

# ISAIAH<sup>a</sup> 17

Hurt or Heal<sup>b</sup>  
(Isaiah 19-20)

Isaiah 19-20 Revised Standard Version (RSV)

## An Oracle concerning Egypt

19 An oracle concerning Egypt.

Behold, the Lord is riding on a swift cloud  
and comes to Egypt;  
and the idols of Egypt will tremble at his presence,  
and the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>2</sup> And I will stir up Egyptians against Egyptians,  
and they will fight, every man against his brother  
and every man against his neighbor,  
city against city, kingdom against kingdom;<sup>d</sup>

<sup>3</sup> and the spirit of the Egyptians within them will be emptied out,  
and I will confound their plans;  
and they will consult the idols and the sorcerers,  
and the mediums and the wizards;<sup>e</sup>

<sup>4</sup> and I will give over the Egyptians  
into the hand of a hard master;  
and a fierce king will rule over them,  
says the Lord, the Lord of hosts.<sup>f</sup>

<sup>5</sup> And the waters of the Nile will be dried up,  
and the river will be parched and dry;<sup>g</sup>

<sup>6</sup> and its canals will become foul,  
and the branches of Egypt's Nile will diminish and dry up,  
reeds and rushes will rot away.<sup>h</sup>

<sup>7</sup> There will be bare places by the Nile,  
on the brink of the Nile,  
and all that is sown by the Nile will dry up,  
be driven away, and be no more.<sup>i</sup>

<sup>8</sup> The fishermen will mourn and lament,  
all who cast hook in the Nile;  
and they will languish  
who spread nets upon the water.<sup>j</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The workers in combed flax will be in despair,  
and the weavers of white cotton.<sup>k</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Those who are the pillars of the land will be crushed,  
and all who work for hire will be grieved.<sup>l</sup>

<sup>11</sup> The princes of Zo'an are utterly foolish;  
the wise counselors of Pharaoh give stupid counsel.

How can you say to Pharaoh,  
"I am a son of the wise,  
a son of ancient kings"?<sup>m</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Where then are your wise men?  
Let them tell you and make known

what the Lord of hosts has purposed against Egypt.<sup>n</sup>  
13 The princes of Zo'an have become fools,  
and the princes of Memphis are deluded;  
those who are the cornerstones of her tribes  
have led Egypt astray.<sup>o</sup>  
14 The Lord has mingled within her  
a spirit of confusion;  
and they have made Egypt stagger in all her doings  
as a drunken man staggers in his vomit.<sup>p</sup>  
15 And there will be nothing for Egypt  
which head or tail, palm branch or reed, may do.<sup>q</sup>

16 In that day the Egyptians will be like women, and tremble with fear before the hand which the Lord of hosts shakes over them.<sup>r</sup> 17 And the land of Judah will become a terror to the Egyptians; every one to whom it is mentioned will fear because of the purpose which the Lord of hosts has purposed against them.<sup>s</sup>

## Egypt, Assyria, and Israel Blessed

18 In that day there will be five cities in the land of Egypt which speak the language of Canaan and swear allegiance to the Lord of hosts. One of these will be called the City of the Sun.<sup>t</sup>

19 In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the Lord at its border.<sup>u</sup> 20 It will be a sign and a witness to the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt; when they cry to the Lord because of oppressors he will send them a savior, and will defend and deliver them.<sup>v</sup> 21 And the Lord will make himself known to the Egyptians; and the Egyptians will know the Lord in that day and worship with sacrifice and burnt offering, and they will make vows to the Lord and perform them.<sup>w</sup> 22 And the Lord will smite Egypt, smiting and healing, and they will return to the Lord, and he will heed their supplications and heal them.<sup>x</sup>

23 In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian will come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians.<sup>y</sup>

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

## Isaiah Dramatizes the Conquest of Egypt and Ethiopia

20 In the year that the commander in chief, who was sent by Sargon the king of Assyria, came to Ashdod and fought against it and took it,<sup>bb</sup> — 2 at that time the Lord had spoken by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, "Go, and loose the sackcloth from your loins and take off your shoes from your feet," and he had done so, walking naked and barefoot<sup>cc</sup> — 3 the Lord said, "As my servant Isaiah has walked naked and barefoot for three years as a sign and a portent against Egypt and Ethiopia,<sup>dd</sup> 4 so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians captives and the Ethiopians exiles, both the young and the old, naked and barefoot, with buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt.<sup>ee</sup> 5 Then they shall be dismayed and confounded because of Ethiopia their hope and of Egypt their boast.<sup>ff</sup> 6 And the inhabitants of this coastland will say in that day, 'Behold, this is what has happened to those in whom we hoped and to whom we fled for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria! And we, how shall we escape?'"<sup>gg</sup>

1. In what three ways will Egypt suffer collapse in verses 1-15?

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<sup>a</sup> The Titles of the lessons in this study are borrowed from those given by **Jhan Moskowitz** of Jews for Jesus to the chapter titles in his recorded study of Isaiah upon which much of this study is based. I owe a great debt to Jhan, my late friend and brother in the Lord, who was called Home before his time, not only for much of the work in this study, but also for giving me a whole new perspective on the Scriptures and the Jewish Messiah. Jhan's original recordings may be downloaded from the Jews for Jesus web site. <http://jewsforjesus.org/jhan-moskowitz>

Most current translations of Isaiah into English are based on the Masoretic (Hebrew) text which was primarily copied, edited and distributed by Jew known as the Masorettes, mostly from the ben Asher family. These Jews lived in the Middle East, especially Jerusalem, Tiberias and Mesopotamia, between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D., a high point of Jewish civilization in the that region. The earliest Masoretic extant texts are from the 9<sup>th</sup> century. The Masoretic text is similar to other Hebrew texts from Qumran (mostly from the first three Centuries before the Messiah) and others from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century. However, there are other Hebrew textual traditions in circulation prior to the standardization of the Masoretic text. The Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa) is a virtually complete copy of Isaiah from Qumran which has been carbon dated between 325 B.C. and 100 B.C. This history indicates that the accepted Hebrew text of Isaiah was substantially settled well before the coming of the Messiah. The Masoretic text of Isaiah has numerous differences of both greater and lesser significance when compared to the manuscripts of the Septuagint, a Koine Greek version of the Scriptures in common use in the Middle East, where this version of Greek was the *lingua franca* at the time of the Messiah. Indeed, where the Gospels and Paul's letters quote Scripture, it is mostly quoted from the Septuagint. The Septuagint was created among diaspora Jews in Egypt beginning during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus (283-246 B.C.) and was completed by 132 B.C., likely from Hebrew texts which differed from the tradition that would later give rise to the Masoretic text. There are extant manuscripts of portions of the Septuagint from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century B.C. and citations to the Septuagint from other sources from the early part of that Century. The Septuagint was the basis of the Old Latin and Vulgate (the authoritative Roman Catholic Latin translation) translations of the Bible and for all Catholic translations until the middle of the last Century. It remains the authoritative version for Greek Orthodox Christians. In the endnotes for these outlines I frequently quote an English translation of the Septuagint version of Isaiah where it differs significantly from the Masoretic text. The Septuagint is particularly useful for Biblical scholars seeking to interpret the Greek of the Messianic Writings (New Testament) because it is likely that the meanings attributable to words used by the Apostolic writers, who were all most familiar with the Septuagint, would be the same as the meaning of those words as used in the Septuagint.

We must approach our study of Isaiah from the standpoint of humility, and recognize that we study from faith and not knowing all the answers. While there are parts that seem fairly clear, there are other parts that are debated. This study will attempt to identify where the scholarship is essentially in agreement, and where there are debated passages and meanings.

There are a number of recurring images or "motifs" in Isaiah, including (1) the Holiness of God, (2) David's City, Jerusalem, Zion or God's Holy Mountain, (3) a restoration to the conditions of the Garden that will reverse the curse of Original Sin (Gn 3), (4) the "seed" or descendant of Abraham and David, and judgment upon the nations, and (5) faith in God. Isaiah's overall theme appears to be that God will judge sin, but at the end of the day, He will use His Messiah to bring reconciliation and healing and establish the Messianic Kingdom.

While there is some debate among scholars regarding the date and authorship of the Book, this study will assume that Isaiah is the primary author, and that it is relatively contemporaneous with the times it describes. Even if others had a hand in authoring some parts of the Book, or in editing, arranging and copying the Book, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit need not be limited to those men and women who actually wrote the text of Scripture. It can extend also to those who may have edited or copied the original text, those who compiled it, and those who decided which texts were to be included within the Scriptural Canon. There is good reason to believe that Isaiah may be a sort of "greatest hits", with various writings of Isaiah throughout his ministry arranged in the final form to make a point about Judah, Jerusalem, the coming Jewish Messiah and the plan of salvation. It is also likely that much of Isaiah was first spoken, or recited, in the form of sermons or prophetic statements, and then written down and collected into the form we have today.

We cannot know whether we have, in the compiled book, the complete original sermons or poems. Nor do we know the context in which they were preached or recited, though in some cases we can make a good guess about that context. It is possible, even likely, that at least some of them were created in a specific context of time and place, endowing them with a specific contemporary meaning, but that when recombined into the final product we have today, the individual pieces take on a new meaning in this new context. Thus we may find multiple meanings for the same passage, including, e.g. a meaning in the

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original context in which it was spoken (if that can be determined), a meaning in the context of the short term history of the Judah, Assyria and Babylon, and a Messianic or eschatological meaning.

Much of the Book is in the form of Hebrew poetry. While the translation into English causes a loss of many of the poetic elements, some of those that remain will be identified as we go along. One thing that is apparent is that poetry, in Hebrew and English, allows the use of images which can paint a powerful picture of what is going on without being a literal description. Isaiah will make liberal use of these images. When God speaks in verse, it helps to elevate the dignity of what He says. Poetry also casts a much larger shadow than prose. If an historical event is described in prose, it would normally be just a description of that event. But by putting it in verse that single historical event can have a much bigger meaning in a larger context. In addition, verse, even unaccompanied by music, is easier to remember, and recite, than is prose. These two aspects of poetry may help explain why many of the Prophets, including Isaiah, wrote in verse. It is not clear that Isaiah's verse was ever set to music, though music was an aspect of at least some of the Prophets, 1Sm 10:5; 2Ki 3:15. If any of Isaiah's verse were set to music, none of the actual music has survived.

Isaiah himself does not appear in the Book until Chapter 6 when the beginning of his ministry is described. In verse 1:1 he tells us that his ministry began in the year King Uzziah (783-742 B.C.; 2Ki 15:1-7, 2Ch 26:1-23) died and continued through the time of Kings Jotham (742-735 B.C.; 2Ki 15:32-38, 2Ch 27:1-9), Ahaz (735-715 B.C.; 2Ki 16:1-17:41, 2Ch 28:1-27) and Hezekiah (715-687 B.C.; 2Ki 18:1-20:21, 2Ch 29:1-32:33). In 721 B.C., the Assyrian army captured the Israelite capital at Samaria and carried away the citizens of the northern kingdom into captivity. The virtual destruction of Israel left the southern kingdom, Judah, to fend for itself among warring Near Eastern kingdoms. At the time of Samaria's fall, there existed two kings in Judah — Ahaz and his son Hezekiah — who ruled as co-regents. After the fall of the Northern Kingdom, the kings of Judah tried to extend their influence and protection to those inhabitants who had not been exiled. They also sought to extend their authority northward into areas previously controlled by the Kingdom of Israel. The latter part of the reign of Ahaz, and most of that of Hezekiah were periods of stability during which Judah was able to consolidate both politically and economically. Although Judah was a vassal of Assyria during this time and paid an annual tribute to the powerful empire, it was the most important state between Assyria and Egypt. In 715 B.C., following the death of Ahaz, Hezekiah became the sole regent of Judah and initiated widespread religious reforms, including the breaking of religious idols. During 2016 archaeological evidence of these reforms was discovered in Israel, <http://www.foxnews.com/science/2016/09/28/archaeologists-unearth-ancient-gate-shrine-in-israel.html>. Hezekiah built Hezekiah's tunnel, still in existence today, to insure that water was available during a siege, <http://www.biblicalarchaeologytruth.com/hezekiahs-tunnel.html>. He re-captured Philistine-occupied lands in the Negev desert, formed alliances with Ashkelon and Egypt, and made a stand against Assyria by refusing to pay tribute. In response, Sennacherib attacked Judah, laying siege to Jerusalem in 701 B.C. God destroyed Sennacherib's army outside Jerusalem and the siege was broken. The records of royal Assyria state that while Sennacherib captured many cities in Judah, Jerusalem was only besieged, not captured, thus agreeing with the Biblical account. Archaeologists have recently uncovered the ruins of Sennacherib's palace in Nineveh under the ruins of Jonah's Tomb, <http://www.foxnews.com/science/2017/03/06/biblical-kings-palace-uncovered-beneath-shrine-destroyed-by-isis.html>. Archaeologists have also discovered a royal seal of Hezekiah picturing a winged sun which may refer to the events of Is 38:8 in which the sun appeared to move backward in the sky, <http://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-sites-places/jerusalem/king-hezekiah-in-the-bible-royal-seal-of-hezekiah-comes-to-light/>. After being saved from the Assyrians, Judah survived until c. 600 B.C. when the Babylonians destroyed the City and carried the leaders into exile. The Exiles were first allowed to return to Jerusalem in 539 B.C. after Babylon fell to the Persians.

The entire Book of Isaiah is identified in 1:1 as a "vision" meaning, in a broad sense, divine revelation, 2Ch 32:32, Ob 1, Nah 1:1, Am 1:1, Mi 1:1, Hab 1:1. The visions in Isaiah are not arranged chronologically. In order to understand Isaiah, we always need to ask how the text relates to the rest of the text of the section in which it appears, how the sections of the Book are connected, and why they are arranged the way they are. The central theme of Chapters 1-39 is the "King." Chapters 40-55 have to do with the "Suffering Servant." And Chapters 56-66 have to do with a restored Jerusalem, with the key theme in those chapters being the "Conqueror."

The initial section on the "King" may also be divided into separate sections. Chapters 1-5 describe the overall background of a sinful time in Judah of greed, hypocrisy, and judgment. Even in these chapters, there were hints of a restoration. Isaiah 6 is Isaiah's call. Chapters 7-12 (the Book of Emmanuel) are all about the birth of a son, explicitly in 7-9 and 11 and implicitly in 6 and 10, who will be Emmanuel. Chapter 12 is a hymn of thanksgiving for what God has done, and has promised to do. The other sub-sections are Chapters 13-23 and 24-37.

The **first 5 chapters** could have taken place during any, or all, of the time of Isaiah's ministry and are perhaps best understood as setting the scene, or painting a picture, of the spiritual condition of Judah during Isaiah's ministry. In **Chapter 6**, Isaiah is given his ministry by God, a ministry to preach to a people who will not hear, and who will continue to be estranged from God and His law, that is, an unsuccessful ministry. Indeed, in some way, the failure to respond to Isaiah's preaching will be used to help convict the people of Judah, Rm 10:14-21. Yet even here, there is a hope of redemption for the remnant. The context for **Chapters 7 and 8** are a rebellion by Syria and Israel against their overlord Assyria. Syria and Israel wish to attack Judah, remove Ahaz of the line of David, and replace him with a King who will join them in an alliance against Assyria. Isaiah warns Ahaz against doing so, but Ahaz chooses to protect himself against Syria and Israel by making an alliance with Assyria thus becoming a vassal of Assyria. Thereafter except for brief periods, Judah will have lost its existence as an independent state. In Chapter 7, Emmanuel is referred to, but remains a mystery. We learn a little more about in in **Chapter 8**, and in **Chapters 9** and

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11 we get a much fuller picture. **Chapter 11** ends with images from the Exodus which is the touchstone of the salvation history in the Hebrew Scriptures. By using that image, Isaiah calls up the story of God as redeemer of Israel, and all of its implication for salvation history.

**Chapter 12** is a Psalm of thanksgiving for God's help and rescue and the conclusion of, or coda for, the Book of Emmanuel, which was introduced in Chapter 6. In some way, not clearly defined because this is poetry, the song expresses that the wrath of God is turned away and the relationship with God restored in joy and thanksgiving. This Psalm should be compared to Chapter 6, in which Isaiah himself confesses his sin to God (a man of unclean lips living among a people of unclean lips), and God brings forgiveness for Isaiah through the touch of a hot coal to his lips. Now, in Chapter 12, for the remnant, something of the same sort has happened, the sin of the remnant has been forgiven so that the relationship with God can be restored. Similar to the Passover itself, where God saw the blood on the doorposts and stayed His hand, God will recognize His people and leave a remnant. Although the details are not clear, we know from the intervening chapters that this child, Emmanuel, will be instrumental in this restoration.

**Chapter 13** begins a new subsection of the "King" section of the Book which will run through Chapter 24. The theme of this section is the goyim, or the Nations, including Judah, and contains prophecies of destruction for the various nations surrounding Judah. Isaiah uses these stories of judgment against these nations as illustrations of what God will do in the Eschaton, often signifying the Day of the Lord with the phrase "In that Day" though the phrase may sometimes simply refer to the day to which the preceding verses described, or both. In this subsection judgment upon individual nations are linked with scenes of universal and cosmic Doom and assurances of better times for God's people. The link with 8<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. Judah is not broken altogether, but the historical horizon is extended far into the future. The first nation, in **Chapters 13 and 14**, is Babylon. Isaiah in Chapter 13 prophesies the conquest and eventual destruction and abandonment of Babylon, an event, over a century in the future, in 539 BC, with several specific details about that event including that the destruction will be at the hands of the Medes. During Isaiah's time, the Medes were allied with Babylon against Assyria. The Chapter consists of two poems, vs. 2-16, which do not mention Babylon, and vs. 17-22 which makes specific reference to conquest by the Medes. There is debate about whether the first poem is about Babylon specifically, or has a more general application. Both poems share, however, the fact that they describe the coming Day of the Lord. The end of Chapter 14 (vs. 24-32) and **Chapters 15 and 16** are, on their face, prophecies against Assyria, Philistia and Moab, ancient neighbors and adversaries of Israel. In **Chapter 16**, the exiles of Moab will seek shelter in Judah but be denied because of their arrogance, in this case the refusal to reject Moab's own gods and submit to the God of Abraham. As a result of that refusal, they are destroyed. **Chapters 17 & 18** contain oracles ostensibly about Damascus (Syria) and Cush (Ethiopia), respectively. The first three verses of **Chapter 17** are about Damascus, but verses 4-11 are a poem about the fall of Israel due to the failure of Israel's alliance with Syria. Verses 12-14 are about the Assyrian attack on Jerusalem that failed suddenly. Taken together they are yet another lesson about trusting God rather than trusting in the devices of men.

Jhan reminds us that the meaning of most stories is found in its end. We know the end of the story is Jesus, which allows us to interpret Isaiah in light of that ending. The central theme of Isaiah, and indeed all of Scripture, is that, after the Fall, God still desired to live with mankind, but could not do so because of Sin. Scripture discloses that Jesus the Messiah is that plan by which God will bring us back from corruption and sin, and His anger will turn to comfort.

<sup>b</sup> In **Chapter 18-20**, Cush/Egypt is ostensibly the target. The historical setting is Cush/Egypt seeking an alliance with Judah which is rejected in part because of Isaiah's advice. Unlike Damascus, however, Cush will be preserved and even serve as an ambassador for God to other gentiles. Isaiah writes about the nations which surround Judah, particularly the most powerful such as Egypt and Assyria. But, in a larger sense, those nations signify the world system of which they are a part, and in opposition to the Kingdom of God. Egypt serves here as an archetype of the gentiles generally who will suffer and be chastened by the Lord, but to whom God will send a savior. At least some of them will come to the Lord and worship with the Jewish people. These passages contain much Messianic and eschatological language. Throughout Isaiah, there is judgment and destruction, but there is also hope for the remnant of every nation who come to the Lord. In a sense, Isaiah is here answering the unspoken question, "How can these gentiles, even these enemies of ours, be admitted as equal partners with us in the Kingdom of God."

<sup>c</sup> (1) Is 13:1; Jl 3:19; Jr 46:2, 46:13-26; Ezk 29:1-31:2, 31:18-32:32; Ps 18:9-11, 104:3, 68:4-5, 68:17, 68:33; Dt 33:26; 2Sm 22:11; Hab 3:8; Is 66:15; Mt 26:64; Rv 1:7; Ex 12:12; 1Sm 5:3; Jr 43:12, 44:8, 50:2; Jsh 2:11; Is 13:7. See also, Jr 46; Ezk 29-32; Is 30-31. Egypt had held the Israelites as slaves for 400 years, Ex 1. They were only released by the intervention of God who led the Israelites out of Egypt to the Promised Land after a series of sudden "plagues" that culminated in the destruction of the first born of Egypt, Ex 7:14-11:10. Each of the plagues, except the last (the death of the first born), is associated with one or more of the Egyptian gods, <http://www.biblecharts.org/oldtestament/thetenplagues.pdf>, so that, in a sense, the plagues were a battle between the True God and the gods of Egypt. The last plague, the death of the first born, reminds us of the Akedah, the story of Abraham and Isaac, and prefigured God's own sacrifice of His Son on the Cross. God is riding on a cloud, a reminder of the pillar of clouds by day which guided the Israelites as they departed Egypt. The gods trembled because they feared a second massive defeat at the hands of God. One might imagine one of the monumental stone idols of the Nile valley temples shaking and trembling as God approaches on a cloud. There can be both fear (of the thunder and lightning) and anticipation (of rain in a parched land) from seeing a storm cloud, just as God coming on a cloud can promise both judgment and salvation. Yet Judah was considering an alliance with Egypt against Assyria, 2Ki 18:17. Isaiah's prophecies warn against such an alliance again and

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again and tell Judah to rely on the Lord alone. In this case the prophecy will explain that Egypt will be an unreliable partner. Unlike many other prophecies in Isaiah, there is no reason given for God to destroy Egypt. One possible reason is the history of enmity and slavery starting with the Exodus. Another might be as a demonstration for Judah that human allies are unreliable. When the storm comes, do not rely upon the devices of the world, but instead put on the whole armor of God, Ep 6:10-13.

<sup>d</sup> (2) Jdg 7:22; 1Sm 14:20; 2Ch 20:23; Mt 10:21, 10:36. Egypt would experience dissent, civil war and social collapse. This may refer to the warfare between the Nubians of Cush and the Princes of the Nile Delta in the late Eighth Century B.C.. The Septuagint reads, “And the Egyptians shall be stirred up against the Egyptians: and a man shall fight against his brother, and a man against his neighbor, city against city, and law against law.”

<sup>e</sup> (3) 1Ch 10:13; Is 8:19; Dn 2:2; Is 47:13, 8:10-19; Ex 7:1-13; Dt 18:9-12. Verses 2-4 represent the collapse of the morale of Egypt stemming from its social collapse.

<sup>f</sup> (4) Is 20:4; Jr 46:26; Ezk 29:19. **Cruel Master**, likely Esarhaddon of Assyria who conquered Egypt in 671 B.C. Other rulers potentially fitting this description are Pianki of Ethiopia (741-715 B.C.), Sargon II (Is 20:1), Sennacherib, Cambyses II (Son of Cyrus the Great of Persia conquered Egypt in 525 B.C.), and Alexander the Great (of Macedonia, 332 B.C.). Although in this case it was likely a foreign conqueror who is referred to, dictators often follow a period of social, economic and intellectual collapse as people are willing to forgo liberty in favor of the messianic hero who promises to put an end to a nation’s problems. In all events, Egypt represents the corrupt world system set over against the Kingdom of God. Isaiah’s message is that we should trust in God and not in the world system of Egypt. This chapter reminds us, in Bob Dylan’s words, “You’re gonna have to serve somebody/Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord,” Rm 6:15-23.

<sup>g</sup> (5) Is 50:2; Jr 51:36; Ezk 30:12. The Nile was the source of Egypt’s civilization, wealth and power. The Nile flooded annually spreading moist, rich soil on the farms of the Nile valley. The coming of the floods each year was very reliable, and very rarely failed, *but see*, Gn 41:53-57. God is inflicting yet another plague upon Egypt, this one directed at the Nile itself, and the god of the annual floods, Hapi. The plague will cause economic collapse. The Septuagint reads, “And the Egyptians shall drink the water that is by the sea, but the river shall fail, and be dried up.”

<sup>h</sup> (6) Ex 7:18; Ezk 30:12; Is 37:25; Ex 2:3; Jb 8:11; Is 15:6.

<sup>i</sup> (7) Is 25:3, 25:10.

<sup>j</sup> (8) Ezk 47:10; Hab 1:15; Nu 11:5.

<sup>k</sup> (9) Pr 7:16; Ezk 27:7. Flax is the raw material for fine linen, an important Egyptian trading product. It is interesting to note that Isaiah is aware of the economic and trade situations in the nations surrounding Judah, referring to the wine of Moab and the linen of Egypt.

<sup>l</sup> (10) Ps 11:3; Gal 2:9; Jr 46:2. The Septuagint reads, “And they that work at them shall be in pain, and all that make beer shall be grieved, and be pained in their souls.”

<sup>m</sup> (11) Nu 13:22; Ps 78:12, 78:43; Is 30:4; Gn 41:38-39; 1Ki 4:30; Ac 7:22. The **Wise Men of Egypt** were widely known, but ineffectual to save Egypt, because God confused them. The represents the political and intellectual collapse of Egypt.

<sup>n</sup> (12) Is 14:24; Rm 9:17; 1Ki 4:30; Ac 7:22.

<sup>o</sup> (13) Jr 2:16, 44:1; 46:14-19; Ezk 30:13; Zec 10:4. **Zoan**, or Tanis, was an important city in the northeast Nile delta, one of the first places which would be subjected to Assyrian invasion. **Memphis** was a former capital of Egypt. The Septuagint reads, “The princes of Tanis have failed, and the princes of Memphis are lifted up [with pride], and they shall cause Egypt to wander by tribes.”

<sup>p</sup> (14) Pr 12:8; Mt 17:17; Is 3:12, 9:16, 24:20, 28:7, 29:9-10; 1Sm 16:14; 1Ki 22:19-23; Ezk 29:8-12; 2Th 2:11-12.

<sup>q</sup> (15) Is 9:13-15. “Head or Tail” both the high born and those of low estate are powerless. Why should Judah trust in Egypt to protect them when they cannot even protect themselves? This poem was likely written during the time of Hezekiah who was urged to enter into an alliance with Egypt. The Septuagint reads, “And there shall be no work to the Egyptians, which shall make head or tail, or beginning or end.”

<sup>r</sup> (16) 2Co 15:11; Hab 10:31; Is 11:15; Jr 50:37, 51:30; Na 3:13; Is 10:32. “In that day . . .” Egypt will share in the blessings by fearing the Lord, worshipping the Lord, and by living in peace with Assyria and Israel. Some commentators believe verses 16-25

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describe a time when there is a Jewish presence in Egypt. After the destruction of Jerusalem, Jews sought exile in many places including Egypt. Jeremiah was one of those exiles. It was in Alexandria, Egypt that the Septuagint was assembled. Isaiah is clear here that, just as in Exodus, the Egyptians are aware that God was the source of the plague, and would eventually also be the source of salvation to those who followed Him.

<sup>s</sup> (17) Is 14:24; Dn 4:35. The Land of Judah would be feared. During Biblical times, and except in the time of David, Israel and Judah were never a threat to Egypt. This suggests that these verses are Messianic and possibly eschatological. Israel was not, and is not, a world power, but in the time referred to in these verses, it will be victorious because God Himself will fight for them.

<sup>t</sup> (18) Is 30:17, 45:23, 65:16; 2Ki 7:13; Zep 3:9; Rm 11:11-12:1. There is a repetition of the phrase, “In that Day” several times in this passage, a phrase that often signifies a Messianic or eschatological reference. Assyria and Egypt were the two great powers surrounding Judah. In a sense they are archetypes for all the gentile nations who will be joined with Spiritual Judah through adoption, and grafting in, after the coming of Messiah, Rm 8:14-17, 11:11-31. They will turn to God only after they have been chastened severely. The five cities are not specifically identified and may refer to the Jewish diaspora in Egypt. Jews had begun to settle earlier but many Jews fled to Egypt after the conquest of Jerusalem by Babylon in 586 B.C. (Jr 2:16, 43:7, 44:1). A large center of Jewish diaspora culture was Alexandria in the Nile Delta, founded by Alexander in 332 B.C. The City of the Sun is referred to as the City of Destruction in some translations. It may be Heliopolis (Greek for “City of the Sun”) also called On (Jr 43:13). The Hebrew words for destruction and sun are nearly identical and thus may have been confused in copying or transcription. During the Amarna Period of Dynasty XVIII, Pharaoh Akhenaten (1353–1336 BC) introduced a kind of monotheistic worship of Aten, the deified solar disc with worship centered in Heliopolis. While Egyptian polytheistic worship returned to dominance after the death of Akhenaten, it is likely that traces of that monotheism survived. The Jewish High Priest Onias IV built a Temple to the Lord in Leontopolis (Tel el-Yahudyeh) in 170 B.C. There is no historical record, however, of entire cities dominated by diaspora Jews. The Septuagint reads, “In that day there shall be five cities in Egypt speaking the language of Chanaan, and swearing by the name of the Lord of hosts; one city shall be called the city of Asedec.” It is not clear whether Isaiah is talking about Egyptians, gentiles, coming to God, or simply that the Jewish diaspora returned to God. The Apostle Paul, in Romans 1, expressed how the salvation of the Jews is inextricably connected to the salvation of the gentiles in God’s plan.

<sup>u</sup> (19) Is 56:7, 60:7; Jos 22:10, 10:26-27; 2Ki 5:17; Gn 28:18; Ex 24:4. After Egypt is chastened, it would come to repent and worship the God of Israel. Verses 19-22 summarize in this short passage the elements of being a true believer including (1) worship and reconciliation to God symbolized by the altar, (2) prayer, (3) revelation (make Himself known), (4) service (sacrifices), and (5) divine discipline.

<sup>v</sup> (20) Is 43:3-11, 45:15-21, 49:24-26, 60:16, 63:8, 49:25; Ob 21. Egypt is an unlikely example of gentiles being brought into the Kingdom. But even the Egyptians, the first major enemy of God’s people, can be redeemed for the Kingdom, there is hope for all of us. The Assyrians, the current enemies of God’s people, will also have an opportunity to enter the Kingdom. God will send Egypt a savior when their people call upon Him for aid, Jn 1:12. If indeed Egypt and Assyria are archetypes for the gentiles generally, then these are a metaphor for the way each of us comes to God, and how, with the return of the Messiah every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord. (Rm 14:11; Php 2:10-11; Rv 13. God will both discipline and restore us, Heb 12:5-11. These passages are clearly Messianic and eschatological, and do not correspond with any historical period or event. The Septuagint reads, “And it shall be for a sign to the Lord for ever in the land of Egypt: for they shall presently cry to the Lord by reason of them that afflict them, and he shall send them a man who shall save them; he shall judge and save them.”

<sup>w</sup> (21) Is 56:7, 60:7; Zec 14:16-18; Ec 5:2. We have a God who is approachable, who has shared our sufferings, and with whom we can have a personal relationship (Heb 4:15-16; Ps 57:1-7; Mt 11:28; Mk 10:46-52; Rm 8:17; Jn 11:35; Ac 17:27). During the early centuries after the coming of the Messiah Egypt, and particularly Alexandria, were important centers of Christianity. There remains a large Christian community in Egypt and Ethiopia.

<sup>x</sup> (22) Dt 32:39; Jr 46:25; 1Sm 2:6; Is 30:26, 57:18; Hab 12:11; Is 27:13, 45:14; Hos 14:1; Php 2:10-11.

<sup>y</sup> (23) Is 11:16, 35:8, 40:3, 49:11, 62:10, 27:13; Zep 3:9; Eph 2:13-19. After coming to the Messiah, former bitter enemies may unite in worship of the one true God. The Hebrew word here translated as highway carries the implication of a major, raised road rather than a country path. The Septuagint reads, “In that day there shall be a way from Egypt to the Assyrians, and the Assyrians shall enter into Egypt, and the Egyptians shall go to the Assyrians, and the Egyptians shall serve the Assyrians.” This version would not indicate equality among the Assyrians, Egyptians and Jews, that the Egyptians would serve Assyria as a conquered people which would seem to contradict the next verse. Some commentators assert that this highway refers to the communications that would be established between the diaspora communities in Egypt and Assyria.

<sup>z</sup> (24) Gn 12:1-3. Not only the children of Abraham, but also Egypt and Assyria will be blessings.

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<sup>aa</sup> (25) Dt 31:9; Is 45:14; Ps 100:3; Is 29:23, 45:11, 60:21, 64:8; Eph 2:10; Hos 2:23. My People (Ex 9:1; Jl 3:3) and the Work of My Hands (Is 45:11) are titles given elsewhere to the Children of Abraham. Here they are also given to gentile peoples. The Septuagint reads, “. . . saying, Blessed be my people that is in Egypt, and that is among the Assyrians, and Israel mine inheritance.”

<sup>bb</sup> (1) 2Ki 18:17; 1Sm 5:1. Ashdod is in Philistia and was captured by Assyria in 711 B.C. under Sargon II. The commander was Tartan.

<sup>cc</sup> (2) Is 1:1, 13:1; Zec 13:4; Mt 3:4; Ezk 24:17-23; 1Sm 19:24; Mi 1:8-11. God asked Isaiah to do something that seems illogical or silly, but thereby used Isaiah’s personal demonstration of obedience and humiliation as a way to show the humiliation that Egypt would suffer from Assyria as its people were led away as prisoner and exiles. Isaiah was also speaking to Judah and warning them to trust in God and not in princes and allies. This is the only time Isaiah was asked to prophecy using actions rather than words, though the names given to his children had prophetic meanings. Jeremiah often uses this device, theatrical actions, to communicate God’s message (e.g. Jr 13:1-11). If you simply tell someone something, even if true, it may not be remembered, but it would be difficult to forget the experience of seeing Isaiah naked as a way of expressing God’s message. Isaiah’s nakedness was a prefiguring of the nakedness of the Egyptian captives taken off the Assyria. This prophecy was fulfilled in 671 B.C. after the Assyrian conquest of Egypt.

<sup>dd</sup> (3) Is 8:18, 37:9, 43:3; Mi 1:8-11.

<sup>ee</sup> (4) Is 19:4, 47:2-3.

<sup>ff</sup> (5) 2Ki 18:21; 2Sm 10:4; Is 30:3-5, 31:1, 37:9; Ezk 29:6-7; Jr 9:23-24, 17:5; 1Co 3:21.

<sup>gg</sup> (6) Is 10:3, 14:29-31, 30:3-7, 31:3, 37:6; Jr 30:1-17, 31:1-3, 47:7; Mt 23:33; 1Th 5:3; Heb 2:3. Everyone who lived in the lands between Assyria and Egypt would realize that putting trust in an alliance with Egypt to protect them from Assyria was futile. We should trust in God and not man, or ourselves, for our salvation.