

# ISAIAH LESSON 50

Max Factor City<sup>a</sup>  
(Isaiah 54:1-17)

## Isaiah 54:1-17 Revised Standard Version (RSV)

### The Eternal Covenant of Peace<sup>b</sup>

**54** “Sing, O barren one<sup>c</sup>, who did not bear;

break forth into singing and cry aloud,  
you who have not been in travail!

For the children of the desolate one will be more  
than the children of her that is married, says the Lord<sup>d,e</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Enlarge the place of your tent,  
and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out;  
hold not back, lengthen your cords  
and strengthen your stakes.<sup>f</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left,  
and your descendants will possess the nations  
and will people the desolate cities.<sup>g</sup>

<sup>4</sup> “Fear not, for you will not be ashamed;  
be not confounded, for you will not be put to shame;  
for you will forget the shame of your youth,  
and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more.<sup>h</sup>

<sup>5</sup> For your Maker is your husband,  
the Lord of hosts<sup>i</sup> is his name;  
and the Holy One of Israel<sup>j</sup> is your Redeemer<sup>k</sup>,  
the God<sup>l</sup> of the whole earth he is called.<sup>m</sup>

<sup>6</sup> For the Lord has called you  
like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit,  
like a wife of youth when she is cast off,  
says your God.<sup>n</sup>

<sup>7</sup> For a brief moment I forsook you,  
but with great compassion I will gather you.<sup>o</sup>

<sup>8</sup> In overflowing wrath for a moment  
I hid my face from you,  
but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you,  
says the Lord, your Redeemer.<sup>p</sup>

<sup>9</sup> “For this is like the days of Noah to me:  
as I swore that the waters of Noah  
should no more go over the earth,  
so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you  
and will not rebuke you.<sup>q</sup>

<sup>10</sup> For the mountains may depart  
and the hills be removed,  
but my steadfast love shall not depart from you,  
and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,  
says the Lord, who has compassion on you.<sup>r</sup>

<sup>11</sup> “O afflicted one, storm-tossed, and not comforted,  
 behold, I will set your stones in antimony,  
 and lay your foundations with sapphires.<sup>s</sup>  
<sup>12</sup> I will make your pinnacles of agate,  
 your gates of carbuncles,  
 and all your wall of precious stones.<sup>t</sup>  
<sup>13</sup> All your sons shall be taught by the Lord,  
 and great shall be the prosperity of your sons.<sup>u</sup>  
<sup>14</sup> In righteousness you shall be established;  
 you shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear;  
 and from terror, for it shall not come near you.<sup>v</sup>  
<sup>15</sup> If any one stirs up strife,  
 it is not from me;  
 whoever stirs up strife with you  
 shall fall because of you.<sup>w</sup>  
<sup>16</sup> Behold, I have created the smith  
 who blows the fire of coals,  
 and produces a weapon for its purpose.  
 I have also created the ravager to destroy;<sup>x</sup>  
<sup>17</sup> no weapon that is fashioned against you shall prosper,  
 and you shall confute every tongue that rises against you in judgment.  
 This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord  
 and their vindication from me, says the Lord.”<sup>y</sup>

**Revised Standard Version (RSV)**

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<sup>a</sup> **Max Factor City.** In the prior lesson we learned of the work of the Servant. We also learned that it was a unique individual who was innocent, who listened to the Lord, and who suffered voluntarily for the good of the many. He cannot be Israel, or the remnant, because neither were innocent and neither suffered voluntarily. This lesson will describe the consequences of what the Servant has done in Chapter 53. Chapter 54 can be divided into three basic sections, Family (vv 1-5), Marriage (vv 6-10) and Max Factor City (vv 11-17). In the first section, God commands Jerusalem to sing and shout for joy in gratitude for God’s grace and what the Servant has done for them. The second section is an extended metaphor in which God is husband to Israel His unfaithful wife who is welcomed back with open arms after a brief time of anger and a reassurance that the covenant of peace that God will establish with Israel will be for all time. The last section is a description of the rebuilt Jerusalem which evokes the description in Revelation. God describes this new Jerusalem as a place of security and says that it is the heritage of the “servants of the Lord” referring to the seed of the Servant. Jhan chose the name of this lesson, and the last section, from the reference to antimony, a metallic element, in verse 11 which is also the word for mascara, because antimony was used to make mascara, as well as to color mortar used in building. The implication is that the use of antimony in the rebuilding of Jerusalem was to make the city beautiful to look at. Max Factor is, of course, a reference to a brand of make-up.

<sup>b</sup> **The Eternal Covenant of Peace.** The Servant’s work, described in the last Servant Song (Is 52:13-53:12), provided atonement and reconciliation for the people of God and opened the way for all the sons of Adam to themselves become servants of the Lord (Is 54:17). Because of Messiah’s sacrifice, they are designated “His offspring” (Is 53:10) and participate in the eternal life of the Servant when they are “born anew, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God” (1Pt 1:23). Now, all who are branches of the Olive Tree of the true Israel, both natural and grafted in, the natural children of Abraham and the adopted sons, are part of a single family of God encompassing the nations (גוֹיִם, *goyim*; Is 54:3). Through God’s grace, Zion will be restored, overflowing with people, and through it, all the nations of the world will be blessed (Gn 12:1-3). God

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promises that, just as after the Great Flood in the days of Noah He promised never again to destroy mankind, he now promises an eternal covenant of peace with Zion (Is 54:10), and by implication with all of this single family of God. This does not mean that God's people will not suffer attack or hardship in this life, but those attacks and hardships will not be coming from God (Is 54:15).

<sup>c</sup> **Replacement theology.** The Eastern Orthodox, as well as many Roman Catholic and even Protestant commentators and theologians, interpret this verse, relying on so-called Replacement Theology, as if the barren wife represented the gentiles who will become the Church and thereby be blessed with many children once the gospel has been brought to them. While Replacement Theology is generally associated with Covenant Theology as distinct from Dispensationalism, rejecting Replacement Theology does by itself not make one a dispensationalist. (An understanding of the differences between Covenant and Dispensational theologies is not necessary for understanding this note or this study as a whole.) Replacement theology teaches that the Church is Israel, or replaced Israel, because the Jews did not accept Yeshua as Messiah. As a result, the Jewish people are no longer chosen of God and are no different, in God's eyes, from any other racial or ethnic group. The institutional Church thus replaced Israel as the object of God's promises in the Scriptures. Unless the Jews repent, come to faith in Yeshua and join the Church, they have no future with God or as a nation. This doctrine, though not often specifically named in books of theology and disclaimed by many accused of holding that view, has implicitly dominated Christian theology since as early as the Third Century when gentile Christians began to see themselves as a new faith rather than as a sect or fulfillment of Judaism. The separation between Judaism and gentile Christianity accelerated after the Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.) and the establishment of Christianity as the faith of Empire and Emperors. It is a cousin to the belief that the Jews "killed Christ" and partly at the root of Christian anti-Semitism. One of the so-called Latin Fathers, one of the earliest theologians to write about the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith, St. Augustine (354-407) declared the continued existence and subservience of the Jews to be an act of God's Providence, and an object lesson, showing the truth of Christianity. John Chrysostom (354-407), Byzantine theologian, liturgist and Patriarch of Constantinople, whose liturgy and prayers are still used today in the Orthodox Churches, preached eight sermons to the Church in Antioch in one of which he said, "I hate the Jews, for they have the Law and they insult it." Elsewhere he writes that Jews are "... murderers, destroyers, men possessed by the devil ... They know only one thing, to satisfy their gullets, to get drunk, to kill and maim one another ... " Christian anti-Semitism became a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy in which anti-Semitism led to the persecution of Jews, which in turn led to Jews being isolated and unable to be full participants in European societies. That isolation and rejection in turn was used as "proof" of God's rejection of the Jews. But in an interesting turn of fate, that isolation and lack of integration into European society also preserved the separate identity of the Jewish nation as a people in exile so that they were generally not assimilated and thereby cease to exist (Gn 50:20). For most of its history Islamic discrimination against Jews took a different path. They, along with Christians, were classified as *dhimmi* and required to defer to Muslims in daily life, assessed a special tax (*jizra*) and otherwise treated as inferiors needing protection and guidance. It can be debated as to whether being thought of as clever devils (as in Europe) or inferiors in need of protection (as in Islamic societies) is the worse for the psyche of the subject people. Though the forms of discrimination were different, it served to preserve the Jews as a separate people in both European and Islamic societies. Replacement theology was likely accepted by the early Church, and thus became a foundation of most later theology, because it was consistent with the political and social goals of gentile Christians during the early centuries, particularly as they gained political power and acceptance. As noted above, it also appeared to be supported by the history of the Jewish people during those early centuries of being driven from Jerusalem and Judea into exile throughout the Mediterranean world and treated, at best, as second class citizens and at worst as a despised and persecuted minority. It was also enabled by a method of Scriptural interpretation which was particularly popular during the early centuries of seeing even the most literal Biblical passages as allegorical. Thus, with virtually no support in the text, the "barren one" is seen as the gentiles who would become the church. While, the Bible, with its variety of literary forms (e.g. history, poetry, prophecy, narrative, letter, sermon, vision, etc.) leaves room for allegory and metaphor, the reader must in the first instance, examine the text itself in, so far as possible, its original context and in light of the literary form. Over reliance on allegory can, as here, lead to error. Replacement theology is error for several reasons. First and foremost, it is contrary to Scripture. There is nothing in Scripture to which one can point in support of the proposition that Israel has been replaced, and much that leads in the opposite direction. St. Paul's letter to the Galatians (Gal 3:28) and similar passages are often cited in favor of replacement theology, and while, as stated there, both Jews and gentiles have equal standing before God and come to salvation by grace through faith, that passage still maintains the separate categories of slave and free, male and female, and Jew and Greek meaning that those categories have not disappear even as, despite the best efforts of some, there are still male and female. The prophecies and promises of the Hebrew Scriptures themselves speak of Israel, Judah, Zion and Jerusalem (e.g. Is 11:11-12, 43:5-6, 49:22-23, 60:9-11; Gn 12:1-3; Ps 105; Ezk 35:1, 37:1-14; Jr 16:14-16) and the burden is upon those who would establish a contrary meaning. Isaiah speaks on multiple occasions of believing gentiles *joining* faithful Jews in worshipping the Lord in Jerusalem (). The Gospel and Yeshua came "to the Jews first, then the Greek" (Mt 10:5-7, 15:24; Ac 1:8; Rm 2:9-10). St. Paul, in his letter to the Romans (Rm 9:1-12:1) makes clear that Israel has not been rejected (Rm 11:1-6) and that while they have "stumbled" they have not "fallen" permanently (Rm 11:11) so that the gentiles can be brought into the family of true Israel and thereby cause jealousy among the Jews, in turn causing them to return to God (Rm 11:13-14). If through Israel's unfaithfulness, the gentiles have been brought into the family (riches for the world), there will be even greater riches upon the full inclusion of the Jews (Rm 11:11-12). He describes the "root" of Israel as holy causing the whole tree to be holy (Rm 11:16). And while some Jewish branches of the olive tree have been broken off and gentile branches grafted in to the root of Israel, the unfaithful among

the gentiles can be broken off again and those Jewish branches that have been broken off grafted back in (Rm 11:17-24). Paul talks of a time when the full number of gentiles will have been grafted in and then “all Israel will be saved” quoting from Isaiah (Rm 11:25-27; Is 59:20-21). The quoted passage from Isaiah, in context, can hardly be seen as anything less than a promise of future salvation for Israel. Paul goes on to write, “As regards the gospel [the Jews] are enemies of God [that is they pursue salvation by works rather than by faith], for your sake; but as regards election they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. *For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.* Just as you were once disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, so they have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may receive mercy. For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all” (emphasis added). Paul makes clear that to his people, the Jews, “belong the sonship [or adoption by virtue of being a descendant of Abraham], the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ. God who is over all be blessed for ever. Amen” (Rm 9:4-5; Ex 4:22). The gentiles, however, have the right to receive adoption (**υιοθεσία**, *huiothesia*, a term appearing only in Paul and never in the LXX) as a son of God through faith in the Messiah (Rm 8:12-29; Gal 4:1-7; and Eph 1:3-6 in which *huiothesia* is likely incorrectly translated as “sons” in the RSV). God has promised the ultimate regathering of the Jews, where He will no longer hide His face from them, but will pour out His Spirit upon the nation as a whole (Ezk 39:28-29). This, as Paul wrote, will be national salvation, as the entire nation as a whole believes in Messiah, and all Israel will be saved. Jeremiah 31:35-37 speaks of the everlasting nature of God’s promises to the Jewish people, “Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—the Lord of hosts is his name: ‘If this fixed order departs from before me,’ says the Lord, ‘then shall the descendants of Israel cease from being a nation before me for ever.’ Thus says the Lord: ‘If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth below can be explored, then I will cast off all the descendants of Israel for all that they have done, says the Lord.’” Second, the subsequent history of the Jewish people, who have survived and prospered as a people for nearly two millennia despite, perhaps even to some degree because of, the persecutions directed against them, and have, in part, returned to the Land, points not to the validity of replacement theology, but to the fact that God is not done with them yet. Third, the very concept of the “Church” replacing Israel, the nation, is a misunderstanding of the Greek word (**ἐκκλησία**, *ekklēsia*) which is used not only in the Messianic Writings but also in the LXX where it refers simply to the assembly of believers (e.g. Dt 4:10, 9:10, 31:30; Jsh 8:35; Jdg 21:5; 1Sm 17:47; 2Ch 29:31-32; Ezr 10:1; Ps 22:25; Pr 5:14). Thus, in contrast to our modern understanding of “church” as an institution or building, it should really be thought of as an assembly of people which does not exist apart from its members. Gentile Christians must reject anti-Semitism in all its forms, including the temptation to treat the Jewish State of Israel as something illegitimate or entitled to less sovereignty than any other nation state. To the Jewish people, gentile Christians are called to bless them (Gn 12:1-3) and show God’s love to them “for the sake of the Patriarchs” (Rm 11:28), for without them gentiles would not have had God’s Word or our Savior, a Jew from Israel. Gentile Christians are to show God’s mercy (Rm 11:31), give our material gifts to help them (Rm 15:27), and pray for them and for Israel (Ps 122:6). Gentile Christians are to be watchman on the walls to protect them (Is 62:6-7) and to help with the *aliyah* (immigration) to Israel and the building up of Zion (Is 49:22-23, 60:9-11; Jr 16:14-16). Jews and gentiles are two distinct groups, both grafted into the same tree, which are the covenants and promises given to Israel, taking nourishment from the same root, the Messiah, and drinking of the same sap, God’s Holy Spirit. We do not hold up the tree, but the tree us, and we are forbidden from boasting against or being arrogant to God’s covenant people the Jews (Rm 11:17-18).

<sup>d</sup> **Lord - Yahweh**, or **Jehovah** (יהוה, YHWH), written without vowel markings, unpronounced by Jews and referred to as the Tetragrammaton. See Note in the Introduction to this Study. **YHWH** appears here and in verses 6, 8, 10, 13 and 17 (twice).

<sup>e</sup> (1) Is 42:10-11, 44:23, 49:13, 49:19-20, 55:12-13, 62:4, 66:7; Gn 21:6, 30:1; 1Sm 2:5; Ps 67:3-5, 98:3-9, 113:9; Song 8:8; Jr 10:20; Zep 3:14; Zec 2:1-5, 8:3-8, 9:9; Gal 4:27; Heb 11:11-12; Rv 7:9-10 In that time, to be barren, or childless, was a great reproach and disgrace for a woman and a sign of God’s disfavor for a man. People depended upon their children help them with their labor and support and take care of them in their old age. A family without children would likely be less prosperous because it would have to hire and pay workers outside the family to do the work children would otherwise do. Children also represented the future, so that to say that a person, or city, was childless was also to say that he, or it, had no future. This picture of Zion as a barren mother, or one with a disbursed and depressed family, but destined to have children, is a major motif of Chapters 40-66 (Is 49:14-25, 51:17-20, 62:1-12, 66:7-11). Bearing children after having been barren is a time for great rejoicing and a sign of God’s favor (Gn 16:1, 16:4-5, 30:22-24; 1Sm 1:2, 1:5-6, 1:11; Lk 1:24-25). God tells the barren woman, likely a personified Zion, to sing and shout for joy because even though she never went through labor, she will have many children, more than a woman who had a husband. God had been the husband of Zion (Is 50:1, 54:5-8, 62:4-5; Jr 2:2, 2:32, 3:6-14, 31:32; Ezk 16:32-34; Hos 1:2, 2:2, 2:7, 3:1-3, 9:1; Jl 1:8). But because of the people’s sin, God had allowed them to be taken into Exile. In the immediate context, and as interpreted by the orthodox rabbis, this verse would refer to an uninhabited Jerusalem which was, after the fall of Babylon, to be filled with the returning Exiles. The metaphor is of a woman who was barren, that is could not bear children, and so there is a hint of the miraculous here, that somehow the seed of the Servant from Chapter 53 (Is 53:10) will be the seed of Zion. The *Targum of Isaiah* applies the verse to the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome in 70 A.D. and predicts that there will come a time when the sons of the destroyed Jerusalem will be more numerous than the sons of its Roman conqueror. The Apostle Paul applies this verse to believers in Messiah, children of the Promise (Rm 9:8), who have become free citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem while the earthly Jerusalem is in slavery to the Romans (Gal 4:21-32). Just as God had enabled barren Sarah to

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become, beyond all human hope, the mother of a great nation (Gn 12:2), the children of the Servant will be many (Is 53:10) and the people of Zion will again inhabit the Land as in the days of Joshua. Many of the critical events of the history of God's people were brought about by miraculous, or special, births: Isaac born to ancient Abraham and barren Sarah (Gn 16:1-2, 17:1-6, 18:14, 21:1; Heb 11:11); Jacob, the second of twins born to the barren Rebekah, holding on to the ankle of his brother (Gn 25:21-24, 35:11); Benjamin and Joseph born of formerly barren Rachel (Gn 30:22, 35:18); Samson born to the barren wife of Manoah (Jdg 13:2); Samuel, the son of barren Hannah (1Sm 1:9-10, 1:27, 2:26); the son of the Shunammite Woman who was kind to the prophet Elisha (2Ki 4:16-17); John the Baptist, son of the barren Elizabeth (Lk 1:14-17, 1:57-58); and the Messiah Yeshua Himself, born to a virgin of the Holy Spirit ( ).

<sup>f</sup> (2) Is 26:15, 33:20, 49:19-20; Gn 26:22; Ex 35:18, 39:40; Jr 10:20 Bedouin tents can be easily enlarged by adding material, lengthening cords and putting in additional or stronger pegs. Zion is told to enlarge its tent to make room for all the sons who will be coming. The image of a tent here is a good one because it evokes memories of Abraham, who lived in a tent ( ), the Exodus when the people lived in tents during the escape from Egypt ( ), and the Tabernacle, the tent in which God's Shekinah Glory resided until the Temple was built ( ). In its more literal application, the City of Jerusalem, and its Temple, will need to be rebuilt, and ultimately enlarged, as was in fact the case in the centuries following the return from Exile. But in a larger sense, the Tent of Zion will need to be metaphorically enlarged to encompass the gentiles who are grafted into Israel ( ). In politics, people talk of making a "bigger tent" to hold people who may disagree on some issues, but who will be able to allow the party to win elections. In the *Targum of Isaiah* the dwelling will be enlarged, cities will be inhabited, the people of the camps will increase, and the governors multiplied, but there is no mention of tents, "Enlarge the place of the house of thy dwelling, and from the cities of the land do not keep back the inhabitants; multiply the people of the camp, and increase the number of thy governors."

<sup>g</sup> (3) Is 2:2-4, 11:9-14, 14:1-2, 35:1-2, 42:1-12, 43:5-6, 45:17, 48:19, 49:8, 49:12, 49:18-19, 52:9, 55:5, 60:3-13, 61:5-9; Gn 13:14, 28:14, 49:10; Jb 12:23; Ps 72:8-11; Ezk 36:35-36; Rm 9:25-26, 10:18, 11:12; Col 1:23 This verse might be interpreted as describing a time when the restored Zion will conquer the lands round about making the gentiles there subject to the Jewish people, or a time in which those enemies who have encroached on Jerusalem will be driven off. However, in a larger sense, it perhaps refers to a time in which the "seed" or descendants (זרע, *zera*) will include the faithful gentiles and thus that the lands of the gentiles will be added to Zion. The faithful gentiles are elsewhere described as coming willingly to Jerusalem to worship the God of Abraham ( ). The Eastern Orthodox interpretation is that the larger tent represents the gentile church which will be larger than Israel itself. Hosea and Jeremiah had depicted Israel as the Lord's wife to highlight Israel's infidelity and God's faithfulness (Hos 1-3; Jr 2:2, 3:1-15). Ezekiel used the image to accuse Israel without mercy (Ezk 16, 23). Isaiah uses this theme of Israel as the Lord's bride in a new way, to show God's gracious love toward His people.

<sup>h</sup> (4) Is 4:1, 22:21, 25:8, 28:16, 29:22, 41:10-14, 45:16-17, 47:8, 51:7, 61:7; Gn 30:23; Ps 25:7, 94:6, 119:39; Jr 2:2, 30:10, 31:19; Ezk 16:22, 16:43, 16:60-63; Hos 3:1-5; Jl 2:21; 1Pt 2:6 God promises that the shame ( ) of Zion's youth, and the reproach ( ) of her widowhood ( ), or perhaps better translated abandonment since her husband, the Eternal God, returned to her, will be forgotten, and that she will not be ashamed ( ), confounded ( ) or put to shame ( ) in the future. While not specifically identified, the shame of Zion's youth is likely a reference to the Captivity in Egypt (Jsh 5:9), or following the orthodox rabbis Israel's idolatry, and the reproach of her childless widowhood (Gn 30:1; 1Sm 1:5) to the Exile in Babylon when she had been abandoned, temporarily, by God. But whatever the specific references, God is telling Israel that you can forget the sins and struggles of the past for God will wipe them away, and not worry about the troubles and failures that we all have in our futures because God will take care of them when the time comes. We can simply be grateful in the moment and sing for joy and in praise of the Lord's grace to us. The restoration of the literal city of Jerusalem (c. 539 B.C.) came to an end by its serial conquests by Alexander (332 B.C.) and the Roman Pompey (63 B.C.), and with its destruction by the Romans in 70 A.D. It was rebuilt again and came under the control of Byzantines, Arabs, Turks, Christian Crusaders, Mongols, Ottomans, British and finally, in 1967, restored to the modern State of Israel. Seen metaphorically however, the restoration of Zion brought about by the Messiah is ongoing, yet permanent.

<sup>i</sup> **Lord of Hosts - Yahweh Tsebaoth (צְבָאוֹת)**, see note on the Names of God in the Introduction.

<sup>j</sup> **Holy One of Israel - Qedosh Yisrael (קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל)**, is used as a name for God approximately 45 times, most often in Isaiah.

<sup>k</sup> Redeemer here and in verse 8.

<sup>l</sup> **God - Elohim (אֱלֹהִים)**, the plural form of the generic *el* (אֵל). See Note in the Introduction to this Study.

<sup>m</sup> (5) Is 1:4, 3:11, 6:3, 11:9, 12:4, 41:14, 43:14, 48:2, 48:17, 49:7, 51:13-15, 55:5, 60:9, 62:4-5, 65:16; Ps 45:10-17, 95:6, 149:2; Jr 3:14, 10:16, 31:32, 51:19; Ezk 16:8; Hos 1:2, 2:7, 2:16, 2:19-20; Zec 14:9; Lk 1:32; Jn 3:29; Rm 3:29-30; 2Co 11:2-3; Eph 5:25-27, 5:32; Rv 11:15, 21:1-4 God is here, and elsewhere ( ), compared to the husband of a personified Zion who had abandoned her due to her infidelity, but who in His mercy and compassion, gathered her back to Him (Is 1:21-32, 62:4-5; Ezk 16:8; Hos 2:7-23; Rv 21:9). The promise by God of Zion's permanent restoration is one that can be believed in and relied upon

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because God has “signed” this promise as her husband, her maker as well as the Creator of everything, the Lord of Hosts, the God of the Whole Earth, her Redeemer (her “kinsman redeemer” signifying a close relative,     ) and the Holy One of Israel. While God is the Creator of the whole Universe, He had a special covenant relationship with Israel who He had created from childless Abraham and Sarah and childless Isaac and Rebekah, sustained through the Exile in Egypt and allowed to become a nation through the Exodus. It is only through the work of the Servant in Chapter 53 that sinful Israel can be redeemed by the Holy One of Israel. Only through the work of the Servant can God’s justice be satisfied while His mercy is extended. And while He continues to watch over His people as a whole, He is also active in the life and spiritual formation of each individual believer.

<sup>n</sup> (6) Is 49:14-21, 50:1-2, 60:15, 62:4, 62:12; Ex 20:14; Pr 5:18; Ec 9:9; Jr 44:2; Hos 1:10, 2:1-2, 2:14-15; Mal 2:14-15; Mt 11:28; 2Co 7:6-10 God promises to call Zion back, both literally to Jerusalem and spiritually, to Himself as if she were a young wife abandoned to Exile for a time because of her infidelity (     as cause for divorce). God, with love and compassion will forgive Zion’s infidelity and they will again live as husband and wife. The image is of a man’s first love who, no matter what happens in his life, and what other women he loves, will always remember the passion of his first love. Our sin separates us from God, and brings us suffering. Confession and repentance can restore our relationship to God and, while it cannot make our lives on earth perfect, it can bring relief from our suffering. The LXX suggests that God did not view Zion as a forsaken, disheartened (**ὀλιγόψυχος**, *oligópsychos*, a combination of the words for little and soul), or hated wife, but as one restored to His favor, “The Lord has not called you as a deserted and faint-hearted woman, nor as a woman hated from her youth, says your God.”

<sup>o</sup> (7) Is 11:11-12, 26:20, 27:8, 27:12, 40:11, 43:5-6, 49:18, 56:8, 60:4, 60:10, 66:18; Dt 30:3; Jb 14:13; Ps 30:5, 51:1, 71:11, 106:47; Ezk 36:24; Mi 4:6; Mt 23:37; 2Co 4:17; Eph 1:10; 2Pt 3:8 After the short period of their exile, God will call Zion back and gather her in to Himself. In doing so He will exercise His great mercy (**רחם**, *racham*, from which comes the Yiddish expression “to ask for a Writ of Rachmones”). The brief moment of anger and judgment (Ps 30:5) are contrasted with the eternal nature of God’s promises just as the Day of Vengeance is contrasted to the Year of the Lord’s Favor (Is 61:2). God is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love (Ex 34:6; Ps 146:8; Jl 2:13; Jn 4:2). The *Targum of Isaiah* states, “In a little anger have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I bring together thy captivity.” The *Westminster Larger Catechism* (1647), in answer to question 172, refers to this chapter in permitting one who is in doubt about his salvation to participate in the sacrament of communion in order to strengthen his faith, “ONE WHO DOUBTETH OF HIS BEING IN CHRIST, OR OF HIS DUE PREPARATION TO THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD’S SUPPER, MAY HAVE TRUE INTEREST IN CHRIST, THOUGH HE BE NOT YET ASSURED THEREOF; AND IN GOD’S ACCOUNT HATH IT, IF HE BE DULY AFFECTED WITH THE APPREHENSION OF THE WANT OF IT [Is 54:7-10], AND UNFEIGNEDLY DESIROUS TO BE FOUND IN CHRIST, AND TO DEPART FROM INIQUITY; IN WHICH CASE (BECAUSE PROMISES ARE MADE, AND THIS SACRAMENT IS APPOINTED, FOR THE RELIEF EVEN OF WEAK AND DOUBTING CHRISTIANS) HE IS TO BEWAIL HIS UNBELIEF, AND LABOR TO HAVE HIS DOUBTS RESOLVED; AND SO DOING, HE MAY AND OUGHT TO COME TO THE LORD’S SUPPER, THAT HE MAY BE FURTHER STRENGTHENED.”

<sup>p</sup> (8) Is 1:15, 4:10-19, 8:17, 9:12, 14:1, 26:20, 41:14, 45:15, 47:6, 48:17, 49:10-13, 49:26, 54:5, 54:10, 55:3, 57:16-17, 60:10, 63:7; Dt 31:17-18; Ps 13:1, 25:6, 27:9, 30:5, 92:2, 100:5, 102:13, 103:17; Jr 31:3, 33:11; Ezk 39:23-24; Hos 2:19; *Zec* 1:15; Rm 11:29; 2Th 2:16; 1Tm 1:16; 1Jn 3:1-2 God again contrasts the brief period of God’s anger, literally an “overflowing of wrath,” with His enduring or perpetual (**לְוַיִּט**, *olam*) loving-kindness (**חֶסֶד**, *chésed*) (Is 43:4; Dt 4:37, 7:8, 10:15; Jr 31:3; Zep 3:17; Mi 1:2), which is often, as in this case, translated to the LXX as **ἔλεος** (*éleos*) meaning mercy, pity, or compassion and into the Vulgate as *misericordia* meaning pity or mercy. The translation loving-kindness does not fully represent the meaning of *chésed* which also embraces the concepts of graciousness, loyalty, steadfast love, mercy and permanence. Isaiah compares *chésed* to the love of a father for his children (Is 1:2, 49:14-16; Jr 31:20; Hos 2:25, 11:1) or of a husband for a beloved wife (Is 62:4-5; Jr 2:2, 31:21-22; Ezk 16:8, 16:60; Hos 2:16-17, 2:21-22, 3:1). It is described here as a free gift. God signs this promise in verses 7 and 8 as Redeemer (**גָּאֹל**, *gaal*) indicating not only what He will do, but his close personal and family relationship with the redeemed.

<sup>q</sup> (9) Is 12:1, 14:24, 49:18, 55:11, 57:16; Gn 8:21, 9:11-16; Dt 28:20; Ps 13:1, 103:9, 104:9; Jr 3:5, 3:12, 31:35-36, 33:20-26; Ezk 39:20, 39:29; Mi 7:18; Heb 6:16-18 Outside of Genesis, and a few genealogical references, Noah is barely mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures. This is the one exception which makes it particularly significant. After the Flood, God made a covenant with Noah, symbolized by the rainbow, that He would never again destroy His Creation by covering the Earth with water (Gn 9:8-17), a covenant that He has never broken. God promises the same permanent covenant of peace between God and Zion. After this covenant takes effect, there may yet be attacks upon Zion, but they will not be attacks instigated by the Lord. God’s steadfast love will not fail to insure the effect and permanence of this covenant of eternal peace (Is 42:6, 49:8). Although literally only applicable to the Jewish people, it is a repeating theme in Isaiah that the benefits of trusting in God, including covenant of peace, may be extended to all who believe (Is 2:1-5, 11:10, 40:5, 42:6, 53:12, 60:1-3). God’s covenant with Noah was on behalf of all his descendants, that is, all mankind. The promise that God will never again destroy the world with a flood is a type of the promise made to Zion never to become angry or punish Zion again. The Flood, and the Babylonian Exile, were both symbols of God’s judgment for sin which can give way to peace when the judgment is completed. But peace cannot come before the judgment. The Eastern Orthodox sometimes compare Noah’s flood, which washed away the sin of mankind to the waters of baptism.

<sup>r</sup> (10) Is 14:1, 42:6, 49:10-11, 51:6-7, 54:8, 55:3, 55:7, 59:21, 61:8; Gn 9:16; Ex 34:10; Nu 25:12; 2Sm 23:5; Ps 6:4, 46:2-3, 76:5, 89:33-34, 102:26, 116:5; Ezk 34:25, 37:26; Mal 2:5; Jdt 16:15; Mt 5:18, 16:18, 24:35; Rm 11:29; Eph 2:4-5; Ti 3:5; Heb 8:6-13, 12:27, 13:20-21; 2Pt 3:10-13; Rv 6:14 In the Day of the Lord the old heavens and earth will pass away, an even more complete reversal of Creation than happened during the days of Noah, yet God's *chessed* for His people, and His promises to them, will remain as a permanent part of God's nature (Is 51:6-7; Ps 89:33-34; Mt 24:35). Some translations speak of the "days of Noah" but the Hebrew refers to the waters (מים, *mayim*) of Noah emphasizing that the Flood was a judgment on sin. After the days of punishment are over, God will give them a new covenant (ברית, *berith*) of peace (שלוש, *shalom*) using the same word for covenant as was used to describe the covenants with Noah (Gn 9:9-11) Abraham (Gn 15:18), and Moses (Ex 19:5). It is also the same Hebrew word used when referring to the New Covenant (Jr 31:31) God will make with the House of Israel and the House of Judah. Verses 9-17 can be viewed, alternatively, as one section which describes all the ways in which God will love Israel and keep her safe from all possible threats. These verses describe the fullness of God's *shalom* which goes far beyond the English word peace and implies love, a fullness of blessing and protection from harm. There is a problem with this promise, however, if it was intended to apply to the literal return from Babylon and restoration of Jerusalem under Ezra, Nehemiah and Zerubbabel. As noted in the note for verse 4 above, Jerusalem would be conquered again and again by foreigners and destroyed again in 70 A.D. The Jews themselves would be exiled again for almost 2000 years and subjected to persecution, pogroms and, finally, the Holocaust. The obvious impermanence of the promise if it refers to the immediate return from Babylon is resolved by many liberal Christians and Reformed Jews by seeing Isaiah speaking poetry about an idealized Israel in an idealized world with no relation to historical context or history. But if it is prophecy, then it must refer to a future restoration which has not yet happened. The LXX for verses 9 and 10 reads, "From the time of the water of Noah this is My purpose; as I swore to him at that time, saying of the earth, I will no more be angry with you, neither when you are threatened, shall the mountains depart, nor shall your hills be removed; so neither shall My mercy fail you, nor shall the covenant of your peace be at all removed; for the Lord who is gracious to you has spoken it." Unlike the LXX, the Hebrew more clearly states that it is God's peace that is permanent demonstrating that God, and God's mercy (רחם, *racham*) is the source. There is an inclusion here between the forsaken wife (or broken covenant) of verse 6 and the permanent covenant of this verse. The Reformers used this verse to support the doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints because the love of God is permanent. For example, the *Westminster Larger Catechism* (1647), in response to Question 79, states, "TRUE BELIEVERS, BY REASON OF THE UNCHANGEABLE LOVE OF GOD, AND HIS DECREE AND COVENANT TO GIVE THEM PERSEVERANCE [Is 54:10], THEIR INSEPARABLE UNION WITH CHRIST, HIS CONTINUAL INTERCESSION FOR THEM, AND THE SPIRIT AND SEED OF GOD ABIDING IN THEM, CAN NEITHER TOTALLY NOR FINALLY FALL AWAY FROM THE STATE OF GRACE, BUT ARE KEPT BY THE POWER OF GOD THROUGH FAITH UNTO SALVATION."

<sup>s</sup> (11) Is 14:32, 28:2, 28:16, 29:6, 44:28, 49:14, 51:17-23, 52:1-5, 54:6, 60:10, 60:15-18; Ex 2:23, 3:2, 3:7, 24:10, 28:17-20, 39:10-14; Dt 31:17; 1Ki 5:17; 1Ch 29:2; Jb 28:16; Ps 34:19, 129:1-3; Song 5:14; Tbt 13:17; Jr 30:17; Lam 1:1-2, 1:16-17, 1:21; Ezk 1:26, 10:1, 28:13-29, 40:1-42:20; Mt 8:24; Jn 16:20-22, 16:33; Ac 14:22, 27:18-20; Eph 2:20; 1Pt 2:4-6; Rv 11:3-10, 12:13-17, 21:2, 21:9-21 God again speaks comfort (נחם, *nacham*) to Zion who is pictured as being afflicted, storm-tossed and alone, telling her that she will be rebuilt greater than ever (Heb 11:16). This is a promise that was kept in the near term as Jerusalem was rebuilt after the exile was over ( ) but also one that has not yet been fulfilled ( ), and will not likely be fulfilled until the Messiah returns ( ). The Hebrew (פוך, *puk*) for antimony (a dark metallic powder used for polishing stones and in mortar to color it) is the same word used for mascara or eye paint (1Ch 29:2; 2Ki 9:30; Jr 4:30) and may signify that the walls of the rebuilt city will be of precious stones (ספיר, *sappir*; possibly meaning sapphire though perhaps more practically in this context of building a wall, the semi-precious stone lapis lazuli) set off by dark mortar to make the stones stand out more richly. Although Jerusalem was rebuilt after the Exile, standard materials, not precious stones were used. But the vision of the New Jerusalem to come down from Heaven will be built with gold and jewels (Rv 21:9-21). Zion was previously criticized for dressing up in finery and make-up when the heart within was not beautiful but had rejected God (?Is 32:9-20, 3:16-26). But now, with a new heart ( ), and the covenant of peace with God, the beauty on the outside will match the beauty inside. This verse, with its reference to Zion not being comforted harkens back to Chapter 40 (Is 40:1) as this chapter brings to a close a larger section of the Book.

<sup>t</sup> (12) Ps 84:11; Rv 21:21 The image of verse 11 continues with a description of the precious stones being used to rebuild Jerusalem including its encircling wall. Most of the references to the materials are unknown to us now, but it surely paints a picture of using the most precious of things in the rebuilt city. This is clearly a description of the New Jerusalem rather than the rebuilt Jerusalem before its destruction by Rome in 70 A.D. According to some of the Greek Fathers of the Church, the choice stones allegorically represent those who live holy lives filled with virtuous deeds. The foundations are the prophets, apostles and evangelists.

<sup>u</sup> (13) Is 2:3, 9:7, 11:9, 26:3, 28:9, 32:15-18, 48:18, 55:12, 66:12; Lv 26:6; Ps 25:8-12, 71:17, 119:165; Jr 31:33-34, 33:6; Ezk 34:25-28, 37:26; Mi 4:2; Hos 2:18; Mt 11:25-29, 16:17; Lk 10:21-22, 24:45; Jn 6:45, 14:26-27, 16:33; Rm 5:1, 14:17, 15:13; 1Co 2:10; Gal 5:22; Eph 4:21; Php 4:7; 1Th 4:9; Heb 8:10-11; 1Jn 2:20, 2:27 All of God's people will be instructed (דלמ, *limmud*) by God, and will have great peace (שלוש, *shalom*). The *Targum of Isaiah* specifies the instruction as being in Torah, "And all thy children shall learn the law of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children." Instruction by God would mean that the people would both know how God's will for humanity and want to live in harmony with God by doing His will. Peace would naturally follow from following that will. Yeshua quotes this verse (Jn 6:45) to say that whoever learns from God will become

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the Messiah's disciple. Instruction in God's Word is a critical mission of God's people (Ps 119:105; 1Co 3:6, 4:15; Gal 4:19; 1Tm \_\_\_). Verses 11 and 12 describe the outward beauty of the rebuilt Jerusalem, but verses 13 through 14 describe the reason for the security of the city. Rather than from powerful towers and armies, Jerusalem's security will come from the righteousness of its people because they will be instructed by the Lord.

<sup>v</sup> (14) Is 1:26-27, 2:4, 9:4, 9:7, 14:4, 17:14, 26:2, 33:18, 45:24, 51:13, 52:1, 54:4, 60:21, 61:10-11, 62:1; 2Sm 7:10; Pr 3:25-26; Jr 23:3-4, 30:10, 30:20, 31:23; Ezk 36:27-28, 37:23-26; Jl 3:17-21; Mi 4:3-4; Zep 3:13-16; Zec 2:4-5, 8:3, 9:8; 2Pt 3:13 God promises that Zion will be reestablished in righteousness or vindication (תְּדָאָה, *tsedaqah*), and thereafter will not experience oppression ( ), fear ( ) or terror (\_\_\_; or trembling) because God has declared it and will bring it to pass. The meaning of *tsedaqah* in this context is uncertain. It could mean that the people of Jerusalem are or will be righteous, or that its government will be just. Or it could indicate that its reestablishment is an act of justice and vindication, which is perhaps closer to the overall context which focuses on deliverance. Before the Exile, Jerusalem's lawlessness and failure to trust in God led to trouble and, ultimately, the devastation of the City. So the verse might mean that now Zion will be safe because its people have repented of their rebellion from God and will now trust in the Lord for salvation leaving no reason for fear. According to the LXX, Zion's freedom from fear and trembling required that its people act justly, "And you shall be built in righteousness; abstain from injustice, and you shall not fear; and trembling shall not come near to you." Alternatively, verses 14-17 may be a new poem, this time addressed to the Servant rather than to Zion. In that reading, God will protect the Servant in accomplishing His mission ( ). There is no clear distinction in the text which would support the change from verse 13 to 14 in the person being addressed.

<sup>w</sup> (15) Is 8:9-10, 41:11-16, 43:3-4, 43:14; Ps 37:12-13; Ezk 38:8-23; Jl 3:9-14; Zec 2:8, 12:3, 12:9, 14:2-3; Rm 8:31; Rv 16:14, 19:19-21, 20:8-9 The Hebrew of this verse is very difficult. Variations of the same Hebrew root (גָּר, *gur*), meaning to sojourn, dwell for a time, seek hostility with, assemble, stir up trouble, quarrel, fear or stand in awe, appear three times in the verse. It appears twice in a row in the first line (perhaps literally "gather, gather") and again in the third line. The LXX translates the verse, "Behold, strangers [or proselytes] (προσήλυτος, *proselutos*) shall come to you by Me, and shall sojourn with you, and shall run to you for refuge." In ancient Israel, a resident alien could become a proselyte or convert. The Hebrew word for "resident alien" (גֵּר, *ger*), is a noun that is often translated proselytos (proselyte) in the LXX. The *Targum or Isaiah* paraphrases the verse as "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." The English translations also vary considerably but most carry the sense of the RSV (quoted above), the KJV and the NASB. The KJV translates the verse as, "Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake." The NASB reads, "If anyone fiercely assails you it will not be from Me. Whoever assails you will fall because of you." Other translations differ. The REB reads, "Should anyone attack you, it will not be my doing; for his attempt the aggressor will perish." Tanakh has, "Surely no harm can be done without my consent: Whoever would harm you shall fall because of you." Some commentators view the verse as presenting a contrast to the time when Sargon and Sennacherib were instruments in God's hands (Is 10:15, 37:26). Instead, if there were future attacks on Jerusalem they would not be instigated or countenanced by God. Others, following the *Targum*, view this as referring to the Final Battle in Revelation in which the enemies of Jerusalem (being an allegorical reference to God's people) are stirred up by Satan rather than God. Other Christian commentators assert that opposition to Messiah's rule does not come to God so that any such opposition will fail (Is 41:11-16). The verse is probably best understood, in the context of God's anger being withdrawn from His people, as referring to a future attack by the gathered nations against Jerusalem which would fail because it was not originated by God. Since Jerusalem has, since Isaiah time, fallen multiple times to enemies, one must look beyond a literal interpretation to discover the significance of this verse.

<sup>x</sup> (16) Is 10:5-6, 10:15, 13:5, 37:26, 44:12, 46:11; Ex 9:16; Pr 16:4; Dn 4:34-35; Jn 19:11 God, the Creator, is also the creator of all the craftsmen who create tools and weapons of war. Nothing that one of God's creations could create could defeat the will of the Creator. The LXX translates the verse as follows, "Behold, I have created you, not as the coppersmith blowing coals, and bringing out a vessel fit for work; but I have created you, not for ruin, that I should destroy you." This rendering has God speaking to Zion. The *Targum of Isaiah* renders the verse, "Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his use; and I have created the destroyer to destroy." Unlike the implements created by human workman which are created for a specific purpose, Jerusalem was not re-created to be destroyed or to destroy.

<sup>y</sup> (17) Is 17:12-14, 29:8, 41:8-11, 45:24-25, 46:13, 50:8-9, 54:15, 56:6-8, 58:14, 61:10, 63:17, 65:8-9, 65:13-15, 66:14; Jb 1:11, 2:5, 22:5-30, 42:7; Ps 2:1-6, 17:2, 32:6, 61:5, 71:16-19; Jr 23:6; Ezk 38:9-10; Dn 3:26, 6:20; Zec 1:20-21, 3:1-4; Mt 16:18; Lk 1:54; Jn 10:28-30; Rm 3:22, 6:22-23, 8:1, 8:28-39, 10:4; 1Co 1:30, 6:2; 2Co 5:21; Php 3:9; 2Pt 1:1; Rv 12:10 Speaking to Zion God promises that He will insure that every weapon of war forged against her will fail, and everyone who accuses her will be declared guilty. The heritage or inheritance of Zion is God's protection, and their righteousness or vindication also comes from the Lord. This reference to the heritage of Servants of the Lord, that is to the faithful either of the Jews or perhaps of the gentiles as well as adopted sons, serves as an introduction to how that theme is carried on in the last section of the Book which begins with Chapter 55 or 56 (Is 56:6, 63:17, 65:8-9, 65:13-16, 66:14). This is the first time in Isaiah when there is a reference to the Servants (plural form) of the Lord and perhaps refers to the seed of the servant (Is 53:\_\_\_), meaning all those who are redeemed by the suffering of the Servant.