

## ISAIAH 30 | *Woe to the Stubborn Children*

### *Shelter of Shame*

1 Woe, stubborn children (בְּנֵי),<sup>1</sup> declares Yahweh, who carry out a plan, but not mine, and who weave a web, but not of my Spirit (רוּחַ), that they may add sin (חַטָּאת) to sin (חַטָּאת), 2 who set out to go down to Egypt, without asking for my direction (דָּרֶכַּי), to take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt!<sup>2</sup> 3 Therefore shall the protection of Pharaoh turn to your shame, and the shelter in the shadow of Egypt to your humiliation. 4 For though his [Hezekiah's] officials are at Zoan<sup>3</sup> and his envoys reach Hanes,<sup>4</sup> 5 everyone comes to shame through a people [Egypt] that cannot profit them, that brings neither help nor profit, but shame and disgrace.<sup>5</sup>

### *Beasts of the Negeb Oracle*

6 An oracle on the beasts of the Negeb.

Through a land of trouble and anguish, from where come the lioness and the lion, the adder and the flying fiery serpent,<sup>6</sup> they carry their riches on the backs of donkeys, and their treasures on the humps of camels, to a people that cannot profit them. 7 Egypt's help is worthless and empty. Therefore I have called her, Rahab (רַהַב)<sup>7</sup> who has lain silent.<sup>8</sup>

### *Sudden Collapse*

8 And now, go, write it before them on a tablet (לִפְנֵיהֶם) and inscribe it in a scroll (סֵפֶר), that it may be for the time to come as a witness forever.<sup>9</sup> 9 For they [Judah] are a rebellious people,

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<sup>1</sup> **Is 1:2** 2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for Yahweh has spoken: Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me.

<sup>2</sup> **Is 31:3** 3 The Egyptians are man, and not God, and their horses are flesh, and not spirit. When Yahweh stretches out his hand, the helper will stumble, and he who is helped will fall, and they will all perish together. **Is 36:6** 6 Behold, you are trusting in Egypt, that broken reed of a staff, which will pierce the hand of any man who leans on it. Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who trust in him.

<sup>3</sup> **Is 19:11** 11 The princes of Zoan are utterly foolish. The wisest counsellors of Pharaoh give stupid counsel. How can you say to Pharaoh, I am a son of the wise, a son of ancient kings?

<sup>4</sup> **Jer 43:7** 7 And they came into the land of Egypt, for they did not obey the voice of Yahweh. And they arrived at Tahpanhes.

<sup>5</sup> **Jer 2:36** 36 How much you go about, changing your way! You shall be put to shame by Egypt as you were put to shame by Assyria.

<sup>6</sup> **Dt 8:15** 15 ...Who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, with its fiery serpents, scorpions, and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock....

<sup>7</sup> “[A] symbolic designation for Egypt” (*HALOT*, 1193). **Is 51:9** 9 Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of Yahweh. Awake, as in days of old, the generations of long ago. Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon?

<sup>8</sup> See *HALOT*, 1193.

<sup>9</sup> **Hab 2:2** 2 And Yahweh answered me: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it.

lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction (תּוֹרָה) of Yahweh, 10 who say to the seers, Do not see, and to the prophets,

Do not prophesy to us straightforwardness/righteousness (נְכוֹן). Speak to us smooth/false words (הַלְקָה). Prophecy illusions (מַהֲתַלֵּה). 11 Leave the way. Turn aside from the path. Let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.<sup>10</sup>

12 Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel,

Because you reject (מָאַס) this word (דְּבָר), trust (בָּטַח) in oppression (עֲשָׂק) and crookedness (לִוּר), and depend (שָׁעַן) on them, 13 therefore this iniquity shall be to you like a breach in a high wall, bulging out and about to collapse, whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant. 14 And its breaking is like that of a potter's vessel that is smashed so ruthlessly that among its fragments not a shard is found with which to take fire from the hearth or to dip up water out of the cistern.<sup>11</sup>

### *God's Rest Rejected*

15 For thus says Lord Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel,

In turning back/sitting still (שׁוֹבֵב)<sup>12</sup> and calm/peace/patience (נְחֵת) you shall be saved (יִשָּׁע). In quietness/peace/rest (שְׁקֵט) and in trust/confidence (בְּטֻחָה) shall be your strength (גְּבוּרָה),<sup>13</sup>

but you were unwilling (אָבֵה). 16 And you said, No! We will flee upon horses.<sup>14</sup> Therefore you shall flee away. And, We will ride upon swift steeds. Therefore your pursuers shall be swift. 17 A thousand shall flee at the threat of one.<sup>15</sup> At the threat of five you shall flee, till you are left like a flagstaff on the top of a mountain, like a signal/flag (טֵי) on a hill.

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<sup>10</sup> **Am 2:12** 12 But you made the Nazirites drink wine, and commanded the prophets saying, You shall not prophesy.

<sup>11</sup> This is a very powerful image. **Ps 2:9** 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

<sup>12</sup> **Hos 14:1** 1 Return, O Israel, to Yahweh your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity.

<sup>13</sup> **Ex 14:14** 14 Yahweh will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.

<sup>14</sup> **Is 31:1-3** 1 Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult Yahweh! ... 3 The Egyptians are man, and not God, and their horses are flesh, and not spirit. When Yahweh stretches out his hand, the helper will stumble, and he who is helped will fall, and they will all perish together. **Hos 14:3** 3 Assyria shall not save us. We will not ride on horses....

<sup>15</sup> **Lv 26:8** 8 Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall chase ten thousand, and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword. **Dt 32:30** 30 How could one have chased a thousand, and two have put ten thousand to flight, unless their Rock had sold them, and Yahweh had given them up?

### *God Waits to Be Gracious*

18 Therefore Yahweh waits (חכה)<sup>16</sup> to be gracious (חנן) to you, and therefore he exalts<sup>17</sup> himself to show mercy (רחם) to you. For Yahweh is a God of justice (משפט). Blessed (אשרי) are all those who wait (חכה) for him.<sup>18</sup>

### *Master Teacher and a Word Behind You*

19 For a people shall dwell in Zion, in Jerusalem. You shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious (חנן) to you at the sound of your cry. As soon as he hears it, he answers you. 20 And though Yahweh give you the bread of anxiety (צר) and the water of oppression (לחץ),<sup>19</sup> yet your Master Teacher (מוֹרֶה)<sup>20</sup> [Jesus] will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Master Teacher. 21 And your ears shall hear a word (דבר) [from the Holy Spirit] behind you saying, This is the way (דֶּרֶךְ), walk (הלך) in it, when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.<sup>21</sup> 22 Then you will defile your carved idols overlaid with silver and your gold-plated metal images. You will scatter them as unclean things. You will say to them, Be gone!<sup>22</sup>

### *Large Pastures and Running Brooks*

23 And he will give rain for the seed with which you sow the ground, and bread, the produce of the ground, which will be rich and plenteous.<sup>23</sup> In that day your livestock will graze in large pastures, 24 and the oxen and the donkeys that work the ground will eat seasoned

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<sup>16</sup> Yahweh waits for us to wait for him.

<sup>17</sup> **Is 5:16** 16 But Yahweh of hosts is exalted in justice, and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness.

<sup>18</sup> **Ps 2:12** 12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him. **Ps 34:8** 8 Oh, taste and see that Yahweh is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him! **Pr 16:20** 20 Whoever gives thought to the word will discover good, and blessed is he who trusts in Yahweh. **Jer 17:7** 7 Blessed is the man who trusts in Yahweh, whose trust is Yahweh. Cf. Samuel Becket's *Waiting for Godot*.

<sup>19</sup> **1 Ki 22:27** 27 ... Thus says the king, Put this fellow in prison and feed him meagre rations of bread and water, until I come in peace. **Eze 4:10-11** 10 And your food that you eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day. From day to day you shall eat it. 11 And water you shall drink by measure, the sixth part of a hin. From day to day you shall drink.

<sup>20</sup> “[M]aster teacher (of God)” (*HALOT*, 560-61).

<sup>21</sup> **Jer 31:33-34** 33 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares Yahweh. I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And no longer shall each one teach his neighbour and each his brother saying, Know Yahweh, for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares Yahweh. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

<sup>22</sup> **Is 2:20** 20 In that day mankind will cast away their idols of silver and their idols of gold, which they made for themselves to worship, to the moles and to the bats.... **Is 31:7** 7 For in that day everyone shall cast away his idols of silver and his idols of gold, which your hands have sinfully made for you.

<sup>23</sup> **Ps 144:13-14** 13 ... May our granaries be full, providing all kinds of produce. May our sheep bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our fields. 14 May our cattle be heavy with young, suffering no mishap or failure in bearing. May there be no cry of distress in our streets!

fodder that has been winnowed with shovel and fork.<sup>24</sup> 25 And on every lofty mountain and every high hill there will be brooks running with water,<sup>25</sup> in the day of the great slaughter (בְּיוֹם הַהֲרָג לָב),<sup>26</sup> when the towers fall. 26 Moreover, the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold, as the light of seven days,<sup>27</sup> in the day when Yahweh binds up the brokenness (שָׁרָר) of his people and heals the wounds inflicted by his blow.<sup>28</sup>

### *God Sifts the Nations*

27 Behold, the name of Yahweh comes from afar, burning with his anger and in weight of uplifted clouds. His lips are full of fury, and his tongue is like a devouring fire. 28 His breath/Spirit (רוּחַ)<sup>29</sup> is like an overflowing stream that reaches up to the neck, to sift the nations (גִּזְּרָה) with the sieve of destruction and to place on the jaws of the peoples (עַמִּים) a bridle that leads astray.<sup>30</sup>

### *Assyrian Funeral Pyre*

29 You shall have a song (שִׁיר) as in the night when a holy feast is kept, and gladness of heart, as when one sets out to the sound of the flute to go to the mountain of Yahweh, to the Rock of

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<sup>24</sup> **Ps 65:13** 13 ...The meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy.

<sup>25</sup> **Joe 3:18** 18 And in that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine, the hills shall flow with milk, all the stream beds of Judah shall flow with water, and a fountain shall come forth from the house of Yahweh and water the Valley of Shittim.

<sup>26</sup> **Pr 24:11** 11 Rescue those who are being taken away to death. Hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter.

<sup>27</sup> **Is 60:19-20** 19 The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light, but Yahweh will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. 20 Your sun shall no more go down, nor your moon withdraw itself, for Yahweh will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended.

<sup>28</sup> God strikes Israel, and then heals her, like he did with Egypt (Is 19). **Is 1:5-6** 5 Why will you still be struck down? Why will you continue to rebel? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. 6 From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but bruises and sores and raw wounds. They are not pressed out or bound up or softened with oil. **Hos 6:1** 1 Come, let us return to Yahweh, for he has torn us, that he may heal us. He has struck us down, and he will bind us up.

<sup>29</sup> **Is 11:4** 4 ...But with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth. And he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. **Th 2:8** 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.

<sup>30</sup> **Is 37:29** 29 Because you have raged against me and your complacency has come to my ears, I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth, and I will turn you back on the way by which you came.

Israel.<sup>31</sup> 30 And Yahweh will cause his majestic voice to be heard<sup>32</sup> and the descending blow of his arm to be seen, in furious anger and a flame of devouring fire, with a cloudburst, storm, and hailstones. 31 The Assyrians will be terror-stricken at the voice of Yahweh when he strikes with his rod. 32 And every stroke of the appointed staff that Yahweh lays on them will be to the sound of tambourines and lyres.<sup>33</sup> Battling with brandished arm, he will fight with them. 33 For a burning place (תִּפְתָּה)<sup>34</sup> has long been prepared. Indeed, for the king it is made ready, its pyre made deep and wide, with fire and wood in abundance. The breath (נְשֵׁם) of Yahweh, like a stream of sulphur, kindles it.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> **Is 2:3** 3 ...And many peoples shall come and say: Come, let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem. **Is 26:4** 4 Trust in Yahweh forever, for Lord Yahweh is an everlasting rock.

<sup>32</sup> **Ps 18:13** 13 Yahweh also thundered in the heavens, and the Most High uttered his voice, hailstones and coals of fire.

<sup>33</sup> **Ex 15:1** 1 Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to Yahweh saying, I will sing to Yahweh, for he has triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.

<sup>34</sup> “[T]he place prepared for his burning, i.e. a funeral pyre for the Assyrian” (*HALOT*, 1781). **2 Ki 23:10** 10 And he defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, that no one might burn his son or his daughter as an offering to Molech. **Je 7:31** 31 And they have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into my mind.

<sup>35</sup> **Ps 18:8** 8 Smoke went up from his nostrils and devouring fire from his mouth. Glowing coals flamed forth from him. **Eze 20:48** 48 All flesh shall see that I Yahweh have kindled it. It shall not be quenched.

## Commentary

### 1. Overview.

- a. This chapter is the fourth of six woes in Is 28-33.
- b. The structure of Is 30 is chiasitic.<sup>36</sup>
  - (1) Contemporary events: Egypt no help (1-7)
    - (a) Coming human events: the refusal of the word (8-17)
    - (b) Coming divine events: the waiting God (18-26)
  - (2) Contemporary events: Assyria no threat (27-33)
  - (3) Man is faithless (vv. 1-17), but God is faithful (vv. 18-33).
- c. Isaiah's primary message is that only God can save Judah from her enemies. He will do so ultimately through his coming Messiah.<sup>37</sup> It is folly to trust in the nations. Woe to those who reject God and trust in man.
- d. The primary question for Judah is will she trust in man or God?

### 2. Shelter of Shame (Is 30:1-5).

- a. **Is 30:1-5** 1 Woe, stubborn children (בְּנֵי), declares Yahweh, who carry out a plan, but not mine, and who weave a web, but not of my Spirit (רוּחִי), that they may add sin (חַטָּאת) to sin (חַטָּאת), 2 who set out to go down to Egypt, without asking for my direction (דָּרֶכַּי), to take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt! 3 Therefore shall the protection of Pharaoh turn to your shame, and the shelter in the shadow of Egypt to your humiliation. 4 For though his [Hezekiah's] officials are at Zoan and his envoys reach Hanes, 5 everyone comes to shame through a people [Egypt] that cannot profit them, that brings neither help nor profit, but shame and disgrace.
- b. Judah is stubborn in that she is carrying out her own plan rather than God's plan. In doing so, she adds sin to sin (v. 1).
  - (1) "[T]his is a rebellious people is a remarkable statement in the context of the ancient Near East. Every other people caused its victories and its triumphs to be recorded."<sup>38</sup>
- c. Specifically, Judah is seeking refuge from Pharaoh in Egypt rather than from God in heaven (v. 2).
  - (1) God had forbidden Israel to return to Egypt.
    - (a) **Dt 17:16** 16 Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since Yahweh has said to you, You shall never return that way again.
    - (2) In Jeremiah's day, Judah will make the same mistake.
      - (a) **Jer 43:7** 7 And they came into the land of Egypt, for they did not obey the voice of Yahweh. And they arrived at Tahpanhes.
- d. Judah has failed to ask for God's direction (v. 2).

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<sup>36</sup> J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 244.

<sup>37</sup> John A. Martin, "Isaiah," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1076.

<sup>38</sup> John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 551.

- e. The result of Judah's stubborn refusal to take refuge in God will be shame and disgrace (vv. 3-5).
- f. Egypt won't be able to help Judah (v. 5).
  - (1) **Is 31:3** 3 The Egyptians are man, and not God, and their horses are flesh, and not spirit. When Yahweh stretches out his hand, the helper will stumble, and he who is helped will fall, and they will all perish together.
  - (2) **Is 36:6** 6 Behold, you are trusting in Egypt, that broken reed of a staff, which will pierce the hand of any man who leans on it. Such is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who trust in him.
  - (3) The Assyrian army defeated Egypt at [] in [] bc.
  - (4) **Jer 2:36** 36 How much you go about, changing your way! You shall be put to shame by Egypt as you were put to shame by Assyria.
- g. Theology.
  - (1) When we are in trouble, we are to seek deliverance from God, not from people.
  - (2) In times of trouble, we especially need to seek God's guidance.
  - (3) If we trust in people to save us, we will be severely disappointed.

### 3. Beasts of the Negeb Oracle (Is 30:6-7).

- a. **Is 30:6-7** 6 An oracle on the beasts of the Negeb. Through a land of trouble and anguish, from where come the lioness and the lion, the adder and the flying fiery serpent, they carry their riches on the backs of donkeys, and their treasures on the humps of camels, to a people that cannot profit them. 7 Egypt's help is worthless and empty. Therefore I have called her, Rahab (רַהַב) who has lain silent.
- b. Judah's ambassadors are travelling through the treacherous Negev wilderness, carrying gifts to the Egyptian pharaoh (v. 6).
  - (1) Rather than going directly to Egypt through Philistia, the Judean ambassadors took the circuitous and dangerous route through the Negev, probably to avoid Assyrian detection. They had taken roughly the same route as their ancestors who left Egypt in the Exodus, only traveling in the opposite direction (cf. Num. 21:6; Deut. 8:15). This irony highlights the folly of returning to Egypt for help.<sup>39</sup>
  - (2) **Dt 8:15** 15 ... Who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, with its fiery serpents, scorpions, and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock....
- c. It is all for nothing. Egypt won't be able to help. The ambassadors are wasting their time and money (v. 7).
  - (1) "A caravan loaded with treasure struggles through wild terrain infested with lions and snakes, all to buy the help of an old dragon who is in fact helpless."<sup>40</sup>
- d. Theology.
  - (1) Trusting in man to save us ends up being a huge waste of money and time.
  - (2) We make ourselves ridiculous when we reject God's protection.

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<sup>39</sup> T. Constable, "Notes on Isaiah," 196.

<sup>40</sup> John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 547.

#### 4. Sudden Collapse (Is 30:8-14).

- a. **Is 30:8-14** 8 And now, go, write it before them on a tablet (לִיָּה) and inscribe it in a scroll (סֵפֶר), that it may be for the time to come as a witness forever. 9 For they [Judah] are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction (תּוֹרָה) of Yahweh, 10 who say to the seers, Do not see, and to the prophets, Do not prophesy to us straightforwardness/righteousness (נִכְיָה). Speak to us smooth/false words (חֲלָק). Prophecy illusions (מִהְתְּלָה). 11 Leave the way. Turn aside from the path. Let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel. 12 Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel, Because you reject (מֵאַס) this word (דְּבָר), trust (בַּטְחָה) in oppression (עֲשָׂק) and crookedness (לִוּי), and depend (שָׁעַן) on them, 13 therefore this iniquity shall be to you like a breach in a high wall, bulging out and about to collapse, whose breaking comes suddenly, in an instant. 14 And its breaking is like that of a potter's vessel that is smashed so ruthlessly that among its fragments not a shard is found with which to take fire from the hearth or to dip up water out of the cistern.
- b. God instructs Isaiah to write out his prophecy as a permanent record (v. 8).
  - (1) **Hab 2:2** 2 And Yahweh answered me: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it.
- c. Judah is a rebellious, deceitful, unteachable nation, unwilling to hear God's instruction (v. 9)
- d. The people of Judah demand from the prophets only "smooth" words (v. 10).
  - (1) Liberalism, neo-orthodoxy, and neo-evangelicalism want to fit in with the mindset of modernism and postmodernism and so give up doctrines like the inerrancy and sufficiency of Scripture.
- e. They don't want to hear about the holy God anymore (v. 11).
  - (1) "Let us hear no more about God" is the rule of our secularised public square today (v. 11).
  - (2) Many refuse to hear what God has says about certain moral issues, especially concerning identity, gender, and sex.
- f. The people of Judah hate God's word and rely on oppression and perverseness (v. 12).
  - (a) When a nation turns from theism to atheism, oppressive government and moral perversity inevitably result (v. 12). An elite arises who believes it is their duty and right to steer society in the direction that seems best to them.
  - (b) The Soviet Union and Nazi Germany were both oppressive and perverse.
- g. As a result, Judah will experience a sudden collapse, like a dam breaking (v. 13).
- h. She will be ruthlessly and totally smashed, like a pot smashed to bits (v. 14).
  - (1) **Ps 2:9** 9 You [the Son] shall break them [the nations] with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.
- i. Theology.
  - (1) We must beware of seeking teachers and "prophets" who tell us what we want to hear rather than the truth.
  - (2) There are real consequences for despising God's word.
  - (3) Nations who reject God and his word often experience sudden collapse.
    - (a) The French, Russian, and German revolutions are historical examples.
    - (b) The "Christian West," including New Zealand, is rejecting God's word and may soon experience a sudden collapse. Many have pointed out the West is crumbling from within.

## 5. God's Rest Rejected (Is 30:15-17).

- a. **Is 30:15-17** 15 For thus says Lord Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, In turning back/sitting still (שׁוֹבֵה) and calm/peace/patience (נְחִיחַ) you shall be saved/receive help/be victorious (יִשַׁע). In quietness/peace/rest (שְׁקֵט) and in confidence/trust (בְּטָחָה) shall be your strength/power (גְּבוּרָה). But you were unwilling (אָבֵה). 16 And you said, No! We will flee upon horses. Therefore you shall flee away. And, We will ride upon swift steeds. Therefore your pursuers shall be swift. 17 A thousand shall flee at the threat of one. At the threat of five you shall flee, till you are left like a flagstaff on the top of a mountain, like a signal/flag (טֵבַל) on a hill.
- b. The three “thus says Yahweh’s” (vv. 1, 12, 15) throughout this chapter reminds Judah God speaks and is very much evaluating her response to the Assyrian crisis.
- c. God’s invitation to Judah was for her to return to him in quietness and trust for salvation and strength (v. 15).
  - (1) Judah was to choose reliance, not alliance.<sup>41</sup>
  - (2) **Ex 14:13-14** 13 And Moses said to the people, Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of Yahweh, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. 14 Yahweh will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.
  - (3) **Is 7:4** 4 And say to him, Be careful, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smouldering stumps of firebrands, at the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria and the son of Remaliah.
- d. Judah refused, however, deciding to rely on swift horses (vv. 15-16).
  - (1) **Hos 14:3** 3 Assyria shall not save us. We will not ride on horses....
  - (2) **Is 31:1-3** 1 Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult Yahweh! ...3 The Egyptians are man, and not God, and their horses are flesh, and not spirit. When Yahweh stretches out his hand, the helper will stumble, and he who is helped will fall, and they will all perish together.
  - (3) “Cavalry and chariotry had the same appeal as armor and air forces do today.”<sup>42</sup>
  - (4) Israel was not willing for Jesus to be king in his day.
    - (a) **Mt 23:37** 37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!
  - (5) “[T]o admit that we need God is to admit our limitation, and that admission the fallen human spirit hates.”<sup>43</sup>
- e. The irony is Judah will flee upon those horses in a cowardly panic (vv. 16-17).

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<sup>41</sup> G. A. Smith, *The Book of Isaiah*, 1:128.

<sup>42</sup> John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 555.

<sup>43</sup> John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 554-555.

- (1) **Lv 26:8** 8 Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall chase ten thousand, and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword.
- f. Only a few Judeans will be left, like a solitary flag on a hill (v. 17).
- g. Theology.
  - (1) When we face crises, we are to return and rest in God with quiet trust. See *Phase Two Faith*.
  - (2) Returning and resting in God allows him to glorify himself by intervening on our behalf at the right moment.
  - (3) Lack of faith on our side leads to cowardice and diminished numbers.

## 6. God Waits to Be Gracious (Is 30:18).

- a. **Is 30:18** 18 Therefore Yahweh waits (חכה) to be gracious (חנן) to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy (רחם) to you. For Yahweh is a God of justice (מִשְׁפָּט). Blessed (אַשְׁרֵי) are all those who wait (חכה) for him.
- b. V. 18 is a hinge between the negative message of vv. 1-17 and the positive message of vv. 19-33.
- c. God desires to exalt himself by gracing Judah with his mercy, based upon his justice (v. 18).
  - (1) **Is 5:16** 16 But Yahweh of hosts is exalted in justice, and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness.
- d. God will bless those Judeans who wait for him during the Assyrian crisis (v. 18).
  - (1) **Pr 16:20** 20 Whoever gives thought to the word will discover good, and blessed is he who trusts in Yahweh.
  - (2) **Jer 17:7** 7 Blessed is the man who trusts in Yahweh, whose trust is Yahweh.
- e. Theology.
  - (1) When we wait for God, we give him the opportunity to exalt himself.
  - (2) In crisis moments, we can expect God to act with justice.
    - (a) Theism beats atheism because there is a fundamental justice to the world. Good triumphs over evil because there is a sovereign God in charge.
  - (3) God waits to be gracious, merciful, and just toward us. All we have to do is wait for him. Whenever we are ready, he is ready.
    - (a) “The key to life is found in letting him be God and in training ourselves to complete dependence upon him until we discover that he can supply our needs a hundred times better than we can.”<sup>44</sup>

## 7. Master Teacher and a Word Behind You (Is 30:19-22).

- a. **Is 30:19-22** 19 For a people shall dwell in Zion, in Jerusalem. You shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious (חנן) to you at the sound of your cry. As soon as he hears it, he answers you. 20 And though Yahweh give you the bread of anxiety (צַר) and the water of oppression (לַחֵץ), yet your Master Teacher (מוֹרֵה) will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Master Teacher. 21 And your ears shall hear a word (דְּבָר) behind you saying, This is the way (דְּרֹךְ), walk (הלך) in it, when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left. 22 Then you will defile your carved idols

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<sup>44</sup> John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 557.

overlaid with silver and your gold-plated metal images. You will scatter them as unclean things. You will say to them, Be gone!

- b. In the Messianic kingdom, a remnant of Judah will live in Jerusalem (v. 19).
- c. God will respond immediately whenever the remnant cries out to him (v. 19).
- d. In the meantime, the remnant will experience anxiety and oppression (v. 20).
  - (1) **1 Ki 22:27** 27 ... Thus says the king, Put this fellow in prison and feed him meagre rations of bread and water, until I come in peace.
- e. But one day they will see with their own eyes their “Master Teacher,” Jesus (v. 20).
  - (1) **Jn 1:18** 18 No one has ever seen God. The only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.
  - (2) **Lk 2:46-47** 46 After three days they found [Jesus] in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. 47 And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.
- f. They will also be guided by the voice of the Holy Spirit from behind (v. 21).
  - (1) “[W]hether to the right or to the left seems to be an antinomy which covers all the actions of life.”<sup>45</sup>
  - (2) **Jn 16:13-14** 13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. 14 He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.
  - (3) **Ga 5:25** 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.
- g. In that day, the remnant will rid themselves of all idols (v. 22).
  - (1) “Although people of the West in the twentieth century have taken off the faces of the gods of love, security, potency, and power, we still surround them with trappings of great material value. Thus it is no easier for us to desert our sources of support than it was for the people of Israel.”<sup>46</sup>
- h. Theology.
  - (1) We will experience anxiety and oppression in this life, as we wait for Jesus’ second coming.
  - (2) The hope of God’s people in the Old Testament was the arrival of the second and third persons of the Trinity. We know they have arrived.
  - (3) When our relationship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit is what it should be, we are eager to throw away our idols.

## 8. Large Pastures and Running Brooks (Is 30:23-26).

- a. **Is 30:23-26** 23 And he [the Master Teacher] will give rain for the seed with which you sow the ground, and bread, the produce of the ground, which will be rich and plenteous. In that day your livestock will graze in large pastures, 24 and the oxen and the donkeys that work the ground will eat seasoned fodder that has been winnowed with shovel and fork. 25 And on every lofty mountain and every high hill there will be brooks running with water, in the day of the great slaughter (בְּיוֹם הַהֲרָגָה), when the

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<sup>45</sup> John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 560-561.

<sup>46</sup> John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 561.

towers fall. 26 Moreover, the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day when Yahweh binds up the brokenness (נִשְׁבֵּר) of his people and heals the wounds inflicted by his blow.

- b. The Master Teacher, Jesus, will give abundant rain with the result that Judah's agriculture-based economy will flourish (vv. 23-25).
  - (1) **Ps 65:13** 13 ... The meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy.
  - (2) **Ps 144:13-14** 13 ... May our granaries be full, providing all kinds of produce. May our sheep bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our fields. 14 May our cattle be heavy with young, suffering no mishap or failure in bearing.
  - (3) **Joe 3:18** 18 And in that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine, the hills shall flow with milk, all the stream beds of Judah shall flow with water, and a fountain shall come forth from the house of Yahweh and water the Valley of Shittim.
  - (4) Economic prosperity isn't the goal or purpose of life—a love relationship with God and one another is. However, economic prosperity is an added bonus.
- c. The abundant rain will begin on “the day of great slaughter,” when Judah's enemies are defeated (v. 25).
  - (1) “It is judgment which shatters the false values and makes one attentive. It is grace which motivates the broken to believe and obey. Neither is ultimately effective without the other.”<sup>47</sup>
- d. The moon and sun will shine much brighter (v. 26).
  - (1) **Is 60:19-20** 19 The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light, but Yahweh will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. 20 Your sun shall no more go down, nor your moon withdraw itself, for Yahweh will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended.
- e. God will heal the brokenness and wounds he inflicted on Judah as a result of divine discipline (v. 26).
  - (1) **Hos 6:1** 1 Come, let us return to Yahweh, for he has torn us, that he may heal us. He has struck us down, and he will bind us up.
  - (2) **Is 1:5-6** 5 Why will you still be struck down? Why will you continue to rebel? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. 6 From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but bruises and sores and raw wounds. They are not pressed out or bound up or softened with oil.
- f. Theology.
  - (1) God will deal with the wickedness of our world—wicked people, wicked ideologies, and wicked objects. A great slaughter will happen.
  - (2) In the Messianic kingdom, nature will change significantly. The earth will be blessed.
  - (3) God is a stern disciplinarian, but he is also outstanding physician.

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<sup>47</sup> John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 559.

## 9. God Sifts the Nations (Is 30:27-28).

- a. **Is 30:27-28** 27 Behold, the name of Yahweh comes from afar, burning with his anger and in weight of uplifted clouds. His lips are full of fury, and his tongue is like a devouring fire. 28 His breath/Spirit (רוּחַ) is like an overflowing stream that reaches up to the neck, to sift the nations (גוֹיִם) with the sieve of destruction and to place on the jaws of the peoples (עַמִּים) a bridle that leads astray/causes to err (תַּעֲוֶה).
- b. One day God will come upon the nations in all his righteous anger (vv. 27-28).
- c. He will judge the nations and either destroy them or lead them where he wants them to go (v. 28).
  - (1) “[E]ach figure leads to destruction: the flood to drowning, the sieve to dividing the good grain from the useless chaff, the bridle which leads an unbreakable horse to its death.”<sup>48</sup>
  - (2) **Is 11:4** 4 And he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.
  - (3) **Is 37:29** 29 Because you have raged against me and your complacency has come to my ears, I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth, and I will turn you back on the way by which you came.
  - (4) **2 Th 2:8** 8 And then the lawless one [Antichrist] will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.
- d. Theology.
  - (1) The wickedness and rebellion of the nations greatly angers God.
  - (2) God will come in righteousness to judge the wicked and destroy them.

## 10. Assyrian Funeral Pyre (Is 30:29-33).

- a. **Is 30:29-33** 29 You shall have a song (שִׁיר) as in the night when a holy feast is kept, and gladness of heart, as when one sets out to the sound of the flute to go to the mountain of Yahweh, to the Rock of Israel. 30 And Yahweh will cause his majestic voice to be heard and the descending blow of his arm to be seen, in furious anger and a flame of devouring fire, with a cloudburst, storm, and hailstones. 31 The Assyrians (אַשּׁוּרִים) will be terror-stricken at the voice of Yahweh when he strikes with his rod. 32 And every stroke of the appointed staff that Yahweh lays on them will be to the sound of tambourines and lyres. Battling with brandished arm, he will fight with them. 33 For a burning place (תַּפְחָה) has long been prepared. Indeed, for the king it is made ready, its pyre made deep and wide, with fire and wood in abundance. The breath (נְשָׁמָה) of Yahweh, like a stream of sulphur, kindles it.
- b. In this paragraph, Isaiah turns from the far future to the near future.
- c. Judah will joyfully sing when God punishes Assyria in 701 bc (vv. 29, 32).
  - (1) **Ex 15:1** 1 Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to Yahweh saying, I will sing to Yahweh, for he has triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.

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<sup>48</sup> John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 567.

- (2) “This joy at God’s judgment is also reflected in Ps. 96. Nor is it odd that it should be compared to a time of feasting, for the biblical feasts were preeminently times of rejoicing over God’s acts of deliverance in history.”<sup>49</sup>
- d. God will strike the Assyrians directly, in an overpowering way (v. 30, 32).
- e. The Assyrians will be terror-stricken (v. 31).
- f. God has long prepared a funeral pyre in the valley of Hinnom (γέεννα) for the corpse of the Assyrian king (v. 33).
- (1) “*Valley of the Sons of Hinnom*, a ravine south of Jerusalem. There, acc. to later Jewish popular belief, God’s final judgment was to take place (cp. Just., A I, 19, 8). In the gospels it is the place of punishment in the next life, *hell*....”<sup>50</sup>
- (2) “Ibn Ezra suggests the valley of Berachah S of Bethlehem, where Jehoshaphat’s forces gathered after the destruction of enemies (2 Ch. 20:26), but Zc. 14 locates the judgment near Jerusalem, and according to 1 Enoch 53:1 all people gather for judgment in a deep valley near the valley of Hinnom.”<sup>51</sup>
- (3) **2 Ki 23:10** 10 And he defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, that no one might burn his son or his daughter as an offering to Molech.
- (4) **Je 7:31** 31 And they have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into my mind.
- (5) “And I looked and turned to another part of the earth, and saw there a deep valley with burning fire. <sup>2</sup> And they brought the kings and the mighty, and began to cast them into this deep valley. <sup>3</sup> And there mine eyes saw how they made these their instruments, iron chains of immeasurable weight. <sup>4</sup> And I asked the angel of peace who went with me, saying: ‘For whom are these chains being prepared?’ <sup>5</sup> And he said unto me: ‘These are being prepared for the hosts of Azâzêl, so that they may take them and cast them into the abyss of complete condemnation, and they shall cover their jaws with rough stones as the Lord of Spirits commanded.’”<sup>52</sup>
- (6) **Mt 10:28** 28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell (γέεννα).
- (7) **Mt 16:18** 18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell (γέεννα) shall not prevail against it.
- (8) **Mt 23:33** 33 You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell (γέεννα)?
- (9) **2 Pe 2:4** 4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell (γέεννα) and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment....

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<sup>49</sup> John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 567.

<sup>50</sup> William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 191.

<sup>51</sup> J. A. Thompson, “*Jehoshaphat, Valley Of*,” ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 548.

<sup>52</sup> Enoch 54, Robert Henry Charles, ed., *Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), 220.

(10)“Assyria’s funeral pyre, like the Lord’s rod, has stood ready from ancient days.  
All it wants is the Lord’s breath to kindle it into flame.”<sup>53</sup>

g. Theology.

(1) It is appropriate for us to sing at the destruction of the wicked, at the triumph of good over evil.

(2) God is very much able to deal with the wickedness of our world. Our job is to let him do it.

## 11. Application.

- a. Don’t seek shelter in people or things that can’t save you (v. 2). You’ll only be disappointed.
- b. Choose a local church that teaches God’s word faithfully, not one that compromises with the popular worldviews of the hour (vv. 10-11).
- c. In times of crisis, return to God and quietly trust in him (v. 15).
  - (1) “Isaiah is saying in every way possible that humanity’s only hope is in abandoning every other hope, including our own abilities, and casting ourselves upon God alone.”<sup>54</sup>
- d. Look forward to God’s righteous intervention into our world (vv. 27-32).

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<sup>53</sup> John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 569.

<sup>54</sup> John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 567-568.