

The prophet Isaiah ben Amoz 740-700BC

Isaiah scroll 1-39

09. Isaiah 9-23



Isaiah 9:8-12 : Israel fails to learn I

From the experience of earthquake

The Lord sent a word against Jacob, and it fell on Israel;
and all the people knew it – Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria –
but in pride and arrogance of heart they said:
“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.”

From a military incursion from Syria and Philistia, perhaps on the death of Jeroboam II (748).

So YHWH raised adversaries against them,
and stirred up their enemies,
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.*

Isaiah 9:13-17 : Israel fails to learn II

The campaigns of Tiglath-pileser (738-732) – already described in 9:1.

The people did not turn to him who struck them,
or seek YHWH of hosts.

So YHWH cut off from Israel head and tail,

palm branch and reed in one day—

elders and dignitaries are the head,

and prophets who teach lies are the tail;

for those who led this people led them astray,

and those who were led by them were left in confusion.

That is why the Lord did not have pity on 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. [refrain from 9:12]

Isaiah 9:18-21 : Israel fails to learn III

From the siege of Samaria (724-721BC)

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.

Through the wrath of YHWH of hosts
the land was burned, and the people became like fuel for the fire;
no one spared another.

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;
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. [refrain from 9:12 and 9:17]

Isaiah 10:1-4 : Israel fails to learn IV

Fail to learn justice

Ah, you who make iniquitous decrees,
who write oppressive statutes,
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!

What will you do on the day of punishment,
in the calamity [shoah] that will come from far away?

To whom will you flee for help,
and where will you leave your wealth,
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. [refrain from 9:12 and 9:17 and 9:21]

Isaiah 10:5-14 : Assyria is God's instrument in punishing Israel

Ah, Assyria, the rod of my anger — the club in their hands is my fury!
Against a godless nation [Israel] 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.
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.
For he says: “Are not my commanders all kings? ...
As my hand has reached to the kingdoms of the idols
whose images were greater than those of Jerusalem and Samaria,
shall I not do to Jerusalem and her idols
what I have done to Samaria and her images?” [added after 721]

Isaiah 10:15-19 : Reflections on Assyria's pride

Shall the axe vaunt itself over the one who wields it,
or the saw magnify itself against the one who handles it?
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!
Therefore the Sovereign, YHWH of hosts,
will send wasting sickness among his stout warriors,
and under his glory a burning will be kindled, like the burning of fire.
The light of Israel will become a fire, and his Holy One a flame;
and it will burn and devour his thorns and briers in one day.
The glory of his forest and his fruitful land
YHWH will destroy, root and branch,
and it will be as when an invalid wastes away.
The remnant of the trees of his forest will be so few
that a child can count and record them.

Isaiah 10:20-27a : Later editorial comments

1. 10:20-23 - There will always be some in Israel-Judah who will 'lean on YHWH in truth'(10:20). 'A remnant will return'(10:22)

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 YHWH, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.

A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God. 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. For the Lord YHWH of hosts will make a full end, as decreed, in all the earth.

Isaiah 10:27-34 : Assyria's advance

Isaiah 11:1-3a

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

The spirit of YHWH shall rest on him,
the spirit of wisdom and understanding [kingly gifts]
the spirit of counsel and might,
the spirit of knowledge and the fear of YHWH.

[His delight will be in the fear of YHWH.] a gloss

- Wisdom - openness to receive revelation
- Understanding - insight into the implications of revelation
- Counsel - ability to make good decisions
- Might - capacity to carry out decisions once made
- Knowledge - knowing God's will
- Fear of YHWH - awe + fear of sin

LXX adds: **Piety** - trusting in God as Father

His delight shall be in the fear of YHWH.

The gift of **Fear of** ('from') **YHWH** is the grace to be conscious of the presence of the Lord at the heart of and beyond everything. This sense of the sacred stops us taking God for granted and awakens in us a profound sense of awe, wonder and respect for God and for all that God holds in existence.

'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'(Proverbs 9:10).

'The fear of the Lord is the fountain of life'(Proverbs 14:27).

'Happy are those who fear the Lord,
who greatly delight in his commandments'(Psalm 112:1).

'Let those who fear the Lord say:
His steadfast love endures forever'(Psalm 118:2)

'The Lord looks on those who fear him ,
on those who hope in his love'(Psalm 33:18).

'Do not be afraid. God has come only to test you and to put
Fear of the Lord upon you so that you do not sin'(Exodus 20:20).

'The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil'(Proverbs 8:13).

Isaiah 11:3-5

He will not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide by what his ears hear;
but with righteousness he will judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
he will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he will kill the wicked.
Righteousness will be the belt around his waist,
and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

Psalm 72

Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king's son.
May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice...
May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor.
For he delivers the needy when they call,
the poor and those who have no helper.

Isaiah 11:6-9

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.

The cow and the bear shall graze,
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

The infant shall play over the hole of the cobra,
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.

They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain;
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of YHWH
as the waters cover the sea.

The coexistence of powerful predatory animals with animals that are their natural prey, and the safety of a child with a venomous serpent, are images for the kind of peace that is possible in this world if only people had 'knowledge of YHWH'.

Isaiah 12: Conclusion to Isaiah 1-11

This is a post-exilic invitation to celebrate the fact that the judgments announced by Isaiah are now in the past. The authors cite and allude to texts sung in the temple to encourage their contemporaries to thank and praise God for the opportunity given them to be what they are called to be: the people of the Holy One of Israel.

Isaiah 12:1-3 : Psalm 1

You will say in that day: I will give thanks to you, YHWH,
for though you were angry with me,
your anger turned away, and you comforted me.

Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid,
for YHWH is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation.

Comfort' (nāham) is echoed in the opening words of Isaiah 40

‘Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God’ (Isaiah 40:1).

Isaiah 12:3

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

This outburst of joy may come from the liturgy of the *śimḥat bēt ha-šō'evâ* ('rejoicing of the place of drawing water') from the festival Sukkot (see the Mishna Sukkah 4:9 - 5:1).

This is the context in which, in the New Testament, Jesus proclaims:

'On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out: Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water"'. '(John 7:37-39).

Isaiah 12:4-6 : Psalm 2

‘You will say in that day:

Give thanks to YHWH, call on his name;
make known his deeds among the nations;
proclaim that his name is exalted.

Sing praises to YHWH, for he has done gloriously;
let this be known in all the earth.

Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

The expression ‘The Holy One of Israel’ has been a theme throughout this first part of the Isaiah scroll (see Isaiah 1:4; 5:19, 24; 6:3; 10:20).

Isaiah 13-27

Isaiah's oracles were directed to his contemporaries at the time of Assyrian expansion. To understand the texts in this section we need to keep in mind the freedom that later editors felt to see in Isaiah's oracles models for grasping YHWH's intention in regard to later empires, especially the Babylonian. Sometimes they reshaped Isaiah's words in order to express what they understood YHWH was wanting to say to them and their contemporaries in their changed circumstances. At times they created new prophecies out of old ones, always with the aim of discovering and giving expression to God's presence and action in their world as they found it in the inspired words of the great prophet.

I. Isaiah 13:1 – 14:27 : The Fall of Babylon



2. Isaiah 14:28-31 : Fall of Philistia



3. Isaiah 15:1 – 16:14 : Fall of Moab



4. Isaiah 17:1-3 : Fall of Syria



Isaiah 17:12-14 : Judah's enemies will not prevail

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!

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 before the wind
and whirling dust before the storm.

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.

Isaiah 18:1 – 19:25 : Against Egypt



Isaiah 19:24-25

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

Greek [LXX: Septuagint] concludes with:

‘Blessed be my people who are in Egypt,
and who are in Assyria, and Israel my heritage.’

Aramaic Targum

‘Blessed be my people whom I brought out of Egypt. Because they sinned before me I carried them into exile to Assyria, but now that they have repented, they shall be called My People, and My Inheritance, even Israel.’

Isaiah 20:1-6 : Against the forming of an anti-Assyrian alliance

In 705 Hezekiah played a leading role in getting together an anti-Assyrian alliance. Assyria attacked and defeated Egypt and in the process devastated Judah.

Isaiah 21:1-10 : The Fall of Babylon

Isaiah 21:11-17 : Oracles about the Peoples of Arabia

Isaiah 22:1-14 : Lament over Jerusalem

Isaiah 22:4-8

Look away from me, let me weep bitter tears;
do not try to comfort me
for the destruction of my beloved people.
For the Lord YHWH 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.
Elam bore the quiver with chariots and cavalry,
and Kir uncovered the shield.
Your choicest valleys were full of chariots,
and the cavalry took their stand at the gates.
He has taken away the covering of Judah

Isaiah 22:12-13

In that day the Lord YHWH of hosts called to weeping and mourning,
to baldness and putting on sackcloth;
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.”

Isaiah 22:15-25 : During the siege of Jerusalem 701BC

Isaiah 23:1-18 : Joy at the humiliation of Tyre and Sidon





Create in us a clean heart,
O God.