

Isaiah

*(Y'sha'yah ... "Salvation is of the Lord")
Prophet of Judah
8th cent BCE*

*"And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send ...?'"
"Then I said, '**Here am I! Send me.**'"
"Go, and say to this people ..." (6:8-9)*

The Ancient Prophets

- The Message of the Prophets

The prophet is supposed to make us feel **uncomfortable** by radically criticizing the way things are ... with the **intent of disturbing our sense of normalcy**.

The prophet is the man who has been set up against his own natural instincts ... that bind him to the community, and **who** likewise **sets himself up against the will of the people** to live as they have always lived ...

The Ancient Prophets

- The Prophet

The prophet is the man who has been set up against his own natural instincts ... that bind him to the community,

and who likewise sets himself up against the will of the people to live as they have always lived

...

Why Isaiah?

- The preaching/ teaching of the Book of Isaiah shows a development of thought and expectation of restoration that goes beyond that of contemporary prophets.
 - Understanding of God.
 - The role of the Jewish nation ... to the world.
 - “Messianic expectation.”
- These developments are the result of the times in which Isaiah ... the school of Isaiah ... is active.
 - 10 of 12 tribes disappear ... assimilated into a foreign empire.
 - The remnant of Judah defeated and taken into captivity (Babylonian Exile).
 - The post-exile ... is less than restorative ... a disappointment.
- Today ... to both Jews and Christians ... Isaiah is a major prophet ...
 - w/ fundamentally different interpretations and understandings.

Historical Background

the world of Isaiah

The Kingdoms of the Jews

- **United Kingdom** only under Saul, David, Solomon
~1000 BCE.
 - Kingdom split during reign of Rehoboam.
- **Northern Kingdom** of Israel conquered by Assyrians in 722 BCE.
 - Ten tribes taken into exile ... never to return.
- Tribes of Judah and Benjamin remain as the **Southern Kingdom** (Judah, Judea) until they are conquered by the Babylonians (King Nebuchadnezzar) in 586 BCE.
 - Temple destroyed

The Prophets

The time from before the conquest of Israel until the fall of the Kingdom of Judah and early post-exile is the time of intense prophetic activity. (early 8th – early 5th century BCE)

- Amos
- Hosea
- Micah
- Isaiah ...

The prophets chastise the falling away from the covenant of the kings ... priests ... and people.
... but largely to no avail.

Before the fall of Israel, alliances are formed that actually pit the two Jewish kingdoms against one another.

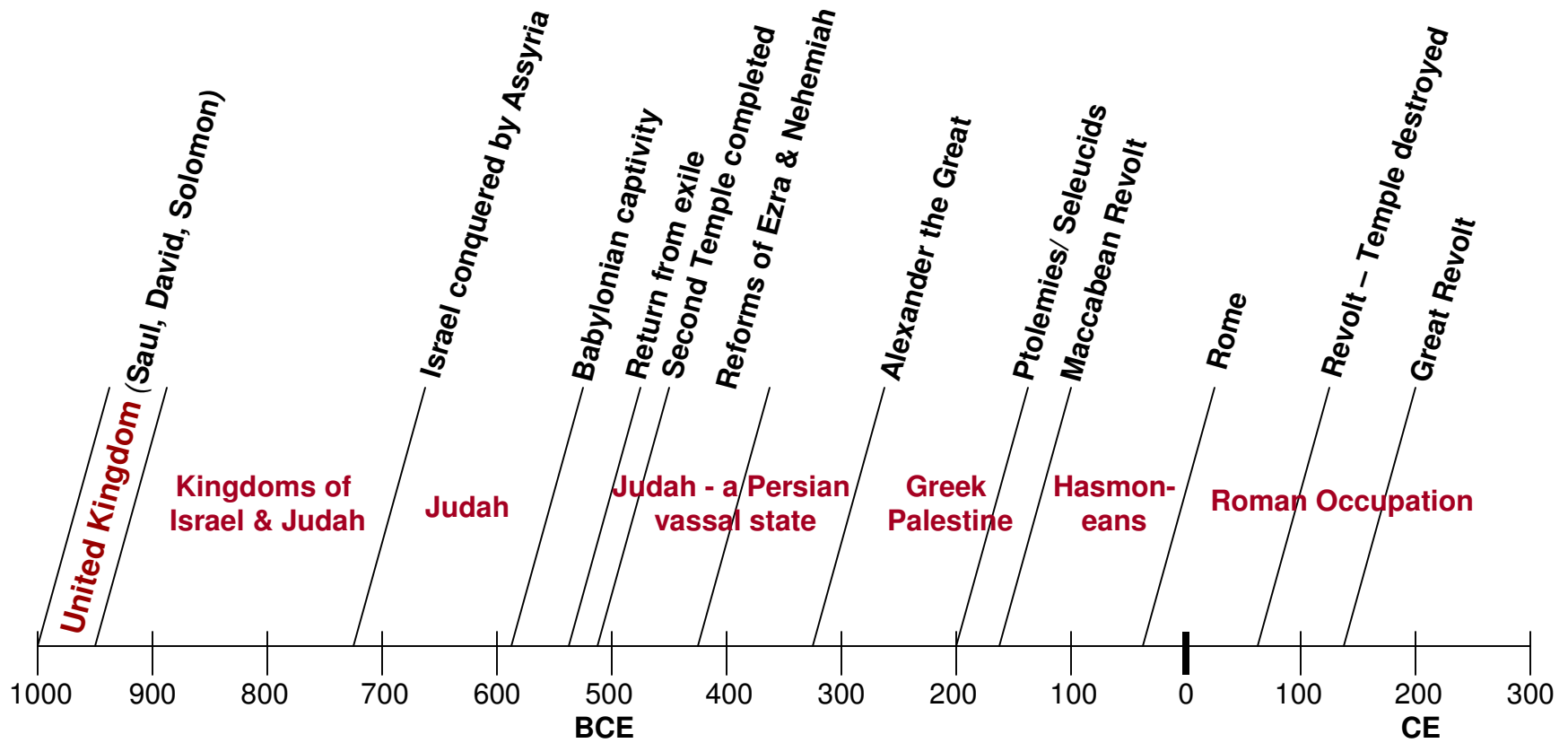
The people do not act as those of “the God that brought you out of the land of Egypt.”

Isaiah – in context

Isaiah (8th cent BCE) ...

- Active during reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and possibly Manasseh. (60+ years)
- Affected by conquest and loss of the Northern Kingdom ... Israel (722 BCE)
- A message directed toward the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

A History of "Israel"



Amos
Hosea
Isaiah
Micah
Hezekiah

Jeremiah
Haggai
Zechariah

Ezra
Malachi

Maccabees

Kings and Reform

In Judah:

Ahaz (735 – 715 BCE)

- Sides with Assyria against revolt.
- Exceedingly corrupt.

Hezekiah (715 - 686 BCE)

- Liturgical/ Temple reforms.
- Revolt against Assyria.

Manasseh (686 – 642 BCE)

- Led the nation to “greater evils” than the nation’s that the Lord destroyed.
- Altars in the Temple dedicated to Assyrian gods.
- Sacrificed one of his own sons in fire.
 - » (II Kings, II Chronicles)

Kings and Reform

In Judah:

Amon (642 - 640 BCE)

- A “backslider.”
- Assassinated.

Josiah (640 - 609 BCE)

- Deuteronomic reform (liturgical/ Temple) reforms.
- War with Egypt.

Jehoahaz ...Jehoiakim ... Jehoiachin ... Zedekiah (609 - 587 BCE)

- A string of weak kings ... ending with the defeat of Judah.
- Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.
- Babylonian Exile begins.

The Kingdom(s)

Before secular kingship ... Israel was a tribal confederation ... **a priestly kingdom and a holy nation** ... in covenant with God.

With the advent of the “kingdom” there emerged:

- economic exploitation
- political oppression
- religious legitimation

God was replaced ... the covenant given no more than “lip service.”

Idolatry was practiced in both the Israel and Judah.

The prophets became prosecutors in a “covenant lawsuit” on behalf of God against Israel.

No King But God

After the conquest of Canaan there was a time when the tribes of Israel were ruled by judges.

The very last verse of the **book of Judges** states:

“In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” (Judges 21:25)

The people wanted a king!

“Give us a king to judge us.’ And Samuel prayed unto HaShem.

And HaShem said unto Samuel: ‘Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee; for they have not rejected thee, **but they have rejected Me, that I should not be king over them.**

According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, in that they have forsaken Me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.”

(1 Samuel 8:6-8)

Samuel ... prophet and judge ... ~1020 BCE

A Warning

God tells Samuel what to tell the people ... about the king they demand

...

“... he will take your daughters to be perfumers, and to be cooks, and to be bakers.

And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them ...

And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards ...

And he will take your men-servants, and your maid-servants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work.

He will take the tenth of your flocks; and ye shall be his servants.

And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king whom ye shall have chosen you; and HaShem will not answer you in that day.’

(1 Samuel 8:13-18)

Anointed Kingship

“But the people refused to hearken unto the voice of Samuel; and they said: ‘Nay; but **there shall be a king over us**;

that **we also may be like all the nations**; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.’

And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he spoke them in the ears of HaShem.

And HaShem said to Samuel: ‘**Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king.**’” (1 Samuel 8:19-22)

The people want a king so that they can be like everyone else.

God warns them.

The people demand a king.

Harlotry - The Example of Hosea

- “The word of HaShem that came (*was*) unto Hosea the son of Beerī, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.” (1:1)
- The Message ... a personalized allegory ...
 - “Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry, *for the land commits great harlotry by forsaking the LORD.*” (1:2)
 - *Jezreel* ... a son ... (God Sows).
 - *Lo-ruhamah* ... a daughter ... (Not pitied).
 - *Lo-ammi* ... a son ... (Not My People).
 - But the story represents ...
 - Hosea ... *God*
 - Gomer ... *Israel*
 - The children ... *the children of Israel*

Idolatry *is* Harlotry

“I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hidden from me; for now, O Ephraim, you have played the whore; Israel is defiled. Their deeds do not permit them to return to their God. For the spirit of whoredom is within them, and they do not know the Lord.” (Hosea 5:3-4)

*“All their kings have fallen; none of them calls upon me.”
(Hosea 7:7)*

The ways of harlotry ... idolatry ... are never satisfying.

All good comes from the Lord ... but the recipients of God's goodness use these gifts to their own purposes.

Other gods

– Harlotry ... idolatry ...

- Placing anything in one's life (individually or communally) before God.
- Jezebel, wife of King Ahab (~ 873 – 853 BCE).
 - Introduces cult of Baal into the Northern kingdom.
 - 2 Kings
 - Elijah

Adulteress = Idolatry = The World = The Harlot

Hebrew Scripture → Christian Scripture

The Good Life

Material prosperity sapped the spiritual strength of the people.

Material prosperity had impoverished the nation.

Isaiah

In a historical context

Isaiah – in historical context

- Israel (Northern Kingdom) and Judah (Southern Kingdom) enjoy prosperity.
- 745 BCE ... beginning of the ascendancy of the Assyrian empire under Tiglath-pileser III.
 - Israel threatened.
- 734 BCE Israel joins in an anti-Assyrian alliance. **King Ahaz** of Judah refuses to join.
 - The alliance attacks Judah to overthrow King Ahaz!
 - Territory of Judah devastated ... Jerusalem under siege.
 - King Ahaz appeals to Assyria.

“So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying: ‘**I am thy servant and thy son**; come up, and save me out of the hand of the king of Aram, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, who rise up against me.’

Isaiah – in historical context

And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the [house of HaShem](#), and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent it for a present to the king of Assyria.” (II Kings 16:7-8)

“To rely on God rather than on weapons would have been to subordinate political wisdom to faith.” (*Abraham Heschel*)

– Political “wisdom” would end in the conquest of the Northern Kingdom ... Israel ... and the eventual destruction of Judah, Jerusalem and the Temple.

- Anti-Assyrian alliance defeated and parts of Galilee conquered by Assyria in 732 BCE. Northern Kingdom now a weak vassal state.
 - Judah spared.

Isaiah – in historical context

- In Jerusalem ... **Ahaz**

“We have made a covenant with death, and with the nether-world are we at agreement; when the scouring scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us; for we have made lies our refuge, and in falsehood have we hid ourselves.” (Isaiah 28:15)

- **Ahaz** dies and his son **Hezekiah** becomes king ~ 728 BCE.
 - Temple and liturgical reform.

“He trusted in HaShem, the G-d of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among them that were before him. For he cleaved to HaShem, he departed not from following Him, but kept His commandments, which HaShem commanded Moses.” (II Kings 18:5)

Isaiah – in historical context

- Tiglath-pileser dies ~ 727 BCE ... Northern Kingdom forms an alliance with Egypt ... stops paying tribute to Assyria.
- Assyria invades ... all of Israel conquered in 722 BCE ... population forced into exile ... ten tribes of Israel disappear.
 - The judgment of Judah was inevitable.
- ~ 720 BCE Egypt begins forming an alliance with Assyrian vassal states in an anti-Assyrian alliance.
 - King Hezekiah refuses to join.

Isaiah – in historical context

- A new king and empire begins to form in the north as a counter to Assyria ... Babylon.
 - A new anti-Assyrian coalition forms ... King Hezekiah becomes an important leader.
- Assyria invades Judah ~705 BCE ... captures 46 Judean towns ... Jerusalem is spared.
 - Judah now pays tribute to Assyria.
- Babylon will supersede Assyria as the threat from the north and conquer Judah in 586 BCE.
 - Jerusalem and Temple destroyed.

Isaiah – in context

- In the crisis of 734 BCE, **Isaiah** warned king **Ahaz** of Judah not to make an alliance with Assyria against Israel.
 - Ahaz angrily rejects Isaiah's words.
- In 701 BCE, **Isaiah** warned king **Hezekiah** not to seek aid from Egypt against Assyria.
 - Hezekiah does not have the moral strength to respond.

Isaiah's hope becomes that some future king, a Messiah, would recognize and obey the sovereignty of God.

The Book of Isaiah

punishment ... and promise

The Book of Isaiah

Treats a number of distinct periods in the life of the Jewish nation(s).

- From just before the fall of the Northern Kingdom ...
- To a time when the Southern Kingdom is itself threatened ... by Assyria
- Foretelling of the conquest of the Southern Kingdom by Babylon ... and of its “release” by Cyrus.
- But also speaks of a “restoration” ... over two centuries away.

The Book of Isaiah

A large book (66 chapters):

Book of Oracles and Judgment (~ chapters 1-39) ... (- 25-27)

- Judah will be judged by the power of God.
 - The covenant cannot protect when it is broken by acts of idolatry, and acts of **injustice**.
- Prophecies of a coming messiah.
 - **Justice and righteousness will reign**.

The Book of Comfort (chapter 40 - 55) ...

- Deliverance of Jews from the Babylonians
 - Restoration of a Jewish nation.
- Future glories foretold.
 - The book ends with a message of hope of a righteous ruler who extends salvation to his righteous subjects living in the Lord's kingdom on earth.

The Book of Isaiah

Back in Judah (chapter 56-66)

- From threat of Divine punishment (chaps 1-39), to the promise of return and redemption (chaps 40-55).
- The Temple is now being rebuilt, exiles are returning to Jerusalem.
- Perhaps this isn't ... the final restoration.

Isaiah ... and the prophets contemporary with Isaiah ... speak directly to the political developments of the time ... to the kings ... and their foolishness in not placing their trust in God.

The Book of Isaiah

Most scripture scholars argue that the “Book of Isaiah” is actually a composite document written over a period of approximately 200 years.

“While Isaiah lived in the 8th century B.C.E., most Bible scholars assume that chapters 40-66 (or at least 40-55) were written some two centuries later, after the destruction of the Temple in 586 B.C.E. The author of later chapters is commonly referred to by Bible scholars as the Second Isaiah.” (Rabbi Joseph Telushkin)

Today ... many consider chapters 56-66 to be a “Third Isaiah.”
Post-exilic disappointment.

Chapters 25 - 27 may be considered a later addition ... a “Fourth Isaiah.”

The Book of Isaiah

Book of Oracles and Judgment (~ chapters 1-39) ...

- Prophecies of judgment against the enemies of Israel (Babylon, Assyria, Philistia, Moab, Syria, Egypt ...)
 - Nations that think of themselves secure in their power and might will be judged by God.
- Judah, however, will also be judged by the power of God.
 - The covenant cannot protect when it is broken by acts of idolatry, and acts of **injustice**.
- Prophecies of a coming Messianic Kingdom.
 - **Justice and righteousness will reign.**

Isaiah

The Prophet's call ...

“And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send ...?’”

“Then I said, ‘Here am I! Send me.’”

“Go, and say to this people ...” (6:8-9)

Isaiah preached primarily in ... and around ... Jerusalem.

The Vision of the Divine

“... I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple.

Above him stood the seraphim; each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory."

And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke.

And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" (6:1-5)

Kadosh ... The Other

Understanding of the Divine

The God of Israel ... is the powerful creator of the universe to whom is owed worship and obedience ... but he is also the intimate Savior whom we can approach in the Temple in prayer.

The God of Israel ... is the God of all peoples and nations.

The God of Israel ... is not like “other gods.”

- God is both transcendent and immanent.
 - God is described as “Wholly Other” ... but he must also be “Wholly Near” ... intimate.

Teaching

The Book of Isaiah, although contemporaneous with other prophetic works, uses a slightly different vocabulary to express its teachings (truths).

Themes:

- Because God is moral and just, **he must be obeyed**.
- God directs history.
 - The might of nations is meaningless to God.
 - **Kings of Israel must be God's "tools" on this earth.**
- The punishment and destruction to come is a sign of God's righteousness.
 - An abasing of human pride and self-sufficiency.
- Refusal to hear (words from God) ... is a rejection of God himself.
- In light of God's justice, mankind can understand its own creatureliness and **moral depravity**.

Teaching

- Man's mind is dulled by sensuality and materialism, and their wills are infected by rebellious pride.
 - Injustice to the innocent.
 - Oppression of the poor.
 - Trust in material things.
 - Self-indulgence and pride.

... so dulled, that man can no longer see God's work in the world
... can no longer tell good from evil.
- For people who are unclean and choose to remain unclean, there can be no alternative to Divine Justice.

Teaching

However, mankind can influence God ...

- The threat to the promise of redemption is acceptance of the “way things are.”
 - A rejection of God’s “mighty deeds.”
- If Judah will accept God, mankind’s anxieties will cease.
 - Judah will survive as an example to the world.
 - The nations of the world will “make pilgrimage to Jerusalem.”
- Faith ... quiet but active confidence in the unseen but conclusive participation of God in mankind’s affairs.
 - Thunder and lightening don’t bring growth ... rain and sun do.
 - Fire can destroy ... or it can purify.
- To Israel, God is judge and defender.

Major Themes

- **Pride** is a major sin that is the antithesis of faith ... arrogance vs trust in the Lord.
 - Divination, wealth, political and military power, idols ...
- **God's refusal to accept ritualistic worship from those who treat others with cruelty and injustice.**
- Israel has become like a wife who is committing adultery ... practicing elements of Canaanite religious practices in violation of the TORAH.
- God has called his covenant people to **teach the world about Him.**
- Unique expression ... **"the Holy One of Israel."**

The warnings are those of the other classical prophets.

The Broken Covenant

- “Sons have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me.” (1:2)
- “The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master's crib; but Israel does not know, my people does not understand.” (1:3)
- “Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, sons who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged.” (1:4)
- “Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me ... Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me, I am weary of bearing them. When you spread forth 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.” (1:13-15)

The Cult of Worship

The people were religious, but there was an **empty ceremonialism**.

- Religion had become a matter of form; ceremonial observances were thought to meet all religious requirements.
 - There was widespread misapprehension that as long as the external acts of worship were scrupulously performed the people were entitled to the divine favor and protection.
- The people replaced heartfelt worship with **empty ritual**, thinking that this is all that God demands.

The people divorced God's standards of justice from their daily dealings with one another ... and the religious leadership fully participated in this.

I Will Not Be There

No sacrifice ... no burnt offerings ... but what about the Law?

In Genesis ...

– Then Noah built an altar to the LORD ... and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

And when the LORD smelled the pleasing odor ... (Gen 8:20-21)

– *Why the difference ... Noah's heart was pure ...*

Intent is important

The Cult of Worship

We participate in elaborate worship ... because these are substitutes for hearing and obeying the word of God.

Religion that is not accompanied by right action ... and true faith ... is anathema to God.

Those who disregard the covenant ... oppress the poor ... live in luxury ... continue to go through the motions of worshipping God ...

an abomination of emptiness

Ethical life ... ritual worship
Not either/ or

The Broken Covenant

- “For Jerusalem has stumbled, and Judah has fallen; because their speech and their deeds are against the LORD, defying his glorious presence.
... they proclaim their sin like Sodom, they do not hide it.” (3:8-9)
- “How the faithful city has become a harlot, she that was full of justice! Righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers. (1:24)
- “For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant planting; and he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, a cry!” (5:7)
 - Parable

The Vineyard

“Let me sing of my well-beloved, a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved had a vineyard in a very fruitful hill;

And he digged it, and cleared it of stones, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also hewed out a vat therein; and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and **it brought forth wild grapes.**

And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.

What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?

The Vineyard

And now come, I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; **I will break down the fence thereof, and it shall be trodden down;**

And **I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned nor hoed, but there shall come up briars and thorns;** I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.

For the vineyard of HaShem of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah the plant of His delight; and **He looked for justice, but behold violence; for righteousness, but behold a cry.** (5:1-7)

(See Mark 12, Matthew 21, Luke 20 ...Parable of Wicked Tenants)

God – The Source of Israel

A remembrance ... from the beginning ...

- “Like grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel. Like the first fruit on the fig tree, in its first season, I saw your fathers. But they came to Ba'al-pe'or, and consecrated themselves to Ba'al, and became detestable like the thing they loved.” (Hosea 9:10)
- “... there I began to hate them.” (Hosea 9:15)
- “... idols of silver made according to their understanding, all of them the work of artisans. “Sacrifice to these”, they say. People are kissing calves!” (Hosea 13:2)
- “Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them.
I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love.
I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks.
I bent down to them and fed them.” (Hosea 11:3-4)

The Call To Change

- “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, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow.**

Come now, **let us reason together**, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.

If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; But if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.” (1:19-20)

“Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.” (Jas 1:27)

A Cleansing

“And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; and HaShem alone shall be exalted in that day.

And the idols shall utterly pass away.

And men shall go into the caves of the rocks, and into the holes of the earth, from before the terror of HaShem, and from the glory of His majesty, when He ariseth to shake mightily the earth.

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

To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the crevices of the crags, from before the terror of HaShem, and from the glory of His majesty, when he ariseth to shake mightily the earth.” (2:17-21)

Messianic Expectation ?

“And it shall come to pass **in the end of days**, that the mountain of HaShem'S house shall be established as the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and **all nations shall flow unto it**.

And many peoples shall go and say: ‘Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of HaShem, to the house of the G-d of Jacob; and **He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths.**’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of HaShem from Jerusalem.

And He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide for many peoples; and **they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.**” (2:2-4)

These verses are identical with Micah 4:1-3

*Before ... we want to be like all the other nations.
Now ... all the other nations want to be like us.*

What Does The Lord Desire?

“With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?

Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:6-8)

Sins of Judah

From the prophet Micah:

Under king Ahaz, a low ebb of morality and religious fidelity was reached in Judah.

- The wealthy coveted and **seized** the land and homes around them. (2:1-2)
- The wealthy **rob** the poor of their own nation. (2:8)
- **Corrupt** business ethics were practiced. (6:11)
- There were numerous **false prophets** who prophesied for reward. (2:11)
- The priests **taught for a price**. (3:11)
- Rulers and judges could be **bribed**. (7:3)

Isaiah & the Kings

In Judah:

Ahaz (735 – 715 BCE)

- Sides with Assyria against revolt (Isaiah).
- Exceedingly corrupt.

Hezekiah (715 - 686 BCE)

- Liturgical/ Temple reforms.

Manasseh (686 – 642 BCE)

- Led the nation to “greater evils” than the nation’s that the Lord destroyed.
- Filled Jerusalem with blood.
- Sacrificed one of his own sons in fire.
 - » (II Kings, II Chronicles)

Hezekiah ... Son of Ahaz

“And HaShem spoke again unto Ahaz, saying: ‘Ask thee a sign of HaShem thy G-d: ask it either in the depth, or in the height above.’ But Ahaz said: ‘I will not ask, neither will I try HaShem.’

And he said: ‘Hear ye now, O house of David: Is it a small thing for you to weary men, that ye will weary my G-d also? **Therefore the L-rd Himself shall give you a sign: behold, the young woman shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.**

Curd and honey shall he eat, when he knoweth to refuse the evil, and choose the good.

Yea, before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land whose two kings thou hast a horror of shall be forsaken.”
(7:10-16)

Coming Redemption

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Imman'u-el. ... he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good.” (7:14-15)

- King Ahaz (734 – 728 BCE) received bad advice from his counselors.
 - Judah became a vassal of Assyria ... against Israel.
- The king's wife, a young woman (*ha'alma*), will bear a child (Hezekiah 728 – 699 BCE) who will maintain the Davidic dynasty ... and bring the people back to God.
- Immanu'el ... the Lord of Hosts is with us.

Christian Interpretation

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. **Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Imman'u-el.** ... he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good.” (Isaiah 7:14-15)

“All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: **‘Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel’**” (Matthew 1:22-23)

- In the Hebrew ... *‘almah* ... can only mean “young woman,” or “maiden” ... of a marriageable age.
- In Matthew, the quote is clearly taken from the Septuagint version of Isaiah, where the Greek word *parthenos* (virgin) is used ...
(*Parthenos* is the equivalent of *b'thulah* in Hebrew (virgin), which is not used in the Hebrew text.)

Matthew uses a number of quotes in a messianic interpretation of Hebrew Scripture to demonstrate that the messianic expectation was fulfilled in Jesus.

Hezekiah

King Hezekiah ... messiah

- **Renewed worship of the God of Israel.**

“Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem ...

And he did that which was right in the eyes of HaShem according to all that David his father had done.

He removed the high places, and broke the pillars, and cut down the Asherah; and he broke in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made; for unto those days the children of Israel did offer to it; and it was called Nehushtan.

He trusted in HaShem, the G-d of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among them that were before him.

For he cleaved to HaShem, he departed not from following Him, but kept His commandments, which HaShem commanded Moses.

And HaShem was with him ... (2 Kings 18:2-7)

Hezekiah

- Renewed the tradition of the Passover pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Temple.

- Invited those Jews of the Northern Kingdom who had not been taken into exile to attend.

“And there assembled at Jerusalem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread ... a very great congregation. And they arose and took away the altars that were in Jerusalem, and all the altars for incense took they away, and cast them into the brook Kidron.

Then they killed the passover lamb ... and the priests and the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought burnt-offerings into the house of HaShem.” (2 Chronicles 30:13-15)

Hezekiah

“So there was great joy in Jerusalem; for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem.

Then the priests the Levites arose and blessed the people; and their voice was heard of HaShem, and their prayer came up to His holy habitation, even unto heaven.” (2 Chronicles 30:26-27)

“Israel has no Messiah since he already enjoyed him in the days of Hezekiah.” (Rabbi Hillel, 4th century CE)

Immanuel – Isaiah 7:14

“Therefore the L-rd Himself shall give you a sign: behold, the young woman shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (JPS 1917)

“Assuredly, my Lord will give you a sign of his own accord! Look, the young woman is with child and about to give birth to a son. Let her name him Immanuel.” (JPS 1985)

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanu-el.” (KJV)

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.” (NRSV)

Hezekiah

But all was not perfect ...

- King Hezekiah participated in a revolt against Assyrian domination.
- In 701 BCE, Assyria struck back ...
 - 46 northern “fortified towns” were destroyed.
 - Population was exiled.
- Judah basically became a vassal state with requirements for tribute.

By this time, the idea of “Covenant” had subtly shifted.

- God’s chosen people ... forever grateful for God’s mighty deeds in support of his people ... faithful to the law and to God.

or

- The Davidic promise of a mighty nation ... among nations ... ever more prosperous and expanding.

Enduring “service to God” or “worldly greatness.”

A Basic Issue

- Israel and Judah had grown far beyond their tribal, nomadic, and then pastoral roots.
- The episodic successes of the kingdoms brought a legitimization to kingship and kingdom.
 - Transfer of the Ark to Jerusalem ... construction of the Temple.
 - David had been called by God to unite the people as nation.

... the institution of kingship, originally foreign to Israel and accepted grudgingly by many, had been accorded a “theological” basis among the people.

... kingship had been foreign ... now was a part of the vary fabric of the people.

... integration of state and cult proved “unhealthy.”

The Promise

The destruction will be great ... but ...

- “In that day the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will ... lean upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.

A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God.
For though your people Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return.

Destruction is decreed, overflowing with righteousness.” (10:20-22)

Punishment will be “medicinal and corrective.”

An Interpretation

God's relationship to his people is as a father who has bestowed all diligent care upon his children.

– ... but ... **rebellious children are bound to come to grief.**

“Israel will be chastised for its sins, even more severely than other nations for theirs; but this is only another proof of God's fatherly love.

For it is **only through suffering** that Israel obtained the greatest gifts from heaven,

and what is still more important to note is that it was affection which reconciled and attached the son to the father (Israel to God).”

Expectation

“And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a twig shall grow forth out of his roots. And the **spirit of HaShem shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of HaShem.**

And his delight shall be in the fear of HaShem; and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither decide after the hearing of his ears; But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the land; and he shall smite the land with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.” (11:1-5)

From David ... but really not like David.

- Spirit of ... wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, fear of God.
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“And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

And the cow and the bear feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the basilisk's den.

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain; **for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of HaShem**, as the waters cover the sea.”
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A change in reality ...

- **Not a Davidic restoration ... but a return to the way the world was before sin ... in the garden ... how creation was when God said it was “very good.”**
- **But ... with Jerusalem ... Temple ...**

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“And He will set up an ensign for the nations, and will assemble the dispersed of Israel, and gather together the scattered of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and they that harass Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.” (11:10-13)

All Jews of the various Diaspora ... exiles ... will return. (The land is also in covenant.)

Not restorative ... as in the time of Judges and Kings ... no competition ... envy ... conflict.

“He will swallow up death for ever; and the L-rd GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the reproach of His people will He take away from off all the earth; for HaShem hath spoken it.

And it shall be said in that day: ‘Lo, this is our G-d, for whom we waited, that He might save us; this is HaShem, for whom we waited, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.’” (25:6-9)

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“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more ...” (Rev 21:4)

The Septuagint

Hebrew Scripture of the Diaspora

The Septuagint

The Alexandrian Canon

- A Greek translation of Hebrew scriptures compiled originally in Alexandria for the Jews outside of the homeland.
 - Began in 3rd century BCE but ... obviously not considered a closed canon because texts continued to be added after the original translations, apparently into the 1st century CE.
 - Made from Hebrew or Aramaic originals (although few of these early scriptures survive in anything but fragments).
 - Was considered authoritative by Jews of the Diaspora.
 - Used by Philo, discussed by Josephus.

The Background

- Hellenized (Greek speaking) Jews worldwide (outside of Israel) were using the Septuagint by the start of the Common Era and during the formative years of Christianity (late Second Temple Period).
 - Worldwide ... the most commonly used Hebrew scripture.
- Over half of the 250+ references to the Hebrew scriptures in the Christian scriptures reference the Septuagint.

The Background

- After the destruction of the Temple (70 CE), Jewish scholars took refuge in Yavneh (var Jabneh, Jamnia) (70-132 CE).
 - Not all books in the Septuagint are accepted, or even considered.
 - Although some of the Septuagint translations date to 3rd century BCE, those now considered Apocrypha date from early 2nd century BCE to mid 1st century CE.
- *Apokryphos* - “to hide away” ... has come to mean writings outside of an accepted canon of scripture ...
- *Kanon* ... meaning a reed or a measuring rod ... has come to mean regulated and defined collection.

The Legend

- From the Letter of Aristeas ... a *psuedepigraphon*.
 - Letter states that it was written by an aide to Ptolemy in 3rd century BCE ... but probably written by an Alexandrian Jew ~ 150-100 BCE.
- Ptolemy II, king of Egypt (285-247 BCE) wanted the Hebrew scriptures in the library he was building in Alexandria.
 - 72 scholars were brought from Israel
 - answered 72 questions
 - were led to the island of Pharos where they labored for 72 days, independently, but each had identical translations.
 - “the perfect translation”

Which Text ?

Although the Septuagint was a Jewish translation, and widely used, the earliest copies available today are all from later Christian sources:

- Codex Vaticanus (4th century)
- Codex Sinaiticus (4th century)
- Codex Alexandrinus (5th century)

... and these copies are not all identical.

Therefore ... although we will speak of the Septuagint it is impossible to know exactly what that collection contained ... as used by Jews of the Diaspora during the late Second Temple Period.

It wasn't until 930 CE that the first complete Hebrew Bible, called the Aleppo Codex, utilizing masoretic symbols and ordering was completed ... the Masoretic Text.

Hezekiah

messiah ???

Hezekiah

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For it is **only through suffering** that Israel obtained the greatest gifts from heaven,

and what is still more important to note is that it was affection which reconciled and attached the son to the father (Israel to God).”

Solomon Schechter

Destruction and Restoration

or

End of Days ??

Expectation

“And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a twig shall grow forth out of his roots. And the **spirit of HaShem shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of HaShem.**

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**All Jews of the various Diaspora ... exiles ... will return.
(The land is also in covenant.)**

**Not restorative ... as in the time of Judges and Kings ... no
competition ... envy ... conflict.**

“And there shall be a highway for the remnant of His people, that shall remain from Assyria, like as there was for Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.” (11:16)

Expectation

“And thy sisters, **Sodom** and her daughters, shall return to their former estate, and **Samaria** and her daughters shall return to their former estate, **and thou** and thy daughters shall return to your former estate.” (Ezekial 16:55)

Ezekial was actually carried off in the Babylonian exile.

- Jerusalem will be destroyed ... Temple destroyed ... but will be rebuilt.

This restoration will restore all ...

- **Sodom ... from its destruction ...**
 - “ ... fulness of bread, and careless ease was in her and in her daughters; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. (Ezekial 16:49)
- **Samaria ... Northern Kingdom from its idolatry ... and foolishness.**
- **And you ... Judah ... will be restored.**

Oracles Against The Nations

God will punish the enemies of his people ... the nations and tyrants ... all of them.

“They come from a far country, from the end of heaven, even HaShem, and the weapons of His indignation, **to destroy the whole earth**. Howl ye; for the day of HaShem is at hand; as destruction from the Almighty shall it come.

Behold, the day of HaShem cometh, cruel, and full of wrath and fierce anger; to make the earth a desolation, and to destroy the sinners thereof out of it ...” (13:5-6)

“For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.

And I will visit upon the world their evil, and upon the wicked their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the tyrants.” (13:10-11)

Jerusalem

“Behold, HaShem maketh the earth empty and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof.

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

The earth shall be utterly emptied, and clean despoiled; for HaShem hath spoken this word.

The earth fainteth and fadeth away, the world faileth and fadeth away, the lofty people of the earth do fail.

The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, violated the statute, broken the everlasting covenant.

Therefore hath a curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are found guilty; therefore the inhabitants of the earth waste away, and men are left few.” (24:1-6)

Expectation

“He will swallow up death for ever; and the L-rd GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the reproach of His people will He take away from off all the earth; for HaShem hath spoken it.

And it shall be said in that day: ‘Lo, this is our G-d, for whom we waited, that He might save us; this is HaShem, for whom we waited, **we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.**” (25:6-9)

“In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; walls and bulwarks doth He appoint for salvation.

Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation that keepeth faithfulness may enter in.

The mind stayed on Thee Thou keepest in perfect peace; because it trusteth in Thee.

Trust ye in HaShem for ever, **for HaShem is GOD, an everlasting Rock.**” (26:1-4)

Expectation

“He will swallow up death for ever; and the L-rd GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces ...” (Isaiah 25:8)

“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more ...” (Rev 21:4)

Expectation

The people will cry out for relief ...

“Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been at Thy presence, O HaShem.

We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were **brought forth wind**; we have not wrought any deliverance in the land; neither are the inhabitants of the world come to life.” (26:17-18)

But ... only God can save ...

“**Thy dead shall live, my dead bodies shall arise** - awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust - for Thy dew is as the dew of light, and the earth shall bring to life the shades.” (26:19)

Nothing the people have done has seemed to work ...

But ... resurrection ... to glory ... or to judgment ???

Expectation

“In that day HaShem with His sore and great and strong sword will punish leviathan the slant serpent, and leviathan the tortuous serpent; and He will slay the dragon that is in the sea.” (27:1)

- Chaos and evil will be no more.

“And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great horn shall be blown; and they shall come that were lost in the land of Assyria, and they that were dispersed in the land of Egypt; and they shall worship HaShem in the holy mountain at Jerusalem.” (27:13)

- All Jews return to Jerusalem.

Expectation

Messianic Expectation

```
graph TD; A[Messianic Expectation] --> B[Restorative]; A --> C[Utopian]; C --> D[Real]; C --> E[Ideal];
```

Restorative

- Davidic Kingdom
- Defeat Israel's enemies
- Israel prosperous & secure

Utopian

Real

- Peace
- Ethical/ Just people
- All worship God of Israel

Ideal

- Death and tears ... no more
- Wolf dwells with lamb
- All nations come to Jerusalem

The Book of Isaiah

The Book of Comfort (chapter 40 - 55)

- Deliverance of Jews from the Babylonians
 - Restoration of a Jewish nation.
 - Cyrus the Great (Persian) defeats the Babylonians and in 536 BCE permits the Jews to return to Judah. (45:1)
- Future glories foretold.
 - The book ends with a message of hope of a righteous ruler who extends salvation to his righteous subjects living in the Lord's kingdom on earth.

Don't Be Fooled

- Isaiah never tires of ridiculing foreign deities ... who some in exile feel may have defeated the God of Israel ... his nation, city, Temple and people.
 - Remember the stories in Daniel which ridiculed the Babylonian god Bel.
 - Foreign gods are “all a delusion ... empty wind.” (41:29)
 - Foreign gods are chosen by their worshippers ... but God chose Israel.
 - “Bel bows down, Nebo stoops, their idols are on beasts and cattle; these things ... are loaded as burdens on weary beasts. They stoop, they bow down together ...” (46:1-2)
- “For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens ... who formed the earth and made it ... ‘I am the LORD, and there is no other.’” (45:18)

I Alone Am God

- “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 ...” (40:28)
 - Even the stars, which were considered deities in Babylon ... were created effortlessly by God.
 - Creation is a continuing quality of God ... as is his presence with Israel.
 - God demands absolute obedience ... but not based on blind subservience but on the fact that God is father ... and potter ... (Gen)
 - “Does the clay say to him who fashions it, ‘What are you making?’ or ‘Your work has no handles?’ Woe to him who says to a father, ‘What are you begetting?’ (45:9-10)

The Mighty Deeds of God

- God answers his people not with words ... but by mighty deeds.
 - “The LORD goes forth **like a mighty man**, like a man of war he stirs up his fury; he cries out, he shouts aloud, he shows himself mighty against his foes.
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 travail**, I will gasp and pant.” (42:13-14)
 - “Remember these things ... for **you are my servant**; I formed you, you are my servant; O Israel, you will not be forgotten by me ...
I have swept away your transgressions like a cloud, and your sins like mist; return to me, for I have redeemed you ...
Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, **who formed you from the womb**: ‘I am the LORD, who made all things, who stretched out the heavens alone, who spread out the earth ...’” (44:21-24)

Your Redeemer

- Term “Your Redeemer” is used fourteen times.
 - Human ingratitude and divine mercy meet ... **forgiveness** is the result.
 - A source of warmth ... light ... and a **release from slavery**.
 - Suffering has purified Israel and provided it the strength to share **salvation**.
 - **Redemption** will begin with Israel but through Israel be realized by “all nations.”
 - Some Gentiles will come to the Lord and “will write” the Lord’s name “on his hand.”
 - Prophecy and revelation will not be whispered by seers but will direct human history.

Although Israel has been a burden to God ... it is chosen ... will be forgiven and redeemed ... to the joy of all the earth. Redeeming Israel is God’s “loving responsibility.”

My Love Is Everlasting

“I am the LORD ... **my glory I give to no other**, nor my praise to graven images.

Behold, the former things have come to pass, and **new things I now declare**; before they spring forth I tell you of them.”

Sing to the LORD a new song ...” (42:8-10)

“Hearken 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; even to your old age I am He, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save.” (46:3-4)

The Remnant

A **remnant** will survive ...

Not great numbers ... or with a lowly interior state (righteousness) ...

But those chosen by God to be a hope for the future ... out of which will come a new Israel.

The “**remnant theory**” declares not only that God is the source of life but also that God brings this life out of lowly origins and an attitude of faith.

Restoration will occur by God’s choosing ... with those that he chooses.`

Defeat of Babylon

“Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins” (40:1-2)

“... prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” (40:3)

“And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed ...” (40:5)

“Fear not ... my darling ... whom I have chosen.” (44:2)

“... who says of Jerusalem, ‘She shall be inhabited,’ and of the cities of Judah, ‘They shall be built, and I will raise up their ruins’... (44:26)

Cyrus “anointed” ... “he is my shepherd.” (44:28) ... “the Lord’s beloved.” (48:14)

(only occasion in the Hebrew Scripture when a foreigner is declared “the Lord’s messiah.”)

Coming Destruction ... Of Babylon

God says to Babylon:

“Come down and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon; sit on the ground without a throne, O daughter of the Chalde'ans!

Your nakedness shall be uncovered, and your shame shall be seen.

I will take vengeance, and I will spare no man.

Now therefore hear this, you lover of pleasures, who sit securely ...

‘I am, and there is no one besides me; I shall not sit as a widow or know the loss of children”:

These two things shall come to 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.

You felt secure in your wickedness ...

But evil shall come upon you ... disaster shall fall upon you ... and ruin shall come on you suddenly ...”

Cyrus

Then ...

King Cyrus of Persia defeats Babylonians ... issues a proclamation in 538 BCE, the first year of his reign, permitting the Jews to return from exile ...

“Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of HaShem by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, HaShem stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying:

‘Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia:

All the kingdoms of the earth hath HaShem, the G-d of heaven, given me; and **He hath charged me to build Him a house in Jerusalem**, which is in Judah.

Whosoever there is among you of all His people - his G-d be with him - let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of HaShem, the G-d of Israel, He is the G-d who is in Jerusalem.”
(Ezra 1:1-3)

Non Jewish Anointed

In fact ... this heathen king ... Cyrus of Persia ... is given the title anointed one in the book of the Prophet Isaiah ...

- “Thus saith HaShem to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him ...
... I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I am HaShem, who call thee by thy name, even the G-d of Israel. For the sake of Jacob My servant, and Israel Mine elect, I have called thee by thy name, I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known Me.” (Isaiah 45:1-4)

Cyrus defeated the Babylonians in the 6th century BCE ... ended the Babylonian captivity ... and permitted the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple.

A non-Jewish “messiah” who does not “Know” God!

The Message of Isaiah

Summary

Isaiah 43

God Alone

“Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior.

Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: For your sake I will send to Babylon and break down all the bars, and the shouting of the Chalde'ans will be turned to lamentations. I am the LORD, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King.”

- I am the only God ...
- I will save you ...
- Babylon will be forced to give you up ...

You Are My Children

“... Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.

For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

... you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you ...”

“Fear not, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you ...

... bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth

... whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”

- You are special ...
- I am your Saviour ...
- I love you ...
- I made you ...
- I will gather you together ...

Redeemer To All Nations

“Bring forth the people who are blind, yet have eyes, who are deaf, yet have ears!

Let all the nations gather together, and let the peoples assemble.

You are my witnesses, says the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am He.”

- Gather all the nations and peoples together ...
- You are to be my witnesses.

The world is to be saved through Israel.

Closing

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the LORD.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and return not thither but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

For you shall go out in joy, and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.”

Punishment

“... you did not call upon me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of me, O Israel!

You have not brought me your sheep for burnt offerings, or honored me with your sacrifices

But you have burdened me with your sins, you have wearied me with your iniquities.

I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.

Your first father sinned, and ... transgressed against me.

Therefore I profaned the princes of the sanctuary, I delivered Jacob to utter destruction and Israel to reviling.

- You, Israel, grew tired of me ...
- You offered me no sacrifices ...
- You have sinned against me ...
- The Temple and Jerusalem have been destroyed ...

Isaiah

&

The Suffering Servant

Suffering Servant #1

“Behold My servant, whom I uphold; Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth; I have put My spirit upon him, he shall make the right to go forth to the nations.

He shall not cry, nor lift up, **nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.**

A bruised reed shall he not break, and the dimly burning wick shall he not quench; he shall make the right to go forth according to the truth.

He shall not fail nor be crushed, **till he have set the right in the earth;** and the isles shall wait for his teaching.

Thus saith G-d HaShem, He that created the heavens, and stretched them forth, He that spread forth the earth and that which cometh out of it, He that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein:

I HaShem have called thee in righteousness, and have taken hold of thy hand, and kept thee, and set thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the nations ... (42:1-6)

Suffering Servant #2

“Listen, O isles, unto me, and hearken, ye peoples, from far: HaShem hath called me from the womb, from the bowels of my mother hath He made mention of my name;

And He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of His hand hath He hid me; and He hath made me a polished shaft, in His quiver hath He concealed me;

And He said unto me: ‘**Thou art My servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.**’

But I said: ‘I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and vanity; yet surely my right is with HaShem, and my recompense with my G-d.’

And now saith HaShem that formed me from the womb to be His servant, to bring Jacob back to Him, and that Israel be gathered unto Him - for I am honourable in the eyes of HaShem, and my G-d is become my strength -

Yea, He saith: ‘It is too light a thing that thou shouldest be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the offspring of Israel; I will also give thee for a light of the nations, that **My salvation may be unto the end of the earth.**’” (49:1-6)

Suffering Servant #3

“The L-rd GOD hath given me the tongue of them that are taught, that I should know how to sustain with words him that is weary; He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as they that are taught.

The L-rd GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away backward.

I gave my back to the smiters, and my checks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting.

For the L-rd GOD will help me; therefore have I not been confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.

He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand up together; who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. Behold, the L-rd GOD will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? Behold, they all shall wax old as a garment, the moth shall eat them up.” (50:4-9)

Suffering Servant #4

“For he shot up right forth as a sapling, and as a root out of a dry ground; he had no form nor comeliness, that we should look upon him, nor beauty that we should delight in him.

He was despised, and forsaken of men, a man of pains, and acquainted with disease, and as one from whom men hide their face: he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely our diseases he did bear, and our pains he carried; whereas we did esteem him stricken, smitten of G-d, and afflicted.

But he was wounded because of our transgressions, he was crushed because of our iniquities: the chastisement of our welfare was upon him, and with his stripes we were healed.

All we like sheep did go astray, we turned every one to his own way; and HaShem hath made to light on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed, though he humbled himself and opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb; yea, he opened not his mouth.” (53:2-7)

Suffering Servant #4

“By oppression and judgment he was taken away, and with his generation who did reason? for he was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due. And they made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich his tomb; although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased HaShem to crush him by disease; to see if his soul would offer itself in restitution, that he might see his seed, prolong his days, and that the purpose of HaShem might prosper by his hand: Of the travail of his soul he shall see to the full, even My servant, who by his knowledge did justify the Righteous One to the many, and their iniquities he did bear. Therefore will I divide him a portion among the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the mighty; because he bared his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” (53:8-12)

The Suffering Servant

Interpretation

The Suffering Servant

“Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch ... He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah.

So Philip ran up to it and heard him **reading the prophet Isaiah**. He asked, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ He replied, ‘How can I, unless someone guides me?’

Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

‘Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth.

In his humiliation justice was denied him.

Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.’

The eunuch asked Philip, ‘About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?’

Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. (Acts 8:26-34)

“... as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb; yea, he opened not his mouth.” **By oppression and judgment he was taken away, and with his generation who did reason? for he was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due.”** (JPS1917 Isaiah 53:7-8)

The Suffering Servant

“Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth.

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(NRSV Acts 8:32-33)

“... as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb; yea, he opened not his mouth.”

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for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due.”

(JPS1917 Isaiah 53:7-8)

The Suffering Servant

“For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps. ‘He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.’

When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls. (1 Peter 2:21-25)

“... with his stripes we were healed. (JPS1917 Isaiah 53:5)

“All we like sheep did go astray ...” (JPS1917 Isaiah 53:6)

“... he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.” (JPS 1917 Isaiah 53:9)

The Suffering Servant

Jewish perspective:

The Jewish people are the suffering servant ...

The Jewish people have suffered through the gentile nations. Yet in spite of all the troubles that befell the Jewish people throughout their history, there always existed a **righteous remnant** that stayed loyal to God.

The messiah ... to the world ... is “corporate Israel.”

- “Restored” ... messianic ... Israel ...
- “Light” ... “first fruits” to the world.

Israel is the suffering servant of the Lord.

- “In Israel’s agony, all nations are involved. Israel’s suffering is not a penalty, but a privilege, a sacrifice; its endurance is a ritual, its meaning is to be disclosed to all men in the hour of Israel’s redemption.” (Abraham Heschel)

What/ Who is the Servant?

This portion of the Book of Isaiah ... *The Suffering Servant* ... is probably written during the early Babylonian captivity.

- Daniel
- Jeremiah

... it is meant to provide hope in the aftermath of a unique trauma.

To what exactly is the text referring ??

- A “restored” Kingdom of Israel.
- The faithful “remnant” of the Jewish people that will ... historically ... always remain faithful to HaShem ... covenant.
- Jesus
- Ecclesia ... assembly of believers ...
- ... ???

Zechariah

“I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; and they shall look unto Me because they have thrust him through; and they shall mourn for him, as one **mourneth for his only son**, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is **in bitterness for his first-born.**”
(Zechariah 12:10)

To Christians ... Jesus

To Jews ... Israel

The Book of Isaiah

Back in Palestine (chapter 56-66)

- From threat of Divine punishment (chaps 1-39), to the promise of return and redemption (chaps 40-55).
- The Temple is now being rebuilt, exiles are returning to Jerusalem.
 - Temple worship is being reintroduced.
 - Idolatry is no longer ridiculed but bitterly condemned.

A call for spiritual and liturgical renewal.

For All

“Neither let the alien, that hath joined himself to HaShem, speak, saying: ‘The HaShem will surely separate me from His people’; neither let the eunuch say: ‘Behold, I am a dry tree.’ For thus saith HaShem concerning the eunuchs that keep My sabbaths, and choose the things that please Me, and hold fast by My covenant:

Even unto them will I give in My house and within My walls a monument and a memorial **better than sons and daughters**; I will give them an everlasting memorial, that shall not be cut off. Also the aliens, that join themselves to HaShem, to minister unto Him, and to love the name of HaShem, to be His servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from profaning it, and holdeth fast by My covenant:

Even them will I bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer; their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be acceptable upon Mine altar; for **My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples**. Saith the L-rd **GOD who gathereth the dispersed of Israel: yet I will gather others to him**, beside those of him that are gathered.” (56:3-8)

Salvation for all the peoples ...

Call for Reform

Fasting:

“Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high. Is such the fast that I choose, a day for a man to humble himself? Is it to bow down his head like a rush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, and a day acceptable to the LORD?”

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

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 him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?](#)

Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

Then you shall call, and [the LORD will answer](#); you shall cry, and [he will say, Here I am.](#)

Call for Reform

If you take away from the midst of you the yoke, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday.

And the LORD will guide you continually ...” (58:4-11)

- Fasting enables a comfortable person to share the lot of the hungry poor ... and from this to look to God as the source of life and nourishment.
- To fast and yet neglect the poor perverts religion.

Nothing comes closer to eternal damnation than the silence of God.

Final Promise

If you do well:

“The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you by night; but the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory.

Your sun shall no more go down, nor your moon withdraw itself; for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended.

Your people shall all be righteous; they shall possess the land for ever, the shoot of my planting, the work of my hands, that I might be glorified.

The least one shall become a clan, and the smallest one a mighty nation; I am the LORD; in its time I will hasten it.” (60:19-22)

Final Promise

“Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool; what is the house which you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest?"

All these things my hand has made, and so all these things are mine, says the LORD. But this is the man to whom I will look, **he that is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.**”

(66:1-2)

Book of Isaiah

Chapters 1-39 (minus) Book of Oracles	Chapters 40 – 55 Book of Comfort	Chapters 56 – 66 Post – Exile	Chapters 25 – 27 Apocalyptic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God accuses his “senseless” people. • Worship & justice • Leadership failure ... vineyard will be destroyed • Ahaz ... Hezekiah ... future hope • Against foreign connections • God ... salvation ... Jerusalem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fulfillment in a New Exodus • Release from Babylon foretold • Sorrow to redemption • Israel’s salvation proclaimed • God as creator ... and “recreator” • God ... first and last 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Struggle for new Temple ... new Leadership • The new Israel • All nations welcome in new Jerusalem • A new heaven ... and a new earth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God is king • The coming banquet • Deliverance

Isaiah's Ideal

The Messianic ruler will:

- Be from the stock of Jesse ... the House of David.
- Have the Spirit of God rest on him ... wisdom ... valor ... fear of the Lord.
- Be righteous and faithful ... will establish justice ...
- Will not engage in war ...
- Will be a guide to all nations to know the Lord God.

The people will not aspire to political greatness but lead a pastoral life ...

Wonderful Counselor ... Godlike Hero ... Constant Father ...

Prince of Peace

Post Babylonian Exile

538 BCE

hope ... reality and disappointment

Post Exile

- When the first contingent of Exiles returned to Judah in 538 BCE, they were led by two Jewish princes who bore Babylonian names: Sheshbazzar and his nephew and successor Zerubbabel.
 - Both are referred to as “governors.”
 - Work on the Temple begins.
 - Efforts were slow and disappointing.
 - High-priest ... Joshua ben Jehozadak.

“In that day, saith HaShem of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, My servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith HaShem, and will make thee as a signet; for I have chosen thee, saith HaShem of hosts.’
(Haggai 2:23)

The prophets Haggai and Zechariah (~ 520 BCE) see in Zerubbabel a prince of Davidic lineage ... the promised “sprout of David.”

The hope for a king ... in the line of David

Post Exile

The prophet Zechariah ...

“... take silver and gold, and make crowns, and set the one upon the head of **Joshua the son of Jehozadak**, the high priest; and speak unto him, saying:

Thus speaketh HaShem of hosts, saying: Behold, **a man whose name is the Shoot**, and who shall shoot up out of his place, and **build the temple of HaShem**; even he shall build the temple of HaShem; and he shall bear the glory, and **shall sit and rule upon his throne; and there shall be a priest before his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.** (Zechariah 6:11-13)

A restoration ... a messianic kingdom ... with two messiahs ... one a king (Zerubbabel) ... and one a priest (Joshua).

Post Exile

Haggai and Zechariah see in Zerubbabel the promised “sprout of David.”

Haggai ... prophet to Zerubbabel

- Zerubbabel ... governor ... not king.
- 17 years since first Jews have returned from exile ... and still no temple

Zechariah ...

- Completion of the temple will usher in the age of the messiah.
(bottom up approach)

The Jewish “nation” no longer existed ... Persian province.

Third Isaiah, Malachi, and Joel have no personal messiah.

- God himself will redeem Israel and bring about the new age of salvation.

Post Exile

Ezra ... sent by Persian king (~ 428 BCE) to "... regulate Judaism and Jerusalem according to the law of your God." (7:14)

- ~ 110 years after Cyrus' proclamation releasing the Jews.

Reforms ... renewal of Covenant.

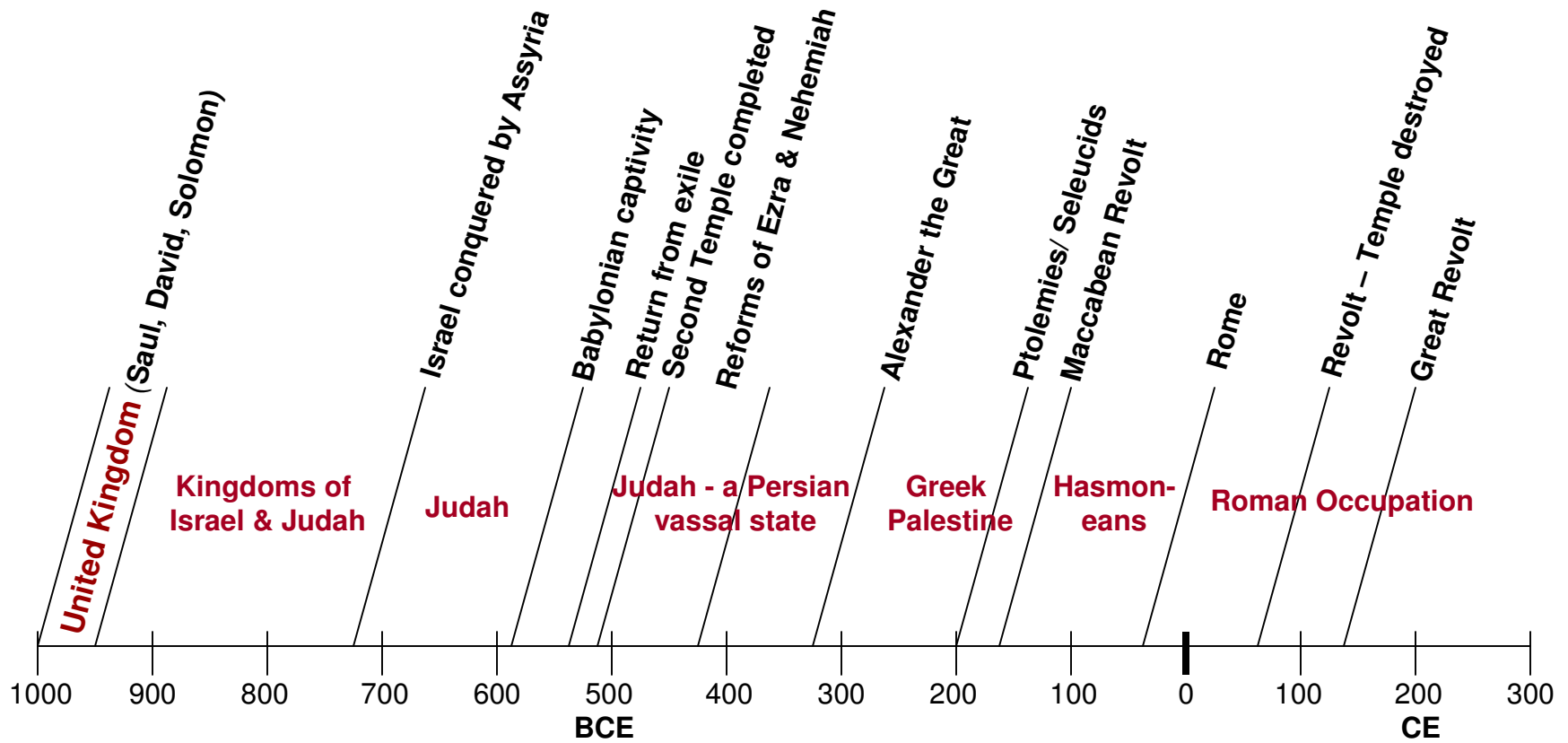
- End of mixed marriages ...
- No work on the Sabbath ...
- Temple tax ... first fruits to sacrifice ...

"Jewish tradition regards Ezra as having saved the Jewish people from extinction." (Rabbi Joseph Telushkin)

Talmud: "Ezra would have been worthy of receiving the Torah for Israel had not Moses preceded him."

(Spinoza ... 1632 - 1677 ... claimed that the TORAH was written down by Ezra in the 6th cent BCE.)

A History of "Israel"



Amos
Hosea
Isaiah
Micah
Hezekiah

Jeremiah
Haggai
Zechariah

Ezra
Malachi

Maccabees

Changing Expectations

The idea of a messianic kingdom was changing:

- From the earliest vision of ... a strong king from the line of David ... who would defeat all of Israel's enemies ... "restore" Israel ... and rule over an age where worship may be properly given to God ... in Jerusalem ... in the Temple (although there was no Temple at the time of David). A priesthood provided the opportunity for proper cultic exercise.



- To the post-exilic time ... a leader ... like David ... and a restored priesthood ... in Jerusalem ... at a rebuilt Temple ... ruling an ethical ... just and righteous people ... cooperatively ... ushering in a world of universal peace ... and the acknowledgement by all nations of the God of Israel. Israel is a guiding light ... the first fruits of a peaceful world.

Real ... or ideal ???

An apocalyptic entry of God ... to restore Israel (creation)?

Isaiah in Christian Scripture

A Fulfillment

Isaiah and Christian Origins

Isaiah is mentioned ... by name ... 21x in the Christian scripture ...

- Gospel of Matthew 6
- Gospel of Mark 1
- Gospel of Luke 2
- Gospel of John 4
- Acts of the Apostles 3
- Epistle to Romans 5

Jesus refers directly to Isaiah:

- 6:9 (Matthew 13:14 see also Mark 4:12) ... parables
- 29:13 (Matthew 15:7; Mark 7:60)

There are over 50 “allusions” ... direct and indirect ... in *Revelation* attributable to Isaiah.

From the Gospels

“That evening they brought to him many who were possessed by demons; and he cast out the spirits with a word, and cured all who were sick. This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah, ‘He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.’”
(Matt 8:16-17)

“Surely our diseases he did bear, and our pains he carried; whereas we did esteem him stricken, smitten of G-d, and afflicted. (Isaiah 53:4)

From the Gospels

“When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet **Isaiah** was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, **‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’**” (Luke 4:16-21)

“The spirit of the L-rd GOD is upon me; because HaShem hath anointed me to bring good tidings unto the humble; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the eyes to them that are bound; To proclaim the year of HaShem'S good pleasure ...” (Isaiah 61:1-2)

Parables and Understanding

“And He said: ‘Go, and tell this people: hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they, seeing with their eyes, and hearing with their ears, and understanding with their heart, return, and be healed.’ Then said I: ‘L-rd, how long?’ And He answered: ‘Until cities be waste without inhabitant, and houses without man, and the land become utterly waste ...’” (6:9-11)

“The reason I speak to them in parables is that ‘seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand.’ With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah that says ...” (Matthew 13:13-14)

From the Epistles

“And **Isaiah** cries out concerning Israel, ‘Though the number of the children of Israel were like the sand of the sea, **only a remnant of them will be saved**; for the Lord will execute his sentence on the earth quickly and decisively.’

And as **Isaiah** predicted,
‘If the Lord of hosts had not left survivors to us,
we would have fared like Sodom and been made like Gomorrah.’”
(Rom 9:27-29)

“For though thy people, O Israel, be as the sand of the sea, **only a remnant of them shall return**; an extermination is determined, overflowing with righteousness.” (Isaiah 10:22)

“Except HaShem of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, we should have been like unto Gomorrah.”
(Isaiah 1:9)

From the Epistles

“... and again Isaiah says,

‘The root of Jesse shall come, the one who rises to rule the Gentiles; in him the Gentiles shall hope.’” (Rom 15:12)

“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the root of Jesse, that standeth for an ensign of the peoples, unto him shall the nations seek; and his resting-place shall be glorious.” (Isaiah 1:10)

Isaiah and the Dead Sea Scrolls

Within the Dead Sea Scrolls ...

- There are two famous scrolls of Isaiah.
 - The most familiar ... Isaiah Scroll A ... consists of 17 strips of leather sown together ... over 24 ft long ... on display at the Shrine of the Book in Jerusalem.
 - Oldest complete biblical manuscript in existence.
- Fragments of 4 commentaries on Isaiah.
- Scrolls of community rules also quote from Isaiah.

Jewish Christian Disputations

“And it shall come to pass **in the end of days**, that the mountain of HaShem'S house shall be established as the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and **all nations shall flow unto it**.

And many peoples shall go and say: ‘Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of HaShem, to the house of the G-d of Jacob; and **He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths.**’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of HaShem from Jerusalem.

And He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide for many peoples; and ***they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.***” (Isaiah 2:2-4, see also Micah 4:1-3)

Moses Nachmanides and the Barcelona Debate (1263)

“Yet from the days of Jesus until now, the whole world has been full of violence and plundering, and the Christians are greater spillers of blood than all the rest ... and how hard it would be for you, my lord king, and for your knights if they were not to learn war any more.”

“Our Father”

“For Thou art **our Father**; for Abraham knoweth us not, and Israel doth not acknowledge us; Thou, O HaShem, art **our Father**, our Redeemer from everlasting is Thy name.” (63:16)

“But now, O HaShem, Thou art **our Father**; we are the clay, and Thou our potter, and we all are the work of Thy hand.” (64:7)

“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.” (63:16)

“Yet, O Lord, you are **our Father**; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.” (64:7)

The Kingdom

“For, behold, I create **new heavens and a new earth**; and **the former things shall not be remembered**, nor come into mind.

But be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create; for, behold, **I create Jerusalem** rejoicing, and her people a joy.

And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in **My people**; and **the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.**”

Isaiah 65:17-19

“Then I saw a **new heaven and a new earth**; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

And I saw the holy city, **the new Jerusalem**, coming down out of heaven from God ... And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be **his people**, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more; **mourning and crying and pain will be no more**, for **the first things have passed away.**’

Revelation 21:1-4