

## Isaiah 54:1-17

Earlier, we encountered a section addressed to “Mother Zion” (49:14-50:3), marked by extensive use of second person feminine singular pronouns and verbal forms. This chapter once again picks up those forms throughout (chart). Isaiah is writing to someone figuratively represented as a woman, though her identity is not as clear as I originally suggested.

The chapter is organized by grammatical marks into three sections of three parts each (chart):

- vv. 1-4 give three commands, each motivated by a clause introduced by “for” (doubled in the third case). These commands are uniformly positive. The woman is to sing, rejoice, and anticipate prosperity.
- vv. 5-10 continue to give motives for these commands, in three paragraphs, each ended with a reference to the Lord who makes the promises. The focus here shifts from the woman’s attitude of joy to the Lord’s grace and mercy.
- vv. 11-17a three times command the woman to behold, calling her attention to facts that will encourage her.

### 1-4, Motivated Commands

The structural marker here is the alternation of imperatives with motive clauses: “do A, for B.” The focus is on the change in attitude in a woman who has been ashamed.

#### 1, Rejoice

Earlier, I identified the woman here, like that in 49:14-50:3, with Mother Zion, who in turn echoes “daughter Zion” from earlier chapters (Isa. 1:8; 10:32; 16:1; 37:22; 52:2; to be seen again in 62:11). But nowhere in this chapter is she identified with either Zion or Jerusalem, and a closer look at the very first verse gives us reason to question that identification, at least in vv. 1-4.

**1 Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child:**

Isaiah emphasizes that this woman is “barren” and has no children. A major emphasis of the woman in the previous section (49:14-50:3) was that she had children whom she has lost. She laments (chart),

Isa 49:21 I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro

In fact, in 50:1-3, her children are blamed for the judgment that has come upon her:

Isa 50:1 Thus saith the LORD, Where *is* the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors *is it* to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.

If this chapter is simply comforting this same desolate woman, how can she be described as “barren,” one who “did not travail”?

Most commentators assume that “barren” is with reference to the time of her humiliation and captivity.

Isaiah 54:1-17

During that time Zion's childbearing might be said to be interrupted. But the OT does have examples of interrupted childbearing (the house of Abimelech in Gen 20:18; Leah in 29:35; 30:17), and the term "barren" עקֵר is never used of these situations. It always refers to a woman who has never had children. The parallel expression "thou that didst not travail" implies that she never had children.

Paul quotes this verse in his allegory of Hagar and Sarah (chart):

Gal 4:22-27 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. 23 But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman *was* by promise. 24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. 25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. 26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. 27 For it is written, **Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.**

Paul suggests that Isaiah has in mind, not worldly Zion, but heavenly Jerusalem. The one whom he addresses is not the historical city, but Sarah, the wife of Abraham, of whom it is written, in terms that suggest 54:1 (chart),

Gen 11:30 But Sarai was barren; she *had* no child.

Recall how Jeremiah anticipates the slaughter in Bethlehem under the Babylonian armies, and Herod's later slaughter of the innocents, by picturing long-dead Rachel mourning:

Jer 31:15 A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, *and* bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they *were* not.

So, for Paul, Isaiah is here comforting Sarah, the first case of barrenness described in the Bible, and the ancestress of the promised people, Abraham's seed. The comfort in ch. 49-50 is addressed to physical Zion, under the covenant of Sinai, but the comfort in ch. 54 is addressed to all of Abraham's seed, under "the promise" that we studied at Christmas, the central promise of the entire Bible.

Methodologically, we need to be careful. We should always read later Scripture in light of earlier, not the other way around. Paul may suggest this interpretation to us, but is it consistent with Isaiah's own emphasis? There's evidence that it is.

First, as we have seen, this woman stands in contrast with the woman in ch. 49. She is not a mother bereft of her children, but a woman marked by barrenness.

Second, the language of 54:1 suggests that Isaiah has Gen 11:30 in mind.

Third, this would not be the first time that Isaiah draws his readers' attention to Abraham and Sarah:

Isa 51:1-2 Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock *whence* ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit *whence* ye are digged. 2 Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah *that* bare you:

We saw in that passage that Isaiah is using Abraham as an example of trusting the Lord, rather than one's own effort, as described in the preceding verses:

Isa 50:10-11 Who *is* among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant,

that walketh *in* darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God. 11 Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass *yourselves* about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks *that* ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.

For Isaiah, as for Paul, Abraham and Sarah are examples of justification by faith.

Finally, recall one aspect of the Servant's reward in the previous chapter:

Isa 53:10 if thou shalt make his soul a reparation offering, **he shall see a seed**,

The "his" in the AV is spurious. The seed are not attributed to the Servant. I suggested that the seed there was to be understood as God's seed, but in the light of ch. 54, I'd now suggest that this seed is identical with that promised to Abraham:

Gen 22:16-18 And said, 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; 18 And in **thy seed** shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

The Servant's greatest joy is in being the means by which Abraham's seed comes into being, and barren Sarah, observing these events unfolding, now can rejoice.

So Paul's observation rests on solid ground. We do not follow Paul in interpreting Isaiah; rather, we have discovered the reasons that led Paul to interpret Isaiah this way, and based on those reasons we reach the same conclusion. Isaiah anticipates, and provides the Scriptural foundation for, his contrast between earthly Zion and heavenly Jerusalem, between those born after the flesh and those born according to promise, between Abraham's physical descendants and those, whether Jew or Gentile, who are his descendants by faith. This distinction is not new with Paul. It is grounded in Isaiah 54.

**for more *are* the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD.--**

Note the contrasts between these two women.

In ch. 49, Mother Zion was comforted that her children would be restored. The one who was bereaved is subsequently comforted. Here, one woman is comforted by comparing her with another. There, the difference was one of time. Here, it is one of person. Zion had many children, and according to ch. 49, will yet again have many children. But barren Sarah will have even more, for to her will be reckoned all those who receive the work of the Servant by faith. Not only will he look on the promised seed and be satisfied, but so will she.

The second command presents another distinction between the women.

## **2-3, Expand**

The second command is a consequence of the first. As one's family expands, one needs to make more room for them. A drive around any older American city will show houses with additional wings tacked on or dormers pushed up to make room for a growing family. It was much easier for a nomadic family like Abraham's; you just added another few yards of cloth to the tent.

**2 Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes;**--The reference to extending a tent rather than rebuilding a ruined city is another evidence that the one being addressed is nomadic Sarah rather than urban Mother Zion. Of Zion, the Lord said,

Isa 49:16 Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of *my* hands; thy **walls** *are* continually before me.

And Gabriel promised Daniel,

Dan 9:25 Know therefore and understand, *that* from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince *shall be* seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: **the street** shall be built again, and **the wall**, even in troublous times.

Physical Zion will be restored, but Isaiah's promise reaches further back, to Sarah and her spiritual seed, dwelling as a pilgrim people in a tent that must constantly be expanded.

**3 For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left;**--The motive for the second command is the great increase of Sarah's offspring, in two ways ("right hand ... left"). The next two clauses anticipate the joining together of Jew and Gentile (chart).

**and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles;**--This expression is another echo of the Abraham stories, where the verb "inherit" ירש first appears in the OT: Gen 15:3, 4 (bis), 7, 8; 21:10; 22:17. Here again, Isaiah anticipates Paul, and provides him with the insight that he later expresses in the NT,

Rom 4:13 For the promise, that he should be the **heir of the world**, *was* not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

**and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.**--The "desolate cities" refer to physical Israel, under God's judgment:

Isaiah 1:7 Your country *is* **desolate**, your **cities** *are* burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and *it is* **desolate**, as overthrown by strangers.

Isaiah 6:11 Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the **cities** be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly **desolate**,

We should note that even in Isaiah, the Gentiles are subordinated to Sarah, not parallel to her. The equal status of Jew and Gentile is not revealed in the OT, but was a distinct, new revelation to Paul (chart):

Eph 3:3-6 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, 4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) 5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; 6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:

## 4, Fear Not

**4 Fear ירא not; for thou shalt not be ashamed בוש; neither be thou confounded כלם; for thou shalt not be put to shame הקר**--Two features of this third command attract our attention.

First, it is the final example of an expression that is extremely popular with Isaiah, the exhortation “fear not” (chart). He uses it more times (13) than any other book in the OT.<sup>1</sup> It occurs four times in ch. 1-39, urging the people (starting with Ahaz in 7:4) not to fear their adversaries, then nine times in ch. 40-54. We should particularly note the first instance in ch. 40-66, which is also in the feminine singular:

Isa 40:9 O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift *it* up, **be not afraid**; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

Even though the second half of the book anticipates Judah’s chastisement, the Lord’s persistent message to her is “Fear not.”

The second interesting feature of this exhortation is that three of its four main words (fear ירא, ashamed בוש, confounded כלם, put to shame חפר) occur together in David’s Psalms, not just once, but three times (chart). Isaiah is steeped in the language of Scripture, and it permeates his writing. We have so much more of the Word of God than Isaiah did. How much more should it saturate our thought and speech?

Psa 35:4 Let them be confounded בוש and put to shame כלם that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion חפר that devise my hurt.

Psa 40:14 Let them be ashamed בוש and confounded חפר together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward and put to shame כלם that wish me evil.

Psa 70:2 Let them be ashamed בוש and confounded חפר that seek after my soul: let them be turned backward, and put to confusion כלם, that desire my hurt.

In each case, David is calling for the Lord’s intervention against his enemies. They have sought his hurt, but he calls on the Lord to frustrate their efforts.

The enemies of the woman of Isa 54 have sought to bring her to shame and confusion. But she is not to fear. Only the Lord can truly bring such judgment, and he promises that it shall not be her lot.

David invokes this judgment on his enemies, while Isaiah here simply assures the Woman that she will not experience it. But Isaiah does use these words, two at a time, in other places to describe the judgment that will come on God’s adversaries (chart):

Isa 1:29 For they shall be ashamed בוש of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded חפר for the gardens that ye have chosen.

Isa 41:11 Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed בוש and confounded כלם:

Isa 45:16 They shall be ashamed בוש, and also confounded כלם, all of them: they shall go to confusion כלמה together *that are* makers of idols.

Throughout the book, Israel has been at the center of a struggle between the Lord and the idol gods. With the Babylonian captivity, it seemed as though the idol gods had won, and Israel was humiliated. But throughout the book God has warned us that it is the idolaters who will be put to shame, in keeping with David’s three-fold prayer, and now the Lord assures Israel that her shame shall come to an end.

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<sup>1</sup> He also uses it more densely than any other book except Joel (2 instances), Haggai, and Zephaniah (1 instance each), but those densities say more about the shortness of the books than their dedication to the expression itself.

**for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth,<sup>2</sup> and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more.**--The parallel phrases suggest that Isaiah is now bringing together the figures of Sarah and Zion (chart). “The shame of thy youth” is her barrenness; “thy widowhood” recalls ch. 49.

We shall see more of this parallel between the two women. Let’s think about its implications for us. The confusion and shame that these two women face, each in their own way, are an example for us.

Zion is reproached because she has sinned against the Lord, and come under chastisement.

- As 1 John 1 reminds us, we also are liable to sin, even as believers, and Hebrews 12 tells us that we too can experience chastisement.
- When that happens, we, like Zion, may feel that we have ruined things beyond repair. In our repentance, we may fall into despair and confusion.
- We need to remember that God’s purpose in chastisement is not to destroy us, but to teach us, so that he can restore us to greater usefulness.
- To the chastised believer smarting under God’s rod, Isaiah commands, “Fear not. Thou shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood.” God will restore you and use you.

Sarah feels shame because she has been unfruitful.

- Similarly, believers can become discouraged, not because they have sinned and come under chastisement, but from a sense that they have not done enough for the Lord.
- We may look back on our lives and regret the things that did not happen. We tried to serve the Lord. Why didn’t he accomplish more through us? If only we had tried harder...
- We need to remember that the fruit that matters is what God brings forth by his power, not what we produce by the strength of the flesh.
- To the frustrated believer, Isaiah commands, “Fear not. Thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth.” God will bring forth his fruit, in a way that guarantees that he gets the glory.

## 5-10, Expanded Motivation

Now the motive clauses continue, but without further imperatives. They are divided into three sections by the quotation formulas: “thy God” (6b), “the Lord thy Redeemer” (8b), “the Lord that hath mercy on thee” (10b). Each section anticipates the signature of the following section (chart).

Thematically, there is a shift in this section. The previous section emphasized the **woman’s shift** from shame to joy. This section emphasizes the **Lord’s change in attitude** toward her.

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2 The word עלומים is problematic. HALOT associates it with youth; Schoors VT 1971 associates it with Ugaritic *glm* “servant,” which seems to fit the root in 1 Sam 20:22, and would translate “thy bondage.” Probably the two are linked, servants often being young. But more common OT instances of the root include עלמה “marriageable young woman, virgin,” which also draws on the idea of youth. The words עלומים and בַּשָּׁת appear together in Ps 89:46 (ET v 45), of the Davidic era (Ethan, 1 Chr 15:19).



## **5-6, You will be restored to your husband**

This section builds up even more clearly both the contrast between the two women, and the links between them. In fact, it supplements the image of Zion and Sarah with that of Naomi and Ruth (chart).

**5 For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer אלהיך the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.**--This verse offers a strong parallelism, which is clearer if we reverse the order of the first clause (“Thy husband is thy maker”), in keeping with Hebrew word order.

- “Husband” and “redeemer” are both family roles;
- “Maker,” like “Holy One of Israel,” is a divine title;
- “is his name” and “shall he be called” both assign names to him;
- “Lord of Hosts” and “God of the whole earth” are the names thus assigned.

The contrasts between these two sections correspond to the contrast between the abandoned wife of ch. 49 and the barren woman of ch. 54. Thus, after distinguishing Sarah from Zion in vv. 1-4, Isaiah is bringing these two images together, as was hinted in the last part of v. 4. To make the contrast clearer, we’ll work through the verse parallel by parallel.

## **Thine Husband**

Ever since the Exodus, God has used the language of marriage to depict the covenant between himself and Israel. The earliest reference is in Exodus, where the Lord calls idolatry “whoredom,” a violation of his (marriage) covenant with Israel. God’s marriage to Israel happened at Sinai.

Exo 34:12-17 Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee: 13 But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves: 14 For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God: 15 Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they **go a whoring after their gods**, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and *one* call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice; 16 And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters **go a whoring after their gods**, and make thy sons **go a whoring after their gods**. 17 Thou shalt make thee no molten gods.

Hosea, Isaiah’s contemporary, develops this idiom most completely, describing how at God’s instruction he married a harlot who was unfaithful to him, to illustrate how Israel had been unfaithful to the Lord. In Hosea, the Lord **puts away** Israel, but then graciously **receives her** to himself again.

The image of God as Israel’s husband from Hosea’s drama leads directly to the account of Mother Zion in 49:14-50:3, where the Lord rejects his faithless wife, then promises to restore her.

## **Thy Redeemer**

This title for God is a favorite of Isaiah. He uses it 25 times, 24 in the last 27 chapters, always<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In 59:20, the Lord speaks in the third person of “the Redeemer,” another instance of the anticipation of the distinction between the Father and the Son that we often see in Isaiah.

referring to something that the Lord does for Israel.

As so often, Isaiah draws on earlier Scripture.<sup>4</sup> The first person to apply this title to God is Job:

Job 19:25 For I know *that* my redeemer liveth, and *that* he shall stand at the latter *day* upon the earth:

David and his contemporary Asaph call God their redeemer:

Psa 19:14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

Psa 78:35 And they remembered that God *was* their rock, and the high God their redeemer.

Among the “sayings of the wise” (Prov 22:17) that Solomon collects, there is a hint of this:

Pro 23:10-11 Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless: 11 For their redeemer *is* mighty; he shall plead their cause with thee.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout the OT, the term refers to a near kinsman who carries out some special duty toward an unfortunate relative. These duties include

- buying back a field (Lev 25:25), or the person of the relative himself (Lev 25:48), that has been sold because of indebtedness, or receiving restitution (Num 5:8)
- avenging a murder (Num 35:12).

By far the densest use of the word in the OT is in the book of Ruth. It accounts for more than one out of every 100 words in the book (compared with one out of 1000 in Isaiah) (chart). Technically the redemption in view there is of the field that belonged to Elimelech, Naomi’s husband. However, the main theme of the story is not the field, but another Israelite custom, levirate marriage, in which a relative marries a childless widow to raise up seed for the deceased husband. And in fact, the way Ruth and Naomi use the verb אָלַף (mostly translated “kinsman” or “kin” in AV), it focuses on Boaz’s relation with Ruth, not on Elimelech’s field, which is hardly more than a prop for the love story.

God calls himself Israel’s redeemer mostly in the second half of Isaiah, which repeatedly promises that the nation will return from abroad to regain their land. It is easy to hear echoes of the book of Ruth, as Naomi returns from the plains of Moab to rebuild her life in Bethlehem. As the nation’s kinsman-redeemer, he will restore their land to them. But the echoes of barren Sarah that we heard in vv. 1-3 and the close linkage of land redemption and levirate marriage in Ruth encourage us to see in the title a reference to God’s role in bringing seed to the barren wife as well. In fact, as Isaiah sketches the contrast between Mother Zion, deprived of her children, and the barren woman in ch. 54, he may well have in mind aged Naomi, widowed and bereft of children, and childless Ruth.

It is interesting to meditate on the implications of the title, “the Lord your redeemer,” in light of the restrictions on this function in the law. We’ve identified four categories of redemption (plus Num 5:8): of sold property, from bondage, the avenger of blood, and (on the basis of Ruth) levirate marriage. In three of these cases, the law specifies that the redeemer must be related to the sufferer. (chart)

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4 See also earlier uses of the finite verb: Gen 48:16 and Exod 15:13

5 Jer 50:34 cites this statement and makes the identification explicit: “ ‘Their Redeemer *is* strong;’ the LORD of hosts *is* his name”



**Land:** Lev 25:25 If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away *some* of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold.

**Bondage:** Lev 25:47-49 And if a sojourner or stranger wax rich by thee, and thy brother *that dwelleth* by him wax poor, and sell himself unto the stranger *or* sojourner by thee, or to the stock of the stranger's family: 48 After that he is sold he may be redeemed again; **one of his brethren may redeem him: 49 Either his uncle, or his uncle's son, may redeem him, or any that is nigh of kin unto him of his family may redeem him;** or if he be able, he may redeem himself.

**Barrenness:** Deu 25:5 If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: **her husband's brother** shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her.

The legislation concerning the avenger of blood (Num 35) doesn't specify that he must be a kinsman, but in 2 Sam 14, Joab fabricates a story involving the avenger of blood to persuade David to restore Absalom, and the custom as reflected in that story also emphasizes that the redeemer is a blood relative:

2Sa 14:6-7 And thy handmaid had two sons, and they two strove together in the field, and *there was* none to part them, but the one smote the other, and slew him. 7 And, behold, **the whole family is risen against thine handmaid, and they said, Deliver him that smote his brother, that we may kill him,** for the life of his brother whom he slew; and we will destroy the heir also: and so they shall quench my coal which is left, and shall not leave to my husband *neither* name nor remainder upon the earth.

The title only makes sense if the Lord God becomes the blood relative of those whom he delivers. Hebrews makes this requirement explicit, referring to two of the four redemption functions (taking vengeance on the murderer, and delivering the slave) (chart):

Heb 2:14-16 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; 15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. 16 For verily he took not on *him the nature of* angels; but he took on *him* the seed of Abraham.

Hebrews 1 describes the exalted position of the Son, applying to him scriptures that call him "God" (vv. 8-9, from Ps 45:6-7) and "Lord" (v. 10, from Ps 102:25). But Heb 2 grapples with the incarnation, quoting Ps 8 and arguing that it must refer to Jesus. 2:14-16 are the culmination of his argument: the divine Son had to become man, in order to do the work of redemption.

Think of the scope of this insight. Every reference to God as the redeemer of humans is a prophecy of the incarnation. When Job, and David, and Solomon, and Isaiah call the Lord the "Redeemer," they are anticipating that he will come as the promised "seed of the woman." The transcendent God will become our near kinsman, to deliver us from death, bondage, debt, and fruitlessness.

## Thy Maker

The divine title associated with the role of “thy husband” is that of creator.

Isaiah has previously spoken of God as the “maker” of the Servant, of Israel, in parallel with other verbs of creation (chart):

44:2 Thus saith the LORD **that made thee** [Heb “thy maker”], and **formed thee** from the womb, *which* will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen.

44:21 Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: **I have formed thee**; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me.

43:1 But now thus saith the LORD that **created thee**, O Jacob, and he that **formed thee**, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.

43:7 Even every one that is called by my name: for I have **created him** for my glory, I have **formed him**; yea, I have **made him**.

43:21 This people have I **formed** for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.

Isaiah draws these notions from Deut 32, Moses’ valedictory song exhorting the new nation as he is about to leave them:

Deu 32:6 Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? *is* not he thy father *that* hath bought thee? hath he not **made thee**, and **established thee**?

Deu 32:18 Of the Rock *that* begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that **formed thee**.

The reference to God’s making Israel is thus a pointer, not to Gen 1, but to the Exodus, the same time when he married her in covenant. “Thy husband is thy maker” recalls the nation’s original relation with God.

## The Holy One of Israel

This title is a favorite of Isaiah (chart). He accounts for 26 of the 31 instances in the Bible, and only three of those precede him. They are in psalms written by David’s contemporaries (Ps 71:22; 78:41; 89:19). The earliest hint of the title is Job 6:10, which refers to God as “the Holy One” (chart), and Isaiah’s contemporary Hosea also uses this shorter title. Once again, we see how saturated Isaiah is with the Word of God.

Let’s think about both halves of the title.

Hosea’s use gives us a good indication of how “the Holy One” should be understood (chart).

Hos 11:8-9 How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? *how* shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? *how* shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. 9 I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: **for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee**: and I will not enter into the city.

Notice the tension in Hosea's description. God explains what "the Holy One" means by saying, "I am God and not man." "Holy" means "separate, distinct." He will not behave as a man would behave because he is different. Yet he is "in the midst of thee."

In Isaiah, the Lord amplifies this tension. He takes the title "the Holy One," the one who is separate and distinct from his creation. Yet he has just called himself "thy redeemer." In every function of the redeemer, both those in the law and the extended function as the levirate husband, a redeemer had to be a near kinsman of those whom he redeemed. How can "thy redeemer" be "the Holy One"? Only if the transcendent God becomes man. The conjunction of these two titles emphasizes the same point that Hosea is making.

The phrase "the holy one" is no doubt precious to Isaiah because of his experience when the Lord commissioned him:

6:2-3 Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. 3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory.

From beginning to end, Isaiah's thought is dominated by God's overwhelming holiness, his separateness from and exaltation over his creation. This is how we must come to know the Lord, as well. First we encounter him as absolutely holy, far above us, and separated even further by our sin. Then, when his Spirit moves us to repentance, we come to realize that he has come as our kinsman to deliver us from that sin.

We must also pay close attention to the second part of the title, "of Israel." This title appears in the half of the verse that pictures God's reign over the whole earth, and the barren woman's seed among the Gentiles. But even the Gentiles must recognize that the God who saves them is first of all Israel's God. This was Ruth's attitude:

Ruth 1:16 And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, *or* to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people *shall be* my people, and **thy God my God**:

Ruth 2:11-12 And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and *how* thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. 12 The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, **under whose wings thou art come to trust**.

And Paul warns Gentile believers in the capital of the empire not to exalt themselves against Israel.

Rom 11:18 Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.

Now Isaiah goes on to give further titles for the one who calls himself Israel's husband and redeemer. These two titles offer a contrast in the domain in which they describe the Lord as acting.

## The LORD of hosts is his name

Who are the “hosts” in the title “Lord of hosts”? The word literally means “armies.” In the singular, the term describes “the host of heaven” (never “hosts”), meaning the heavenly bodies, and the angelic host (no clear reference in the plural), but the plural is very common in the Pentateuch, focusing on the Exodus (chart):

Exo 7:4 But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth **mine armies**, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments.

Exo 12:41 And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all **the hosts of the LORD** went out from the land of Egypt.

It’s particularly common in Numbers, where it describes the marshaling of the camp for the march, one “host” per tribe:

Num 10:14-16 In the first *place* went the standard of the camp of the children of Judah according to **their armies** [i.e., of the entire camp]: and over his **host** was Nahshon the son of Amminadab. 15 And over the **host** of the tribe of the children of Issachar was Nethaneel the son of Zuar. 16 And over **the** host of the tribe of the children of Zebulun was Eliab the son of Helon.

Just as the marriage picture (“thy husband”) recalls the covenant at Sinai, and “thy maker” reaches back to the foundations of the nation, so “the Lord of hosts” recalls the exodus, when the nation was a loose confederation of tribes, under the Lord’s unifying command.

Note the form of the predication: “the Lord of hosts is his name.” The verbless clause makes no statement about time. This is a characteristic of the Lord that is true now, and has long been true.

## The God of the whole earth shall he be called

Where “the Lord of hosts” focuses on the Lord’s relation to Israel’s tribes, this title is of much broader extent. It places the Lord in relation to the entire world.

Note also the form of the predication. Now Isaiah uses a verb, and in particular, one in the prefix conjugation, suggesting something that will be true in the future.

The first panel of v. 5 points consistently to Israel and its past roots in the Exodus and Sinai, but the second panel looks to the future time when God redeems his people and extends his rule over all the earth. This is not the first time we have heard such a promise. For example, perhaps most strikingly,

19:23-25 In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. 24 In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, *even* a blessing in the midst of the land: 25 Whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed *be* Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.

## v. 6 as summary (chart)

**6 For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused,**--We have the same two images as in v. 4. The young but barren wife is rejected; the older woman is forsaken (49:14) by her husband.

The “woman ... grieved in spirit” may be another reference to the story of Ruth. The name “Naomi” is the focus of a play on words. The name literally means “pleasant, beautiful,” but when Naomi returns to Bethlehem, she disowns her own name:

Ruth 1:20-21 And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me **Mara**: for the Almighty hath dealt very **bitterly** with me. 21 I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why *then* call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?

Thus we trace the consistent echo of the theme of two women, from Hagar and Sarah, through Ruth and Naomi, to Isaiah, and on to Paul (chart), reminding us of God’s dual promise, to restore erring Israel and to bring the Gentiles into relationship with him.

**saith thy God.**--The signature of this section is unembellished. Its main role is to initiate the structural pattern that distinguishes the next two sections, where the names do take on more specific meaning.

## 7-8, God’s wrath will turn to mercy **רחם**

This section is a single parallelism, in which each panel consists of a contrast (chart). As with v. 5, it is possible to distinguish an emphasis in the first panel on the fate of widowed Zion, and in the second on that of barren Sarah.

The two verbs in v. 7 recall Mother Zion in 49:14-50:3 (chart).

**7 For a small moment have I forsaken thee;**--Recall Zion’s opening lament in 49:14,

Isa 49:14 But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.

In the following verses, the Lord denies ever having forgotten her:

Isa 49:15-16 Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. 16 Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of *my* hands; thy walls *are* continually before me.

But he does not deny forsaking her, and here he acknowledges it. Many times in Isaiah Israel is said to be forsaken (passive), and twice God reassures his faithful ones that he will not forsake them (41:17; 42:16), but these are the only two verses that state positively that the Lord might forsake his people, and this is the only place where he states it. He emphasizes that it is only a short, temporary action.

**... will I gather thee.**--This verb recalls 49:18. Zion laments that she has lost her children, but the Lord replies,

49:18 Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these **gather** themselves together, *and* come to thee.

**but with great mercies **רחמים** will I gather thee.**--This regathering is motivated by God’s “mercies.”

The Bible describes God as “rich in mercy,” Eph 2:4, and we should pause to reflect on three related concepts. All are most commonly translated “mercy” in the KJV, and with cognates of *ελεος* in the LXX, but they have very different meanings. (We leave aside “mercy seat,” the English translation for the distinctive Hebrew word that refers to the lid of the Ark of the Covenant, which the LXX never translates with *ελεος* or *ελεεω*.) All three of these words appear in God’s central revelation of himself to Moses (chart), a description so fundamental that it is quoted (in part or whole) no fewer than eight times in the OT (Num 14:18; Neh 9:17; Ps 86:15; 89:1,2; 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jon 4:2)<sup>6</sup>:

Exo 34:6 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, **merciful** חַנּוּן and **gracious** רַחוּם, longsuffering, and abundant in **goodness** חֶסֶד and truth,

- By far the most common Hebrew words translated “mercy” is חַסֵד, which emphasizes God’s covenant love for his people. Less often it is translated “lovingkindness.” It is true that God’s regathering of Israel will be a sign of his חַסֵד to them, and we will encounter this word in vv. 8, 10, but that is not the word used here.
- Another common word is חֶנֶן, also translated “grace” or “favor.” This word describes undeserved favor displayed by a sovereign to a subject. Again, it is true that the restoration of Israel is a mark of God’s grace, but this is not the term used here.
- Our word, רַחוּם, is the word for a womb, more generally for bowels, and then metaphorically for the deep compassion felt by a mother for her children. It is the word that describes Joseph’s response in Egypt when he saw Benjamin his brother:

Gen 43:30 And Joseph made haste; for his **bowels** did yearn upon his brother: and he sought *where* to weep; and he entered into *his* chamber, and wept there.

This is the most strikingly anthropomorphic of the “mercy” words in the OT. God describes himself as deeply moved emotionally by Israel’s plight, and motivated by that deep emotion, he promises to regather them.

Sometimes we tend to view God in rather mechanical terms. He gives his law, we break it, so he punishes us. He desires to show his grace, so he provides a redeemer, we receive the Lord Jesus, and he forgives us. But the God of the Bible is much more alive than this. We often find it necessary to emphasize his wrath against sin, which is presented as a fierce, burning anger. Conversely, toward those whom he has chosen for himself, his feelings are those of a tender, compassionate parent. This is a precious assurance and comfort for us.

Now we turn to the parallel contrast.

**8 In a little<sup>7</sup> wrath**—Having just mentioned his tender compassion for Israel, he reminds them of his complementary character of wrath. This had burst out upon them briefly, reminding them of his hatred for sin, but it was only a brief outburst.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. also Nah 1:3, which alludes to this verse but doesn’t use these terms

<sup>7</sup> This *hapax* שִׁצְףָּ is usually understood these days as a byform of שִׁטַּף “overflowing,” with essentially the same meaning, but this would violate the strong parallelism of vv. 7-8, which demands something corresponding to קָתַן. Delitzsch notes a comparable difference between קָמַט Job 16:8 “to seize” and the more common קָמַץ “handful,” a “little seizing.” The idea would then be that what Israel has experienced is a momentary bubbling up of God’s wrath, which he pours out in great measure on his adversaries.



**I hid my face from thee for a moment;**--This is a fascinating idiom. What does it mean for God to hide his face from us (chart)?

We might think that it means he takes no notice of us and our problems, but at least one instance of the expression shows that he can hide his face and still take a deep interest in what his people are doing.

Deu 32:20 And he said, I will **hide my face from them**, I will see what their end *shall be*:

More likely, the expression is related to another one, to “seek פקד the face” of the Lord (1 Chr 16:11 = Ps 105:4; 2 Chr 7:14; Ps 24:6; 27:8; Hos 5:15). When God hides his face, it is not so that he won’t see his people, but so that they can’t have access to him. This is how David understood the expression:

Psa 69:17 And **hide not thy face** from thy servant; for I am in trouble: hear me speedily.

Psa 143:7 **Hear me** speedily, O LORD: my spirit faileth: **hide not thy face** from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.

Note the context in these instances of the expression, by Isaiah and his contemporary Micah.

Isa 59:2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have **hid his face** from you, that **he will not hear**.

Mic 3:4 Then shall they cry unto the LORD, but **he will not hear them**: he will even **hide his face** from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings.

Can this happen to us today (chart)? Something like this is involved in our Lord’s exhortation to “abide in him,” John 15. This condition is what gives us access to the Father in prayer:

Joh 15:7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

But it is inconsistent with sin in our lives:

1Jo 3:6 Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.

Compare also the exhortation of Hebrews:

Heb 12:14 Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

And Paul unhesitatingly cites OT prophecies from Isa 52:11 and Ezek 20:34 in exhorting the Corinthians to separation from sin.

2Co 6:17-7:1 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, 18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. 7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Salvation is by grace, through faith, not of works. But our effectiveness in the Christian life, and God’s openness to our prayers, requires that we walk worthy of the Lord. Some of us have been exercised about how we can revitalize and strengthen our corporate prayer life. One thing we all can do is focus on our personal holiness. If God hides his face from us because of our sin, our prayers won’t go any higher than the ceiling.

**but with everlasting kindness**—This word is **רחם**, which is most often translated “mercy,” but here is rendered “kindness” to avoid clashing with the repetition of the earlier word in the next phrase. This word refers to covenant faithfulness. If, as I suggest, this verse focuses on barren Sarah, it is appropriate that the Lord emphasizes his faithfulness to the promise to bless all nations through her and Abraham.

**will I have mercy רחם on thee**,--Again, the Lord’s care of Sarah, as of mother Zion, is not just a legal transaction, but is motivated by his deep compassion for his people.

We need to consider the time period to which this promise of restoration refers. How long will God’s “small moment” of forsaking and wrath last (chart)?

- The immediate motive for these prophecies is to encourage the nation in the Babylonian captivity. So one might think that the “gathering” at the end of v. 7 is the return under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. But that return was of modest size, only about 50k people (Ezra 2:64, 65; Neh 7:66, 67). Many Jews remained dispersed, as we see from the book of Esther. In addition, in light of later history (the oppression in the time of the Maccabees, the Roman war, the holocaust), it’s hard to see God’s wrath as ending with the book of Ezra.
- The next possible candidate is 1947, the initiation of the Jewish state. Again, the “gathering” is a problem; the Jewish population of Israel is less than six million, while the world Jewish population is over 13 million,<sup>8</sup> so fewer than half of the world’s Jews live in the land. And Zech 14:1-4 predicts a future fall of Jerusalem and captivity of half of its population immediately before the dramatic appearance of the Messiah on the Mount of Olives, something that has not yet happened.
- It seems most likely that this “small moment” is still taking place, and that the blessing in view will unfold at the Lord’s return.

If this analysis is correct, the “small moment” of God’s wrath against his people has endured for 2600 years, more than half of the history of the world by the most straightforward biblical chronology! This is very long by human standards (though not to one to whom a thousand years are as one day, 2 Pet 3:8). But rather than leading us to question God’s promise, this observation should amplify for us all the more the magnitude of the “great mercies” and “everlasting kindness” that he promises in these verses. If God can call two and a half millennia a “small moment,” think about how wonderful the blessings are that he contrasts with this period of displeasure.

**saith the LORD thy Redeemer רגלך**.--The Lord signs this paragraph with the title of “redeemer” that marked his encouragement to Sarah in v. 5, and that recalls the experience of Ruth. By applying the title to both vv. 7 and 8, he emphasizes that he will deliver from both conditions, Naomi and Ruth, the abandoned widow reclaiming her land, and the barren young woman, the chastised but repentant saint and the frustrated believer.

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8 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish\\_population](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_population)

## **9-10, The Lord will be true to his sworn covenant**

(charts on structure of this panel)

**9 For this is as the waters of Noah unto me:**--“This” refers to their experience of God’s “outburst of wrath” for “a small moment.”

**for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth;**--God promised Noah and his family (chart),

Gen 9:11-15 And I will establish my covenant with you; **neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.**  
... 15 And I will remember my covenant, which *is* between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and **the waters shall no more become a flood** to destroy all flesh.

So the flood is an image of a once-for-all divine judgment.

**so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.**--Let’s consider the history of God’s wrath and rebuke (chart). God was wroth (angry) with Israel: he says to Babylon,

Isa 47:6 **I was wroth with my people**, I have polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thine hand: thou didst shew them no mercy; upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke.

In the previous verse, he says,

Isa 54:8 **In a little wrath** I hid my face from thee for a moment;

Similarly, he certainly rebukes his people through the prophets.

Isa 51:20 Thy sons have fainted, they lie at the head of all the streets, as a wild bull in a net: they are full of the fury of the LORD, the **rebuke** of thy God.

But now he promises that the time will come when such wrath and rebuke will not return. Like Noah’s waters, they will be once-for-all.

How might this apply to us? Since the death of Christ, God is angry with unbelievers (John 3:36; Col 3:6; many other times), but he is never said to be angry with us. His Servant has borne that wrath for us once and for all.

Joh 3:36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but **the wrath of God abideth on him.**

1Th 1:9-10 ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; 10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even* Jesus, which **delivered us from the wrath to come.**

How about rebukes? *ἐπιτιμαω* appears only twice after the gospels, and one of those is Jude 9, when Michael is contending with the devil over the body of Moses. But the other probably does refer to believers:

2Ti 4:2-4 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, **rebuke**, exhort with all

longsuffering and doctrine. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

Note the objective: in this paragraph, Paul is concerned with sound doctrine in the church, not with spreading the gospel among the unsaved. It appears that as long as we are in these bodies of flesh, those who speak for the Lord must sometimes deliver rebukes to us on his behalf. But as we have observed, such things will be unnecessary in the coming kingdom.

**10 For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed;**--Mountains seem to us to be the very emblem of permanence and immutability, a characteristic to which Jacob and Moses refer in their blessings on the tribe of Joseph (chart):

Gen 49:26 The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of **the everlasting hills**: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.

Deu 33:13-15 And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the LORD *be* his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath, ... 15 And for the chief things of **the ancient mountains**, and for the precious things of **the lasting hills**,

But this very impression means that their movement marks a great historical disruption. Ps 46 uses the image of some great disaster<sup>9</sup> in the face of which God's people are called to trust in him:<sup>10</sup>

Psa 46:2 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and **though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea**;

The Lord appears to be elaborating on this confident hope. No matter what may happen, the same God who sustained Israel in the face of the enemy in her history will continue to do so. Both clauses of the promise have a strong covenant flavor.

**but my kindness יְרֻמִּי shall not depart from thee**,--"Kindness" is another of the words for mercy that we discussed, the one that refers particularly to covenant faithfulness. Here the Lord assures his people that once he is in covenant relation with them, he will not forsake it.

**neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed**,--It is worthwhile meditating on the expression, "covenant of my peace," and its historical development (chart).

First, note the frequent association of "covenant" and "peace" in secular contexts:

Jos 9:15 And Joshua made **peace** with [the Gibeonites], and made a **league** with them, to let them **live**:

Psa 55:20 He [Ahithophel? Delitzsch] hath put forth his hands against such as be at **peace** with him: he hath broken his **covenant**.

"Peace" here is freedom from antagonism and the resulting harm.

9 Two postexilic passages, Hab 3:6 and Ps 114:6 (see Hengstenberg for dating), also use this idiom to recall the disruption at the time of the Exodus, when God was actually causing the change, not just sustaining his people through it.

10 Delitzsch refers this Psalm to Jehoshaphat's victory over the transjordanian coalition in 2 Chr 20; Hengstenberg to the defeat of Sennacherib before Jerusalem (a possibility that Delitzsch also entertains).

Second, recall the subtly different expression in Num 25, concerning Phinehas, who slew Zimri of the tribe of Simeon for his fornication with the Midianite woman:

10 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 11 Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy. 12 Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him **my covenant of peace**:

The Jewish sages suggest that the “peace” in this case (not “my peace” as in our text) is protection from the avenger of blood from the tribe of Simeon, who would otherwise seek to slay Phinehas.

A similar use promises security during the millennium:

Ezek 34:25 And I will make with them a **covenant of peace**, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.

Again, “peace” refers to security from harm.

So how should we understand Isa 54:10? Here only, the “peace” is qualified: “my peace.” God has been commenting on the wrath that he has previously poured out on them. He promises that, once complete, that wrath will not return, just as the waters of Noah will not return. This promise constitutes a covenant of “his peace.” This is not peace with a human confederate (as in Joshua and the Gibeonites), or with a potential avenger of blood (as in the case of Phinehas), or with the wild animals (as in Ezek 34), but with God himself. The case is very much what we see in Eph 2:11-19, which promises the Gentiles peace with God as well as integration with Israel (chart).

The covenant in view here is certainly the New Covenant, which alone among all of God’s covenants takes away sin rather than simply covering it over, and thus alone among all of God’s covenants can actually secure peace with him.

**saith the LORD that hath mercy רַחֵם on thee.**--We return to the word for “mercy” that we saw twice in the second panel, the one describing God’s compassion. It is because of his compassion for his chosen ones that he limits the exhibit of his displeasure and promises an eternal sequel of peace with him.

## 11-17a, Three Commands to Behold

**11 O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted,**--These all lend perspective to the people’s troubles.

The Lord gives three descriptions of Zion, and follows with three commands to behold. As we meditate on the three commands, we’ll see that they align with these three characterizations, which thus form an introductory summary.

**afflicted**—Just before his first word to Mother Zion, Isaiah wrote,

Isa 49:13 Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath **comforted** his people, and will have mercy upon his **afflicted**.

This verse also anticipates the third characterization of Zion as “not comforted.” Recall that Mother Zion entered the conversation in protest against the promise of the Lord’s blessing to his Servant in

49:1-13. He promises the Servant that after being rejected, the Servant will be the means of bring both Israel and the nations to faith, and in particular of bring comfort and mercy to his afflicted people. Mother Zion finds this incredible:

Isa 49:14 But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.

In these three “beholds,” the Lord is reminding her of what he already said: she was afflicted and not comforted, but her affliction will end, and he will comfort her.

**tossed with tempest**—This expression represents a single Hebrew word, which appears only 15 times in the entire OT. Four of those are in a single book, Jonah, which is dated by the writer of the book of Kings to the earlier part of the reign of Jeroboam II of Israel, about 780 BC.

2Ki 14:25 [Jeroboam II] restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which *was* of Gathhepher.

With the possible exception of Obadiah and Joel, whose dates are uncertain, Jonah is the earliest of the writing prophets. Isaiah’s call (ch. 6) was in “the year that King Uzziah died,” 740 BC, just 40 years later. Could Isaiah have Jonah in mind here? Observe:

- Kings calls Jonah “God’s servant.” We have seen that Isaiah’s description of the Servant shifts back and forth from the nation to the Messiah. In particular, the co-occurrence of “afflicted” and “comforted” is very rare, appearing only here, Isa 49:13, and later in Lam 1:9. The reference in 49:13 is at the end of one of the Servant songs.
- Jonah’s career reflects the nation’s history: rebellion, met with God’s chastisement, but then restoration.

**not comforted**—Like “afflicted,” this term recalls the last verse before Mother Zion’s protest. Isaiah uses this verb more than any other OT book, 17/55, and all but two of Isaiah’s uses are in the second half of the book, which begins:

Isa 40:1-2 Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. 2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD’S hand double for all her sins.

There, the leading theme of her comfort is that “her warfare is accomplished,” and we shall see that this theme is the heart of her comfort here.

### **11-14, God will give prosperity.**

The first characterization of the woman was as “afflicted” עָנִי, which is most often (59x out of 82x) translated “poor” in the AV. This impoverished woman is to behold three forms of prosperity: material, familial, and political. The first of these is particularly relevant to a poor person: the very walls of the city are resplendent with precious stones.

**behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. 12 And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones.**--Precious stones form key architectural elements of the city. The focus is likely on Mother



Zion, of whom the Lord previously wrote,

Isa 49:16 Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of *my* hands; thy walls *are* continually before me.

Even when those walls were scattered in shambles by the Babylonians, the Lord preserved in his mind a memory and a future purpose for them, and here promises to rebuild the city, no longer with the limestone common in the hill country of Judaea, but with sparkling jewels.

There is further imagery behind this picture of a city built of jewels, and understanding it will encourage us.

The reference to a multitude of different precious stones would naturally bring to the mind of Isaiah and his readers the design of the priestly breastplate in the tabernacle, the only earlier reference to such a collection:

Exod 28:9 And thou shalt take two onyx stones, and grave on them **the names of the children of Israel**: 10 Six of their names on one stone, and *the other* six names of the rest on the other stone, according to their birth. 11 With the work of an engraver in stone, *like* the engravings of a signet, shalt thou engrave the two stones with the names of the children of Israel: thou shalt make them to be set in ouches of gold. 12 And thou shalt put the two stones upon the shoulders of the ephod *for* stones of memorial unto the children of Israel: and Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD upon his two shoulders for a memorial. ... 17 And thou shalt set in it settings of stones, *even* four rows of stones: *the first* row *shall be* a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle: *this shall be* the first row. 18 And the second row *shall be* an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond. 19 And the third row a ligure, an agate, and an amethyst. 20 And the fourth row a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper: they shall be set in gold in their inclosings. 21 **And the stones shall be with the names of the children of Israel**, twelve, according to their names, *like* the engravings of a signet; every one with his name shall they be **according to the twelve tribes**. ... 29 And Aaron shall bear **the names of the children of Israel** in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy *place*, for a memorial before the LORD continually.

In Exodus, each stone represented a different tribe in the nation. This may be why the Lord in Malachi refers to those that fear the Lord as his “jewels.”<sup>11</sup>

Mal 3:16-17 Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard *it*, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. 17 And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up **my jewels**; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

Here is the first word of encouragement that we can draw from this passage. We are precious to the Lord, far more precious than gems are to worldly people. He treasures us and protects us as a king would protect his crown jewels.

- Why do kings like jewels? Because their brilliance shows off the glory of the king.

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11 The modern tendency is to translate the word סגולה, translated “jewels,” as “private possession,” but all of its uses indicate something precious, the kind of property distinctive to persons of high rank.

- Why does the Lord treasure us? Because we reflect his glory and show him to all the world.

Every day, as you make the small decisions of life, recognize that you are God's gemstone, and ask, "Am I making his crown shine brighter today, or am I making it appear dull and drab?"

There is more to learn here. In Isaiah, the restored city is not just the home for the nation, but it is built up of the stones representing the nation. We see here the origin of the imagery of Paul and Peter, in which believers are built up into a holy temple for the Lord:

Eph 2:19-22 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*; 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

1Pe 2:2-5 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: 3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord *is* gracious. 4 To whom coming, *as unto* a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, *and* precious, 5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

This imagery, in turn, provides the background for John's vision in the Revelation of the New Jerusalem:

Rev 21:19-21 And the foundations of the wall of the city *were* garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation *was* jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; 20 The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. 21 And the twelve gates *were* twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city *was* pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

To unpack the expression, then, the Lord tells Zion to gaze upon her glorious new city, made up of her restored children. She has been impoverished and deprived when they were scattered abroad in the captivity. Now they are gathered together, and she is to find her wealth in contemplating them.

Here is another encouragement for us. One gem by itself is beautiful, but it is far more striking to see many of them jointed together, for example on a crown, or on the High Priest's breastplate. Then the light that glances off of one can hit another, and their different colors blend into a rainbow of dazzling glory.

God's gems are best seen together. The real beauty of his people comes when they are united, as stones in a city wall, or in a holy temple. When we join our voices in worship, or our hands in service to one another, or our labors in reaching out together to the lost, then we shine most brightly, and bring the greatest glory to our Lord.

So Zion's lost children will be restored, no longer in rebellion, and will together form the new Jerusalem. The next verse makes this oblique reference to the restoration of the children direct.

**13 And all thy children *shall be taught of the LORD***;--Further insight is available here by distinguishing the predicate adjective (as AV translates) from the predicate nominative. Isaiah and

Isaiah 54:1-17

Jeremiah are the only books to use this form,<sup>12</sup> and Isaiah's other uses suggest we should take it as nominative rather than adjective. The first use is in 8:16, where the Messiah prays that the Lord would protect his followers, those who have learned from him:

Isa 8:16 Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my **disciples**.

In the second, the suffering servant describes himself as a faithful disciple of the Lord who has sent him.

Isa 50:4 The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of **the learned**, that I should know how to speak a word in season to *him that is weary*: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as **the learned**.

Clearly, Isaiah uses the word as a noun, not an adjective. The promise is that all of the promised children, those restored to Mother Zion and those borne to barren Sarah, will follow in the example of the servant of 50:4 and be numbered among those for whom Messiah prays in 8:16.

In 50:1, Zion's children are the very opposite of faithful disciples:

Isa 50:1 Thus saith the LORD, Where *is* the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors *is it* to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.

In fact, the Servant's claim to have the tongue and ear of the disciple in 50:4 stands in pointed contrast to the failure of the nation as a whole. But the time will come when the nation will be a faithful Servant. The physical and spiritual people of God will be one. The tares will be removed from among the wheat.<sup>13</sup>

Ezekiel anticipates this event when he predicts the yet-future regathering of Israel:

Eze 20:34-40 And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. 35 And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. 36 Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord GOD. 37 And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: 38 And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and **they shall not enter into the land of Israel**: and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD. 39 As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord GOD; Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter *also*, if ye will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols. 40 For in mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, **there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me**: there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings,

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12 On the *qittul* nominal form, see Joüon-Muraoka 88 I e. 87 c recognizes geminate adjectives, though it does not give any examples or mention the *i-u* vowel pattern.

13 The emphasis here is a bit different from that seen by Delitzsch, who points to Jer 31:34 and 1 John 2:20, the promises of the internal teaching of the Spirit under the new covenant. That is certainly an important *mechanism* in how the Lord deals with his disciples, but the main point here appears to be the transformation of Zion's children from rebels to disciples.

and the firstfruits of your oblations, with all your holy things.

And Paul looks forward to this day as well:

Rom 11:25-29 For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. 26 And so **all Israel shall be saved**: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: 27 For this *is* my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. 28 As concerning the gospel, *they are* enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, *they are* beloved for the fathers' sakes. 29 For the gifts and calling of God *are* without repentance.

**and great shall be the peace of thy children.**--Isaiah is likely recalling the promise of Ps 119:165, the only other place in the OT where רב (with an a-vowel) and שלום come together:

Psa 119:165 **Great peace** have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.

According to the Psalmist, peace is the natural result of loving the law of God, which (Isaiah promises) will be the preoccupation of Zion's children as disciples of the Lord.

**14 In righteousness shalt thou be established:**--We should consider three details of this clause: the verb chosen, the form of the verb, and the prepositional phrase "in righteousness." (chart)

First, the verb "establish" כון is regularly used in parallel with "build" to add the emphasis of something that becomes solid and stable (see notes). It was said of Heshbon,

Num 21:27 let the city of Sihon be built and prepared [established]:

Note the contrast implicit in God's promise to David,

2Sa 7:13 He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.

What you "build" may fall down tomorrow, but when you "establish" something, you expect it to continue indefinitely.

Second, consider the form of the verb. Who is doing the building? The verb is a reflexive form. The Lord is telling Zion that she will establish herself "in righteousness." AV follows the Bishop's Bible, and all recent translations emend the text.

Third, attend to the prepositional phrase. Often, the meaning of a preposition depends on the verb with which it is used. The semantic unit is actually the verb and the preposition together, something that Indoeuropean languages (Greek, German) represent by making the preposition part of some verbs. With the verb כון, the preposition ב־ regularly has an instrumental meaning:

Pro 16:12 *It is* an abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne is **established by righteousness** בצדקה.

Pro 24:3 Through wisdom בהכמה is an house builded; and **by understanding** בתבונה **it is established**:

Hab 2:12 Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood בדמים, and **stablisheth a city by iniquity** בעולה!

In each of these cases it refers to the character of the one who is doing the building.

Taken together, these insights show that the sentence means that restored Zion will make her situation secure by the righteousness that she displays. There is no condition here. God is not saying, “OK, I’m giving you another chance: don’t mess it up.” Her righteousness, and the resulting security, is part of what he promises her.

Note the sequence (chart):

- vv. 11-12, God sovereignly restores the ruined city, bringing the various tribes together to form a beautiful unity that anticipates the body of Christ.
- v. 13, the children who are part of this glorious city are the Lord’s disciples, diligently hearing and faithfully following God’s word.
- v. 14, by means of the resulting righteousness, the city’s status is made firm.

Once again we see the balanced relation of faith and works that Paul makes explicit in passages such as Eph 2:8-10 and Tit 3:5-8. Our salvation is completely apart from our own good works, but it produces the certain result of righteousness in our lives, a righteousness that God then blesses with security.

**thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear:**--The noun “oppression” refers first of all to extortion or economic abuse. This was Zion’s experience when she was “afflicted,” poor, but now the Lord is delivering her from this condition.

**and from terror; for it shall not come near thee.**--There are many words in Hebrew that describe what we would call fear or terror, but this isn’t one of the usual ones. Its earliest reference is in Ps 89:40 (MT 41), describing the downfall of the citadels of Lord’s anointed (translated “ruin”):

Psa 89:40 Thou hast broken down all his hedges; thou hast brought his strong holds to **ruin**.

This is what happened to the Jerusalem of Zedekiah, under Nebuchadnezzar. But the Lord now calls Mother Zion to gaze upon her new bejeweled city, and promises that it will never fall.

### ***15, Those who oppose them will turn to support them.***

The second characterization of the woman in v. 11 was “tempest-tossed.” We remarked that this word is particularly prominent in the first chapter of Jonah, which is probably the first prophetic book, written perhaps 50 years before Isaiah. Isaiah’s verbal link invites us to consider in more detail the parallel between Jonah and Israel (chart).

God called Jonah to call the Gentiles, and in particular the city of Nineveh, to repentance. Jonah was tempest-tossed because he refused to carry out this mission, but after being delivered from his captivity in the belly of the fish, he finally did what God had commanded him to do.

Israel, like Jonah, had a mission to carry the knowledge of God to all nations. Moses outlined her foreign policy in Deut 20. She was to destroy without mercy the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land that God promised to her. But it was a different story with the nations afar off.

Deu 20:10-15 When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it.  
11 And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, *that* all

Isaiah 54:1-17

the people *that is* found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee. 12 And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it: ... 15 Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities *which are* very far off from thee, which *are* not of the cities of these nations.

Israel, like Jonah, was disobedient. Instead of bringing the Gentile nations into submission to the Lord, she followed after their pagan gods.

The first half of Isaiah describes her disobedience, and warns of the coming captivity, which befell the northern kingdom in 722 BC and the south in three waves in 606, 596, and 586 BC. Like Jonah, she was held captive in a foreign environment.

Isaiah also promised Israel's restoration under Cyrus (ch. 44-45), just as God brought Jonah back from his exile in the belly of the fish. Jonah then went on to carry out his mission. We have already seen God's promise to the Servant,

Isa 42:6 I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;

We will see other promises of this role for chastised and obedient Israel. The second command to "behold" can be understood as an example of this promise.

The Hebrew of this verse can be understood in several different ways, some quite inconsistent with others. My interpretation is the most direct interpretation of the MT as it stands, from which all major translations (including the AV) deviate. (Here, as often, AV's deviation can be attributed to their charge not to deviate from the Bishop's Bible unless absolutely necessary.) The justification for these changes is a bit technical (chart),<sup>14</sup> but we can motivate this rendering by parallels with other texts.

**15 Behold, they shall surely gather together,**--The Hebrew verb means "to live as an alien." Here it refers to non-Israelites coming to live in Israel. The verb sometimes has ominous overtones:

Ps 56:6 They **gather** themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul.

Psa 59:3 For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul: the mighty are **gathered** against me;

That meaning seems to fit here (as most translations agree). The major disagreement is over the next two words, which our version translates, "but not by me."

If this is the correct rendering, the event would be exceptional (chart). Throughout Isaiah, whenever strangers gather to Israel, it is the Lord who draws them. This is the case whether they come to attack:

10:5-6 O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. 6 I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge,

47:5-6 Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms. 6 I was wroth with my people, I have polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thine hand:

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<sup>14</sup> See notes



or to submit:

11:10 And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.

49:22 Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.

If the Hebrew were unambiguous, we would not hesitate to understand this event as an exception. But in fact, the most natural way to read the Hebrew agrees with the other passages in Isaiah. For grammatical reasons, we should translate these two words differently.

**~~but not by me in vain, at my sign~~**--The first, rendered “not” in AV, is grouped by the Massoretic accents with the preceding words, where we can naturally take it as an adverbial accusative, “as nothing”: “They shall surely gather together in vain.” Any hostile intent will be frustrated. In the past, when God brings them against Israel as a chastening rod, Israel suffers, but the time will come when he will bring them and they will be impotent.

The second word is most naturally rendered, not “by me,” but “at my sign.” The sense is the same as in 11:10 “an ensign of the people” and 49:22 “my standard.”<sup>15</sup>

So, like previous texts, this verse promises that God will bring the Gentiles to live with Israel, but will restrain them from hostile actions.

**whosoever shall gather together against<sup>16</sup> with thee shall fall for thy sake to<sup>17</sup> thee.**--The promise is not just that her adversaries will be destroyed, but that those who come into contact with her will become her allies, her friends. When Zion is restored, she will finally become the instrument for world evangelism that God intended her to be.

Thus understood, this verse reinforces what has already been promised to the Lord’s bride:

v.3 thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles,

v.5 and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.

Here we may discern an echo of the second description of the widow in v. 11, “tempest-tossed.” As we saw, this expression is characteristic of the history of Jonah, who lived about 80 years before Isaiah.

- Like Jonah, Israel of old was sent by God with a message to the heathen world.
- Like Jonah, Israel sought to evade her responsibility. To this day, she prides herself on not being a proselytizing religion.
- Like Jonah, Israel was “tempest-tossed” at God’s hand.
- Like Jonah, Israel will one day fulfill her mission to the Gentiles.

15 “by me” would be מאתי with *hireq*, which is Isaiah’s standard form. See in this very chapter at v. 17, cf. also 44:24; 51:4; 57:8. The difference is not just of vocalization; the consonantal text מאתי insists on the *o*-vowel.

16 Gathering against requires על, not את (Ps 59:3). The phrase את גור consistently means “dwell with.”

17 This idiom is attested in 1 Chr 12:19, 20; Jer 21:9; 37:14; 39:9 (though the later date of these texts is problematic)

**16-17a, The Lord's power will overcome their adversaries.**

The third summary of Zion's dilemma is that she was "not comforted." In 40:1-2, her comfort is achieved by telling her that her warfare is accomplished, that is, finished. These two verses amplify this statement (chart).

**16 Behold, I**—The pronoun is emphatic in both halves of this verse. "It is I who have created these things. They have no independent power apart from me."

**16 Behold, I have created the smith**—The blacksmith, who creates weapons.

**that bloweth the coals in the fire**,--He pictures the smith blowing into the fire to make it hotter. The verb is an echo of God's creative act:

Gen 2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

We ought not to be so impressed with those who create powerful engines of destruction, for they themselves have life only from God's breath.

**and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work**;--More specifically, "a weapon for its work," that is, the work of warfare. Note the chain of causation (chart):

- Zion has experienced the devastation of war.
- That devastation is caused by terrible weapons.
- Those weapons are forged by the smith.
- But it is God who makes the smith, and thus is in control of the whole process.

**and I have created the waster to destroy**.--God claims to create not only the weapon, but also the warrior who wields it. Both are alike under his control.

**17 No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper**;--Having firmly established his authority over both sword and swordsman, the Lord now gives his solemn pledge: Zion will never again yield to the force of arms.

**and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn**.--Not only in combat, but also in judgment, Zion will prevail. Anyone who tries to accuse her will be himself condemned.

These two clauses are related to each other (chart). Israel's military troubles have come from her spiritual rebellion against the Lord. Now that the Lord has enabled her to establish herself in righteousness (v. 14), there is no need for chastisement, and she is secure against military attack. Contrast the earlier statement to Assyria:

10:5-6 O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. 6 I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge,

There, because of the nation's sin, God forged a weapon for their enemies to use against them. Now, because they are righteous, they are invulnerable.

## 17b, Summary

**saith the LORD נאם יהוה**--The נאם יהוה marks this as a summary (chart); it may be a summary either of the third section, or of the whole chapter. It fits well as a summary of the whole chapter.

**the servants of the LORD**--Note the reference to עבדי יהוה, following up on ch. 53. This is the first time that “servants” is applied to the faithful, a metaphor that becomes common throughout the rest of the book: 56:6; 65:9, 13ff; 66:14. Already we see the hourglass opening up. Once Israel, the flawed and deaf servant, finds her redemption in the one servant, she in turn becomes the servant.

**This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD**--He sums up the encouragement that he has presented under two heads: the heritage of God’s servants, and their righteousness.

**Heritage נחלה** is something you own that nobody can take from you (chart). It refers to an inalienable possession, typically one passed on by succession within the family. It is closely related to the word ירש, which emphasizes taking possession but without the idea of succession. Together, these words are common in describing the conquest of the land, with ירש being the verb that governs the object נחלה in the expression, “possess an inheritance” (Num 36:8; Deut 15:4; 25:19; 26:1; Judg 2:6). Isaiah connects these two words later:

Isa 57:13 but he that putteth his trust in me shall possess נחל the land, and shall inherit ירש my holy mountain;

We haven’t seen the root נחל before in this chapter, but we have seen ירש, in v. 3,

Isa 54:3 For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit ירש the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.

Israel’s heritage is the land. In the captivity, she thought she lost it, but in fact, God will restore it to her, and far more. Adam was to rule over all the earth, and at the culmination of all things, mankind will be restored to this glorious position. Today, as believers, our attitude should be to recognize our riches rather than scrap in a miserly way with the world (chart).

1Co 3:21-23 For all things are yours; 22 Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; 23 And ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s.

God delights to bless his people. It is not sinful to prosper; what is sinful is to trust in ourselves for these blessings, and to seek them in violation of God’s word, rather than trusting God for them and being thankful.

1Ti 6:17 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

The fundamental sin of the pagans, according to Paul in Rom 1, is that

Rom 1:21 when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful.

In Christ, we are partakers of God’s “unsearchable riches” (Eph 3:8).

**Righteousness** is conformity to an ethical or moral standard (chart). One of the most universal human

traits is the longing for righteousness. We exhibit it by our universal tendency to criticize other people:

Rom 2:1 Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

God has given us a deep, ingrained sense that life is more than pragmatism; that there is a standard to which we can hold others accountable. Paul calls this sense “the work of the law,” which conscience imperfectly but persistently mimics even in the Gentile heart:

Rom 2:14-15 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: 15 Which shew the work of the law<sup>18</sup> written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;

As Rom 2:1 points out, we inevitably fall short of this internal consciousness. There are three possible responses (chart).

1. We can rebel against it, expressing our frustration by flaunting our wickedness:

Rom 1:32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

2. We can try to circumscribe it with human laws, and persuade ourselves that if we satisfy them, we are good enough:

Rom 10:3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.

3. We can “hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Matt 5:6), longing for it while recognizing that we can never achieve it in our own strength.

Our Savior promises those in this last category that “they shall be filled.” God’s whole redemptive program is designed to give us the righteousness that our nature demands, and that our hearts long after, but that we cannot achieve in our own strength.

Isaiah is preoccupied with righteousness (chart). Three out of every thousand words he uses is a form of the root.<sup>19</sup> It was a major theme of the Servant’s teaching in the early part of ch. 51:

Isa 51:1-8 Hearken to me, ye that follow after **righteousness**, ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. 2 Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: ... 5 My **righteousness** is near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; 6 Lift up your eyes to the

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18 “Written” is neuter, agreeing with “work” *εργον*, not the masculine “law” *νομος*. It is not the law that is written on the heart, but moral consciousness, that which it is ordinarily the work of the law to produce. Thus Moule in the Cambridge Bible: ““*The work of the law*” has been explained as if collective for “works;” but this is ill-supported by real parallels. It is better to explain it as “what the law does,” than as “what is done for the law’s sake;” and thus it means the teaching of the Difference of right and wrong (see 3:20). This “work,” done in an intense degree by the law, is done in a lower degree by conscience alone; but the work is the same in kind. The sense of wrong and right, which it is the law’s work to produce fully, is somehow and in some measure, without the law, “written” in heathen “hearts.””

19 Only two books use the root more often than Isaiah: Psalms (0.34%) and Proverbs (0.31%). Job is fourth, at 0.25%, and the next nearest, Malachi, is 0.17%, but this represents only 2 instances in a short book. Isaiah’s emphasis on this word family is another example of thematic unity with the wisdom literature, seen in the many allusions that he makes to it.

heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my **righteousness** shall not be abolished. 7 Hearken unto me, ye that know **righteousness**, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. 8 For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my **righteousness** shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.

The crowning description of the Servant’s work is,

Isa 53:11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant **justify** [declare **righteous**] for the many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

Clearly, his people were not righteous in themselves; he had to provide that righteousness through his prudent action, by bearing their iniquities. But now that they have been redeemed, and become the Lord’s disciples (54:13), they will be able to establish themselves in righteousness (v. 14), working out the consequences of the salvation that God has given them. The capstone on this whole process is the Lord’s declaration here: “Their righteousness is from me.”

## Overall Summary

It is useful to summarize a biblical passage in our own words to focus on its unifying themes. Often, we can build this up following the structure of the text. Let’s do that for the nine individual paragraphs of this chapter, which form three successive sections (see table on next page, and chart).

Now combine the section summaries into an overall summary (chart):

Section Summaries	Overall Summary
1-4, Zion's Attitude: Zion's fear should become joy at the children God is giving her.	God promises to enrich barren Zion by restoring and enlarging her family, and to end her chastisement by making her righteous.
5-10, God's Attitude: God solemnly promises that his chastisement is over and he will bless her.	
11-17b, Coming blessings: God will reverse her poverty, lack of witness, and military defeat.	
17b, Summary: God both enriches her and enables her to satisfy him.	

## Notes

### “Redeem” *גאל* in Isaiah v. 5

Passive describing Israel: 35:9; 51:10; 52:3; 62:12

Verb with the Lord as subject: 44:22, 23; 48:20; 52:9; 63:9

Ptc with genitive referring to Israel: 41:14; 43:1, 14; 44:6, 24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7, 26; 54:5, 8; 60:16; 63:16

Ptc without genitive: 59:20 (but distinct from the Lord!)

Isaiah 54:1-17

Text	Paragraph summary	Section Summary
1 <b>Sing</b> , O barren, thou <i>that</i> didst not bear; <b>break forth</b> into singing, and <b>cry</b> aloud, thou <i>that</i> didst not travail with child: <b>for</b> more <i>are</i> the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD.	Barren Zion is to rejoice at the children God promises her.	Zion's Attitude:
2 <b>Enlarge</b> the place of thy tent, and <b>let them stretch</b> forth the curtains of thine habitations: <b>spare not, lengthen</b> thy cords, and <b>strengthen</b> thy stakes; 3 <b>For</b> thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.	She is to enlarge her home to accommodate her Gentile and Jewish offspring	Zion's fear should become joy at the children
4 <b>Fear not</b> ; <b>for</b> thou shalt not be ashamed: <b>neither be thou confounded</b> ; <b>for</b> thou shalt not be put to shame: <b>for</b> thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more.	This promise should bring an end to her fear.	God is giving her.
5 For thy Maker <i>is</i> thine husband; the LORD of hosts <i>is</i> his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called. 6 For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, <b>saith thy God</b> .	God will protect her as Boaz did Naomi and Ruth.	God's Attitude:
7 For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. 8 In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, <b>saith the LORD thy Redeemer</b> .	His momentary wrath is replaced by his everlasting kindness.	God solemnly promises that his chastisement is over and he will bless her.
9 For this <i>is</i> as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. 10 For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, <b>saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee</b> .	The end of God's wrath, and the certainty of his blessing, rest upon his oath and covenant.	
11 O thou <b>afflicted</b> , ... <b>behold</b> , I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. 12 And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. 13 And all thy children <i>shall be</i> taught of the LORD; and great <i>shall be</i> the peace of thy children. 14 In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee.	The impoverished woman will be enriched with pious, righteous children.	Coming blessings: God will reverse her poverty, lack of witness, and military defeat.
11 O thou ... <b>tossed with tempest</b> , ... 15 <b>Behold</b> , they shall surely gather together in vain, at my sign; whosoever shall gather together with thee shall fall to thee.	The chastised missionary will draw many nations.	
11 O thou ... <b>not comforted</b> , ... 16 <b>Behold</b> , I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy. 17a No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue <i>that</i> shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn.	The suffering victim will be triumphant over every foe.	
17b This <i>is</i> the <b>heritage</b> of the servants of the LORD, and their <b>righteousness</b> <i>is</i> of me, saith the LORD.	Summary: God both enriches her and enables her to satisfy him.	

Alternative sense “pollute”: 59:3; 63:3

### Lord of Hosts v. 5

Cross (CMHE p. 70) traces the title back to a sentence name, “he who causes to be the hosts [of heaven], and thus takes צבאות as referring in the first instance to the heavenly host. However, Hartley



in TWOT notes that in reference to the heavenly bodies, the expression is always singular.

Israel's human armies are sometimes described in the plural, reflecting their tribal distinctions and the militia-like character of Israel's early military exploits in the wilderness and down to the time of David. All 22 instances of צבא in the Pentateuch, including instances in Exodus, Numbers, and Deut, are with reference to the nation.

Exo 6:26 These *are* that Aaron and Moses, to whom the LORD said, Bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt according to **their armies**.

Num 1:52 And the children of Israel shall pitch their tents, every man by his own camp, and every man by his own standard, throughout their **hosts**. [so 16x throughout Numbers]

Deu 20:9 And it shall be, when the officers have made an end of speaking unto the people, that they shall make captains of the armies to lead the people.

Psa 44:9 But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame; and goest not forth with our **armies**.

Most often, the hosts are called "their hosts," that is, the hosts of Israel. But twice the Lord claims possession of the hosts of Israel:

Exo 7:4 But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth **mine armies**, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments.

Exo 12:41 And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all **the hosts of the LORD** went out from the land of Egypt.

But later in the monarchy, they form a single host:

2Ch 26:11 Moreover Uzziah had an **host** of fighting men, that went out to war by bands, according to the number of their account by the hand of Jeiel the scribe and Maaseiah the ruler, under the hand of Hananiah, *one* of the king's captains.

How about the angels? Micaiah refers to them in the singular:

1Ki 22:19 And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left. (= 2Ch 18:18)

Are they ever referred to in the plural? Two instances might be cited, but both are questionable.

Psa 103:20-22 Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. 21 Bless ye the LORD, **all ye his hosts**; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure. 22 Bless the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.

v.21 is ambiguous in reference. Angels are indeed in view in v. 20, but v. 22 expands to all his works, and 21 may well include his faithful human followers as well as the angels.

Psa 148:2 Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts.

Here the parallelism makes "angels" the most natural referent for "hosts," but the Hebrew text is

## Isaiah 54:1-17

ambiguous. The *ketib* (represented by the consonantal text) is singular, but the *qere* is plural.

In summary,

- Heavenly bodies form a single host, as do (arguably) the angels.
- Israel’s tribes are viewed as a set of hosts (plural), especially in the account of the wanderings in Numbers. This is the first reference to the plural.
- When we first hear of “the Lord of Hosts” (1 Sam 1:11), it is most natural to understand the reference as being first of all to Israel’s armies, whom he has led out of Egypt and in conquest into the land. It would be natural to extend the plural to include the heavenly host who fight for Israel (cf. Josh 10:12,13; Judg 5:20), but (*pace* Cross), the main reference must be to the nation, with strong echos of the exodus.

### “Forsake” עָזַב in Isaiah

The verb appears 23x in Isaiah. Who forsakes whom? Rows are subject, cols object. Red references are negatives, e.g., “I will not forsake...”

	Israel	God	Land of Israel	Other Land	Other (often metaphorical)
Men		1:4, 28; 65:11		17:9b	10:3; 55:7; <b>58:2</b>
God	<b>41:17; 42:16</b> ; 49:14; 54:7				
passive	60:15; <b>62:4</b>		6:12; 17:2; 27:10; 32:14; <b>62:12</b>	7:16; 17:9a	10:14; 18:6; 54:6

### “Mercy” in Hebrew

	Total #	Other words	LXX	Mercy	Mercies	Merciful
רחם Strong 7356	42	Bowels, compassions	Ελεος 6, ελεεω 25	4	26	
חסד Strong 2617	249	Lovingkindness	Ελεος 202	137	9	5
חֲנּוּן Strong 2603	75	Grace, favor	Ελεεω, ελεος	16		12
כפרת Strong 3727	27	Tech'l term for the lid of the Ark		27		

### Covenant of Peace

#### Levitical Reference

Num 25:6-13 And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a

Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who *were* weeping *before* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 7 And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw *it*, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand; 8 And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel. 9 And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand. 10 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 11 Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy. 12 Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him **my covenant of peace**: 13 And he shall have it, and his seed after him, *even* the **covenant of an everlasting priesthood** = Exod 40:15; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.

*This is בריתי שלום, not ברית שלומי as in our text. The sense seems to be that peace is the covenant. Milgrom, following Ibn Ezra and Abravanel, suggests that the “peace” is protection from vengeance from Zimri’s clan. Cf. also Ezek 34 below, where “covenant of peace” = “protection from wild beasts.” But the shift to “my peace” in Isa suggests that the violence in view there is from the Lord rather than from external causes.*

Mal 2:5 My **covenant** was with him **of life and peace**; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name.

*Mal refers to Levi in general, but clearly the reference is to Phinehas. “Life” here would support the idea that he is being protected.*

*Jer 33:17-22 makes the priestly ministry of the Levites coterminous with that of David’s Heir, and with the continuation of the temporal order of day and night. So, with Payne, we should understand these promises as enduring through the Millennium.*

## Other Divine Covenants

Eze 34:23-25 And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, *even* my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. 24 And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken *it*. 25 And I will make with them a **covenant of peace**, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.

Eze 37:21-26 And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: 22 And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: 23 Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. 24 And David my servant *shall be* king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. 25 And they shall dwell in the

land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, *even* they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David *shall be* their prince for ever. 26 Moreover I will make a **covenant of peace** with them; it shall be an **everlasting covenant** with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore.

## Covenant among Nations

“Peace” and “covenant” are often used in parallel, because peace is the result that comes from covenant, and to break peace is to break covenant.

Jos 9:15 And Joshua made **peace** with them, and made a **league** with them, to let them **live**:

1Ki 5:12 And the LORD gave Solomon wisdom, as he promised him: and there was **peace** between Hiram and Solomon; and they two made a **league** together.

Psa 55:20 He hath put forth his hands against such as be at **peace** with him: he hath broken his **covenant**.

Oba 1:7 All the men of thy **confederacy** have brought thee *even* to the border: the men that were at **peace** with thee have deceived thee, *and* prevailed against thee; *they that eat* thy bread have laid a wound under thee: *there is* none understanding in him.

## Reflexes of גער

	απειλη	Επιτιμω, επιτιμησις
גער , גערה	4	15
Total	23	20

## Precious Stones in Scripture

### Physical References

First is

Gen 2:11-12 The name of the first *is* Pison: that *is* it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where *there is* gold; 12 And the gold of that land *is* good: there *is* bdellium and the onyx stone.

### Description of a Glorious Person

Eze 28:13 Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone *was* thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold:

Sol 5:14-15 His hands *are as* gold rings set with the beryl: his belly *is as* bright ivory overlaid *with* sapphires. 15 His legs *are as* pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance *is as* Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.

## Description of God

Exo 24:10 And they saw the God of Israel: and *there was* under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in *his* clearness.

Eze 1:26 And above the firmament that *was* over their heads *was* the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne *was* the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.

Eze 10:1 Then I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubims there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne.

Rev 4:3 And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and *there was* a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

## Characteristic of the People of God

Exod 28:9 And thou shalt take two onyx stones, and grave on them the names of the children of Israel: 10 Six of their names on one stone, and *the other* six names of the rest on the other stone, according to their birth. 11 With the work of an engraver in stone, *like* the engravings of a signet, shalt thou engrave the two stones with the names of the children of Israel: thou shalt make them to be set in ouches of gold. 12 And thou shalt put the two stones upon the shoulders of the ephod *for* stones of memorial unto the children of Israel: and Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD upon his two shoulders for a memorial. ... 17 And thou shalt set in it settings of stones, *even* four rows of stones: *the first* row *shall be* a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle: *this shall be* the first row. 18 And the second row *shall be* an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond. 19 And the third row a ligure, an agate, and an amethyst. 20 And the fourth row a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper: they shall be set in gold in their inclosings. 21 And the stones shall be with the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, *like* the engravings of a signet; every one with his name shall they be according to the twelve tribes. ... 29 And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy *place*, for a memorial before the LORD continually.

Mal 3:16-17 Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard *it*, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. 17 And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

## The New Jerusalem

Isa 54:11-12 O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, *and* not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. 12 And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones.

Rev 21:19-21 And the foundations of the wall of the city *were* garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation *was* jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; 20 The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. 21 And the twelve gates *were* twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city *was* pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

## The verbs כּוּן and בּנָה

These often appear together.

## Parallelism

In these instances, the two words are applied to the same activity, usually in poetic parallelism. As the more common word (377x vs. 219x), בּנָה is usually first, and כּוּן would have a more specific sense, but note Ps 89:4. (Yet there the objects of the verbs are different.)

## Same Object

This construction is common in speaking of cities or houses:

Pro 24:3 Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established:

Num 21:27 Wherefore they that speak in proverbs say, Come into Heshbon, let the city of Sihon be built and prepared:

Hab 2:12 Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity!

Zech 5:11 And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base.

## Related Objects

Altar and sacrifice.

Num 23:1 And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven oxen and seven rams.

Num 23:29 And Balaam said unto Balak, Build me here seven altars, and prepare me here seven bullocks and seven rams.

Immaterial things



Psalm 89:2 For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.

Psalm 89:4 Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah.

### **K-Q as evidence for similarity**

2 Chronicles 33:16 And he repaired *ketiv* כִּוֵּן , *qere* בִּנְה the altar of the LORD, and sacrificed thereon peace offerings and thank offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel.

### **כִּוֵּן as preparation for בִּנְה**

Proverbs 24:27 Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house.

1 Kings 5:18 And Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders did hew *them*, and the stonemasons: so they prepared timber and stones to build the house.

1 Chronicles 22:5 And David said, Solomon my son *is* young and tender, and the house *that is* to be builded for the LORD *must be* exceeding magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries: I will *therefore* now make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death.

1 Chronicles 28:2 Then David the king stood up upon his feet, and said, Hear me, my brethren, and my people: *As for me*, I *had* in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building:

1 Chronicles 29:16 O LORD our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thine holy name *cometh* of thine hand, and *is* all thine own.

1 Chronicles 29:19 And give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, and thy statutes, and to do all *these things*, and to build the palace, *for* the which I have made provision.

2 Chronicles 2:9 Even to prepare me timber in abundance: for the house which I am about to build *shall be* wonderful great.

2 Chronicles 3:1 Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where *the LORD* appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite.

### **כִּוֵּן as perfection of בִּנְה**

Characteristic of David's throne: How does the poetic parallelism of these terms possibly affect their interaction in this context?

2Sa 7:13 He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for

ever.

1 Chronicles 17:12 He shall build me an house, and I will stablish his throne for ever.

1 Chronicles 22:10 He shall build an house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I *will be* his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever.

### **Translation of 54:15**

The common translation of אפס מאותי as “apart from me” is questionable for three reasons.

1. אפס carries the disjunctive accent *tipxa*. Elsewhere (at least in Isaiah) where it negates a following clause, it has a conjunctive accent. This suggests that it should be associated with the first part of the verse, as an adverbial accusative: “They shall surely gather together in vain.”
2. The most natural understanding of את in the construction מאותי is not the preposition “with,” which takes an *i* vowel. Oswalt suggests that the misspelling with an *o* vowel is common in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, but we are a hundred years earlier, in Isaiah, and v. 17 (also 51:4) has exactly the form we would expect if this were “from me.” On the face of it, the form is either the marker of the direct object, or the noun “sign.” In context, the latter is by far the more likely.
3. Isaiah’s general teaching is that whenever strangers gather to Israel, whether in adversity (10:5,6; 47:6) or in submission (11:10; 49:22), it is the Lord who draws them. It would be singular here to read that when they gather, it is *not* his influence that draws them.

If we understand the last clause עלֶיךָ יִפְּלוּ as “they shall fall to you,” as many commentators suggest, then understanding the first half of the verse as emphasizing rather than denying the Lord’s agency in their coming makes good sense.

Isa 45:14 Thus saith the LORD, The labour of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, *saying*, Surely God *is* in thee; and *there is* none else, *there is* no God.

Targum: Isa 54:15 Behold, the captivity of thy people shall surely be gathered unto thee: in the end, the kings of the nations, who are gathered together to oppress thee, Jerusalem, shall be cast down in the midst of thee.