
- 15 Therefore in the east give glory to the LORD;  
in the coastlands of the sea glorify the name  
of the LORD, the God of Israel.
- 16 From the ends of the earth we hear songs of  
praise,  
of glory to the Righteous One.  
But I say, I pine away,  
I pine away. Woe is me!  
For the treacherous deal treacherously,  
the treacherous deal very treacherously.
- 17 Terror, and the pit, and the snare  
are upon you, O inhabitant of the earth!
- 18 Whoever flees at the sound of the terror  
shall fall into the pit;  
and whoever climbs out of the pit  
shall be caught in the snare.  
For the windows of heaven are opened,  
and the foundations of the earth tremble.
- 19 The earth is utterly broken,  
the earth is torn asunder,  
the earth is violently shaken.

20 The earth staggers like a drunkard,  
it sways like a hut;  
its transgression lies heavy upon it,  
and it falls, and will not rise again.

21 On that day the LORD will punish  
the host of heaven in heaven,  
and on earth the kings of the earth.

22 They will be gathered together  
like prisoners in a pit;

they will be shut up in a prison,  
and after many days they will be  
punished.

23 Then the moon will be abashed,  
and the sun ashamed;  
for the LORD of hosts will reign  
on Mount Zion and in  
Jerusalem,  
and before his elders he will  
manifest his glory.

### Praise for Deliverance from Oppression

**25** O LORD, you are my God;  
I will exalt you, I will praise your name;  
for you have done wonderful things,  
plans formed of old, faithful and sure.

2 For you have made the city a heap,  
the fortified city a ruin;  
the palace of aliens is a city no more,  
it will never be rebuilt.  
3 Therefore strong peoples will glorify you;  
cities of ruthless nations will fear you.  
4 For you have been a refuge to the poor,  
a refuge to the needy in their distress,  
a shelter from the rainstorm and a shade from  
the heat.

When the blast of the ruthless was like a winter  
rainstorm,

5 the noise of aliens like heat in a dry place,  
you subdued the heat with the shade of clouds;  
the song of the ruthless was stilled.  
6 On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for  
all peoples  
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,  
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged  
wines strained clear.  
7 And he will destroy on this mountain  
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,  
the sheet that is spread over all nations;  
8 he will swallow up death forever.  
Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from  
all faces,  
and the disgrace of his people he will take  
away from all the earth,  
for the LORD has spoken.  
9 It will be said on that day,  
Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so  
that he might save us.  
This is the LORD for whom we have waited;  
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.



<sup>10</sup> For the hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain.

The Moabites shall be trodden down in their place as straw is trodden down in a dung-pit.

<sup>11</sup> Though they spread out their hands in the midst of it,

as swimmers spread out their hands to swim, their pride will be laid low despite the struggle<sup>a</sup> of their hands.

<sup>12</sup> The high fortifications of his walls will be brought down, laid low, cast to the ground, even to the dust.

### Read Isaiah 26–27

This section opens with a psalm of trust and praise for Yahweh, who will restore peace. Note the assurance to Israel that judgment will pass. In the song of Yahweh's vineyard in chapter 27, Yahweh is pleased with the vineyard. Contrast this with the negative description of the vineyard in chapter 5. The earliest biblical reference to a resurrection appears in 26:19; note, however, that these verses refer to the resurrection of only the righteous.

**Reflect:** "Trust in the LORD forever, for in the LORD GOD you have an everlasting rock" (26:4). "Rock" is an epithet for God as a refuge for God's people.

**Pray:** We pray for a greater awareness of God's goodness to all, especially the needy and the poor.

**Act:** Let all your actions reflect your trust in the Lord.

### Judah's Song of Victory

**26** On that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah:

We have a strong city;  
he sets up victory  
like walls and bulwarks.

- <sup>2</sup> Open the gates,  
so that the righteous nation that keeps faith  
may enter in.
- <sup>3</sup> Those of steadfast mind you keep in peace—  
in peace because they trust in you.
- <sup>4</sup> Trust in the LORD forever,  
for in the LORD GOD<sup>b</sup>  
you have an everlasting rock.
- <sup>5</sup> For he has brought low  
the inhabitants of the height;  
the lofty city he lays low.  
He lays it low to the ground,  
casts it to the dust.
- <sup>6</sup> The foot tramples it,  
the feet of the poor,  
the steps of the needy.
- <sup>7</sup> The way of the righteous is level;  
O Just One, you make smooth the path of the  
righteous.
- <sup>8</sup> In the path of your judgments,  
O LORD, we wait for you;  
your name and your renown  
are the soul's desire.
- <sup>9</sup> My soul yearns for you in the night,  
my spirit within me earnestly seeks you.  
For when your judgments are in the earth,  
the inhabitants of the world learn  
righteousness.
- <sup>10</sup> If favor is shown to the wicked,  
they do not learn righteousness;  
in the land of uprightness they deal perversely  
and do not see the majesty of the LORD.
- <sup>11</sup> O LORD, your hand is lifted up,  
but they do not see it.

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>b</sup> Heb *in Yah, the LORD*

- Let them see your zeal for your people, and be ashamed.  
 Let the fire for your adversaries consume them.
- 12 O LORD, you will ordain peace for us, for indeed, all that we have done, you have done for us.
- 13 O LORD our God, other lords besides you have ruled over us, but we acknowledge your name alone.
- 14 The dead do not live; shades do not rise— because you have punished and destroyed them, and wiped out all memory of them.
- 15 But you have increased the nation, O LORD, you have increased the nation; you are glorified; you have enlarged all the borders of the land.
- 16 O LORD, in distress they sought you, they poured out a prayer<sup>a</sup> when your chastening was on them.
- 17 Like a woman with child, who writhes and cries out in her pangs when she is near her time, so were we because of you, O LORD; we were with child, we writhed, but we gave birth only to wind. We have won no victories on earth, and no one is born to inhabit the world.
- 19 Your dead shall live, their corpses<sup>b</sup> shall rise. O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a radiant dew, and the earth will give birth to those long dead.<sup>c</sup>
- 20 Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until the wrath is past.
- 21 For the LORD comes out from his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth will disclose the blood shed on it, and will no longer cover its slain.

### Israel's Redemption

**27** On that day the LORD with his cruel and great and strong sword will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan the twisting serpent, and he will kill the dragon that is in the sea.

- 2 On that day:  
 A pleasant vineyard, sing about it!
- 3 I, the LORD, am its keeper; every moment I water it. I guard it night and day so that no one can harm it;
- 4 I have no wrath. If it gives me thorns and briers, I will march to battle against it. I will burn it up.
- 5 Or else let it cling to me for protection, let it make peace with me, let it make peace with me.
- 6 In days to come<sup>d</sup> Jacob shall take root, Israel shall blossom and put forth shoots, and fill the whole world with fruit.

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>b</sup> Cn Compare Syr Tg: Heb *my corpse*

<sup>c</sup> Heb *to the shades*

<sup>d</sup> Heb *Those to come*

- 7 Has he struck them down as he struck down those who struck them?  
Or have they been killed as their killers were killed?
- 8 By expulsion,<sup>a</sup> by exile you struggled against them; with his fierce blast he removed them in the day of the east wind.
- 9 Therefore by this the guilt of Jacob will be expiated, and this will be the full fruit of the removal of his sin:  
when he makes all the stones of the altars  
like chalkstones crushed to pieces,  
no sacred poles<sup>b</sup> or incense altars will remain standing.
- 10 For the fortified city is solitary, a habitation deserted and forsaken, like the wilderness; the calves graze there,  
there they lie down, and strip its branches.
- 11 When its boughs are dry, they are broken;  
women come and make a fire of them.  
For this is a people without understanding;  
therefore he that made them will not have compassion on them,  
he that formed them will show them no favor.
- 12 On that day the LORD will thresh from the channel of the Euphrates to the Wadi of Egypt, and you will be gathered one by one, O people of Israel. <sup>13</sup> And on that day a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were lost in the land of Assyria and those who were driven out to the land of Egypt will come and worship the LORD on the holy mountain at Jerusalem.

### Read Isaiah 28

Once again, the oracles against Israel and Judah terminate in the survival of the remnant. Exclusive confidence in human resources is false and deceptive. The reliable foundation of salvation is based on “a foundation stone” in Zion (28:16); the person who puts faith in it shall not be shaken.

**Reflect:** How important it is to keep one’s eye on the promise of final salvation, achieved through faith in God.

**Pray:** May we always stay focused on the Lord, despite life’s many obstacles.

**Act:** Make an effort to act with a proper perspective, putting your confidence in God.

### Judgment on Corrupt Rulers, Priests, and Prophets

- 28** Ah, the proud garland of the drunkards of Ephraim,  
and the fading flower of its glorious beauty,  
which is on the head of those bloated with rich food, of those overcome with wine!
- 2 See, the Lord has one who is mighty and strong;  
like a storm of hail, a destroying tempest,  
like a storm of mighty, overflowing waters;  
with his hand he will hurl them down to the earth.
- 3 Trampled under foot will be  
the proud garland of the drunkards of Ephraim.
- 4 And the fading flower of its glorious beauty,  
which is on the head of those bloated with rich food,  
will be like a first-ripe fig before the summer;  
whoever sees it, eats it up  
as soon as it comes to hand.
- 5 In that day the LORD of hosts will be a garland of glory,  
and a diadem of beauty, to the remnant of his people;
- 6 and a spirit of justice to the one who sits in judgment,  
and strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate.

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>b</sup> Heb *Asherim*

- 7 These also reel with wine  
and stagger with strong drink;  
the priest and the prophet reel with  
strong drink,  
they are confused with wine,  
they stagger with strong drink;  
they err in vision,  
they stumble in giving judgment.
- 8 All tables are covered with filthy vomit;  
no place is clean.
- 9 “Whom will he teach knowledge,  
and to whom will he explain the  
message?  
Those who are weaned from milk,  
those taken from the breast?”
- 10 For it is precept upon precept,  
precept upon precept,  
line upon line, line upon line,  
here a little, there a little.”<sup>a</sup>
- 11 Truly, with stammering lip  
and with alien tongue  
he will speak to this people,  
12 to whom he has said,  
“This is rest;  
give rest to the weary;  
and this is repose”;  
yet they would not hear.
- 13 Therefore the word of the LORD will  
be to them,  
“Precept upon precept, precept  
upon precept,  
line upon line, line upon line,  
here a little, there a little;”<sup>a</sup>  
in order that they may go, and fall  
backward,  
and be broken, and snared, and  
taken.
- 14 Therefore hear the word of the LORD,  
you scoffers  
who rule this people in Jerusalem.
- 15 Because you have said, “We have  
made a covenant with death,  
and with Sheol we have an  
agreement;  
when the overwhelming scourge  
passes through  
it will not come to us;
- for we have made lies our refuge,  
and in falsehood we have taken  
shelter”;
- 16 therefore thus says the Lord GOD,  
See, I am laying in Zion a foundation  
stone,  
a tested stone,  
a precious cornerstone, a sure  
foundation:  
“One who trusts will not panic.”
- 17 And I will make justice the line,  
and righteousness the plummet;  
hail will sweep away the refuge of  
lies,  
and waters will overwhelm the  
shelter.
- 18 Then your covenant with death will  
be annulled,  
and your agreement with Sheol  
will not stand;  
when the overwhelming scourge  
passes through  
you will be beaten down by it.
- 19 As often as it passes through, it will  
take you;  
for morning by morning it will  
pass through,  
by day and by night;  
and it will be sheer terror to  
understand the message.
- 20 For the bed is too short to stretch  
oneself on it,  
and the covering too narrow to  
wrap oneself in it.
- 21 For the LORD will rise up as on  
Mount Perazim,  
he will rage as in the valley of  
Gibeon  
to do his deed—strange is his deed!—  
and to work his work—alien is his  
work!
- 22 Now therefore do not scoff,  
or your bonds will be made stronger;  
for I have heard a decree of  
destruction  
from the Lord GOD of hosts upon  
the whole land.
- 23 Listen, and hear my voice;

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of Heb of this verse uncertain

- Pay attention, and hear my speech.
- 24 Do those who plow for sowing plow continually?  
Do they continually open and harrow their ground?
- 25 When they have leveled its surface, do they not scatter dill, sow cummin,  
and plant wheat in rows  
and barley in its proper place,  
and spelt as the border?
- 26 For they are well instructed;  
their God teaches them.

- 27 Dill is not threshed with a threshing sledge,  
nor is a cart wheel rolled over cummin;  
but dill is beaten out with a stick,  
and cummin with a rod.
- 28 Grain is crushed for bread,  
but one does not thresh it forever;  
one drives the cart wheel and horses over it,  
but does not pulverize it.
- 29 This also comes from the LORD of hosts;  
he is wonderful in counsel,  
and excellent in wisdom.

### Read Isaiah 29

Because the people of Jerusalem refuse to believe divine revelation that she will be saved, Jerusalem (Ariel) is seized. The negativity of the prediction of Jerusalem's demise is overridden by the assurance of hope for the future. The model of Abraham's redemption offers support for struggling mortals. Once again the "lowly" and the "poor" will be the special object of God's redemption.

**Reflect:** Reliance on God's redemption is our most important support as we journey through life.

**Pray:** May we always be guided by the assurance of salvation, despite our many human failings.

**Act:** We may act as though everything depends on us, but we know that ultimately everything is in God's hands.

### The Siege of Jerusalem

- 29** Ah, Ariel, Ariel,  
the city where David encamped!  
Add year to year;  
let the festivals run their round.
- 2 Yet I will distress Ariel,  
and there shall be moaning and lamentation,  
and Jerusalem<sup>a</sup> shall be to me like an Ariel.<sup>b</sup>
- 3 And like David<sup>c</sup> I will encamp against you;  
I will besiege you with towers  
and raise siegeworks against you.
- 4 Then deep from the earth you shall speak,  
from low in the dust your words shall come;  
your voice shall come from the ground like the  
voice of a ghost,  
and your speech shall whisper out of the dust.
- 5 But the multitude of your foes<sup>d</sup> shall be like  
small dust,  
and the multitude of tyrants like flying chaff.  
And in an instant, suddenly,
- 6 you will be visited by the LORD of hosts  
with thunder and earthquake and great noise,  
with whirlwind and tempest, and the flame of a  
devouring fire.
- 7 And the multitude of all the nations that fight  
against Ariel,  
all that fight against her and her stronghold,  
and who distress her,  
shall be like a dream, a vision of the night.
- 8 Just as when a hungry person dreams of eating  
and wakes up still hungry,  
or a thirsty person dreams of drinking  
and wakes up faint, still thirsty,  
so shall the multitude of all the nations be  
that fight against Mount Zion.

<sup>a</sup> Heb *she*

<sup>b</sup> Probable meaning, *altar hearth*; compare Ezek 43.15

<sup>c</sup> Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>d</sup> Cn: Heb *strangers*

- 9 Stupefy yourselves and be in a stupor,  
blind yourselves and be blind!  
Be drunk, but not from wine;  
stagger, but not from strong drink!
- 10 For the LORD has poured out upon you  
a spirit of deep sleep;  
he has closed your eyes, you prophets,  
and covered your heads, you seers.

11 The vision of all this has become for  
you like the words of a sealed document. If  
it is given to those who can read, with the  
command, "Read this," they say, "We can-  
not, for it is sealed." <sup>12</sup> And if it is given to  
those who cannot read, saying, "Read this,"  
they say, "We cannot read."

- 13 The Lord said:  
Because these people draw near  
with their mouths  
and honor me with their lips,  
while their hearts are far from me,  
and their worship of me is a human  
commandment learned by rote;
- 14 so I will again do  
amazing things with this people,  
shocking and amazing.  
The wisdom of their wise shall perish,  
and the discernment of the  
discerning shall be hidden.
- 15 Ha! You who hide a plan too deep  
for the LORD,  
whose deeds are in the dark,  
and who say, "Who sees us? Who  
knows us?"
- 16 You turn things upside down!  
Shall the potter be regarded as  
the clay?  
Shall the thing made say of its maker,  
"He did not make me";  
or the thing formed say of the one  
who formed it,  
"He has no understanding"?

### Hope for the Future

- 17 Shall not Lebanon in a very little  
while  
become a fruitful field,  
and the fruitful field be regarded  
as a forest?
- 18 On that day the deaf shall hear  
the words of a scroll,  
and out of their gloom and darkness  
the eyes of the blind shall see.
- 19 The meek shall obtain fresh joy in  
the LORD,  
and the neediest people shall  
exult in the Holy One of Israel.
- 20 For the tyrant shall be no more,  
and the scoffer shall cease to be;  
all those alert to do evil shall be  
cut off—
- 21 those who cause a person to lose a  
lawsuit,  
who set a trap for the arbiter in  
the gate,  
and without grounds deny justice  
to the one in the right.
- 22 Therefore thus says the LORD, who  
redeemed Abraham, concerning the house  
of Jacob:  
No longer shall Jacob be ashamed,  
no longer shall his face grow pale.
- 23 For when he sees his children,  
the work of my hands, in his  
midst,  
they will sanctify my name;  
they will sanctify the Holy One of  
Jacob,  
and will stand in awe of the God  
of Israel.
- 24 And those who err in spirit will come  
to understanding,  
and those who grumble will  
accept instruction.

### The Futility of Reliance on Egypt

- 30** Oh, rebellious children, says the LORD,  
who carry out a plan, but not mine;  
who make an alliance, but against my will,  
adding sin to sin;
- <sup>2</sup> who set out to go down to Egypt  
without asking for my counsel,

### Read Isaiah 30

Despite the futile alliance with Egypt, Zion's (Jerusalem's) future prosperity is assured. Yahweh has said: "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength" (v. 15). Yahweh is referred to as "Teacher" (v. 20) in the sense that God gives instruction to the prophets.

**Reflect:** Not only by our own activities, but also "in returning and rest" shall we be saved.

**Pray:** May our lives be founded upon the "Rock of Israel" (v. 29).

**Act:** Be assured of God's presence at all times.

- to take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh,  
and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt;
- 3 Therefore the protection of Pharaoh shall  
become your shame,  
and the shelter in the shadow of Egypt your  
humiliation.
- 4 For though his officials are at Zoan  
and his envoys reach Hanes,  
5 everyone comes to shame  
through a people that cannot profit them,  
that brings neither help nor profit,  
but shame and disgrace.
- 6 An oracle concerning the animals of the Negeb.  
Through a land of trouble and distress,  
of lioness and roaring<sup>a</sup> lion,  
of viper and flying serpent,  
they carry their riches on the backs of donkeys,  
and their treasures on the humps of camels,  
to a people that cannot profit them.
- 7 For Egypt's help is worthless and empty,  
therefore I have called her,  
"Rahab who sits still."<sup>b</sup>

### A Rebellious People

- 8 Go now, write it before them on a tablet,  
and inscribe it in a book,  
so that it may be for the time to come  
as a witness forever.
- 9 For they are a rebellious people,  
faithless children,  
children who will not hear  
the instruction of the LORD;
- 10 who say to the seers, "Do not see";  
and to the prophets, "Do not prophesy to us  
what is right;  
speak to us smooth things,  
prophesy illusions,
- 11 leave the way, turn aside from the path,  
let us hear no more about the Holy One of  
Israel."
- 12 Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel:  
Because you reject this word,  
and put your trust in oppression and deceit,  
and rely on them;
- 13 therefore this iniquity shall become for you  
like a break in a high wall, bulging out, and  
about to collapse,  
whose crash comes suddenly, in an instant;
- 14 its breaking is like that of a potter's vessel  
that is smashed so ruthlessly

<sup>a</sup> Cn: Heb from them

<sup>b</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

that among its fragments not a  
 sherd is found  
 for taking fire from the hearth,  
 or dipping water out of the cistern.

15 For thus said the Lord GOD, the Holy  
 One of Israel:

In returning and rest you shall be saved;  
 in quietness and in trust shall be  
 your strength.

But you refused<sup>16</sup> and said,  
 “No! We will flee upon horses”—  
 therefore you shall flee!  
 and, “We will ride upon swift steeds”—  
 therefore your pursuers shall be  
 swift!

17 A thousand shall flee at the threat of  
 one,  
 at the threat of five you shall flee,  
 until you are left  
 like a flagstaff on the top of a  
 mountain,  
 like a signal on a hill.

### God's Promise to Zion

18 Therefore the LORD waits to be  
 gracious to you;  
 therefore he will rise up to show  
 mercy to you.

For the LORD is a God of justice;  
 blessed are all those who wait for  
 him.

19 Truly, O people in Zion, inhabitants  
 of Jerusalem, you shall weep no more. He  
 will surely be gracious to you at the sound  
 of your cry; when he hears it, he will answer  
 you.<sup>20</sup> Though the Lord may give you the  
 bread of adversity and the water of affliction,  
 yet your Teacher will not hide himself  
 any more, but your eyes shall see your  
 Teacher.<sup>21</sup> And when you turn to the right  
 or when you turn to the left, your ears shall  
 hear a word behind you, saying, “This is  
 the way; walk in it.”<sup>22</sup> Then you will defile  
 your silver-covered idols and your gold-  
 plated images. You will scatter them like  
 filthy rags; you will say to them, “Away  
 with you!”

23 He will give rain for the seed with  
 which you sow the ground, and grain, the  
 produce of the ground, which will be rich  
 and plenteous. On that day your cattle will  
 graze in broad pastures;<sup>24</sup> and the oxen  
 and donkeys that till the ground will eat  
 silage, which has been winnowed with  
 shovel and fork.<sup>25</sup> On every lofty mountain  
 and every high hill there will be brooks run-  
 ning with water—on a day of the great  
 slaughter, when the towers fall.<sup>26</sup> Moreover  
 the light of the moon will be like the light of  
 the sun, and the light of the sun will be sev-  
 enfold, like the light of seven days, on the  
 day when the LORD binds up the injuries of  
 his people, and heals the wounds inflicted  
 by his blow.

### Judgment on Assyria

27 See, the name of the LORD comes  
 from far away,  
 burning with his anger, and in  
 thick rising smoke;<sup>a</sup>  
 his lips are full of indignation,  
 and his tongue is like a devouring  
 fire;

28 his breath is like an overflowing  
 stream  
 that reaches up to the neck—  
 to sift the nations with the sieve of  
 destruction,  
 and to place on the jaws of the  
 peoples a bridle that leads them  
 astray.

29 You shall have a song as in the night  
 when a holy festival is kept; and gladness  
 of heart, as when one sets out to the sound  
 of the flute to go to the mountain of the  
 LORD, to the Rock of Israel.<sup>30</sup> And the LORD  
 will cause his majestic voice to be heard and  
 the descending blow of his arm to be seen,  
 in furious anger and a flame of devouring  
 fire, with a cloudburst and tempest and  
 hailstones.<sup>31</sup> The Assyrian will be terror-  
 stricken at the voice of the LORD, when he  
 strikes with his rod.<sup>32</sup> And every stroke of  
 the staff of punishment that the LORD lays

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain



upon him will be to the sound of timbrels and lyres; battling with brandished arm he will fight with him.<sup>33</sup> For his burning place<sup>a</sup> has long been prepared; truly it is made

ready for the king,<sup>b</sup> its pyre made deep and wide, with fire and wood in abundance; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of sulfur, kindles it.

### Read Isaiah 31–32

Do not trust in horses and in chariots; seek Yahweh. Be strengthened by God's deliverance of Jerusalem from Assyria. The people of God will live in security and quiet; they will experience unprecedented peace and prosperity under leaders of integrity.

**Reflect:** The reference to the women of Jerusalem lamenting recalls a gender-specific occupation in ancient times. Weeping for the departed was a profession, not a demeaning description of women. Thus, the women are called upon to practice their calling by mourning the impending destruction of Jerusalem.

**Pray:** We pray for peace and prosperity not only for our own land but also for the whole world.

**Act:** In our personal relationships, let us do nothing that weakens a spirit of love and peace.

### Alliance with Egypt Is Futile

- 31** Alas for those who go down to Egypt for help and who rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the LORD!
- 2** Yet he too is wise and brings disaster; he does not call back his words, but will rise against the house of the evildoers, and against the helpers of those who work iniquity.
- 3** The Egyptians are human, and not God; their horses are flesh, and not spirit. When the LORD stretches out his hand, the helper will stumble, and the one helped will fall, and they will all perish together.
- 4** For thus the LORD said to me, As a lion or a young lion growls over its prey, and—when a band of shepherds is called out against it— is not terrified by their shouting or daunted at their noise, so the LORD of hosts will come down to fight upon Mount Zion and upon its hill.
- 5** Like birds hovering overhead, so the LORD of hosts will protect Jerusalem; he will protect and deliver it, he will spare and rescue it.
- 6** Turn back to him whom you<sup>c</sup> have deeply betrayed, O people of Israel. **7** For on that day all of you shall throw away your idols of silver and idols of gold, which your hands have sinfully made for you.
- 8** “Then the Assyrian shall fall by a sword, not of mortals; and a sword, not of humans, shall devour him; he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall be put to forced labor.
- 9** His rock shall pass away in terror, and his officers desert the standard in panic,” says the LORD, whose fire is in Zion, and whose furnace is in Jerusalem.

<sup>a</sup> Or *Topheth*

<sup>b</sup> Or *Molech*

<sup>c</sup> Heb *they*

**Government with Justice Predicted**

- 32** See, a king will reign in righteousness,  
and princes will rule with justice.
- 2 Each will be like a hiding place from the wind,  
a covert from the tempest,  
like streams of water in a dry place,  
like the shade of a great rock in a weary land.
- 3 Then the eyes of those who have sight will not be closed,  
and the ears of those who have hearing will listen.
- 4 The minds of the rash will have good judgment,  
and the tongues of stammerers will speak readily and distinctly.
- 5 A fool will no longer be called noble,  
nor a villain said to be honorable.
- 6 For fools speak folly,  
and their minds plot iniquity:  
to practice ungodliness,  
to utter error concerning the LORD,  
to leave the craving of the hungry unsatisfied,  
and to deprive the thirsty of drink.
- 7 The villainies of villains are evil;  
they devise wicked devices  
to ruin the poor with lying words,  
even when the plea of the needy is right.
- 8 But those who are noble plan noble things,  
and by noble things they stand.

**Complacent Women Warned of Disaster**

- 9 Rise up, you women who are at ease,  
hear my voice;  
you complacent daughters, listen  
to my speech.
- 10 In little more than a year  
you will shudder, you complacent ones;  
for the vintage will fail,  
the fruit harvest will not come.

- 11 Tremble, you women who are at ease,  
shudder, you complacent ones;  
strip, and make yourselves bare,  
and put sackcloth on your loins.
- 12 Beat your breasts for the pleasant fields,  
for the fruitful vine,  
for the soil of my people  
growing up in thorns and briars;  
yes, for all the joyous houses  
in the jubilant city.
- 14 For the palace will be forsaken,  
the populous city deserted;  
the hill and the watchtower  
will become dens forever,  
the joy of wild asses,  
a pasture for flocks;
- 15 until a spirit from on high is poured  
out on us,  
and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field,  
and the fruitful field is deemed a forest.

**The Peace of God's Reign**

- 16 Then justice will dwell in the wilderness,  
and righteousness abide in the fruitful field.
- 17 The effect of righteousness will be peace,  
and the result of righteousness,  
quietness and trust forever.
- 18 My people will abide in a peaceful habitation,  
in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.
- 19 The forest will disappear completely,<sup>a</sup>  
and the city will be utterly laid low.
- 20 Happy will you be who sow beside every stream,  
who let the ox and the donkey range freely.

<sup>a</sup> Cn: Heb *And it will hail when the forest comes down*

### Read Isaiah 33

This chapter deals with entreaties and oracles: deliverance from Assyria followed by the “golden age” of Jerusalem. Once again, it is God’s presence in Jerusalem that is responsible for Jerusalem’s security; it is Yahweh, our king, who will save us.

**Reflect:** This is a call to the righteous who are living in the presence of God.

**Pray:** May we always live conscious of the presence of God. May this keep us from discouragement and despair.

**Act:** Act with a real conviction of living close to God.

### A Prophecy of Deliverance from Foes

- 33** Ah, you destroyer,  
 who yourself have not been destroyed;  
 you treacherous one,  
 with whom no one has dealt treacherously!  
 When you have ceased to destroy,  
 you will be destroyed;  
 and when you have stopped dealing treacherously,  
 you will be dealt with treacherously.
- 2 O LORD, be gracious to us; we wait for you.  
 Be our arm every morning,  
 our salvation in the time of trouble.
- 3 At the sound of tumult, peoples fled;  
 before your majesty, nations scattered.
- 4 Spoil was gathered as the caterpillar gathers;  
 as locusts leap, they leaped<sup>a</sup> upon it.
- 5 The LORD is exalted, he dwells on high;  
 he filled Zion with justice and righteousness;
- 6 he will be the stability of your times,  
 abundance of salvation, wisdom, and  
 knowledge;  
 the fear of the LORD is Zion’s treasure.<sup>b</sup>
- 7 Listen! the valiant<sup>a</sup> cry in the streets;  
 the envoys of peace weep bitterly.
- 8 The highways are deserted,  
 travelers have quit the road.  
 The treaty is broken,  
 its oaths<sup>c</sup> are despised,  
 its obligation<sup>d</sup> is disregarded.
- 9 The land mourns and languishes;  
 Lebanon is confounded and withers away;  
 Sharon is like a desert;  
 and Bashan and Carmel shake off their leaves.
- 10 “Now I will arise,” says the LORD,  
 “now I will lift myself up;  
 now I will be exalted.
- 11 You conceive chaff, you bring forth stubble;  
 your breath is a fire that will consume you.
- 12 And the peoples will be as if burned to lime,  
 like thorns cut down, that are burned in the  
 fire.”
- 13 Hear, you who are far away, what I have done;  
 and you who are near, acknowledge my might.
- 14 The sinners in Zion are afraid;  
 trembling has seized the godless:  
 “Who among us can live with the devouring fire?  
 Who among us can live with everlasting  
 flames?”

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>b</sup> Heb *his treasure*; meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>c</sup> Q Ms: MT *cities*

<sup>d</sup> Or *everyone*

- 15 Those who walk righteously and  
speak uprightly,  
who despise the gain of oppression,  
who wave away a bribe instead of  
accepting it,  
who stop their ears from hearing  
of bloodshed  
and shut their eyes from looking  
on evil,  
16 they will live on the heights;  
their refuge will be the fortresses  
of rocks;  
their food will be supplied, their  
water assured.

### The Land of the Majestic King

- 17 Your eyes will see the king in his  
beauty;  
they will behold a land that  
stretches far away.  
18 Your mind will muse on the terror:  
“Where is the one who counted?  
Where is the one who weighed the  
tribute?  
Where is the one who counted the  
towers?”  
19 No longer will you see the insolent  
people,  
the people of an obscure speech  
that you cannot comprehend,

- stammering in a language that  
you cannot understand.  
20 Look on Zion, the city of our  
appointed festivals!  
Your eyes will see Jerusalem,  
a quiet habitation, an immovable  
tent,  
whose stakes will never be pulled up,  
and none of whose ropes will be  
broken.  
21 But there the LORD in majesty will be  
for us  
a place of broad rivers and streams,  
where no galley with oars can go,  
nor stately ship can pass.  
22 For the LORD is our judge, the LORD  
is our ruler,  
the LORD is our king; he will save us.  
23 Your rigging hangs loose;  
it cannot hold the mast firm in its  
place,  
or keep the sail spread out.  
Then prey and spoil in abundance  
will be divided;  
even the lame will fall to plundering.  
24 And no inhabitant will say, “I am  
sick”;  
the people who live there will be  
forgiven their iniquity.

### Judgment on the Nations

- 34** Draw near, O nations, to hear;  
O peoples, give heed!  
Let the earth hear, and all that fills it;  
the world, and all that comes from it.  
2 For the LORD is enraged against all the nations,  
and furious against all their hordes;  
he has doomed them, has given them over for  
slaughter.  
3 Their slain shall be cast out,  
and the stench of their corpses shall rise;  
the mountains shall flow with their blood.  
4 All the host of heaven shall rot away,  
and the skies roll up like a scroll.  
All their host shall wither  
like a leaf withering on a vine,  
or fruit withering on a fig tree.  
5 When my sword has drunk its fill in the  
heavens,

### Read Isaiah 34–35

Here we have oracles of judgment and renewal. The first is directed against Edom, and this destruction is of an ecological nature. Chapter 35, concerning renewal, is based on the theme of the “new exodus.” It bears a strong resemblance to the description of Israel’s return from exile as found in Second Isaiah (chs. 40–55). The “highway” refers to God’s deliverance of the people through the wilderness. We would agree that the longing of every human heart is simply expressed in 35:10: “sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

**Reflect:** In the midst of earthly trials, God’s highway will lead us to liberation.

**Pray:** May we be counted among those who will be liberated from captivity.

**Act:** In your actions, strive to be an instrument of God’s liberation and joy.

- lo, it will descend upon Edom,  
upon the people I have doomed to judgment.
- 6 The LORD has a sword; it is sated with blood,  
it is gorged with fat,  
with the blood of lambs and goats,  
with the fat of the kidneys of rams.  
For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah,  
a great slaughter in the land of Edom.
- 7 Wild oxen shall fall with them,  
and young steers with the mighty bulls.  
Their land shall be soaked with blood,  
and their soil made rich with fat.
- 8 For the LORD has a day of vengeance,  
a year of vindication by Zion’s cause.<sup>a</sup>
- 9 And the streams of Edom<sup>b</sup> shall be turned into pitch,  
and her soil into sulfur;  
her land shall become burning pitch.
- 10 Night and day it shall not be quenched;  
its smoke shall go up forever.  
From generation to generation it shall lie waste;  
no one shall pass through it forever and ever.
- 11 But the hawk<sup>c</sup> and the hedgehog<sup>c</sup> shall possess it;  
the owl<sup>c</sup> and the raven shall live in it.  
He shall stretch the line of confusion over it,  
and the plummet of chaos over<sup>d</sup> its nobles.
- 12 They shall name it No Kingdom There,  
and all its princes shall be nothing.
- 13 Thorns shall grow over its strongholds,  
nettles and thistles in its fortresses.  
It shall be the haunt of jackals,  
an abode for ostriches.
- 14 Wildcats shall meet with hyenas,  
goat-demons shall call to each other;  
there too Lilith shall repose,  
and find a place to rest.
- 15 There shall the owl nest  
and lay and hatch and brood in its shadow;  
there too the buzzards shall gather,  
each one with its mate.
- 16 Seek and read from the book of the LORD:  
Not one of these shall be missing;  
none shall be without its mate.  
For the mouth of the LORD has commanded,  
and his spirit has gathered them.
- 17 He has cast the lot for them,  
his hand has portioned it out to them with the line;  
they shall possess it forever,  
from generation to generation they shall live in it.

<sup>a</sup> Or of recompense by Zion’s defender

<sup>b</sup> Heb her streams

<sup>c</sup> Identification uncertain

<sup>d</sup> Heb lacks over

### The Return of the Redeemed to Zion

**35** The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus <sup>2</sup> it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God.

<sup>3</sup> Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees.

<sup>4</sup> Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you."

<sup>5</sup> Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

<sup>6</sup> then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.

For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert;

<sup>7</sup> the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,<sup>a</sup> the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

<sup>8</sup> A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it,<sup>b</sup> but it shall be for God's people;<sup>c</sup> no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray.

<sup>9</sup> No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there.

<sup>10</sup> And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

### Sennacherib Threatens Jerusalem

**36** In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, King Sennacherib of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them. <sup>2</sup> The king of Assyria sent the Rabshakeh from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem, with a great army. He stood by the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Fuller's Field. <sup>3</sup> And there came out to him Eliakim son of Hilkiah, who was in charge of the palace, and Shebna the secretary, and Joah son of Asaph, the recorder.

<sup>4</sup> The Rabshakeh said to them, "Say to Hezekiah: Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria: On what do you base this confidence of yours? <sup>5</sup> Do you think that mere words are strategy and power for war? On whom do you now rely, that you have rebelled against me? <sup>6</sup> See, you are relying on Egypt, that broken reed of a staff, which will pierce the hand of anyone who leans on it. Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who rely on him. <sup>7</sup> But if you say to me, 'We rely on the LORD our God,' is it not he whose high places and altars

<sup>a</sup> Cn: Heb *in the haunt of jackals is her resting place*

<sup>b</sup> Or *pass it by*

<sup>c</sup> Cn: Heb *for them*

### Read Isaiah 36–39

These narratives concern Isaiah and Hezekiah. The text forms a historical appendix to the preceding chapters. The first part concerns Sennacherib's campaign against Jerusalem and the second part deals with the failure of the siege. Isaiah sends a message to Hezekiah in order to encourage Hezekiah's faith. Isaiah's prediction concerning the fate of the Assyrian siege is literally fulfilled (37:33–35). Chapter 38 focuses on the sickness and recovery of Hezekiah. In Hezekiah's hymn of thanksgiving, we read, "I said, In the noontide of my days I must depart... I shall not see the LORD in the land of the living." At the moment Hezekiah accepts the finality of death, he is spared. He then celebrates his return to health.

**Reflect:** The thought of death should never be far from our minds. We should live life as though it may be terminated in an instant. This is not a morbid thought, because salvation awaits those who trust in God.

**Pray:** May we fear neither life nor death.

**Act:** Live each day with an eye on eternity.

Hezekiah has removed, saying to Judah and to Jerusalem, 'You shall worship before this altar'?<sup>8</sup> Come now, make a wager with my master the king of Assyria: I will give you two thousand horses, if you are able on your part to set riders on them.<sup>9</sup> How then can you repulse a single captain among the least of my master's servants, when you rely on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen?<sup>10</sup> Moreover, is it without the LORD that I have come up against this land to destroy it? The LORD said to me, Go up against this land, and destroy it."

11 Then Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah said to the Rabshakeh, "Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand it; do not speak to us in the language of Judah within the hearing of the people who are on the wall."<sup>12</sup> But the Rabshakeh said, "Has my master sent me to speak these words to your master and to you, and not to the people sitting on the wall, who are doomed with you to eat their own dung and drink their own urine?"

13 Then the Rabshakeh stood and called out in a loud voice in the language of Judah, "Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria!<sup>14</sup> Thus says the king: 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you.<sup>15</sup> Do not let Hezekiah make you rely on the LORD by saying, The LORD will surely deliver us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.'<sup>16</sup> Do not listen to Hezekiah; for thus says the king of Assyria: 'Make your peace with me and come out to me; then every one of you will eat from your own vine and your own fig tree and drink water from your own cistern,<sup>17</sup> until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and wine, a land of bread and vineyards.<sup>18</sup> Do not let Hezekiah mislead you by saying, The LORD will save us. Has any of the gods of the nations saved their land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?<sup>19</sup> Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand?<sup>20</sup> Who among all the gods of these countries have saved their countries out of my hand, that the LORD should save Jerusalem out of my hand?'"

21 But they were silent and answered him not a word, for the king's command was, "Do not answer him."<sup>22</sup> Then Eliakim son of Hilkiyah, who was in charge of the palace, and Shebna the secretary, and Joah son of Asaph, the recorder, came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn, and told him the words of the Rabshakeh.

### Hezekiah Consults Isaiah

**37** When King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and

went into the house of the LORD. <sup>2</sup> And he sent Eliakim, who was in charge of the palace, and Shebna the secretary, and the senior priests, covered with sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz. <sup>3</sup> They said to him, “Thus says Hezekiah, This day is a day of distress, of rebuke, and of disgrace; children have come to the birth, and there is no strength to bring them forth. <sup>4</sup> It may be that the LORD your God heard the words of the Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to mock the living God, and will rebuke the words that the LORD your God has heard; therefore lift up your prayer for the remnant that is left.”

<sup>5</sup> When the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah, <sup>6</sup> Isaiah said to them, “Say to your master, ‘Thus says the LORD: Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have reviled me. <sup>7</sup> I myself will put a spirit in him, so that he shall hear a rumor, and return to his own land; I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.’”

<sup>8</sup> The Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah; for he had heard that the king had left Lachish. <sup>9</sup> Now the king<sup>a</sup> heard concerning King Tirhakah of Ethiopia,<sup>b</sup> “He has set out to fight against you.” When he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, <sup>10</sup> “Thus shall you speak to King Hezekiah of Judah: Do not let your God on whom you rely deceive you by promising that Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. <sup>11</sup> See, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, destroying them utterly. Shall you be delivered? <sup>12</sup> Have the gods of the nations delivered them, the nations that my predecessors destroyed, Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and the people of Eden who were in Telassar? <sup>13</sup> Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, the king of Hena, or the king of Ivvah?”

### Hezekiah’s Prayer

<sup>14</sup> Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it; then Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD and spread it before the LORD. <sup>15</sup> And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD, saying: <sup>16</sup> “O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, who are enthroned above the cherubim, you are God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth. <sup>17</sup> Incline your ear, O LORD, and hear; open your eyes, O LORD, and see; hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God. <sup>18</sup> Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands, <sup>19</sup> and have hurled their gods into the fire, though they were no gods, but the work of human hands—wood and stone—and so they were destroyed. <sup>20</sup> So now, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone are the LORD.”

<sup>21</sup> Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying: “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Because you have prayed to me concerning King Sennacherib of Assyria, <sup>22</sup> this is the word that the LORD has spoken concerning him:

She despises you, she scorns you—  
virgin daughter Zion;  
she tosses her head—behind your  
back,  
daughter Jerusalem.

<sup>23</sup> “Whom have you mocked and  
reviled?  
Against whom have you raised  
your voice  
and haughtily lifted your eyes?  
Against the Holy One of Israel!

<sup>24</sup> By your servants you have mocked  
the Lord,  
and you have said, ‘With my  
many chariots  
I have gone up the heights of the  
mountains,  
to the far recesses of Lebanon;

<sup>a</sup> Heb *he*

<sup>b</sup> Or *Nubia*; Heb *Cush*



- I felled its tallest cedars,  
 its choicest cypresses;  
 I came to its remotest height,  
 its densest forest.
- <sup>25</sup> I dug wells  
 and drank waters,  
 I dried up with the sole of my foot  
 all the streams of Egypt.’
- <sup>26</sup> “Have you not heard  
 that I determined it long ago?  
 I planned from days of old  
 what now I bring to pass,  
 that you should make fortified cities  
 crash into heaps of ruins,
- <sup>27</sup> while their inhabitants, shorn of  
 strength,  
 are dismayed and confounded;  
 they have become like plants of the  
 field  
 and like tender grass,  
 like grass on the housetops,  
 blighted<sup>a</sup> before it is grown.
- <sup>28</sup> “I know your rising up<sup>b</sup> and your  
 sitting down,  
 your going out and coming in,  
 and your raging against me.
- <sup>29</sup> Because you have raged against me  
 and your arrogance has come to  
 my ears,  
 I will put my hook in your nose  
 and my bit in your mouth;  
 I will turn you back on the way  
 by which you came.

<sup>30</sup> “And this shall be the sign for you:  
 This year eat what grows of itself, and in  
 the second year what springs from that;  
 then in the third year sow, reap, plant vine-  
 yards, and eat their fruit. <sup>31</sup> The surviving  
 remnant of the house of Judah shall again  
 take root downward, and bear fruit upward;  
<sup>32</sup> for from Jerusalem a remnant shall go  
 out, and from Mount Zion a band of sur-  
 vivors. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do  
 this.

<sup>33</sup> “Therefore thus says the LORD con-  
 cerning the king of Assyria: He shall not  
 come into this city, shoot an arrow there,  
 come before it with a shield, or cast up a  
 siege ramp against it. <sup>34</sup> By the way that he  
 came, by the same he shall return; he shall  
 not come into this city, says the LORD.  
<sup>35</sup> For I will defend this city to save it, for  
 my own sake and for the sake of my ser-  
 vant David.”

### Sennacherib’s Defeat and Death

<sup>36</sup> Then the angel of the LORD set out  
 and struck down one hundred eighty-five  
 thousand in the camp of the Assyrians;  
 when morning dawned, they were all dead  
 bodies. <sup>37</sup> Then King Sennacherib of Assyria  
 left, went home, and lived at Nineveh.  
<sup>38</sup> As he was worshiping in the house of his  
 god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and  
 Sharezer killed him with the sword, and  
 they escaped into the land of Ararat. His  
 son Esar-haddon succeeded him.

### Hezekiah’s Illness

**38** In those days Hezekiah became sick and was  
 at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah son of  
 Amoz came to him, and said to him, “Thus says the  
 LORD: Set your house in order, for you shall die; you  
 shall not recover.” <sup>2</sup> Then Hezekiah turned his face to  
 the wall, and prayed to the LORD: <sup>3</sup> “Remember now,  
 O LORD, I implore you, how I have walked before you  
 in faithfulness with a whole heart, and have done  
 what is good in your sight.” And Hezekiah wept bit-  
 terly.

<sup>4</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to Isaiah: <sup>5</sup> “Go  
 and say to Hezekiah, Thus says the LORD, the God of  
 your ancestor David: I have heard your prayer, I have  
 seen your tears; I will add fifteen years to your life. <sup>6</sup> I

<sup>a</sup> With 2 Kings 19.26: Heb *field*

<sup>b</sup> Q Ms Gk: MT lacks *your rising up*

will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and defend this city.

7 “This is the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that he has promised: <sup>8</sup> See, I will make the shadow cast by the declining sun on the dial of Ahaz turn back ten steps.” So the sun turned back on the dial the ten steps by which it had declined.<sup>a</sup>

9 A writing of King Hezekiah of Judah, after he had been sick and had recovered from his sickness:

- 10 I said: In the noontide of my days  
I must depart;  
I am consigned to the gates of Sheol  
for the rest of my years.
- 11 I said, I shall not see the LORD  
in the land of the living;  
I shall look upon mortals no more  
among the inhabitants of the world.
- 12 My dwelling is plucked up and  
removed from me  
like a shepherd’s tent;  
like a weaver I have rolled up my life;  
he cuts me off from the loom;  
from day to night you bring me to  
an end;<sup>a</sup>
- 13 I cry for help<sup>b</sup> until morning;  
like a lion he breaks all my bones;  
from day to night you bring me to  
an end.<sup>a</sup>
- 14 Like a swallow or a crane<sup>a</sup> I clamor,  
I moan like a dove.  
My eyes are weary with looking  
upward.  
O Lord, I am oppressed; be my  
security!

15 But what can I say? For he has  
spoken to me,  
and he himself has done it.  
All my sleep has fled<sup>c</sup>  
because of the bitterness of my  
soul.

- 16 O Lord, by these things people live,  
and in all these is the life of my  
spirit.<sup>a</sup>  
Oh, restore me to health and  
make me live!
- 17 Surely it was for my welfare  
that I had great bitterness;  
but you have held back<sup>d</sup> my life  
from the pit of destruction,  
for you have cast all my sins  
behind your back.
- 18 For Sheol cannot thank you,  
death cannot praise you;  
those who go down to the Pit cannot  
hope  
for your faithfulness.
- 19 The living, the living, they thank  
you,  
as I do this day;  
fathers make known to children  
your faithfulness.
- 20 The LORD will save me,  
and we will sing to stringed  
instruments<sup>e</sup>  
all the days of our lives,  
at the house of the LORD.

21 Now Isaiah had said, “Let them take a lump of figs, and apply it to the boil, so that he may recover.” <sup>22</sup> Hezekiah also had said, “What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the LORD?”

### Envoys from Babylon Welcomed

**39** At that time King Merodach-baladan son of Baladan of Babylon sent envoys with letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that he had been sick and had recovered. <sup>2</sup> Hezekiah welcomed them; he showed them his treasure house, the silver, the gold, the spices, the precious oil, his whole armory, all that was found in his storehouses. There was nothing in his house or in all his realm that Hezekiah did not show them. <sup>3</sup> Then the prophet Isaiah came to King Hezekiah and said to him, “What did these men say? From where

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>b</sup> Cn: Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>c</sup> Cn Compare Syr: Heb *I will walk slowly all my years*

<sup>d</sup> Cn Compare Gk Vg: Heb *loved*

<sup>e</sup> Heb *my stringed instruments*

did they come to you?" Hezekiah answered, "They have come to me from a far country, from Babylon." <sup>4</sup> He said, "What have they seen in your house?" Hezekiah answered, "They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing in my storehouses that I did not show them."

<sup>5</sup> Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD of hosts: <sup>6</sup> Days are coming when all that is in your house, and

that which your ancestors have stored up until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left, says the LORD. <sup>7</sup> Some of your own sons who are born to you shall be taken away; they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." <sup>8</sup> Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the LORD that you have spoken is good." For he thought, "There will be peace and security in my days."

### Read Isaiah 40:1–11

This is the prologue of Second Isaiah. The setting of this prophetic vision is the heavenly court. The key to the whole prophecy is: "Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God" (40:1). Jerusalem's warfare has now ended. The exodus is one of the central motifs of Second Isaiah. God will come to deliver humankind, and the passing nature of material things is contrasted with the stability of God's promise. The good news is: "Here is your God." Yahweh will free Israel from captivity with compassion and tenderness.

**Reflect:** We should think often of God's goodness and the accompanying hope of salvation. In keeping with the exodus motif, we can live our lives with the confidence of salvation.

**Pray:** May we take seriously the key to the prophecy: "Comfort, O comfort my people."

**Act:** Listen and act when God speaks to us through the prophets.

### God's People Are Comforted

**40** Comfort, O comfort my people,  
says your God.

<sup>2</sup> Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and cry to her

that she has served her term,  
that her penalty is paid,  
that she has received from the LORD's hand  
double for all her sins.

<sup>3</sup> A voice cries out:

"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,  
make straight in the desert a highway for our  
God.

<sup>4</sup> Every valley shall be lifted up,  
and every mountain and hill be made low;  
the uneven ground shall become level,  
and the rough places a plain.

<sup>5</sup> Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,  
and all people shall see it together,  
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

<sup>6</sup> A voice says, "Cry out!"

And I said, "What shall I cry?"

All people are grass,  
their constancy is like the flower of the field.

<sup>7</sup> The grass withers, the flower fades,  
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;  
surely the people are grass.

<sup>8</sup> The grass withers, the flower fades;  
but the word of our God will stand forever.

<sup>9</sup> Get you up to a high mountain,  
O Zion, herald of good tidings;<sup>a</sup>

lift up your voice with strength,  
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,<sup>b</sup>  
lift it up, do not fear;

say to the cities of Judah,  
"Here is your God!"

<sup>10</sup> See, the Lord GOD comes with might,  
and his arm rules for him;

<sup>a</sup> Or O herald of good tidings to Zion

<sup>b</sup> Or O herald of good tidings to Jerusalem

**Read Isaiah 40:12–31**

This passage draws attention to God as creator. Those on earth who count themselves mighty are miniscule in the infinite perspective of God. God's nature is completely beyond human comprehension. The chapter ends with a contrast between the weakness of Israel and the strength of God, who sustains and redeems.

**Reflect:** With the psalmist (Ps 8), at all times we should be in awe of God's creation.

**Pray:** May we never overestimate our limited abilities.

**Act:** Let us act with the proper consideration of who we are.

- his reward is with him,  
and his recompense before him.
- 11 He will feed his flock like a shepherd;  
he will gather the lambs in his arms,  
and carry them in his bosom,  
and gently lead the mother sheep.
- 12 Who has measured the waters in the hollow of  
his hand  
and marked off the heavens with a span,  
enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure,  
and weighed the mountains in scales  
and the hills in a balance?
- 13 Who has directed the spirit of the LORD,  
or as his counselor has instructed him?
- 14 Whom did he consult for his enlightenment,  
and who taught him the path of justice?  
Who taught him knowledge,  
and showed him the way of understanding?
- 15 Even the nations are like a drop from a bucket,  
and are accounted as dust on the scales;  
see, he takes up the isles like fine dust.
- 16 Lebanon would not provide fuel enough,  
nor are its animals enough for a burnt offering.
- 17 All the nations are as nothing before him;  
they are accounted by him as less than  
nothing and emptiness.
- 18 To whom then will you liken God,  
or what likeness compare with him?
- 19 An idol? —A workman casts it,  
and a goldsmith overlays it with gold,  
and casts for it silver chains.
- 20 As a gift one chooses mulberry wood<sup>a</sup>  
—wood that will not rot—  
then seeks out a skilled artisan  
to set up an image that will not topple.
- 21 Have you not known? Have you not heard?  
Has it not been told you from the beginning?  
Have you not understood from the foundations  
of the earth?
- 22 It is he who sits above the circle of the earth,  
and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;  
who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,  
and spreads them like a tent to live in;
- 23 who brings princes to naught,  
and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.
- 24 Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown,  
scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth,  
when he blows upon them, and they wither,  
and the tempest carries them off like stubble.

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

- 25 To whom then will you compare me,  
or who is my equal? says the Holy  
One.
- 26 Lift up your eyes on high and see:  
Who created these?  
He who brings out their host and  
numbers them,  
calling them all by name;  
because he is great in strength,  
mighty in power,  
not one is missing.
- 27 Why do you say, O Jacob,  
and speak, O Israel,  
“My way is hidden from the LORD,  
and my right is disregarded by my  
God”?
- 28 Have you not known? Have you not  
heard?  
The LORD is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the  
earth.  
He does not faint or grow weary;  
his understanding is unsearchable.
- 29 He gives power to the faint,  
and strengthens the powerless.
- 30 Even youths will faint and be weary,  
and the young will fall exhausted;
- 31 but those who wait for the LORD shall  
renew their strength,  
they shall mount up with wings  
like eagles,  
they shall run and not be weary,  
they shall walk and not faint.

### Read Isaiah 41

God is speaking; Israel is God's servant. This is not a demeaning reference, because to be God's servant is to be chosen by God. Service is a prevalent idea in Second Isaiah. One of the greatest biblical promises is: “Do not fear, I will help you.” The proclamation of salvation is described in terms of the new exodus.

**Reflect:** A proper understanding of service does not confuse it with servitude.

**Pray:** Pray that we may always be faithful servants of Yahweh.

**Act:** Always put yourself at the service of others.

### Israel Assured of God's Help

- 41** Listen to me in silence, O coastlands;  
let the peoples renew their strength;  
let them approach, then let them speak;  
let us together draw near for judgment.
- 2 Who has roused a victor from the east,  
summoned him to his service?  
He delivers up nations to him,  
and tramples kings under foot;  
he makes them like dust with his sword,  
like driven stubble with his bow.
- 3 He pursues them and passes on safely,  
scarcely touching the path with his feet.
- 4 Who has performed and done this,  
calling the generations from the beginning?  
I, the LORD, am first,  
and will be with the last.
- 5 The coastlands have seen and are afraid,  
the ends of the earth tremble;  
they have drawn near and come.
- 6 Each one helps the other,  
saying to one another, “Take courage!”
- 7 The artisan encourages the goldsmith,  
and the one who smooths with the hammer  
encourages the one who strikes the anvil,  
saying of the soldering, “It is good”;  
and they fasten it with nails so that it cannot  
be moved.
- 8 But you, Israel, my servant,  
Jacob, whom I have chosen,  
the offspring of Abraham, my friend;  
9 you whom I took from the ends of the earth,

- and called from its farthest  
corners,  
saying to you, "You are my servant,  
I have chosen you and not cast  
you off";
- 10 do not fear, for I am with you,  
do not be afraid, for I am your God;  
I will strengthen you, I will help you,  
I will uphold you with my  
victorious right hand.
- 11 Yes, all who are incensed against you  
shall be ashamed and disgraced;  
those who strive against you  
shall be as nothing and shall  
perish.
- 12 You shall seek those who contend  
with you,  
but you shall not find them;  
those who war against you  
shall be as nothing at all.
- 13 For I, the LORD your God,  
hold your right hand;  
it is I who say to you, "Do not fear,  
I will help you."
- 14 Do not fear, you worm Jacob,  
you insect<sup>a</sup> Israel!  
I will help you, says the LORD;  
your Redeemer is the Holy One of  
Israel.
- 15 Now, I will make of you a threshing  
sledge,  
sharp, new, and having teeth;  
you shall thresh the mountains and  
crush them,  
and you shall make the hills like  
chaff.
- 16 You shall winnow them and the wind  
shall carry them away,  
and the tempest shall scatter them.  
Then you shall rejoice in the LORD;  
in the Holy One of Israel you shall  
glory.
- 17 When the poor and needy seek water,  
and there is none,

- and their tongue is parched with  
thirst,  
I the LORD will answer them,  
I the God of Israel will not forsake  
them.
- 18 I will open rivers on the bare heights,<sup>b</sup>  
and fountains in the midst of the  
valleys;  
I will make the wilderness a pool of  
water,  
and the dry land springs of water.
- 19 I will put in the wilderness the cedar,  
the acacia, the myrtle, and the  
olive;  
I will set in the desert the cypress,  
the plane and the pine together,  
20 so that all may see and know,  
all may consider and understand,  
that the hand of the LORD has done  
this,  
the Holy One of Israel has created it.

### The Futility of Idols

- 21 Set forth your case, says the LORD;  
bring your proofs, says the King  
of Jacob.
- 22 Let them bring them, and tell us  
what is to happen.  
Tell us the former things, what they  
are,  
so that we may consider them,  
and that we may know their outcome;  
or declare to us the things to come.
- 23 Tell us what is to come hereafter,  
that we may know that you are gods;  
do good, or do harm,  
that we may be afraid and terrified.
- 24 You, indeed, are nothing  
and your work is nothing at all;  
whoever chooses you is an  
abomination.
- 25 I stirred up one from the north, and  
he has come,  
from the rising of the sun he was  
summoned by name.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Syr: Heb *men of*

<sup>b</sup> Or *trails*

<sup>c</sup> Cn Compare Q Ms Gk: MT *and he shall call on my name*

He shall trample<sup>a</sup> on rulers as on mortar,  
as the potter treads clay.

<sup>26</sup> Who declared it from the beginning,  
so that we might know,  
and beforehand, so that we might say, “He is right?”

There was no one who declared it,  
none who proclaimed,  
none who heard your words.

<sup>27</sup> I first have declared it to Zion,<sup>b</sup>  
and I give to Jerusalem a herald  
of good tidings.

<sup>28</sup> But when I look there is no one;  
among these there is no counselor  
who, when I ask, gives an answer.

<sup>29</sup> No, they are all a delusion;  
their works are nothing;  
their images are empty wind.

### Read Isaiah 42

Yahweh is speaker, and the servant’s mission is described in what is known as the first of four “Servant Songs.” The servant is selected as the one on whom God’s favor rests. He is to be mediator of God’s justice as well as an agent of peace and nonviolence. Note in the opening of the first Servant Song the words: “Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights.” The description of the servant as “a light to the nations” refers to the broad universality of this message. In the Christian era, most Jews adopted a collective understanding of the “servant”; the term “servant” referred to by these words is Israel.

**Reflect:** How many times have we had the opportunity to be agents of peace and nonviolence, and perhaps missed the chance?

**Pray:** At all times, may we be faithful servants of Yahweh.

**Act:** Recall Jesus’ words to his disciples: “For the Son of Man [Jesus] came not to be served but to serve” (Mk 10:45).

### The Servant, a Light to the Nations

**42** Here is my servant, whom I uphold,  
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;  
I have put my spirit upon him;  
he will bring forth justice to the nations.

<sup>2</sup> He will not cry or lift up his voice,  
or make it heard in the street;

<sup>3</sup> a bruised reed he will not break,  
and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;  
he will faithfully bring forth justice.

<sup>4</sup> He will not grow faint or be crushed  
until he has established justice in the earth;  
and the coastlands wait for his teaching.

<sup>5</sup> Thus says God, the LORD,  
who created the heavens and stretched them out,  
who spread out the earth and what comes from it,  
who gives breath to the people upon it  
and spirit to those who walk in it:

<sup>6</sup> I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness,  
I have taken you by the hand and kept you;  
I have given you as a covenant to the people,<sup>c</sup>  
a light to the nations,  
<sup>7</sup> to open the eyes that are blind,  
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,  
from the prison those who sit in darkness.

<sup>8</sup> I am the LORD, that is my name;  
my glory I give to no other,  
nor my praise to idols.

<sup>9</sup> See, the former things have come to pass,  
and new things I now declare;  
before they spring forth,  
I tell you of them.

### A Hymn of Praise

<sup>10</sup> Sing to the LORD a new song,  
his praise from the end of the earth!

<sup>a</sup> Cn: Heb come

<sup>b</sup> Cn: Heb First to Zion—Behold, behold them

<sup>c</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

- Let the sea roar<sup>a</sup> and all that fills it,  
the coastlands and their inhabitants.
- 11 Let the desert and its towns lift up  
their voice,  
the villages that Kedar inhabits;  
let the inhabitants of Sela sing for joy,  
let them shout from the tops of  
the mountains.
- 12 Let them give glory to the LORD,  
and declare his praise in the  
coastlands.
- 13 The LORD goes forth like a soldier,  
like a warrior he stirs up his fury;  
he cries out, he shouts aloud,  
he shows himself mighty against  
his foes.
- 14 For a long time I have held my peace,  
I have kept still and restrained  
myself;  
now I will cry out like a woman in labor,  
I will gasp and pant.
- 15 I will lay waste mountains and hills,  
and dry up all their herbage;  
I will turn the rivers into islands,  
and dry up the pools.
- 16 I will lead the blind  
by a road they do not know,  
by paths they have not known  
I will guide them.  
I will turn the darkness before them  
into light,  
the rough places into level ground.  
These are the things I will do,  
and I will not forsake them.
- 17 They shall be turned back and  
utterly put to shame—  
those who trust in carved images,  
who say to cast images,  
“You are our gods.”
- 18 Listen, you that are deaf;  
and you that are blind, look up  
and see!

- 19 Who is blind but my servant,  
or deaf like my messenger whom I  
send?  
Who is blind like my dedicated one,  
or blind like the servant of the  
LORD?
- 20 He sees many things, but does<sup>b</sup> not  
observe them;  
his ears are open, but he does not  
hear.

### Israel's Disobedience

- 21 The LORD was pleased, for the sake  
of his righteousness,  
to magnify his teaching and make  
it glorious.
- 22 But this is a people robbed and  
plundered,  
all of them are trapped in holes  
and hidden in prisons;  
they have become a prey with no  
one to rescue,  
a spoil with no one to say,  
“Restore!”
- 23 Who among you will give heed to  
this,  
who will attend and listen for the  
time to come?
- 24 Who gave up Jacob to the spoiler,  
and Israel to the robbers?  
Was it not the LORD, against whom  
we have sinned,  
in whose ways they would not  
walk,  
and whose law they would not  
obey?
- 25 So he poured upon him the heat of  
his anger  
and the fury of war;  
it set him on fire all around, but he  
did not understand;  
it burned him, but he did not take  
it to heart.

### Restoration and Protection Promised

**43** But now thus says the LORD,  
he who created you, O Jacob,  
he who formed you, O Israel:  
Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;  
I have called you by name, you are mine.

<sup>a</sup> Cn Compare Ps 96.11; 98.7: Heb *Those who go down to the sea*

<sup>b</sup> Heb *You see many things but do*



### Read Isaiah 43

Herein are promises of redemption and restoration, once again with the guarantee: “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you.” God says: “I have called you by name, you are mine,” indicating the intimate relationship between God and people. Note again the exodus typology in verses 2–4. The climax of this section is expressed in the guarantee, “Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you.”

**Reflect:** Think about the exodus from Egypt, the exodus from Babylon, and exodus in your own spiritual journey.

**Pray:** Pray that God will open your heart to the depth of his love for you.

**Act:** Each day, reflect on your intimate relationship with God.

- 2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;  
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;  
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,  
and the flame shall not consume you.
- 3 For I am the LORD your God,  
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.  
I give Egypt as your ransom,  
Ethiopia<sup>a</sup> and Seba in exchange for you.
- 4 Because you are precious in my sight,  
and honored, and I love you,  
I give people in return for you,  
nations in exchange for your life.
- 5 Do not fear, for I am with you;  
I will bring your offspring from the east,  
and from the west I will gather you;
- 6 I will say to the north, “Give them up,”  
and to the south, “Do not withhold;  
bring my sons from far away  
and my daughters from the end of the earth—
- 7 everyone who is called by my name,  
whom I created for my glory,  
whom I formed and made.”
- 8 Bring forth the people who are blind, yet have eyes,  
who are deaf, yet have ears!
- 9 Let all the nations gather together,  
and let the peoples assemble.  
Who among them declared this,  
and foretold to us the former things?  
Let them bring their witnesses to justify them,  
and let them hear and say, “It is true.”
- 10 You are my witnesses, says the LORD,  
and my servant whom I have chosen,  
so that you may know and believe me  
and understand that I am he.  
Before me no god was formed,  
nor shall there be any after me.
- 11 I, I am the LORD,  
and besides me there is no savior.
- 12 I declared and saved and proclaimed,  
when there was no strange god among you;  
and you are my witnesses, says the LORD.
- 13 I am God, and also henceforth I am He;  
there is no one who can deliver from my hand;  
I work and who can hinder it?
- 14 Thus says the LORD,  
your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:

<sup>a</sup> Or Nubia; Heb Cush

- For your sake I will send to Babylon  
and break down all the bars,  
and the shouting of the Chaldeans  
will be turned to lamentation.<sup>a</sup>
- 15 I am the LORD, your Holy One,  
the Creator of Israel, your King.
- 16 Thus says the LORD,  
who makes a way in the sea,  
a path in the mighty waters,  
17 who brings out chariot and horse,  
army and warrior;  
they lie down, they cannot rise,  
they are extinguished, quenched  
like a wick:
- 18 Do not remember the former things,  
or consider the things of old.
- 19 I am about to do a new thing;  
now it springs forth, do you not  
perceive it?  
I will make a way in the wilderness  
and rivers in the desert.
- 20 The wild animals will honor me,  
the jackals and the ostriches;  
for I give water in the wilderness,  
rivers in the desert,  
to give drink to my chosen people,  
21 the people whom I formed for  
myself  
so that they might declare my praise.
- 22 Yet you did not call upon me,  
O Jacob;
- but you have been weary of me,  
O Israel!
- 23 You have not brought me your sheep  
for burnt offerings,  
or honored me with your sacrifices.  
I have not burdened you with  
offerings,  
or wearied you with frankincense.
- 24 You have not bought me sweet cane  
with money,  
or satisfied me with the fat of your  
sacrifices.  
But you have burdened me with  
your sins;  
you have wearied me with your  
iniquities.
- 25 I, I am He  
who blots out your transgressions  
for my own sake,  
and I will not remember your sins.
- 26 Accuse me, let us go to trial;  
set forth your case, so that you  
may be proved right.
- 27 Your first ancestor sinned,  
and your interpreters transgressed  
against me.
- 28 Therefore I profaned the princes of  
the sanctuary,  
I delivered Jacob to utter  
destruction,  
and Israel to reviling.

### God's Blessing on Israel

**44** But now hear, O Jacob my servant,  
Israel whom I have chosen!

<sup>2</sup> Thus says the LORD who made you,  
who formed you in the womb and will help  
you:

Do not fear, O Jacob my servant,  
Jeshurun whom I have chosen.

<sup>3</sup> For I will pour water on the thirsty land,  
and streams on the dry ground;

I will pour my spirit upon your descendants,  
and my blessing on your offspring.

<sup>4</sup> They shall spring up like a green tamarisk,  
like willows by flowing streams.

<sup>5</sup> This one will say, "I am the LORD's,"  
another will be called by the name of Jacob,  
yet another will write on the hand, "The LORD's,"  
and adopt the name of Israel.

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

### Read Isaiah 44

Here is a description of the “New Israel,” formed by the Spirit of God. The author compares the true God and false gods. The graciousness of God stands out in God’s appeal directed to Israel to return. The final lines introduce Cyrus, king of Persia and conqueror of Babylon, who liberated the Jews. This marks a new day, not only for Israel, but for humankind.

**Reflect:** The graciousness of God is unmatched and without limit because God is unique. There is always an opportunity for a “new beginning.”

**Pray:** “I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.”

**Act:** Let us always be gracious in our relations with our neighbors, both friends and enemies.

- 6 Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel,  
and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts:  
I am the first and I am the last;  
besides me there is no god.
- 7 Who is like me? Let them proclaim it,  
let them declare and set it forth before me.  
Who has announced from of old the things to  
come?<sup>a</sup>  
Let them tell us<sup>b</sup> what is yet to be.
- 8 Do not fear, or be afraid;  
have I not told you from of old and declared it?  
You are my witnesses!  
Is there any god besides me?  
There is no other rock; I know not one.

### The Absurdity of Idol Worship

9 All who make idols are nothing, and the things they delight in do not profit; their witnesses neither see nor know. And so they will be put to shame. <sup>10</sup> Who would fashion a god or cast an image that can do no good? <sup>11</sup> Look, all its devotees shall be put to shame; the artisans too are merely human. Let them all assemble, let them stand up; they shall be terrified, they shall all be put to shame.

<sup>12</sup> The ironsmith fashions it<sup>c</sup> and works it over the coals, shaping it with hammers, and forging it with his strong arm; he becomes hungry and his strength fails, he drinks no water and is faint. <sup>13</sup> The carpenter stretches a line, marks it out with a stylus, fashions it with planes, and marks it with a compass; he makes it in human form, with human beauty, to be set up in a shrine. <sup>14</sup> He cuts down cedars or chooses a holm tree or an oak and lets it grow strong among the trees of the forest. He plants a cedar and the rain nourishes it. <sup>15</sup> Then it can be used as fuel. Part of it he takes and warms himself; he kindles a fire and bakes bread. Then he makes a god and worships it, makes it a carved image and bows down before it. <sup>16</sup> Half of it he burns in the fire; over this half he roasts meat, eats it and is satisfied. He also warms himself and says, “Ah, I am warm, I can feel the fire!” <sup>17</sup> The rest of it he makes into a god, his idol, bows down to it and worships it; he prays to it and says, “Save me, for you are my god!”

<sup>18</sup> They do not know, nor do they comprehend; for their eyes are shut, so that they cannot see, and their minds as well, so that they cannot understand. <sup>19</sup> No one considers, nor is there knowledge or discernment to say, “Half of it I burned in the fire; I also baked bread on its coals, I roasted meat and have eaten. Now shall I make the rest of it an abomination? Shall I fall down before a block of wood?” <sup>20</sup> He feeds on ashes; a deluded

<sup>a</sup> Cn: Heb from my placing an eternal people and things to come

<sup>b</sup> Tg: Heb them

<sup>c</sup> Cn: Heb an ax

mind has led him astray, and he cannot save himself or say, “Is not this thing in my right hand a fraud?”

### Israel Is Not Forgotten

- 21 Remember these things, O Jacob,  
and Israel, for you are my servant;  
I formed you, you are my servant;  
O Israel, you will not be forgotten  
by me.
- 22 I have swept away your  
transgressions like a cloud,  
and your sins like mist;  
return to me, for I have redeemed  
you.
- 23 Sing, O heavens, for the LORD has  
done it;  
shout, O depths of the earth;  
break forth into singing,  
O mountains,  
O forest, and every tree in it!  
For the LORD has redeemed Jacob,  
and will be glorified in Israel.
- 24 Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer,  
who formed you in the womb:  
I am the LORD, who made all things,

who alone stretched out the  
heavens,  
who by myself spread out the  
earth;

- 25 who frustrates the omens of liars,  
and makes fools of diviners;  
who turns back the wise,  
and makes their knowledge  
foolish;
- 26 who confirms the word of his servant,  
and fulfills the prediction of his  
messengers;  
who says of Jerusalem, “It shall be  
inhabited,”  
and of the cities of Judah, “They  
shall be rebuilt,  
and I will raise up their ruins”;
- 27 who says to the deep, “Be dry—  
I will dry up your rivers”;
- 28 who says of Cyrus, “He is my  
shepherd,  
and he shall carry out all my  
purpose”;  
and who says of Jerusalem, “It shall  
be rebuilt,”  
and of the temple, “Your  
foundation shall be laid.”

### Read Isaiah 45

The only time the word “messiah” (Heb. *meshiah*, “anointed”) is used of a foreigner is in this section, and the foreigner is Cyrus, the Persian, who was the agent of Yahweh. The Greek equivalent is *christos* (Christ). God’s purpose in creation is the redemption of all human-kind. To all people God offers this invitation. “That you may know that it is I, the LORD.”

**Reflect:** Reflect upon the universality of salvation.

**Pray:** May we develop an appreciation of the meaning of creation.

**Act:** Include everyone; exclude no one.

### Cyrus, God’s Instrument

- 45** Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus,  
whose right hand I have grasped  
to subdue nations before him  
and strip kings of their robes,  
to open doors before him—  
and the gates shall not be closed:
- 2 I will go before you  
and level the mountains,<sup>a</sup>  
I will break in pieces the doors of bronze  
and cut through the bars of iron,
- 3 I will give you the treasures of darkness  
and riches hidden in secret places,  
so that you may know that it is I, the LORD,  
the God of Israel, who call you by your name.
- 4 For the sake of my servant Jacob,  
and Israel my chosen,  
I call you by your name,  
I surname you, though you do not know me.
- 5 I am the LORD, and there is no other;  
besides me there is no god.  
I arm you, though you do not know me,

<sup>a</sup> Q Ms Gk: MT *the swellings*

- 6 so that they may know, from the  
rising of the sun  
and from the west, that there is no  
one besides me;  
I am the LORD, and there is no  
other.
- 7 I form light and create darkness,  
I make weal and create woe;  
I the LORD do all these things.
- 8 Shower, O heavens, from above,  
and let the skies rain down  
righteousness;  
let the earth open, that salvation  
may spring up,<sup>a</sup>  
and let it cause righteousness to  
sprout up also;  
I the LORD have created it.
- 9 Woe to you who strive with your  
Maker,  
earthen vessels with the potter!<sup>b</sup>  
Does the clay say to the one who  
fashions it, "What are you  
making"?  
or "Your work has no handles"?
- 10 Woe to anyone who says to a father,  
"What are you begetting?"  
or to a woman, "With what are  
you in labor?"
- 11 Thus says the LORD,  
the Holy One of Israel, and its  
Maker:  
Will you question me<sup>c</sup> about my  
children,  
or command me concerning the  
work of my hands?
- 12 I made the earth,  
and created humankind upon it;  
it was my hands that stretched out  
the heavens,  
and I commanded all their host.
- 13 I have aroused Cyrus<sup>d</sup> in  
righteousness,  
and I will make all his paths straight;  
he shall build my city  
and set my exiles free,  
not for price or reward,  
says the LORD of hosts.
- 14 Thus says the LORD:  
The wealth of Egypt and the  
merchandise of Ethiopia,<sup>e</sup>  
and the Sabeans, tall of stature,  
shall come over to you and be yours,  
they shall follow you;  
they shall come over in chains  
and bow down to you.  
They will make supplication to you,  
saying,  
"God is with you alone, and there  
is no other;  
there is no god besides him."
- 15 Truly, you are a God who hides  
himself,  
O God of Israel, the Savior.
- 16 All of them are put to shame and  
confounded,  
the makers of idols go in  
confusion together.
- 17 But Israel is saved by the LORD  
with everlasting salvation;  
you shall not be put to shame or  
confounded  
to all eternity.
- 18 For thus says the LORD,  
who created the heavens  
(he is God!),  
who formed the earth and made it  
(he established it;  
he did not create it a chaos,  
he formed it to be inhabited!):  
I am the LORD, and there is no other.
- 19 I did not speak in secret,  
in a land of darkness;  
I did not say to the offspring of Jacob,  
"Seek me in chaos."  
I the LORD speak the truth,  
I declare what is right.

### Idols Cannot Save Babylon

- 20 Assemble yourselves and come  
together,

<sup>a</sup> Q Ms: MT *that they may bring forth salvation*

<sup>b</sup> Cn: Heb *with the potsherd, or with the potters*

<sup>c</sup> Cn: Heb *Ask me of things to come*

<sup>d</sup> Heb *him*

<sup>e</sup> Or *Nubia; Heb Cush*

- draw near, you survivors of the nations!  
 They have no knowledge—  
 those who carry about their wooden idols,  
 and keep on praying to a god that cannot save.
- 21 Declare and present your case;  
 let them take counsel together!  
 Who told this long ago?  
 Who declared it of old?  
 Was it not I, the LORD?  
 There is no other god besides me,  
 a righteous God and a Savior;  
 there is no one besides me.
- 22 Turn to me and be saved,  
 all the ends of the earth!

- For I am God, and there is no other.
- 23 By myself I have sworn,  
 from my mouth has gone forth in righteousness  
 a word that shall not return:  
 “To me every knee shall bow,  
 every tongue shall swear.”
- 24 Only in the LORD, it shall be said  
 of me,  
 are righteousness and strength;  
 all who were incensed against him  
 shall come to him and be ashamed.
- 25 In the LORD all the offspring of Israel  
 shall triumph and glory.

### Read Isaiah 46–47

Chapter 46 deals with the gods of Babylon; chapter 47 describes the fall of Babylon. Note the contrast between the ineffectual Babylonian deities and the God of Israel. You “who have been borne by me from your birth, carried from the womb; even to your old age I am he.” There is also a taunt mocking Babylon, warning it of the punishment it will receive for cruelties inflicted upon conquered Judah.

**Reflect:** God is with us always, helping us to bear the burdens of everyday life.

**Pray:** Bear in mind that God’s help is close at hand.

**Act:** Be a person of faith, always aware of God’s presence.

- 46** Bel bows down, Nebo stoops,  
 their idols are on beasts and cattle;  
 these things you carry are loaded  
 as burdens on weary animals.
- 2 They stoop, they bow down together;  
 they cannot save the burden,  
 but themselves go into captivity.
- 3 Listen to me, O house of Jacob,  
 all the remnant of the house of Israel,  
 who have been borne by me from your birth,  
 carried from the womb;
- 4 even to your old age I am he,  
 even when you turn gray I will carry you.  
 I have made, and I will bear;  
 I will carry and will save.
- 5 To whom will you liken me and make me equal,  
 and compare me, as though we were alike?
- 6 Those who lavish gold from the purse,  
 and weigh out silver in the scales—  
 they hire a goldsmith, who makes it into a god;  
 then they fall down and worship!
- 7 They lift it to their shoulders, they carry it,  
 they set it in its place, and it stands there;  
 it cannot move from its place.  
 If one cries out to it, it does not answer  
 or save anyone from trouble.
- 8 Remember this and consider,<sup>a</sup>  
 recall it to mind, you transgressors,
- 9 remember the former things of old;  
 for I am God, and there is no other;

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

I am God, and there is no one  
like me,  
10 declaring the end from the beginning  
and from ancient times things not  
yet done,  
saying, "My purpose shall stand,  
and I will fulfill my intention,"  
11 calling a bird of prey from the east,  
the man for my purpose from a  
far country.

I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass;  
I have planned, and I will do it.  
12 Listen to me, you stubborn of heart,  
you who are far from deliverance:  
13 I bring near my deliverance, it is not  
far off,  
and my salvation will not tarry;  
I will put salvation in Zion,  
for Israel my glory.

### The Humiliation of Babylon

**47** Come down and sit in the dust,  
virgin daughter Babylon!  
Sit on the ground without a throne,  
daughter Chaldea!  
For you shall no more be called  
tender and delicate.  
2 Take the millstones and grind meal,  
remove your veil,  
strip off your robe, uncover your legs,  
pass through the rivers.  
3 Your nakedness shall be uncovered,  
and your shame shall be seen.  
I will take vengeance,  
and I will spare no one.  
4 Our Redeemer—the LORD of hosts is his name—  
is the Holy One of Israel.  
5 Sit in silence, and go into darkness,  
daughter Chaldea!  
For you shall no more be called  
the mistress of kingdoms.  
6 I was angry with my people,  
I profaned my heritage;  
I gave them into your hand,  
you showed them no mercy;  
on the aged you made your yoke  
exceedingly heavy.  
7 You said, "I shall be mistress forever,"  
so that you did not lay these things to heart  
or remember their end.  
8 Now therefore hear this, you lover of pleasures,  
who sit securely,  
who say in your heart,  
"I am, and there is no one besides me;  
I shall not sit as a widow  
or know the loss of children"—  
9 both these things shall come upon you  
in a moment, in one day:

- the loss of children and widowhood shall come upon you in full measure, in spite of your many sorceries and the great power of your enchantments.
- 10 You felt secure in your wickedness; you said, “No one sees me.” Your wisdom and your knowledge led you astray, and you said in your heart, “I am, and there is no one besides me.”
- 11 But evil shall come upon you, which you cannot charm away; disaster shall fall upon you, which you will not be able to ward off; and ruin shall come on you suddenly, of which you know nothing.
- 12 Stand fast in your enchantments and your many sorceries, with which you have labored from your youth;
- perhaps you may be able to succeed, perhaps you may inspire terror.
- 13 You are wearied with your many consultations; let those who study<sup>a</sup> the heavens stand up and save you, those who gaze at the stars, and at each new moon predict what<sup>b</sup> shall befall you.
- 14 See, they are like stubble, the fire consumes them; they cannot deliver themselves from the power of the flame. No coal for warming oneself is this, no fire to sit before!
- 15 Such to you are those with whom you have labored, who have trafficked with you from your youth; they all wander about in their own paths; there is no one to save you.

### Read Isaiah 48

These are exhortations to the exiles. Prosperity and well-being are contingent upon the observance of the commandments. God teaches us what is for our good and leads us always along right paths. The notion of return from Babylonian exile is reminiscent of the exodus from Egypt. In the course of the exodus, Yahweh provided water even in dry lands.

**Reflect:** God is the provider, even in life-threatening situations. Observance of the commandments is a prerequisite for prosperity and well-being.

**Pray:** May we always be aware of our duty to observe God’s law.

**Act:** On our journey through life, we should lend a helping hand to our sisters and our brothers.

### God the Creator and Redeemer

- 48** Hear this, O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel, and who came forth from the loins<sup>c</sup> of Judah; who swear by the name of the LORD, and invoke the God of Israel, but not in truth or right.
- 2 For they call themselves after the holy city, and lean on the God of Israel; the LORD of hosts is his name.
- 3 The former things I declared long ago, they went out from my mouth and I made them known; then suddenly I did them and they came to pass.
- 4 Because I know that you are obstinate, and your neck is an iron sinew and your forehead brass,
- 5 I declared them to you from long ago, before they came to pass I announced them to you, so that you would not say, “My idol did them, my carved image and my cast image commanded them.”
- 6 You have heard; now see all this; and will you not declare it?

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>b</sup> Gk Syr Compare Vg: Heb *from what*

<sup>c</sup> Cn: Heb *waters*



- From this time forward I make you  
hear new things,  
hidden things that you have not  
known.
- 7 They are created now, not long ago;  
before today you have never  
heard of them,  
so that you could not say, "I  
already knew them."
- 8 You have never heard, you have  
never known,  
from of old your ear has not been  
opened.  
For I knew that you would deal very  
treacherously,  
and that from birth you were  
called a rebel.
- 9 For my name's sake I defer my anger,  
for the sake of my praise I restrain  
it for you,  
so that I may not cut you off.
- 10 See, I have refined you, but not  
like<sup>a</sup> silver;  
I have tested you in the furnace of  
adversity.
- 11 For my own sake, for my own sake,  
I do it,  
for why should my name<sup>b</sup> be  
profaned?  
My glory I will not give to another.
- 12 Listen to me, O Jacob,  
and Israel, whom I called:  
I am He; I am the first,  
and I am the last.
- 13 My hand laid the foundation of the  
earth,  
and my right hand spread out the  
heavens;  
when I summon them,  
they stand at attention.
- 14 Assemble, all of you, and hear!  
Who among them has declared  
these things?  
The LORD loves him;  
he shall perform his purpose on  
Babylon,
- and his arm shall be against the  
Chaldeans.
- 15 I, even I, have spoken and called him,  
I have brought him, and he will  
prosper in his way.
- 16 Draw near to me, hear this!  
From the beginning I have not  
spoken in secret,  
from the time it came to be I have  
been there.  
And now the Lord GOD has sent me  
and his spirit.
- 17 Thus says the LORD,  
your Redeemer, the Holy One of  
Israel:  
I am the LORD your God,  
who teaches you for your own good,  
who leads you in the way you  
should go.
- 18 O that you had paid attention to my  
commandments!  
Then your prosperity would have  
been like a river,  
and your success like the waves  
of the sea;
- 19 your offspring would have been like  
the sand,  
and your descendants like its  
grains;  
their name would never be cut off  
or destroyed from before me.
- 20 Go out from Babylon, flee from  
Chaldea,  
declare this with a shout of joy,  
proclaim it,  
send it forth to the end of the earth;  
say, "The LORD has redeemed his  
servant Jacob!"
- 21 They did not thirst when he led them  
through the deserts;  
he made water flow for them from  
the rock;  
he split open the rock and the  
water gushed out.
- 22 "There is no peace," says the LORD,  
"for the wicked."

<sup>a</sup> Cn: Heb *with*

<sup>b</sup> Gk Old Latin: Heb *for why should it*

**Read Isaiah 49**

This is the second of the four “Servant Songs”; it is the call (like the call of Moses and Jeremiah), mission, and destiny of the servant. The servant is speaking, describing God’s call and commission to be a light to the nations. Nowhere in the Hebrew Scriptures, except perhaps in Jeremiah 31:20, is the love of Yahweh for the people so poignantly expressed as in v. 15. Yahweh comforts his people in the same way a mother comforts her child. Also note in verse 26 the words: “Then all flesh shall know that I am the LORD your Savior, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.” This is the grand theocentric conclusion to this passage.

**Reflect:** To make known God’s love for all people, the servant’s principal functions are to serve and to glorify Yahweh.

**Pray:** Lord, give us a deeper consciousness of your love for all people.

**Act:** Through your actions, strive to make real God’s love not only for us, but for everybody.

**The Servant’s Mission**

- 49** Listen to me, O coastlands,  
pay attention, you peoples from far away!  
The LORD called me before I was born,  
while I was in my mother’s womb he named me.
- 2 He made my mouth like a sharp sword,  
in the shadow of his hand he hid me;  
he made me a polished arrow,  
in his quiver he hid me away.
- 3 And he said to me, “You are my servant,  
Israel, in whom I will be glorified.”
- 4 But I said, “I have labored in vain,  
I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity;  
yet surely my cause is with the LORD,  
and my reward with my God.”
- 5 And now the LORD says,  
who formed me in the womb to be his servant,  
to bring Jacob back to him,  
and that Israel might be gathered to him,  
for I am honored in the sight of the LORD,  
and my God has become my strength—
- 6 he says,  
“It is too light a thing that you should be my  
servant  
to raise up the tribes of Jacob  
and to restore the survivors of Israel;  
I will give you as a light to the nations,  
that my salvation may reach to the end of the  
earth.”
- 7 Thus says the LORD,  
the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One,  
to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations,  
the slave of rulers,  
“Kings shall see and stand up,  
princes, and they shall prostrate themselves,  
because of the LORD, who is faithful,  
the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.”

**Zion’s Children to Be Brought Home**

- 8 Thus says the LORD:  
In a time of favor I have answered you,  
on a day of salvation I have helped you;  
I have kept you and given you  
as a covenant to the people,<sup>a</sup>  
to establish the land,  
to apportion the desolate heritages;
- 9 saying to the prisoners, “Come out,”  
to those who are in darkness, “Show  
yourselves.”

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

- They shall feed along the ways,  
on all the bare heights<sup>a</sup> shall be  
their pasture;
- 10 they shall not hunger or thirst,  
neither scorching wind nor sun  
shall strike them down,  
for he who has pity on them will lead  
them,  
and by springs of water will guide  
them.
- 11 And I will turn all my mountains into  
a road,  
and my highways shall be raised  
up.
- 12 Lo, these shall come from far away,  
and lo, these from the north and  
from the west,  
and these from the land of Syene.<sup>b</sup>
- 13 Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult,  
O earth;  
break forth, O mountains, into  
singing!  
For the LORD has comforted his  
people,  
and will have compassion on his  
suffering ones.
- 14 But Zion said, “The LORD has  
forsaken me,  
my Lord has forgotten me.”
- 15 Can a woman forget her nursing child,  
or show no compassion for the  
child of her womb?  
Even these may forget,  
yet I will not forget you.
- 16 See, I have inscribed you on the  
palms of my hands;  
your walls are continually before  
me.
- 17 Your builders outdo your destroyers,<sup>c</sup>  
and those who laid you waste go  
away from you.
- 18 Lift up your eyes all around and see;  
they all gather, they come to you.  
As I live, says the LORD,  
you shall put all of them on like  
an ornament,
- and like a bride you shall bind  
them on.
- 19 Surely your waste and your desolate  
places  
and your devastated land—  
surely now you will be too crowded  
for your inhabitants,  
and those who swallowed you up  
will be far away.
- 20 The children born in the time of your  
bereavement  
will yet say in your hearing:  
“The place is too crowded for me;  
make room for me to settle.”
- 21 Then you will say in your heart,  
“Who has borne me these?  
I was bereaved and barren,  
exiled and put away—  
so who has reared these?  
I was left all alone—  
where then have these come from?”
- 22 Thus says the Lord GOD:  
I will soon lift up my hand to the  
nations,  
and raise my signal to the peoples;  
and they shall bring your sons in  
their bosom,  
and your daughters shall be  
carried on their shoulders.
- 23 Kings shall be your foster fathers,  
and their queens your nursing  
mothers.  
With their faces to the ground they  
shall bow down to you,  
and lick the dust of your feet.  
Then you will know that I am the  
LORD;  
those who wait for me shall not be  
put to shame.
- 24 Can the prey be taken from the  
mighty,  
or the captives of a tyrant<sup>d</sup> be  
rescued?
- 25 But thus says the LORD:  
Even the captives of the mighty  
shall be taken,

<sup>a</sup> Or the trails

<sup>b</sup> Q Ms: MT *Sinim*

<sup>c</sup> Or *Your children come swiftly; your destroyers*

<sup>d</sup> Q Ms Syr Vg: MT of a *righteous person*

and the prey of the tyrant be  
rescued;  
for I will contend with those who  
contend with you,  
and I will save your children.  
26 I will make your oppressors eat their  
own flesh,

and they shall be drunk with their  
own blood as with wine.  
Then all flesh shall know  
that I am the LORD your  
Savior,  
and your Redeemer, the Mighty  
One of Jacob.

### Read Isaiah 50

Verses 4–11 constitute the third of the four “Servant Songs.” The servant has not withdrawn from his task, even though he has had to suffer from violence and ignominy. He does not reject the divine vocation, but rather submits to insults and beatings. In spite of these great sufferings, the servant has not been deterred. The servant confesses that it is God who is his teacher.

**Reflect:** Notice the references to the various bodily organs in verses 4–6: tongue, ear, back, cheeks, face.

**Pray:** It is never easy to follow God, even with divine assurance. Therefore, we pray to be forever loyal.

**Act:** Always trust in the name of the Lord.

- 50** Thus says the LORD:  
Where is your mother’s bill of divorce  
with which I put her away?  
Or which of my creditors is it  
to whom I have sold you?  
No, because of your sins you were sold,  
and for your transgressions your mother was  
put away.
- 2 Why was no one there when I came?  
Why did no one answer when I called?  
Is my hand shortened, that it cannot redeem?  
Or have I no power to deliver?  
By my rebuke I dry up the sea,  
I make the rivers a desert;  
their fish stink for lack of water,  
and die of thirst.<sup>a</sup>
- 3 I clothe the heavens with blackness,  
and make sackcloth their covering.

### The Servant’s Humiliation and Vindication

- 4 The Lord GOD has given me  
the tongue of a teacher,<sup>b</sup>  
that I may know how to sustain  
the weary with a word.  
Morning by morning he awakens—  
awakens my ear  
to listen as those who are taught.
- 5 The Lord GOD has opened my ear,  
and I was not rebellious,  
I did not turn backward.
- 6 I gave my back to those who struck me,  
and my cheeks to those who pulled out the  
beard;  
I did not hide my face  
from insult and spitting.
- 7 The Lord GOD helps me;  
therefore I have not been disgraced;  
therefore I have set my face like flint,  
and I know that I shall not be put to shame;  
8 he who vindicates me is near.  
Who will contend with me?  
Let us stand up together.

<sup>a</sup> Or die on the thirsty ground

<sup>b</sup> Cn: Heb of those who are taught

Who are my adversaries?

Let them confront me.

- <sup>9</sup> It is the Lord GOD who helps me;  
 who will declare me guilty?  
 All of them will wear out like a  
 garment;  
 the moth will eat them up.

- <sup>10</sup> Who among you fears the LORD  
 and obeys the voice of his servant,  
 who walks in darkness

and has no light,  
 yet trusts in the name of the LORD  
 and relies upon his God?

- <sup>11</sup> But all of you are kindlers of fire,  
 lighters of firebrands.<sup>a</sup>  
 Walk in the flame of your fire,  
 and among the brands that you  
 have kindled!  
 This is what you shall have from my  
 hand:  
 you shall lie down in torment.

### Read Isaiah 51:1—52:12

This passage is an exhortation to trust in Yahweh. Salvation is expressed as the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham. Once again, a plea for divine intervention is followed by a word of divine assurance. Jerusalem is restored, followed by the victorious approach of a ruler to his kingdom. Watchmen are stationed on the mountains and guards on the walls of Jerusalem; they announce the good news: "Your God reigns."

**Reflect:** In 51:12–13, God reminds his people that they should not fear mortals. Humanity is frail, but we can put our trust in God our creator.

**Pray:** "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, 'your God reigns.'"

**Act:** Our daily lives should reflect the fact that God reigns.

### Blessings in Store for God's People

**51** Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness,  
 you that seek the LORD.

Look to the rock from which you were hewn,  
 and to the quarry from which you were dug.

- <sup>2</sup> Look to Abraham your father  
 and to Sarah who bore you;  
 for he was but one when I called him,  
 but I blessed him and made him many.
- <sup>3</sup> For the LORD will comfort Zion;  
 he will comfort all her waste places,  
 and will make her wilderness like Eden,  
 her desert like the garden of the LORD;  
 joy and gladness will be found in her,  
 thanksgiving and the voice of song.
- <sup>4</sup> Listen to me, my people,  
 and give heed to me, my nation;  
 for a teaching will go out from me,  
 and my justice for a light to the peoples.
- <sup>5</sup> I will bring near my deliverance swiftly,  
 my salvation has gone out  
 and my arms will rule the peoples;  
 the coastlands wait for me,  
 and for my arm they hope.
- <sup>6</sup> Lift up your eyes to the heavens,  
 and look at the earth beneath;  
 for the heavens will vanish like smoke,  
 the earth will wear out like a garment,  
 and those who live on it will die like gnats;<sup>b</sup>  
 but my salvation will be forever,  
 and my deliverance will never be ended.
- <sup>7</sup> Listen to me, you who know righteousness,  
 you people who have my teaching in your hearts;  
 do not fear the reproach of others,  
 and do not be dismayed when they revile you.
- <sup>8</sup> For the moth will eat them up like a garment,  
 and the worm will eat them like wool;

<sup>a</sup> Syr: Heb you gird yourselves with firebrands

<sup>b</sup> Or in like manner

- but my deliverance will be forever,  
and my salvation to all  
generations.
- 9 Awake, awake, put on strength,  
O arm of the LORD!  
Awake, as in days of old,  
the generations of long ago!  
Was it not you who cut Rahab in  
pieces,  
who pierced the dragon?  
10 Was it not you who dried up the sea,  
the waters of the great deep;  
who made the depths of the sea a way  
for the redeemed to cross over?  
11 So the ransomed of the LORD shall  
return,  
and come to Zion with singing;  
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;  
they shall obtain joy and gladness,  
and sorrow and sighing shall flee  
away.
- 12 I, I am he who comforts you;  
why then are you afraid of a mere  
mortal who must die,  
a human being who fades like grass?  
13 You have forgotten the LORD, your  
Maker,  
who stretched out the heavens  
and laid the foundations of the earth.  
You fear continually all day long  
because of the fury of the oppressor,  
who is bent on destruction.  
But where is the fury of the  
oppressor?  
14 The oppressed shall speedily be  
released;  
they shall not die and go down to  
the Pit,  
nor shall they lack bread.  
15 For I am the LORD your God,  
who stirs up the sea so that its  
waves roar—  
the LORD of hosts is his name.  
16 I have put my words in your mouth,  
and hidden you in the shadow of  
my hand,  
stretching out<sup>a</sup> the heavens  
and laying the foundations of the  
earth,  
and saying to Zion, “You are my  
people.”
- 17 Rouse yourself, rouse yourself!  
Stand up, O Jerusalem,  
you who have drunk at the hand of  
the LORD  
the cup of his wrath,  
who have drunk to the dregs  
the bowl of staggering.  
18 There is no one to guide her  
among all the children she has borne;  
there is no one to take her by the hand  
among all the children she has  
brought up.  
19 These two things have befallen you  
—who will grieve with you?—  
devastation and destruction, famine  
and sword—  
who will comfort you?<sup>b</sup>  
20 Your children have fainted,  
they lie at the head of every street  
like an antelope in a net;  
they are full of the wrath of the LORD,  
the rebuke of your God.
- 21 Therefore hear this, you who are  
wounded,<sup>c</sup>  
who are drunk, but not with wine:  
22 Thus says your Sovereign, the LORD,  
your God who pleads the cause of  
his people:  
See, I have taken from your hand  
the cup of staggering;  
you shall drink no more  
from the bowl of my wrath.  
23 And I will put it into the hand of your  
tormentors,  
who have said to you,  
“Bow down, that we may walk on  
you”;  
and you have made your back like  
the ground  
and like the street for them to  
walk on.

<sup>a</sup> Syr: Heb *planting*

<sup>b</sup> Q Ms Gk Syr Vg: MT *how may I comfort you?*

<sup>c</sup> Or *humbled*

**Read Isaiah 52:13—53:12**

This, the fourth “Servant Song,” contrasts the servant’s suffering and the servant’s exaltation. In Jewish scholarship the reference is to the suffering of Israel in the world; in Christian scholarship the reference is to Jesus Christ. The sinless servant suffers voluntarily for the sins of humanity. A parallel to 53:4–6 on the “wounded healer” appears in Mark 10:45: “The Son of Man [Jesus] came not to be served but to serve.”

**Reflect:** The servant suffered in silence, totally devoid of vindictiveness.

**Pray:** We pray that we too may be totally devoid of vindictiveness.

**Act:** Be willing to imitate Jesus by practicing humility.

**Let Zion Rejoice**

**52** Awake, awake,  
 put on your strength, O Zion!  
 Put on your beautiful garments,  
 O Jerusalem, the holy city;  
 for the uncircumcised and the unclean  
 shall enter you no more.  
 2 Shake yourself from the dust, rise up,  
 O captive<sup>a</sup> Jerusalem;  
 loose the bonds from your neck,  
 O captive daughter Zion!

3 For thus says the LORD: You were sold for nothing, and you shall be redeemed without money. 4 For thus says the Lord GOD: Long ago, my people went down into Egypt to reside there as aliens; the Assyrian, too, has oppressed them without cause. 5 Now therefore what am I doing here, says the LORD, seeing that my people are taken away without cause? Their rulers howl, says the LORD, and continually, all day long, my name is despised. 6 Therefore my people shall know my name; therefore in that day they shall know that it is I who speak; here am I.

- 7 How beautiful upon the mountains  
 are the feet of the messenger who announces  
 peace,  
 who brings good news,  
 who announces salvation,  
 who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”  
 8 Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices,  
 together they sing for joy;  
 for in plain sight they see  
 the return of the LORD to Zion.  
 9 Break forth together into singing,  
 you ruins of Jerusalem;  
 for the LORD has comforted his people,  
 he has redeemed Jerusalem.  
 10 The LORD has bared his holy arm  
 before the eyes of all the nations;  
 and all the ends of the earth shall see  
 the salvation of our God.  
 11 Depart, depart, go out from there!  
 Touch no unclean thing;  
 go out from the midst of it, purify yourselves,  
 you who carry the vessels of the LORD.  
 12 For you shall not go out in haste,  
 and you shall not go in flight;  
 for the LORD will go before you,  
 and the God of Israel will be your rear guard.

<sup>a</sup> Cn: Heb *rise up, sit*

## The Suffering Servant

- 13 See, my servant shall prosper;  
he shall be exalted and lifted up,  
and shall be very high.
- 14 Just as there were many who were  
astonished at him<sup>a</sup>  
—so marred was his appearance,  
beyond human semblance,  
and his form beyond that of  
mortals—
- 15 so he shall startle<sup>b</sup> many nations;  
kings shall shut their mouths  
because of him;  
for that which had not been told  
them they shall see,  
and that which they had not heard  
they shall contemplate.
- 53** Who has believed what we have  
heard?  
And to whom has the arm of the  
LORD been revealed?
- 2 For he grew up before him like a  
young plant,  
and like a root out of dry  
ground;  
he had no form or majesty that we  
should look at him,  
nothing in his appearance that we  
should desire him.
- 3 He was despised and rejected by  
others;  
a man of suffering<sup>c</sup> and  
acquainted with infirmity;  
and as one from whom others hide  
their faces<sup>d</sup>  
he was despised, and we held him  
of no account.
- 4 Surely he has borne our infirmities  
and carried our diseases;  
yet we accounted him stricken,  
struck down by God, and afflicted.
- 5 But he was wounded for our  
transgressions,  
crushed for our iniquities;

- upon him was the punishment that  
made us whole,  
and by his bruises we are healed.
- 6 All we like sheep have gone astray;  
we have all turned to our own way,  
and the LORD has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all.
- 7 He was oppressed, and he was  
afflicted,  
yet he did not open his mouth;  
like a lamb that is led to the  
slaughter,  
and like a sheep that before its  
shearers is silent,  
so he did not open his mouth.
- 8 By a perversion of justice he was  
taken away.  
Who could have imagined his  
future?  
For he was cut off from the land of  
the living,  
stricken for the transgression of  
my people.
- 9 They made his grave with the  
wicked  
and his tomb<sup>e</sup> with the rich,<sup>f</sup>  
although he had done no violence,  
and there was no deceit in his  
mouth.
- 10 Yet it was the will of the LORD to  
crush him with pain.<sup>g</sup>  
When you make his life an offering  
for sin,<sup>b</sup>  
he shall see his offspring, and  
shall prolong his days;  
through him the will of the LORD  
shall prosper.
- 11 Out of his anguish he shall see  
light;<sup>h</sup>  
he shall find satisfaction through his  
knowledge.  
The righteous one,<sup>i</sup> my servant,  
shall make many righteous,  
and he shall bear their iniquities.

<sup>a</sup> Syr Tg: Heb you

<sup>b</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>c</sup> Or a man of sorrows

<sup>d</sup> Or as one who hides his face from us

<sup>e</sup> Q Ms: MT and in his death

<sup>f</sup> Cn: Heb with a rich person

<sup>g</sup> Or by disease; meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>h</sup> Q Mss: MT lacks light

<sup>i</sup> Or and he shall find satisfaction. Through his knowledge, the righteous one



12 Therefore I will allot him a portion  
with the great,  
and he shall divide the spoil with  
the strong;  
because he poured out himself to death,

and was numbered with the  
transgressors;  
yet he bore the sin of many,  
and made intercession for the  
transgressors.

### Read Isaiah 54

Jerusalem is depicted as a barren wife who suddenly finds herself with children. The theme here is the encouragement of Israel. The "redeemer" (Heb. *goel*) is the one who frees another from slavery and avenges his sufferings; in this case, it is God. "My steadfast love shall not depart from you."

**Reflect:** God is the source of love and redemption.

**Pray:** May we always extend to our neighbors encouragement and love.

**Act:** Take to heart your prayer and act accordingly.

### The Eternal Covenant of Peace

- 54** Sing, O barren one who did not bear;  
burst into song and shout,  
you who have not been in labor!  
For the children of the desolate woman will be more  
than the children of her that is married, says  
the LORD.
- 2 Enlarge the site of your tent,  
and let the curtains of your habitations be  
stretched out;  
do not hold back; lengthen your cords  
and strengthen your stakes.
- 3 For you will spread out to the right and to the left,  
and your descendants will possess the nations  
and will settle the desolate towns.
- 4 Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed;  
do not be discouraged, for you will not suffer  
disgrace;  
for you will forget the shame of your youth,  
and the disgrace of your widowhood you will  
remember no more.
- 5 For your Maker is your husband,  
the LORD of hosts is his name;  
the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer,  
the God of the whole earth he is called.
- 6 For the LORD has called you  
like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit,  
like the wife of a man's youth when she is cast off,  
says your God.
- 7 For a brief moment I abandoned you,  
but with great compassion I will gather you.
- 8 In overflowing wrath for a moment  
I hid my face from you,  
but with everlasting love I will have compassion  
on you,  
says the LORD, your Redeemer.
- 9 This is like the days of Noah to me:  
Just as I swore that the waters of Noah  
would never again go over the earth,  
so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you  
and will not rebuke you.
- 10 For the mountains may depart  
and the hills be removed,

but my steadfast love shall not  
depart from you,  
and my covenant of peace shall  
not be removed,  
says the LORD, who has  
compassion on you.

- 11 O afflicted one, storm-tossed, and  
not comforted,  
I am about to set your stones in  
antimony,  
and lay your foundations with  
sapphires.<sup>a</sup>
- 12 I will make your pinnacles of rubies,  
your gates of jewels,  
and all your wall of precious  
stones.
- 13 All your children shall be taught by  
the LORD,  
and great shall be the prosperity  
of your children.
- 14 In righteousness you shall be  
established;

you shall be far from oppression,  
for you shall not fear;  
and from terror, for it shall not  
come near you.

- 15 If anyone stirs up strife,  
it is not from me;  
whoever stirs up strife with you  
shall fall because of you.
- 16 See it is I who have created the smith  
who blows the fire of coals,  
and produces a weapon fit for its  
purpose;  
I have also created the ravager to  
destroy.
- 17 No weapon that is fashioned  
against you shall prosper,  
and you shall confute every  
tongue that rises against you in  
judgment.  
This is the heritage of the servants  
of the LORD  
and their vindication from me,  
says the LORD.

### Read Isaiah 55

Expansive universalism! The invitation to the messianic banquet (in the future) is for all people; it is the banquet of the kingdom of God. The renewal of the covenant to David is to be extended to all. Once again, the reference to the new exodus is unmistakable.

**Reflect:** Let us reflect upon the significance of universalism in our day. We should reject all forms of exclusiveness.

**Pray:** In our dealings with others, may we be like God who is generous in forgiving.

**Act:** Try, each day, to extend your capacity to forgive.

### An Invitation to Abundant Life

- 55** Ho, everyone who thirsts,  
come to the waters;  
and you that have no money,  
come, buy and eat!  
Come, buy wine and milk  
without money and without price.
- 2 Why do you spend your money for that which is  
not bread,  
and your labor for that which does not satisfy?  
Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,  
and delight yourselves in rich food.
- 3 Incline your ear, and come to me;  
listen, so that you may live.  
I will make with you an everlasting covenant,  
my steadfast, sure love for David.
- 4 See, I made him a witness to the peoples,  
a leader and commander for the peoples.
- 5 See, you shall call nations that you do not know,  
and nations that do not know you shall run to  
you,  
because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of  
Israel,  
for he has glorified you.
- 6 Seek the LORD while he may be found,  
call upon him while he is near;

<sup>a</sup> Or lapis lazuli

- 7 let the wicked forsake their way,  
and the unrighteous their thoughts;  
let them return to the LORD, that he  
may have mercy on them,  
and to our God, for he will  
abundantly pardon.
- 8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
nor are your ways my ways, says  
the LORD.
- 9 For as the heavens are higher than  
the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your  
ways  
and my thoughts than your thoughts.
- 10 For as the rain and the snow come  
down from heaven,  
and do not return there until they  
have watered the earth,  
making it bring forth and sprout,  
giving seed to the sower and  
bread to the eater,
- 11 so shall my word be that goes out  
from my mouth;  
it shall not return to me empty,  
but it shall accomplish that which I  
purpose,  
and succeed in the thing for which  
I sent it.
- 12 For you shall go out in joy,  
and be led back in peace;  
the mountains and the hills before you  
shall burst into song,  
and all the trees of the field shall  
clap their hands.
- 13 Instead of the thorn shall come up  
the cypress;  
instead of the brier shall come up  
the myrtle;  
and it shall be to the LORD for a  
memorial,  
for an everlasting sign that shall  
not be cut off.

### Read Isaiah 56

This chapter contains one of the most compassionate statements in the entire Bible: There is no place for segregation! Along with the foreigner, the eunuch is not to be excluded. Originally eunuchs, because of bodily mutilation, were not considered members of the community of Yahweh. The prophet protests this attitude: "For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples," (that is, all were to be welcome to worship in the rebuilt temple of Jerusalem). Unfortunately, Israel's leaders were failing to discharge their duties.

**Reflect:** Those who have visited Jerusalem are familiar with Yad Vashem ("a monument and a name"), the stark memorial to Jews murdered in World War II. The source of the name is Isaiah 56:5.

**Pray:** We pray fervently for an end to hatred between people.

**Act:** Let us act with the utmost respect and tolerance toward our neighbors.

### The Covenant Extended to All Who Obey

**56** Thus says the LORD:  
Maintain justice, and do what is right,  
for soon my salvation will come,  
and my deliverance be revealed.

- 2 Happy is the mortal who does this,  
the one who holds it fast,  
who keeps the sabbath, not profaning it,  
and refrains from doing any evil.
- 3 Do not let the foreigner joined to the LORD say,  
"The LORD will surely separate me from his  
people";  
and do not let the eunuch say,  
"I am just a dry tree."
- 4 For thus says the LORD:  
To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths,  
who choose the things that please me  
and hold fast my covenant,
- 5 I will give, in my house and within my walls,  
a monument and a name  
better than sons and daughters;  
I will give them an everlasting name  
that shall not be cut off.
- 6 And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD,  
to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD,  
and to be his servants,

- all who keep the sabbath, and do  
not profane it,  
and hold fast my covenant—  
7 these I will bring to my holy mountain,  
and make them joyful in my  
house of prayer;  
their burnt offerings and their  
sacrifices  
will be accepted on my altar;  
for my house shall be called a house  
of prayer  
for all peoples.  
8 Thus says the Lord GOD,  
who gathers the outcasts of Israel,  
I will gather others to them  
besides those already gathered.<sup>a</sup>

### The Corruption of Israel's Rulers

- 9 All you wild animals,

- all you wild animals in the forest,  
come to devour!  
10 Israel's<sup>b</sup> sentinels are blind,  
they are all without knowledge;  
they are all silent dogs  
that cannot bark;  
dreaming, lying down,  
loving to slumber.  
11 The dogs have a mighty appetite;  
they never have enough.  
The shepherds also have no  
understanding;  
they have all turned to their own way,  
to their own gain, one and all.  
12 "Come," they say, "let us<sup>c</sup> get wine;  
let us fill ourselves with strong  
drink.  
And tomorrow will be like today,  
great beyond measure."

### Israel's Futile Idolatry

- 57** The righteous perish,  
and no one takes it to heart;  
the devout are taken away,  
while no one understands.  
For the righteous are taken away from calamity,  
2 and they enter into peace;  
those who walk uprightly  
will rest on their couches.  
3 But as for you, come here,  
you children of a sorceress,  
you offspring of an adulterer and a whore.<sup>d</sup>  
4 Whom are you mocking?  
Against whom do you open your mouth wide  
and stick out your tongue?  
Are you not children of transgression,  
the offspring of deceit—  
5 you that burn with lust among the oaks,  
under every green tree;  
you that slaughter your children in the valleys,  
under the clefts of the rocks?  
6 Among the smooth stones of the valley is your  
portion;  
they, they, are your lot;  
to them you have poured out a drink offering,  
you have brought a grain offering.  
Shall I be appeased for these things?  
7 Upon a high and lofty mountain  
you have set your bed,  
and there you went up to offer sacrifice.

<sup>a</sup> Heb *besides his gathered ones*

<sup>b</sup> Heb *His*

<sup>c</sup> Q Ms Syr Vg Tg: MT *me*

<sup>d</sup> Heb *an adulterer and she plays the whore*

### Read Isaiah 57

Here we read about how foreign religious practices are still prevalent in Judah's postexilic community. Apostates continue the age-old fertility cults with their sexual immorality. Molech is the deity to whom child sacrifices are offered. Faithless people ridicule the righteous who observe God's covenant. The passage ends with comfort for the afflicted—a promise of restoration, guidance, and peace for all those who find refuge in God. "Peace, peace, to the far and the near, says the LORD; and I will heal them" (v. 19). The prophet ends by assuring the penitent of God's presence and peace.

**Reflect:** Consider how important it is to distinguish between false gods and the true God.

**Pray:** May we extend God's peace to the far and the near.

**Act:** Though it is easy to follow the ways of others, make every effort to follow the way of God.

- 8 Behind the door and the doorpost  
you have set up your symbol;  
for, in deserting me,<sup>a</sup> you have uncovered your  
bed,  
you have gone up to it,  
you have made it wide;  
and you have made a bargain for yourself with  
them,  
you have loved their bed,  
you have gazed on their nakedness.<sup>b</sup>
- 9 You journeyed to Molech<sup>c</sup> with oil,  
and multiplied your perfumes;  
you sent your envoys far away,  
and sent down even to Sheol.
- 10 You grew weary from your many wanderings,  
but you did not say, "It is useless."  
You found your desire rekindled,  
and so you did not weaken.
- 11 Whom did you dread and fear  
so that you lied,  
and did not remember me  
or give me a thought?  
Have I not kept silent and closed my eyes,<sup>d</sup>  
and so you do not fear me?
- 12 I will concede your righteousness and your works,  
but they will not help you.
- 13 When you cry out, let your collection of idols  
deliver you!  
The wind will carry them off,  
a breath will take them away.  
But whoever takes refuge in me shall possess  
the land  
and inherit my holy mountain.

### A Promise of Help and Healing

- 14 It shall be said,  
"Build up, build up, prepare the way,  
remove every obstruction from my people's  
way."
- 15 For thus says the high and lofty one  
who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:  
I dwell in the high and holy place,  
and also with those who are contrite and  
humble in spirit,  
to revive the spirit of the humble,  
and to revive the heart of the contrite.
- 16 For I will not continually accuse,  
nor will I always be angry;  
for then the spirits would grow faint before me,  
even the souls that I have made.

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>b</sup> Or *their phallus*; Heb *the hand*

<sup>c</sup> Or *the king*

<sup>d</sup> Gk Vg: Heb *silent even for a long time*

- 17 Because of their wicked  
covetousness I was angry;  
I struck them, I hid and was  
angry;  
but they kept turning back to their  
own ways.
- 18 I have seen their ways, but I will heal  
them;  
I will lead them and repay them  
with comfort,

- creating for their mourners the  
fruit of the lips.<sup>a</sup>
- 19 Peace, peace, to the far and the  
near, says the LORD;  
and I will heal them.
- 20 But the wicked are like the tossing sea  
that cannot keep still;  
its waters toss up mire and mud.
- 21 There is no peace, says my God, for  
the wicked.

### Read Isaiah 58

True worship involves fasting that must be joined to internal sincerity. Worship that is merely external avails very little. Ritual gestures are not sufficient. The fasting that God desires consists in releasing those imprisoned unjustly; setting free the oppressed; sharing bread with the hungry; sheltering the homeless; clothing the naked.

**Reflect:** Recall the demands of social justice and how important it is to act with sympathy, compassion, and love of neighbor.

**Pray:** May we always be conscious of the “corporal works of mercy.”

**Act:** Let our actions be rooted in sincerity of heart.

### False and True Worship

- 58** Shout out, do not hold back!  
Lift up your voice like a trumpet!  
Announce to my people their rebellion,  
to the house of Jacob their sins.
- 2 Yet day after day they seek me  
and delight to know my ways,  
as if they were a nation that practiced  
righteousness  
and did not forsake the ordinance of their God;  
they ask of me righteous judgments,  
they delight to draw near to God.
- 3 “Why do we fast, but you do not see?  
Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?”  
Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day,  
and oppress all your workers.
- 4 Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight  
and to strike with a wicked fist.  
Such fasting as you do today  
will not make your voice heard on high.
- 5 Is such the fast that I choose,  
a day to humble oneself?  
Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush,  
and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?  
Will you call this a fast,  
a day acceptable to the LORD?
- 6 Is not this the fast that I choose:  
to loose the bonds of injustice,  
to undo the thongs of the yoke,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
and to break every yoke?
- 7 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,  
and bring the homeless poor into your house;  
when you see the naked, to cover them,  
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?
- 8 Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,  
and your healing shall spring up quickly;  
your vindicator<sup>b</sup> shall go before you,  
the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>b</sup> Or *vindication*

9 Then you shall call, and the LORD  
will answer;  
you shall cry for help, and he will  
say, Here I am.

If you remove the yoke from among  
you,  
the pointing of the finger, the  
speaking of evil,

10 if you offer your food to the hungry  
and satisfy the needs of the  
afflicted,  
then your light shall rise in the  
darkness  
and your gloom be like the  
noonday.

11 The LORD will guide you continually,  
and satisfy your needs in parched  
places,  
and make your bones strong;  
and you shall be like a watered  
garden,  
like a spring of water,  
whose waters never fail.

12 Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;

you shall raise up the foundations  
of many generations;  
you shall be called the repairer of  
the breach,  
the restorer of streets to live in.

13 If you refrain from trampling the  
sabbath,  
from pursuing your own interests  
on my holy day;

if you call the sabbath a delight  
and the holy day of the LORD  
honorable;

if you honor it, not going your own  
ways,  
serving your own interests, or  
pursuing your own affairs;<sup>a</sup>

14 then you shall take delight in the  
LORD,  
and I will make you ride upon the  
heights of the earth;

I will feed you with the heritage of  
your ancestor Jacob,  
for the mouth of the LORD has  
spoken.

### Read Isaiah 59

This is an indictment of the breakdown of justice and righteousness. Because sins have been kept hidden, salvation has not come. Here God is pictured as a “warrior” who opposes sin and evil in the world. Because of God’s concern, humanity may have hope. Yahweh will come to Zion (Jerusalem) as redeemer. The chapter closes with a reference to the new covenant with Israel.

**Reflect:** The vocabulary of sin is highly developed in this chapter and is worth pondering in terms of our lives and our world.

**Pray:** May God always be a “warrior” for us.

**Act:** May our spirits always be uplifted because of our awareness of the “new covenant.”

### Injustice and Oppression to Be Punished

**59** See, the LORD’s hand is not too short to save,  
nor his ear too dull to hear.

2 Rather, your iniquities have been barriers  
between you and your God,  
and your sins have hidden his face from you  
so that he does not hear.

3 For your hands are defiled with blood,  
and your fingers with iniquity;  
your lips have spoken lies,  
your tongue mutters wickedness.

4 No one brings suit justly,  
no one goes to law honestly;  
they rely on empty pleas, they speak lies,  
conceiving mischief and begetting iniquity.

5 They hatch adders’ eggs,  
and weave the spider’s web;  
whoever eats their eggs dies,  
and the crushed egg hatches out a viper.

6 Their webs cannot serve as clothing;  
they cannot cover themselves with what they  
make.

Their works are works of iniquity,  
and deeds of violence are in their hands.

<sup>a</sup> Heb or speaking words

- 7 Their feet run to evil,  
and they rush to shed innocent  
blood;  
their thoughts are thoughts of  
iniquity,  
desolation and destruction are in  
their highways.
- 8 The way of peace they do not know,  
and there is no justice in their paths.  
Their roads they have made crooked;  
no one who walks in them knows  
peace.
- 9 Therefore justice is far from us,  
and righteousness does not  
reach us;  
we wait for light, and lo! there is  
darkness;  
and for brightness, but we walk in  
gloom.
- 10 We grope like the blind along a wall,  
groping like those who have no  
eyes;  
we stumble at noon as in the twilight,  
among the vigorous<sup>a</sup> as though  
we were dead.
- 11 We all growl like bears;  
like doves we moan mournfully.  
We wait for justice, but there is none;  
for salvation, but it is far from us.
- 12 For our transgressions before you  
are many,  
and our sins testify against us.  
Our transgressions indeed are  
with us,  
and we know our iniquities:
- 13 transgressing, and denying the LORD,  
and turning away from following  
our God,  
talking oppression and revolt,  
conceiving lying words and  
uttering them from the heart.
- 14 Justice is turned back,  
and righteousness stands at a  
distance;

- for truth stumbles in the public  
square,  
and uprightness cannot enter.
- 15 Truth is lacking,  
and whoever turns from evil is  
despoiled.

- The LORD saw it, and it displeased him  
that there was no justice.
- 16 He saw that there was no one,  
and was appalled that there was  
no one to intervene;  
so his own arm brought him victory,  
and his righteousness upheld him.
- 17 He put on righteousness like a  
breastplate,  
and a helmet of salvation on his  
head;  
he put on garments of vengeance for  
clothing,  
and wrapped himself in fury as in  
a mantle.
- 18 According to their deeds, so will he  
repay;  
wrath to his adversaries, requital  
to his enemies;  
to the coastlands he will render  
requital.
- 19 So those in the west shall fear the  
name of the LORD,  
and those in the east, his glory;  
for he will come like a pent-up stream  
that the wind of the LORD drives on.
- 20 And he will come to Zion as  
Redeemer,  
to those in Jacob who turn from  
transgression, says the LORD.
- 21 And as for me, this is my covenant with  
them, says the LORD: my spirit that is upon  
you, and my words that I have put in your  
mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth,  
or out of the mouths of your children, or out  
of the mouths of your children's children,  
says the LORD, from now on and forever.

### The Ingathering of the Dispersed

**60** Arise, shine; for your light has come,  
and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.

- <sup>2</sup> For darkness shall cover the earth,  
and thick darkness the peoples;

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain



### Read Isaiah 60

This is a vision of Jerusalem's pending exaltation. The light of God's glory has dawned for Jerusalem and the promise of restoration has been renewed. Note that the "glory of the LORD" refers to God's self-manifestation. People flock to Jerusalem from faraway places to give homage and pay tribute. A program of restoration is being implemented. The temple will become a glorious building (the reference is to the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple). The gates of the city will be open day and night to give ready access. The chapter ends with a beautiful description of a land at peace.

**Reflect:** Rejoice in the promise of restoration, which applies to all of us. Again, reflect on the universalism of salvation.

**Pray:** May we always radiate the "glory of the LORD" in all our actions.

**Act:** Reflect in every action God's love and the prospect of peace.

- but the LORD will arise upon you,  
and his glory will appear over you.
- 3 Nations shall come to your light,  
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.
- 4 Lift up your eyes and look around;  
they all gather together, they come to you;  
your sons shall come from far away,  
and your daughters shall be carried on their  
nurses' arms.
- 5 Then you shall see and be radiant;  
your heart shall thrill and rejoice,<sup>a</sup>  
because the abundance of the sea shall be  
brought to you,  
the wealth of the nations shall come to you.
- 6 A multitude of camels shall cover you,  
the young camels of Midian and Ephah;  
all those from Sheba shall come.  
They shall bring gold and frankincense,  
and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD.
- 7 All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered to you,  
the rams of Nebaioth shall minister to you;  
they shall be acceptable on my altar,  
and I will glorify my glorious house.
- 8 Who are these that fly like a cloud,  
and like doves to their windows?
- 9 For the coastlands shall wait for me,  
the ships of Tarshish first,  
to bring your children from far away,  
their silver and gold with them,  
for the name of the LORD your God,  
and for the Holy One of Israel,  
because he has glorified you.
- 10 Foreigners shall build up your walls,  
and their kings shall minister to you;  
for in my wrath I struck you down,  
but in my favor I have had mercy on you.
- 11 Your gates shall always be open;  
day and night they shall not be shut,  
so that nations shall bring you their wealth,  
with their kings led in procession.
- 12 For the nation and kingdom  
that will not serve you shall perish;  
those nations shall be utterly laid waste.
- 13 The glory of Lebanon shall come to you,  
the cypress, the plane, and the pine,  
to beautify the place of my sanctuary;  
and I will glorify where my feet rest.
- 14 The descendants of those who oppressed you  
shall come bending low to you,  
and all who despised you

<sup>a</sup> Heb be enlarged

- shall bow down at your feet;  
they shall call you the City of the LORD,  
the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.
- 15 Whereas you have been forsaken  
and hated,  
with no one passing through,  
I will make you majestic forever,  
a joy from age to age.
- 16 You shall suck the milk of nations,  
you shall suck the breasts of kings;  
and you shall know that I, the LORD,  
am your Savior  
and your Redeemer, the Mighty  
One of Jacob.
- 17 Instead of bronze I will bring gold,  
instead of iron I will bring silver;  
instead of wood, bronze,  
instead of stones, iron.  
I will appoint Peace as your overseer  
and Righteousness as your  
taskmaster.
- 18 Violence shall no more be heard in  
your land,  
devastation or destruction within  
your borders;  
you shall call your walls Salvation,  
and your gates Praise.

### God the Glory of Zion

- 19 The sun shall no longer be  
your light by day,  
nor for brightness shall the moon  
give light to you by night;<sup>a</sup>  
but the LORD will be your everlasting  
light,  
and your God will be your glory.
- 20 Your sun shall no more go down,  
or your moon withdraw itself;  
for the LORD will be your everlasting  
light,  
and your days of mourning shall  
be ended.
- 21 Your people shall all be righteous;  
they shall possess the land  
forever.  
They are the shoot that I planted,  
the work of my hands,  
so that I might be glorified.
- 22 The least of them shall become a  
clan,  
and the smallest one a mighty  
nation;  
I am the LORD;  
in its time I will accomplish it  
quickly.

### The Good News of Deliverance

- 61** The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,  
because the LORD has anointed me;  
he has sent me to bring good news to the  
oppressed,  
to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and release to the prisoners;
- 2 to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn;
- 3 to provide for those who mourn in Zion—  
to give them a garland instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.  
They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.
- 4 They shall build up the ancient ruins,  
they shall raise up the former devastations;  
they shall repair the ruined cities,  
the devastations of many generations.

<sup>a</sup> Q Ms Gk Old Latin Tg: MT lacks *by night*

### Read Isaiah 61–62

The opening words of chapter 61 describing the mission to the afflicted are later quoted by Jesus in the Nazareth synagogue at the beginning of his public ministry (Lk 4:18–19). The tasks of the servant are the tasks of all of us. Yahweh will make an everlasting covenant with the restored people. Justice and peace will spring up like shoots in a garden. Judah will no longer be plundered by foreign powers, and the dispersed will assemble in preparation for the journey home to Judah.

**Reflect:** Consider the significance of the opening lines of chapter 61 as they apply to the mission we are all given at baptism.

**Pray:** Ask God for the grace to be faithful to the mission with which you have been entrusted.

**Act:** May our actions show that we really believe what we are reading in Isaiah.

- 5 Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks,  
foreigners shall till your land and dress your  
vines;
- 6 but you shall be called priests of the LORD,  
you shall be named ministers of our God;  
you shall enjoy the wealth of the nations,  
and in their riches you shall glory.
- 7 Because their<sup>a</sup> shame was double,  
and dishonor was proclaimed as their lot,  
therefore they shall possess a double portion;  
everlasting joy shall be theirs.
- 8 For I the LORD love justice,  
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;<sup>b</sup>  
I will faithfully give them their recompense,  
and I will make an everlasting covenant with  
them.
- 9 Their descendants shall be known among the  
nations,  
and their offspring among the peoples;  
all who see them shall acknowledge  
that they are a people whom the LORD has  
blessed.
- 10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,  
my whole being shall exult in my God;  
for he has clothed me with the garments of  
salvation,  
he has covered me with the robe of  
righteousness,  
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,  
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
- 11 For as the earth brings forth its shoots,  
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to  
spring up,  
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and  
praise  
to spring up before all the nations.

### The Vindication and Salvation of Zion

- 62** For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,  
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,  
until her vindication shines out like the dawn,  
and her salvation like a burning torch.
- 2 The nations shall see your vindication,  
and all the kings your glory;  
and you shall be called by a new name  
that the mouth of the LORD will give.
  - 3 You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the  
LORD,  
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.
  - 4 You shall no more be termed Forsaken,<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Heb your

<sup>b</sup> Or robbery with a burnt offering

<sup>c</sup> Heb Azubah

- and your land shall no more be  
termed Desolate;<sup>a</sup>  
but you shall be called My Delight Is  
in Her,<sup>b</sup>  
and your land Married;<sup>c</sup>  
for the LORD delights in you,  
and your land shall be married.
- 5 For as a young man marries a  
young woman,  
so shall your builder<sup>d</sup> marry you,  
and as the bridegroom rejoices over  
the bride,  
so shall your God rejoice over you.
- 6 Upon your walls, O Jerusalem,  
I have posted sentinels;  
all day and all night  
they shall never be silent.  
You who remind the LORD,  
take no rest,  
7 and give him no rest  
until he establishes Jerusalem  
and makes it renowned  
throughout the earth.
- 8 The LORD has sworn by his right hand  
and by his mighty arm:
- I will not again give your grain  
to be food for your enemies,  
and foreigners shall not drink the wine  
for which you have labored;  
9 but those who garner it shall eat it  
and praise the LORD,  
and those who gather it shall drink it  
in my holy courts.
- 10 Go through, go through the gates,  
prepare the way for the people;  
build up, build up the highway,  
clear it of stones,  
lift up an ensign over the peoples.
- 11 The LORD has proclaimed  
to the end of the earth:  
Say to daughter Zion,  
“See, your salvation comes;  
his reward is with him,  
and his recompense before him.”
- 12 They shall be called, “The Holy  
People,  
The Redeemed of the LORD”;  
and you shall be called, “Sought Out,  
A City Not Forsaken.”

### Vengeance on Edom

**63** “Who is this that comes from Edom,  
from Bozrah in garments stained crimson?  
Who is this so splendidly robed,  
marching in his great might?”

“It is I, announcing vindication,  
mighty to save.”

2 “Why are your robes red,  
and your garments like theirs who tread the  
wine press?”

3 “I have trodden the wine press alone,  
and from the peoples no one was with me;  
I trod them in my anger  
and trampled them in my wrath;  
their juice spattered on my garments,  
and stained all my robes.

4 For the day of vengeance was in my heart,  
and the year for my redeeming work had come.

5 I looked, but there was no helper;  
I stared, but there was no one to sustain me;  
so my own arm brought me victory,  
and my wrath sustained me.

6 I trampled down peoples in my anger,

<sup>a</sup> Heb *Shemamah*

<sup>b</sup> Heb *Hephzibah*

<sup>c</sup> Heb *Beulah*

<sup>d</sup> Cn: Heb *your sons*

### Read Isaiah 63–64

These chapters deal with the punishment of Edom. Most of this section is a psalm of communal lament, a poignant expression of alienation and distance from God. The final appeal is made to God as father and creator, asking that there be a cessation of divine anger. The most important concept in these verses concerns the glorious deeds of God, most notable the great gift expressed in the profound Hebrew word *hesed* (divine faithfulness).

**Reflect:** Reflect on the glorious deeds of God as well as on God's unlimited grace.

**Pray:** Let us pray with confidence to God who is both our father and our redeemer.

**Act:** At all times, be a witness to the great kindness of God (*hesed*).

I crushed them in my wrath,  
and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.”

### God's Mercy Remembered

- 7 I will recount the gracious deeds of the LORD,  
the praiseworthy acts of the LORD,  
because of all that the LORD has done for us,  
and the great favor to the house of Israel  
that he has shown them according to his mercy,  
according to the abundance of his steadfast  
love.
- 8 For he said, “Surely they are my people,  
children who will not deal falsely”;  
and he became their savior
- 9 in all their distress.  
It was no messenger<sup>a</sup> or angel  
but his presence that saved them;<sup>b</sup>  
in his love and in his pity he redeemed them;  
he lifted them up and carried them all the  
days of old.
- 10 But they rebelled  
and grieved his holy spirit;  
therefore he became their enemy;  
he himself fought against them.
- 11 Then they<sup>c</sup> remembered the days of old,  
of Moses his servant.<sup>d</sup>  
Where is the one who brought them up out of  
the sea  
with the shepherds of his flock?  
Where is the one who put within them  
his holy spirit,  
12 who caused his glorious arm  
to march at the right hand of Moses,  
who divided the waters before them  
to make for himself an everlasting name,  
13 who led them through the depths?  
Like a horse in the desert,  
they did not stumble.
- 14 Like cattle that go down into the valley,  
the spirit of the LORD gave them rest.  
Thus you led your people,  
to make for yourself a glorious name.

### A Prayer of Penitence

- 15 Look down from heaven and see,  
from your holy and glorious habitation.  
Where are your zeal and your might?  
The yearning of your heart and your  
compassion?  
They are withheld from me.

<sup>a</sup> Gk: Heb *anguish*

<sup>b</sup> Or *savior*. <sup>9</sup> *In all their distress he was distressed; the angel of his presence saved them;*

<sup>c</sup> Heb *he*

<sup>d</sup> Cn: Heb *his people*

- 16 For you are our father,  
 though Abraham does not know us  
 and Israel does not acknowledge  
 us;  
 you, O LORD, are our father;  
 our Redeemer from of old is your  
 name.
- 17 Why, O LORD, do you make us stray  
 from your ways  
 and harden our heart, so that we  
 do not fear you?
- Turn back for the sake of your  
 servants,  
 for the sake of the tribes that are  
 your heritage.
- 18 Your holy people took possession  
 for a little while;  
 but now our adversaries have  
 trampled down your sanctuary.
- 19 We have long been like those whom  
 you do not rule,  
 like those not called by your name.

- 64** O that you would tear open the heavens and  
 come down,  
 so that the mountains would quake at your  
 presence—
- 2<sup>a</sup> as when fire kindles brushwood  
 and the fire causes water to boil—  
 to make your name known to your adversaries,  
 so that the nations might tremble at your  
 presence!
- 3 When you did awesome deeds that we did not  
 expect,  
 you came down, the mountains quaked at  
 your presence.
- 4 From ages past no one has heard,  
 no ear has perceived,  
 no eye has seen any God besides you,  
 who works for those who wait for him.
- 5 You meet those who gladly do right,  
 those who remember you in your ways.  
 But you were angry, and we sinned;  
 because you hid yourself we transgressed.<sup>b</sup>
- 6 We have all become like one who is unclean,  
 and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth.  
 We all fade like a leaf,  
 and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.
- 7 There is no one who calls on your name,  
 or attempts to take hold of you;  
 for you have hidden your face from us,  
 and have delivered<sup>c</sup> us into the hand of our iniquity.
- 8 Yet, O LORD, you are our Father;  
 we are the clay, and you are our potter;  
 we are all the work of your hand.
- 9 Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD,  
 and do not remember iniquity forever.  
 Now consider, we are all your people.
- 10 Your holy cities have become a wilderness,  
 Zion has become a wilderness,  
 Jerusalem a desolation.
- 11 Our holy and beautiful house,

<sup>a</sup> Ch 64.1 in Heb

<sup>b</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>c</sup> Gk Syr Old Latin Tg: Heb *melted*

where our ancestors praised you,  
has been burned by fire,  
and all our pleasant places have  
become ruins.

<sup>12</sup> After all this, will you restrain  
yourself, O LORD?  
Will you keep silent, and punish  
us so severely?

### Read Isaiah 65

This is a salvation-judgment oracle consisting of an indictment as well as a sentence. God's response to the prophet's intercession is that Yahweh is accessible. A remnant, expressed as "my chosen ones" and "my servants," will return. The chapter closes with a profound description of the age of peace, as described previously in Isaiah 11:6–9.

**Reflect:** Imagine and reflect on the meaning of an "age of peace." It is not easy to do in the midst of the ravages of war in the Middle East.

**Pray:** With God's help, may we soon experience a time of peace in the Middle East and throughout the world.

**Act:** Make every effort to reflect the true meaning of peace in your own life.

### The Righteousness of God's Judgment

**65** I was ready to be sought out by those who did not ask,  
to be found by those who did not seek me.  
I said, "Here I am, here I am,"  
to a nation that did not call on my name.  
<sup>2</sup> I held out my hands all day long  
to a rebellious people,  
who walk in a way that is not good,  
following their own devices;  
<sup>3</sup> a people who provoke me  
to my face continually,  
sacrificing in gardens  
and offering incense on bricks;  
<sup>4</sup> who sit inside tombs,  
and spend the night in secret places;  
who eat swine's flesh,  
with broth of abominable things in their vessels;  
<sup>5</sup> who say, "Keep to yourself,  
do not come near me, for I am too holy for you."  
These are a smoke in my nostrils,  
a fire that burns all day long.  
<sup>6</sup> See, it is written before me:  
I will not keep silent, but I will repay;  
I will indeed repay into their laps  
<sup>7</sup> their<sup>a</sup> iniquities and their<sup>a</sup> ancestors' iniquities  
together,  
says the LORD;  
because they offered incense on the mountains  
and reviled me on the hills,  
I will measure into their laps  
full payment for their actions.  
<sup>8</sup> Thus says the LORD:  
As the wine is found in the cluster,  
and they say, "Do not destroy it,  
for there is a blessing in it,"  
so I will do for my servants' sake,  
and not destroy them all.  
<sup>9</sup> I will bring forth descendants<sup>b</sup> from Jacob,  
and from Judah inheritors<sup>c</sup> of my mountains;  
my chosen shall inherit it,  
and my servants shall settle there.  
<sup>10</sup> Sharon shall become a pasture for flocks,  
and the Valley of Achor a place for herds to lie  
down,  
for my people who have sought me.

<sup>a</sup> Gk Syr: Heb *your*

<sup>b</sup> Or *a descendant*

<sup>c</sup> Or *an inheritor*

- 11 But you who forsake the LORD,  
 who forget my holy mountain,  
 who set a table for Fortune  
 and fill cups of mixed wine for  
 Destiny;
- 12 I will destine you to the sword,  
 and all of you shall bow down to  
 the slaughter;  
 because, when I called, you did not  
 answer,  
 when I spoke, you did not listen,  
 but you did what was evil in my sight,  
 and chose what I did not delight in.
- 13 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD:  
 My servants shall eat,  
 but you shall be hungry;  
 my servants shall drink,  
 but you shall be thirsty;  
 my servants shall rejoice,  
 but you shall be put to shame;
- 14 my servants shall sing for gladness  
 of heart,  
 but you shall cry out for pain of  
 heart,  
 and shall wail for anguish of spirit.
- 15 You shall leave your name to my  
 chosen to use as a curse,  
 and the Lord GOD will put you to  
 death;  
 but to his servants he will give a  
 different name.
- 16 Then whoever invokes a blessing in  
 the land  
 shall bless by the God of faithfulness,  
 and whoever takes an oath in the land  
 shall swear by the God of  
 faithfulness;  
 because the former troubles are  
 forgotten  
 and are hidden from my sight.

### The Glorious New Creation

- 17 For I am about to create new heavens  
 and a new earth;  
 the former things shall not be  
 remembered  
 or come to mind.
- 18 But be glad and rejoice forever  
 in what I am creating;  
 for I am about to create Jerusalem  
 as a joy,  
 and its people as a delight.
- 19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem,  
 and delight in my people;  
 no more shall the sound of weeping  
 be heard in it,  
 or the cry of distress.
- 20 No more shall there be in it  
 an infant that lives but a few days,  
 or an old person who does not live  
 out a lifetime;  
 for one who dies at a hundred years  
 will be considered a youth,  
 and one who falls short of a  
 hundred will be considered  
 accursed.
- 21 They shall build houses and inhabit  
 them;  
 they shall plant vineyards and eat  
 their fruit.
- 22 They shall not build and another  
 inhabit;  
 they shall not plant and another  
 eat;  
 for like the days of a tree shall the  
 days of my people be,  
 and my chosen shall long enjoy  
 the work of their hands.
- 23 They shall not labor in vain,  
 or bear children for calamity;<sup>a</sup>  
 for they shall be offspring blessed by  
 the LORD—  
 and their descendants as well.
- 24 Before they call I will answer,  
 while they are yet speaking I will  
 hear.
- 25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed  
 together,  
 the lion shall eat straw like the ox;  
 but the serpent—its food shall be  
 dust!  
 They shall not hurt or destroy  
 on all my holy mountain,  
 says the LORD.

<sup>a</sup> Or sudden terror



### Read Isaiah 66

Unfortunately, much of this chapter is unclear as it moves between judgment and salvation. We are to worship in spirit and in truth. God assures us that, "As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem." There is a call for general rejoicing. One of the most remarkable, expansive views of religion is found in verses 18–21. The unit closes on the note that all humankind shall come to worship in Jerusalem.

**Reflect:** All people are touched by the relationship between mother and child. The use of this image for God's relationship with people is especially poignant.

**Pray:** Spend some time praying over the words in verses 18–21.

**Act:** Be aware of the opportunities we have to offer comfort to people who may be hurting or in need.

### The Worship God Demands

- 66** Thus says the LORD:  
 Heaven is my throne  
 and the earth is my footstool;  
 what is the house that you would build for me,  
 and what is my resting place?  
 2 All these things my hand has made,  
 and so all these things are mine,<sup>a</sup>  
 says the LORD.  
 But this is the one to whom I will look,  
 to the humble and contrite in spirit,  
 who trembles at my word.  
 3 Whoever slaughters an ox is like one who kills a  
 human being;  
 whoever sacrifices a lamb, like one who  
 breaks a dog's neck;  
 whoever presents a grain offering, like one who  
 offers swine's blood;<sup>b</sup>  
 whoever makes a memorial offering of  
 frankincense, like one who blesses an idol.  
 These have chosen their own ways,  
 and in their abominations they take delight;  
 4 I also will choose to mock<sup>c</sup> them,  
 and bring upon them what they fear;  
 because, when I called, no one answered,  
 when I spoke, they did not listen;  
 but they did what was evil in my sight,  
 and chose what did not please me.

### The LORD Vindicates Zion

- 5 Hear the word of the LORD,  
 you who tremble at his word:  
 Your own people who hate you  
 and reject you for my name's sake  
 have said, "Let the LORD be glorified,  
 so that we may see your joy";  
 but it is they who shall be put to shame.  
 6 Listen, an uproar from the city!  
 A voice from the temple!  
 The voice of the LORD,  
 dealing retribution to his enemies!  
 7 Before she was in labor  
 she gave birth;  
 before her pain came upon her  
 she delivered a son.  
 8 Who has heard of such a thing?  
 Who has seen such things?  
 Shall a land be born in one day?  
 Shall a nation be delivered in one moment?

<sup>a</sup> Gk Syr: Heb *these things came to be*

<sup>b</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>c</sup> Or to *punish*

Yet as soon as Zion was in labor  
she delivered her children.

- 9 Shall I open the womb and not deliver?  
says the LORD;  
shall I, the one who delivers, shut the womb?  
says your God.
- 10 Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her,  
all you who love her;  
rejoice with her in joy,  
all you who mourn over her—
- 11 that you may nurse and be satisfied from her consoling breast;  
that you may drink deeply with delight from her glorious bosom.
- 12 For thus says the LORD:  
I will extend prosperity to her like a river,  
and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing stream;  
and you shall nurse and be carried on her arm,  
and dandled on her knees.
- 13 As a mother comforts her child,  
so I will comfort you;  
you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

### The Reign and Indignation of God

- 14 You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice;  
your bodies<sup>a</sup> shall flourish like the grass;  
and it shall be known that the hand of the LORD is with his servants,  
and his indignation is against his enemies.
- 15 For the LORD will come in fire,  
and his chariots like the whirlwind,  
to pay back his anger in fury,  
and his rebuke in flames of fire.
- 16 For by fire will the LORD execute judgment,

and by his sword, on all flesh;  
and those slain by the LORD shall be many.

17 Those who sanctify and purify themselves to go into the gardens, following the one in the center, eating the flesh of pigs, vermin, and rodents, shall come to an end together, says the LORD.

18 For I know<sup>b</sup> their works and their thoughts, and I am<sup>c</sup> coming to gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and shall see my glory, <sup>19</sup> and I will set a sign among them. From them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Put,<sup>d</sup> and Lud—which draw the bow—to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands far away that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the nations. <sup>20</sup> They shall bring all your kindred from all the nations as an offering to the LORD, on horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and on mules, and on dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the LORD, just as the Israelites bring a grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD. <sup>21</sup> And I will also take some of them as priests and as Levites, says the LORD.

22 For as the new heavens and the new earth,  
which I will make,  
shall remain before me, says the LORD;  
so shall your descendants and your name remain.

23 From new moon to new moon,  
and from sabbath to sabbath,  
all flesh shall come to worship before me,  
says the LORD.

24 And they shall go out and look at the dead bodies of the people who have rebelled against me; for their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.

<sup>a</sup> Heb bones

<sup>b</sup> Gk Syr: Heb lacks know

<sup>c</sup> Gk Syr Vg Tg: Heb it is

<sup>d</sup> Gk: Heb Pul