

Isaiah 10:5-32

Introduction

The last section (9:8-10:4) corresponded to the “woe” and “therefore” sections of 5:7-30. The remainder of ch. 10 corresponds to the warnings of foreign oppression in that chapter. It falls into two parts.

- 5-14 describe the Assyrian's attack against the people of God, but from two different perspectives. The prophet alternates between God's view (that the Assyrian is his tool to chastise his people) and Assyria's (that Israel is just another country that it will subdue by its superior military power).
- The balance of the chapter can be viewed as the final member of this alternation, greatly amplified. Chapter 5 threatened only that foreign powers would decimate Israel. Assyria's arrogance means that she, too, will fall under judgment. 15-32 anticipates the subsequent humbling of Assyria and the restoration of Israel and Judah. It thus provides a glimmer of hope. Though the Lord is going to tear up his vineyard, he will not leave it forever desolate, but will one day restore it to its intended glory.

5-14, A Difference in Perspective

We have an ABAB alternation between God's perspective on Assyria's conquest, and the Assyrian's own arrogant attitude.

5-6, *God's Perspective*

10:5 O Assyrian,--“O” is הוי, translated “woe” in 10:1 and in ch. 5. “Woe to the Assyrian.” While this section begins outlining Assyria's role in judging Israel, already at the outset the Lord anticipates the judgment that will finally befall him.

the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation.--God claims ownership and authority over Assyria's might. Assyria is a rod, and will beat Israel with a staff, but it is God's anger and God's indignation that drives the chastisement.

The general principle is that the kingdoms of this world are answerable to God in all that they do. Man's dominion over the earth is not absolute, but a trust from God, for which he must give account.

6 I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.--In Assyria's case, her God-given task was to chastise Israel. Note three steps in the judgment:

1. The nation's wickedness (“an hypocritical nation,” “the people of my wrath”) invites the coming disaster. As we have seen many times, and particularly in the previous section, the nation is ripe for judgment.

2. "I will send him," "I will give him a charge." Because of Israel's sin, the Lord sends Assyria against them. Assyria does not come on its own initiative or mission. She is under God's direction.
3. The action that God intends is that Assyria should defeat the land, "to take spoil," "to take the prey," "to tread them down."

7-11, Assyria's Perspective

7 Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so;--This understanding of Assyria's mission is completely foreign to the kings of Nineveh. They have no concept that they are under God's control. They are not motivated by any sense of obligation or submission to him, and they are not grateful to him for enriching them at the expense of his people. Just so, the nations of the world today are ignorant of their obligations to their creator.

In this case, while God intends Assyria to punish Israel, they do not see themselves as focused on Israel.

but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few.--In their mind, Israel is just another nation to conquer. They intend to subdue many nations, one of which just happens to be Israel.

The Assyrian's proud confidence is based in his assessment of three things: his strength of his own forces, the weakness of his adversaries, and the impotence of the gods of all the other lands.

8 For he saith, Are not my princes altogether kings?--First, he boasts of the prowess of his commanders. As we saw in our discussion of 9:6, a "prince" is an advisor to a king, a cabinet officer or subordinate general. The Assyrian king views his commanders as the equivalent of kings of other nations.

9 Is not Calno as Carchemish? is not Hamath as Arpad? is not Samaria as Damascus?--Second, he views the cities that he is conquering as comparable to one another in strength. The names proceed from north to south, down the Levant, tracing the line of his conquest. Carchemish is on the upper Euphrates, far to the north. If that cannot stand, neither can Calno, a few days march to the south-west. It would fall, and so would nearby Arpad. The next is Hamath, a hundred miles to the south. Two more steps of 100 miles bring one to Damascus, and then to Samaria, which will fall like the others. With each conquest, his confidence grows that no one has fortifications or militias that can withstand his might.

10 As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols,--Now he scorns the gods of the nations that he has conquered. They have been unable to shield their nations from his conquering hand.

and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria;--And what gods they were. He is impressed with the sophistication of their idols, and has heard how meager the idols of Jerusalem and Samaria are by comparison. How can these weak Canaanite gods defend their cities, when far more impressive idols have failed?

Does he know that Jerusalem's official cult in fact eschews idols altogether? Or has he heard of the cherubim on the ark of the covenant, and think that these are Israel's gods? Or does he have in mind the images of Baal that the Israelites, in violation of their own law, had set up on the high places? In any

case, he is as scornful of their spiritual defenses as he is of their physical ones.

11 Shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols?--So far is he from acknowledging that he is under the control of the God of Jerusalem, that he views his conquest as proving his superiority to that God.

The Assyrian, functioning as God's agent, unconsciously speaks better than he knows (compare Caiaphas in John 11:51). Israel's idols are indeed puny and impotent; it is because they have turned to them that they are now vulnerable to invasion.

12, God's Perspective

In this verse, we are back to God's perspective again.

The grammatical relation of the two main clauses in this verse is obscure. Almost all commentators and translators render as the AV, in which the first clause is subordinate to the second. But in this case (see the Note below), we expect the Hebrew conjunction *waw* to introduce the main clause, and that is lacking here. In other cases where the conjunction is lacking, the two phrases are parallel. So we should read here, "The Lord will perform his whole work in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem. I will punish ..."

This understanding (due to J.A. Alexander of the old Princeton Seminary) clarifies two dilemmas.

1. The mismatch between the third person and first person references to the Lord in the AV is awkward: "When the Lord hath performed ... then I will punish." But if the two expressions are parallel, we can understand the first as uttered by Isaiah, and the second by the Lord.
2. If the two verbs are sequential, the first clause ("when the Lord has ...") must occur before the punishment of the King of Assyria. Assyria did lay siege to Jerusalem, but that was not the end of the Lord's work with the holy city. Even after Assyria had vanished as a kingdom, Jerusalem had yet to endure the subsequent Babylonian humiliation, something that falls within Isaiah's prophetic vision. But if the verbs are parallel, another understanding is possible, outlined below.

12 Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath [shall] performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem,--The verb "perform" can have the special sense "cut off," and in this sense might be understood of Assyria's work. Hearing Assyria's proud boasting, Isaiah exclaims, "Surely the Lord will cut off Assyria's work in Jerusalem and Mount Zion." That was exactly what happened, as we will see when we get to the history of Hezekiah. Rabshakeh threatened the city, but the Lord smote the army with a plague. God cut off Assyria's work, and he did it at Jerusalem.

I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.--

Now the Lord responds to Isaiah's observation, "Indeed, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the King of Assyria."

We saw the "stout heart" before at 9:9, where it belonged to Ephraim. First God chastises his people, but then goes on to deal with the heathen.

1 Pet 4:17-18 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? 18 And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

Assyria's arrogance will not be allowed to stand.

13-14, Assyria's Perspective

Once more, the prophet turns our attention to the display of that arrogance. He imagines the Assyrian boasting first of his ability, then of his accomplishments.

13 For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent:--Here he boasts of his ability: his strength, his wisdom, his prudence in battle.

and I have removed the bounds of the people,--He disregards the boundaries of the nations, rearranging them at his will.

and have robbed their treasures,--He takes all their silver and gold for his own possession.

and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man:--Not only the territory and the riches, but the very people are forced to be subject to him.

14 And my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped.--Among people who survive by hunting and gathering, collecting the eggs of nesting birds is one of the easiest ways to gather food. Even children can do it. The king of Assyria compares his conquests to such an egg-hunting expedition.

Ordinarily, a nest robber must contend with an angry mother bird. But the Assyrian is so powerful that no one even posed such opposition. The nest is "left," abandoned. No one flaps her wings at him, or chirps angrily, as a mother bird would to an egg-robber reaching into the nest. We would say today, "It's like taking candy from a baby."

15-32, God Wins

When there is this sort of difference of perspective, God always wins. The last 18 verses summarize what will happen to the human players in this drama: first Assyria, then the northern kingdom, and finally Judah.

- Assyria will be destroyed.
- After her chastisement, Israel will be restored.
- Judah will be spared the full wrath of Assyria.

15-19, Judgment to Assyria

15 Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood.--The Lord compares the Assyrian with four passive implements: an axe, a saw, a rod, and a staff. Each of these is controlled by someone active. The axe cuts nothing without the hewer. The saw will not cut unless someone moves it back and forth. The rod must have someone to lift it; the staff, a mere stick of wood, is under the control of someone

who is not wood. The Assyrian's arrogance is as inappropriate as it would be for any of these implements to rise up against its owner and pretend to be in control.

16 Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts,--The title emphasizes that it is the Lord who commands armies, including that of the king of Assyria. The first title is literally "the sovereign," and emphasizes that this one, and not Assyria, is in command. It appears five times in Isa and once more in Mal 3:1.

send among his fat ones leanness;--Assyria has grown strong at the expense of others. Now he will be made lean. The word "fat ones" is parallel in Ps 78:31 to "chosen ones":

The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel.

It probably refers to muscular strength rather than obesity. His muscular warriors will become emaciated skeletons.

and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire.--"Glory" is often used to describe the glorious wealth that people amass. The Lord will burn it up.

Thus the Lord promises to destroy both the means by which Assyria controls the world, and the wealth that it has amassed by that means.

17 And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame:--Recall 9:18-19, where Israel's wickedness consumed the people. Now something else consumes her adversaries.

Both "the light of Israel" and "his Holy One" describe the Lord.

Consider the second title first. The phrase "the Holy One of Israel" (once "of Jacob") is overwhelmingly Isaiah's. Of 32 instances in the OT, 26 are his (including 2 Kings 19:23), two are in Jeremiah a hundred and fifty years later, and only three are earlier, all in the Psalms: 71 (attributed by the LXX to David), 78 (Asaph, David's seer), and 89 (Ethan, also of David's era; this Psalm in particular is distinctly messianic). Thus Isaiah once again picks up an expression that is peculiar to the David dynasty and amplifies it. It reflects his personal experience (ch. 6) of the one whom the seraphim proclaim to be "Holy, Holy, Holy."

The title is paradoxical. The Lord is "the holy one," set apart and separate. Yet only once (Hab 3:3) is he called simply "the holy one." He is "the holy one of Israel," "the holy one of Jacob," "his holy one," "my holy one," "your holy one." He is particularly associated with Israel. In this position, he is a destroying flame to those who would oppose them.

"The light of Israel" must also refer to the Lord. Indeed, the OT frequently describes the Lord as Israel's light:

Isa 60:19 The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but **the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light**, and thy God thy glory.

Psa 27:1 A Psalm of David. **The LORD is my light** and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

Psa 84:11 For **the LORD God is a sun** and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

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This title recalls the imagery of 8:20-9:2. Those who forsake the law of God walk in darkness. But he promises to send them light, in the person of the child whose name is Miracle. This one will not only illumine his people, but also burn up their adversaries.

Note in particular how qualities that are so precious to God's people pose a threat to their adversaries.

- He is their holy one, but that holiness makes him alien and threatening to unbelievers.
- He is their light, but that light burns up those who reject it.

Recall our study of 8:14, quoted in 1 Pet 2:7-8. One cannot be neutral toward the Lord. He will either bring blessing or judgment. There is no middle ground.

and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briars in one day;--Isaiah recalls the imagery of 9:18, where Ephraim's own wickedness is pictured as devouring the people the way a forest fire rages through the underbrush. Now the Lord becomes the fire that consumes Ephraim's enemy.

In 9:18, the conflagration extended beyond the roadside briars to the thick forest. Now Isaiah turns his attention to Assyria's forest, and more.

18 And shall consume—Better, “He shall consume.” The subject changes from the fire to the Lord whom the fire represents.

the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field,--In 9:14, we learned about the figure of speech called a “merism,” in which two extremes are used to refer to everything that they encompass. Here is another instance of this figure. The inferno destroys both the wild land (the thick forest) and the cultivated field, and thus every sort of land.

both soul and body:--Another merism, and perhaps a step away from the metaphor and toward the literal truth. Forests and fields don't have souls and bodies, but people do. “Soul” here means “life.” God will not only slay them, but also destroy their flesh.

and they shall be as when a standardbearer fainteth.--The word rendered “standardbearer” appears only here, and is of uncertain meaning. This is one possible translation, the idea being that when the army's flag falls, the army flees.

19 And the rest of the trees of his forest shall be few, that a child may write them.--Now we are back to the forest metaphor. So few trees remain that even a child could count them.

20-23, Restoration to Israel

Now we turn from Assyria to the northern kingdom, known as Israel.

20 And it shall come to pass in that day,--We first met the phrase “in that day” in 2:11, in reference to the eschatological Day of the Lord. Sometimes the phrase appears to refer more immediately to some point in the past, as in the four instances in 7:18-23, and here also it appears to focus on a historical event, the return of the captives under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. But there may be a more remote reference as well, to the coming restoration of Israel when “they look on him whom they have pierced.”

that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob,--The language “remnant”

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and “escaped” implies that the nation has undergone a severe catastrophe from which only a few remain. Compare the use of the term in v. 22. This emphasis, and the language “Israel,” focuses our attention on the northern kingdom, which Assyria took into captivity. Though Assyria invaded the southern kingdom, Jerusalem emerged relatively unscathed, and one could hardly speak of it as a “remnant” or “escaped,” terms that would become appropriate only after the Babylonian invasions a hundred years later.

shall no more again stay upon him that smote them;--The majority of commentators understand this to be an allusion to Ahaz and his policy of calling on Assyria for help, as we discussed in ch. 7. But this interpretation has two flaws. First, it ignores the distinction between Israel in vv. 20-23 and Judah in 24-32. Second, it is imprecise. Assyria never smote Ahaz. It was only under Hezekiah that Assyria afflicted the southern kingdom.

As we observed in discussing the alternating verb tenses in 9:8-12, Assyria took many of Israel captive in the reign of Pekah, leading to a coup by Hoshea, who adopted a policy of submitting to Assyrian rule. He chose to “stay [lean] upon him who smote them.”

Of course, more broadly, Ahaz's policy is subject to the same criticism, as is much human policy to follow. In their effort to avoid facing their sin at any cost, unbelievers would much rather place their trust in things that ultimately will destroy them.

but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.--They will truly trust in the Lord. Every Israelite would claim to trust in the Lord. Those of Judah were particularly guilty of a hypocritical trust in the Lord. Recall our discussion of Ahaz's claim in 7:12, when offered a sign,

I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD.

We saw that this is tantamount to a claim to be trusting in the Lord. Similarly, Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah, says of the leaders of Jerusalem (3:11),

The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: **yet will they lean upon the LORD**, and say, Is not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us.

What Judah was doing hypocritically, the remnant of Israel will one day do “in truth.”

21 The remnant shall return,--In Hebrew, this clause is “Shear-Yashub,” the name of Isaiah's son from 7:3.

even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God.--“The mighty God” is one of titles of the Child whose name is Miracle in 9:6.

22 For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea,--See the Notes for a full survey of this expression in the Bible.

This condition has its origin in God's promise to Abraham in Gen 22:16-17,

16 By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: 17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

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It is a common idiom for an overwhelming army, and is often applied to pagan forces, including the kings of the north who faced Joshua (Josh 11:4), the Midianites and Amalekites against Gideon (Judg 7:12), the Philistines against Saul (1 Sam 13:5), and the great final army that Satan gathers against the Lamb (Rev 20:7-8).

The inspired narrator views the promise as fulfilled under Solomon,

1 Kings 4:20, Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude,

And the NT book of Hebrews also views the promise as accomplished in the OT period:

11:12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

Isaiah's contemporaries were clinging to this promise as evidence that God could not possibly allow them to be destroyed by Assyria. "The Lord promised that we would be as the sand of the sea. Now we are. This is a divinely-ordained state, and nobody can take it away from us." This is an example of a perversion of piety in which people argue that God can't possibly mean what he says because of some previous promise that he has made. In Isaiah's day their hope was founded on the promise to Abraham. In Jeremiah's day (7:4), it was founded on the temple, and the promises that God had made to Solomon at its inauguration. In our foolish pride, we think that we can play lawyer with God's words and force him into a corner. "You can't send us into captivity, because you promised to multiply us, not diminish us."

They overlook two important points.

First, God's promise to Abraham was that "thy seed" would be thus multiplied. Paul emphasizes that the promises to Abraham's seed are focused on those who are his spiritual children, and not only his physical descendants:

Rom 9:8, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

Second, when the pagans were "as the sand of the sea," God allowed them to be overtaken by Israel. So now, the promise to Abraham is no guarantee that Israel will withstand the Assyrian.

This passage is a warning against the sin of presumption. 1 Cor 10:1-12 is the classic exposition of this warning, leading to the summary in v.12,

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

We must not bear God's blessings casually. They should lead us every day to thankfulness and a sense of our increased dependence on him.

One day, by God's grace, "all Israel shall be saved" (Rom 11:26), and the people will be invincibly innumerable. Hosea, a contemporary of Isaiah, sees the ultimate promise as still future,

1:9 Then said God, Call his name Loammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God. 10 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.

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Jeremiah, a hundred and twenty years later, also sees it as still future,

33:22 As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured: so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me.

But in the meantime, God can decimate them as he pleases, and Isaiah reveals that such a judgment is indeed his pleasure at this moment:

yet a remnant of them shall return:--The deliverance to which Israel looks forward is of only a minority. "Of them" is literally, "in them," as we might say, "one in ten." The emphasis is on how few come back, and thus how many are destroyed. This is reinforced by the next clause,

the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness.--Only four words in Hebrew, but fraught with meaning.

Notice first that the consumption (annihilation, destruction, "state of being consumed") is "decreed," formally ordered, engraved on stone so that it cannot be altered. The judgment is just as sure, just as grounded in the counsels of God, as are the promises to Abraham in which they falsely trust.

Second, notice the contrast between "consumption" and "overflow." Though they will be diminished, that very action will constitute an overflow of God's righteousness. His ultimate objective is to exalt himself, whatever the consequences may be for his people.

23 For the Lord GOD of hosts shall make a consumption, even determined,--"Consumption" and "determined" are different words, but from the same roots, as "consumption" and "decreed," respectively, in the previous verse. The judgment that Israel will experience is extreme and deliberate. She must not think of it as just an accident that she can overcome by her own hard work (as in 9:10).

in the midst of all the land [all the earth].--God's dealings with his people are not hidden, but visible to the entire earth. Compare the role of the church as his means of instructing a watching universe (Eph 2:7; 3:10).¹ Because of what the world sees in Israel's chastisement, they should not be surprised when the great Day of the Lord comes on them; compare the similar language in 28:22.

24-32, Reassurance to the Southern Kingdom

24 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD of hosts, O my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian:--Now the Lord turns to those who dwell in Zion. The tone is notably different, reflecting the difference in the fates of Israel and Judah under the Assyrian. Here there is no threat of an overflowing consumption, no reference to an escaping remnant. The emphasis rather is entirely on the destruction of the Assyrian after he has brought limited oppression on them.

Ultimately, Judah fared just as poorly as Israel, under Babylon. But here Isaiah's focus is on the Assyrian threat, which was realized much less against Judah than against Israel.

he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt.--They should recognize that the Assyrian will express his anger against them, and attempt to enslave them, as Egypt once did.

¹ When I delivered this study, I understood "all the land" as a reference to Israel, but Isaiah's usage much favors its being understood of the whole earth.

25 For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease,--God's indignation against his people, of which the Assyrian is the expression (10:5b).

and mine anger in their destruction.--Formerly directed against his people (10:5a), now God's anger will be directed against Assyria.

26 And the LORD of hosts shall stir up a scourge for him—A “scourge” is a whip.

according to the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb:--He recalls the rout of Midian under Gideon, and the ignominious destruction of one of their princes, Judg 7:25,

And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and they slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the winepress of Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side Jordan.

“Rod” and “staff” in 10:5 recall the oppression mentioned in 9:4, “the staff of his shoulder, and the rod of his oppressor.” There, deliverance from that oppression was compared with “the day of Midian,” the great victory that God gave Gideon over Israel's adversaries, and here the same imagery emerges.

and as his rod was upon the sea, so shall he lift it up after the manner of Egypt.--Just as God destroyed the armies of Egypt under his rod, wielded by Moses, so he will destroy the Assyrian.

27 And it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck,--Notice the parallels with 9:4, together with the mention of Midian echoed in v. 26:

For thou hast broken the **yoke** of his **burden**, and the staff of his **shoulder**, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian.

Why does Isaiah focus so much on Gideon's victory over Midian? It may be because of the prominence of that cycle in Judges. The main body of the book (ch. 2-16) is divided into seven cycles: a template in ch. 2, then six specific cycles of oppression, supplication, deliverance, and rest. The Midianite oppression is the fourth of these. It is the second longest, after the Samson cycle (which closes this section of the book). In addition, it is followed by the history of Abimelech, Israel's first king, in ch. 9, an ornament that the story of Samson does not enjoy. So it is emblematic of oppression by a foreign foe followed by divine deliverance and the establishment of a king over Israel, which is the vision that occupies Isaiah.

and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing.--What defeats the Assyrian, like the Midianite before him, is no intrinsic strength in Israel, but “the anointing,” literally “the oil.” Though modern versions like to refer this to fatness, the AV's association makes more sense. Israel's kings, unlike Assyria's, enjoyed the divine anointing symbolized by the oil. The Targum explicitly says that “the people [sc. the Assyrians] shall be broken before the Messiah.” In our next portion (v. 34), we will see another example of this assertion, when Assyria, pictured as Lebanon, falls by “the Mighty One.”

28 He is come to Aiath, he is passed to Migron; at Michmash he hath laid up his carriages: 29 They are gone over the passage: they have taken up their lodging at Geba; Ramah is afraid; Gibeah of Saul is fled. 30 Lift up thy voice, O daughter of Gallim: cause it to be heard unto Laish, O poor Anathoth. 31 Madmenah is removed; the inhabitants of Gebim gather themselves to flee. 32 As yet shall he remain at Nob that day: he shall shake his hand against the mount of the

daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.--The order in which these places are named approaches Jerusalem from the north. The Assyrian draws nearer and nearer, until he stands on Nob hill, overlooking the holy city, but he is unable to overcome it, and eventually withdraws.

The sequence here recalls the Assyrian's geographically-ordered boast in 10:8-11. He boasted of moving inexorably southward, with the doom of Samaria and Jerusalem assured. And he did indeed conquer Samaria. But now Isaiah reports his progress toward Jerusalem—and it stops short on Nob hill, overlooking the city that he was unable to conquer.

Notes

The construction כִּי וְהָיָה in v. 12

וְהָיָה כִּי־יִבְצֹעַ אֲדֹנָי אֶת־כָּל־מַעֲשָׂהוּ ... אֶפְקֹד עַל־פְּרִי־גֹדֶל לְבָב מֶלֶךְ־אֲשׁוּר

The usual translation of the clause is temporal, “When the Lord shall cut off ..., I will punish” Alexander argues for sequential, “The Lord shall cut off ... (then) I will punish,” understanding כִּי as *σντ*. What is the usage?

The usual construction is כִּי וְהָיָה + imperfect verb + converted perfect. In these cases, the כִּי clause is always subordinate to the following converted perfect. Exceptions, besides the current verse, are:

Ref	Following clause	Relation
Deut 6:10-12	Impv	Traditionally subordinate, but could easily be read as sequential. “The Lord shall bless you. Beware that you don't forget him.”
1 Sam 1:12	ו + subject + ptc	Subordinate
1 Sam 10:7	Impv	Subordinate, but sequential would be workable.
1 Sam 25:30-31	וְלֹא + imperfect	Subordinate
Jer 3:16	נֶאֱמַר יְהוָה + לא + imperfect	Given the function of נֶאֱמַר יְהוָה ² , probably parallel!

It appears that clear subordinate uses always require *waw* to introduce the main clause. In this case, we should read with Alexander.

22, “As the Sand of the Sea”

This condition has its origin in God's promise to Abraham in Gen 22:16-17,

2H.V.D. Parunak, “Some Discourse Functions of Prophetic Quotation Formulas,” in R.D. Bergen, ed., *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, Dallas, TX: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1994, 489-519, esp. 508-512.

Isaiah 10

16 By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: 17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

and repeated to Jacob (32:12),

32:12 And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.

It is a common idiom for an overwhelming army, and is often applied to pagan forces:

Josh 11:4 (the kings of the north), 4 And they went out, they and all their hosts with them, much people, even as the sand that is upon the sea shore in multitude, with horses and chariots very many.

Judg 7:12 (Gideon's adversaries), 12 And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude.

1 Sam 13:5 (the Philistines against Saul), 5 And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the sea shore in multitude: and they came up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Bethaven.

Rev 20:7-8 (Satan's final army, gathered against the Lamb), 7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, 8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

It seems to imply overwhelming military force, and this lends to its impact in 10:22 as an expression of false confidence.

When is this promise fulfilled for Israel? Hushai described “all Israel” in the days of David in these terms, when he recommended that Absalom gather an army before pursuing David,

2 Sam 17:11, Therefore I counsel that all Israel be generally gathered unto thee, from Dan even to Beersheba, as the sand that is by the sea for multitude; and that thou go to battle in thine own person.

The inspired narrator views the promise as fulfilled under Solomon,

1 Kings 4:20, Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude,

And the NT book of Hebrews also views the promise as accomplished in the OT period:

11:12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.

But the depredations of civil war and foreign chastisement greatly reduced their numbers. Hosea, a contemporary of Isaiah, sees the ultimate promise as still future,

1:9 Then said God, Call his name Loammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your

Isaiah 10

God. 10 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.

Jeremiah also sees it as still future,

33:22 As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured: so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me.

Why the Midianites?

Of the six oppressions recorded by the book of Judges, why does Isaiah focus on the Midianites as the prototype of the Assyrian invader (9:4; 10:26)?

Oppressor	Years	Deliverer	Miracles?
3:8, Cushanrishathaim king of Mesopotamia	8	Othniel the son of Kenaz	3:10 Spirit of the Lord came upon him ... the Lord delivered CRKM into his hand
3:12, Eglon king of Moab	18		none
4:2, Jabin king of Canaan	20	Deborah, Barak, Jael	4:15 the Lord discomfited
6:1, Midian	7	Gideon	6:34 Spirit of the Lord Fleece, reduced force, enemy's dream
10:7, Philistines and children of Ammon	18	Jephthah	11:29 Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah ... 11:32 the Lord delivered them into his hands
13:1, Philistines	40	Samson	13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14 Spirit of the Lord

Reasons for choosing Gideon's conquest over Midian:

- Miraculous nature of the deliverance more obvious than in the other cases
- Unlike the first three, opposition is national rather than a single king, reflecting
- Royal context, emergence of Abimelech as the first king