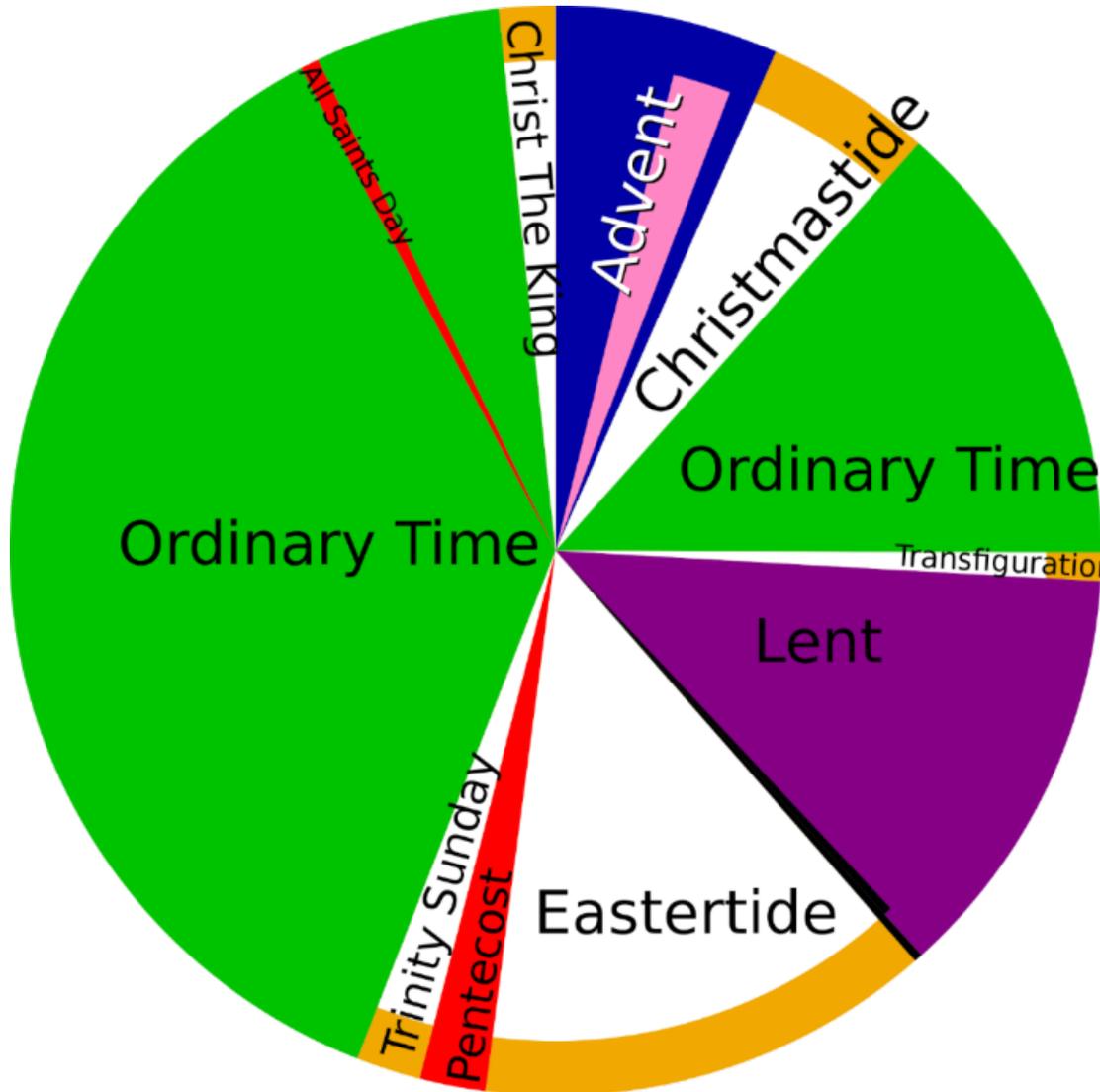


## Liturgical Reflections 2017



The diagram above represents a given liturgical year, similar diagrams having been used with other such reflections posted on this home page. It's intended to give a quick guide of where we are advancing from the First Sunday of Advent all the way around to Christ the King which is the Sunday before the beginning of Advent. Thus the liturgical cycle fits in seamlessly with our regular calendar of way of telling time. At the same time it's circular as opposed to be linear. The latter gives the impression of moving forward compared with the never-ending repetition of the former. However, the liturgical model is intended to reflect growth in the Christian life which without a doubt is more "progressive" than anything found on the linear model. Besides, it embraces a paradox: never does it come to an end yet is an end in and by itself.

The liturgical cycle consists of three consecutive go-arounds with regard to readings during Mass. This year the excerpts are from the second readings. All biblical excerpts, as in the case throughout this lectio divina homepage, are from the **Revised Standard Bible with the Apocrypha (RSV)**, Oxford 1973.

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## 27 November, First Sunday of Advent

*1) The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. 2) It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains and shall be raised above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, 3) and many peoples shall come and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, 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 the Lord from Jerusalem. 4) He shall judge between the nations and shall decide for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. 5) O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord. Isaiah 2.1-5*

Please note. This and the excerpt for 4 December are taken from the first readings. Reason: at the time of this posting, work is being done on Romans which form these second readings. That is to say, the two would conflict. Passages from both weeks come from *Expansions on the Book of Isaiah* posted on this same home page.

Vs. 1: The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

Compare this verse with 1.1: “The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem (etc.).” In both instances emphasis is upon seeing or *chazah*; in the verse at hand, *chazah* concerns the “word” or *davar*. Physically speaking, you don’t see a word but hear it. That means the *davar* has some kind of perceptible form though the specifics aren’t given. Emphasis upon *davar* in the opening of two chapters of Isaiah obviously elicits reflection upon St. John’s Gospel concerning Jesus Christ as *Logos*.

As in 1.1, the preposition *hal-* is used, literally as “upon Judah and Jerusalem.” It is as though the divine *davar* were weighing upon them both which is true both spiritually and physically.

Vs. 2: It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains and shall be raised above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it,

“It shall come to pass” is rendered by the verb “it shall be.”

The “latter days” or *‘acharyth* are not specified but imply an indefinite span of days which comes before the ones at hand or the present time. Nevertheless, emphasis is upon the future. Those whom the Lord is addressing through the mediation of Isaiah haven’t a clue as to the exact time, but it’s a relief after hearing the condemnatory words of the last chapter. Now the listeners are held in suspense as to the nature of these “latter days” which they await eagerly to have spelled out. “That we may know their outcome” [41.22].

The mountain at hand is not specified but almost certainly Zion, that is, concerning its establishment, the verb *kun* (cf. 9.7) being used. Without a doubt, Zion is the highest spiritual mountain on earth which acts as a beacon—more specifically, the temple on Zion—once it is set as literally “in the head” (*r’osh*) of them. “For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin” [7.8]. Note the sequence of this constitution: first it shall be established and then raised, the two being effected at once.

Upon completion of this double establishment, nations “shall flow” to Zion, *nahar* being the verb which has a connotation of shining. “Then you shall see and be radiant” [60.5]. It seems that once the nations catch a glimpse of Zion as the highest point on earth, a light will be their guide not unlike the Magi: “for we have seen his star in the east and have come to worship him” [Mt 2.2].

Vs. 3: and many peoples shall come and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, 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 the Lord from Jerusalem.

Note the two “comes,” the common *halak*. The first one consists of that flowing...being illumined...which leads to the second, an exhortation to those who haven’t been so enlightened or *nahar*, that they may ascend the Lord’s mountain or Zion which is also the house of Jacob. Chances are that en route to this highest point on the face of the earth they were singing Songs of Ascents, that is Psalms 120 through 134. “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the Lord’” [Ps 122.1]!

The *nahar* spoken of in vs. 1 and continued into the present verse comes with the realization that the Lord will “teach” his ways or *yarah* which fundamentally means to cast. “Whom will he teach knowledge and to whom will he explain the message” [28.9]? That which is cast, of course, consist of the Lord’s “ways” or *derek* found next in 3.12: “and confuse the course of your paths.” Compare *derek* with *‘orach* (cf. 3.12) or the Lord’s “ways” after having been taught them which is a more poetical form.

So once in Jerusalem or more specifically, on Mount Zion, those present will be able to see the entire earth in one glance or in a “moment of time” [Lk 4.12]. Having attained this exalted place, there is no need to go anywhere else. Everywhere else is literally downhill, to a lower level of existence. From this place and time the people will witness both the “law” and the “word” of the Lord going forth, that is, the *Torah* and the *davar*

(cf. vs. 1). Although the means by which both descend from this highest spot on earth isn't spelled out, chances are those who have come to Zion and have been instructed will be the instruments of its going forth. After all, Torah is derived from *yarah*, to cast. The destination of this going forth isn't given. That will be up to the people who have been *yarah* in *Torah*. Note that the Torah goes from Zion whereas the *davar* goes from Jerusalem, both leaving the same gate by which the people had entered.

Vs. 4: He shall judge between the nations and shall decide for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

*Shaphat* means “shall judge” (cf. 1.17) which can be taken as a result of the divine *Torah* and *davar* exiting Zion and Jerusalem in the person of those who have been so *yarah*. In other words, *shaphat* is a natural outcome of having been on Mount Zion, highest point on the earth. Although judgement is done through the medium of those who had come to Jerusalem, the Lord himself will carry it out. Nothing is said as to how long the people will reside on Zion, although they have as a historical precedent the sacred time span of forty days and forty nights after the pattern of Moses on Mount Sinai. Of course, on Zion the Torah in its fulness had been given to Moses, so it is natural for the people to imitate him.

Note use of the word “between” (*beyn*), suggestive of the Lord's presence (i.e., by those *yarah* in *Torah*) not above the peoples but smack in their midst or the normal place of action for this between-ness. The first part of this verse speaks of “nations” or *goy* which often apply to those who are not Israelites. The second part speaks of “people,” *ham* being a more generic term.

Not only will the Lord judge between nations, he “shall decide” for many peoples, *yakach* which connotes confuting or convicting. “And decide with equity for the meek of the earth” [11.4].

So once this judging and deciding takes place, both nations and peoples will undergo a conversion. The implication is that they have been at war either with each other or with external enemies. As a result of the Lord's intervention, spontaneously they will convert their weapons of war into means of cultivating the earth. Most likely the plowshares and pruning hooks had been turned into swords and spears, only now the order is reversed.

*Lamad* is the verb for “learn” (cf. 1.17) used with respect to war. To learn war means that someone must have been teaching the people. It's implied that such persons are no more or have left the Israelites since their martial skills is no long required.

Vs. 5: O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.

After the invitation in vs. 3 to come and ascend the mountain of the Lord, the house of Jacob is invited, not compelled, to walk in the light of the Lord. That is to say, this walking consists in accompanying the *Torah* and *davar*, also in vs. 3.

#### 4 December, Second Sunday of Advent

1) *There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.* 2) *And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.* 3) *And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see or decide by what his ears hear;* 4) *but with righteousness he shall judge the poor and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked.* 5) *Righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist, and faithfulness the girdle of his loins.* 6) *The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.* 7) *The cow and the bear shall feed; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.* 8) *The sucking child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.* 9) *They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.* 10) *In that day the root of Jesse shall stand as an ensign to the peoples; him shall the nations seek, and his dwellings shall be glorious.* Isaiah 11.1-10

**Vs. 1:** There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

The conjunctive *v-* for “therefore” is used which normally means “and.” It is found in many verses throughout Isaiah as a means of connecting the flow of thought, not so much speeding the reader along with the text. For example, *w-* shows the connection between the last chapter and the current one, making a seamless transition.

*Choter* is the noun for “shoot” with one other biblical reference, Prov 14.3: “The talk of a fool is a rod for his back, but the lips of the wise will preserve them.” In the verse at hand, such a shoot will appear at a future time and place yet to be determined. However, it will arise not simply from Jesse (father of King David, cf. 1Sam 16.1-20) but from him as a “stump” or *gezah* which has two other references, one being Job 14.8 and the other 40.24: “Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth when he blows upon them.” In other words, *gezah* represents a tree that had been felled for some reason or another, symbolic of the unfortunate state of decline which befell the line of King David. Even though the time of the shoot’s appearing is not given, the line of King David will remain which is assurance enough.

*Netser* is a “branch” or sprout which has three other biblical references, two of which are in Isaiah, the first being 14.19: “like a loathed untimely birth” (the RSV) whereas the Hebrew reads “a loathed branch.” This branch will come from the very roots

of Jesse, suggestive of the glory days of King David or even earlier, when Samuel anointed him as king to succeed Saul.

Vs. 2: And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

As noted in the last verb, the conjunctive *v-* for “therefore” commonly means “and” as it does with vs. 2 showing the close connection between them.

Note three “spirits” or *ruach* (cf. 4.4) which derive from the divine *Ruach*, breathed out, if you will. First this *Ruach* as source must “rest upon” the shoot and branch, two words for the same person who has yet to be identified. The verb at hand is *nuach* (cf. 7.2) which sounds a lot like *ruach*. With this in mind, the following three pairs are to share in this *nuach*, being informed by *ruach*:

1) The *ruach* of “wisdom” or *chakmah* (cf. 10.13) which originally means technical skill. This *ruach* combines *chakmah* with *bynah* (‘understanding’) as a pair, the latter being applied to insight and is related to the preposition “between”...a spirit of being able to see between things, if you will. “For this is a people without discernment” [27.11].

2) A second pair involving *ruach*, namely, “counsel and might” or *hetsah* (cf. 5.19) and *gevurah* (cf. 3.25 but not noted there).

3) The third pair with regard to “knowledge and fear” or *dahath* (cf. 5.13) and *yir’ah* (cf. vs. 7.25 but not noted there). In the verse at hand, this *yir’ah* is more specific as pertaining to the Lord in the next verse.

Vs. 3: And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see or decide by what his ears hear;

*Ruach* is a verb, the only use in Isaiah, and more commonly refers to the sense of smell. “And when the Lord smelled the pleasing odor” [Gn 8.21, hiphil form of verb]. Note that this verb is used with the preposition *b-* (in), presence-in this divine fear. With this notion of smell in mind, the future shoot/branch from Jesse’s stump, his cut-off remainder, will smell the *yir’ah* or “fear” of the Lord which means he will inhale it not unlike inhaling incense, fear here meaning respect. By way of note, the verb for “fear and see” (*yare’* and *ra’ah*) can be very similar in their varying forms, thereby enabling an exchange, if you will, between them: to fear is to see and to see is to fear.

Because the future ruler in the line of King David will have this sense of smell being operative, he will not “judge” (*shaphat*, cf. 5.3) with the senses of sight nor hearing. Nothing is said about the sense of touch, but it can be implied. Should we play along with this a bit, the ruler’s *ruach*...his smell...will be the guiding principle of all his actions which are spelled out in the next verse.

Vs. 4: but with righteousness he shall judge the poor and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked.

Here is where that sense of *ruach*...smell or better, scent (a more delicate, all-inclusive term) comes into play, namely, “righteousness and equity” or *tsedeq* (cf. 1.27) and *myshur*. The latter also means a plain or level country. “The uneven ground shall become level and the rough places a plain.” [40.4].

The verb “judge” or *shaphat* (previous verse) is associated with *tsedeq* and pertains to the “poor” or *dal* (adjective) noted last in 10.2 where this word is compared with the more well known one for the poor, *hany*, and is found next.

The verb “decide” is *yakach* (cf. 2.4) which connotes confuting or convicting and pertains to the “meek” or *hanav* found next in 29.19. *Yakach* is used with the preposition *l-* or literally, “to the meek” compared with the verb *shaphat* which has the preposition *b-* or literally “in righteousness.”

*Shevet* is the noun for “rod” (cf. 10.24) which this new king will use to strike the earth. The words “of his mouth” suggest not that it comes physically from there but by reason of the words he will speak as king, and these words derive ultimately from the *ruach* or sense of smell delineated in vs. 3. Closely related to this *ruach* is his “breath” or the noun *ruach* which won’t be a gentle breeze but a powerful wind which will slay the “wicked” (*rashah*, cf. 3.11). Thus two actions from one mouth: the rod and breath or *shevet* and *ruach*.

Vs. 5: Righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist and faithfulness the girdle of his loins.

“Righteousness and faithfulness” *tsedeq* (cf. vs. 4) and *‘emunah*, the latter derived from the verbal root *‘aman* as in 8.2. “Girdle” or *‘ezor* (found last in 5.27 but not noted there) is used twice, this verse being reminiscent of the “son of man” in Rev 1.13-16 (“with a golden girdle round his breast,” vs. 13). Also consider the seven angels in 15.6: “and their breasts girded with golden girdles.”

Vs. 6: The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.

Three pairs of animals are naturally hostile to each other, and that is carried over to the next two verses. Note the two verbs relative to their harmony, “dwell and lie down” or *gur* and *ravats*. The former means to tarry or sojourn for a period of time, not necessarily in a permanent fashion but for an extended period of time. Consider 54.15 with a different meaning which implies a gathering and hence stirring up: “If anyone stirs up strike, it is not from me.” The latter means to recline much as a four-footed animal folds its legs under its body, not unlike a crouching position. It is found in the next verse.

A “child” who is little or a *nahar* noted last in 7.16 with respect to Immanu-el could be the one involved. He doesn’t let these animals hang around but leads them, *nahag* often

used with driving a flock and thus implying a certain force. “For he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them” [40.10].

Vs. 7: The cow and the bear shall feed; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

Another pair of unlikely opposites where the two verbs worth noting are “feed and lie down” or *rahaḥ* and *ravats* (cf. vs. 6), the former usually pertaining to the way a flock consumes food or grass. *Rahaḥ* is found last in 5.17 but not noted there. Perhaps something of this harmony is taken from the way the animals on Noah’s ark behaved for the duration of the flood, that is, one hundred and fifty days (cf. Gn 7.24). In the verse at hand a promise is made that this will be replicated by the “little child” of vs. 6.

Vs. 8: The sucking child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.

Two words for a very young child: *yoneq* and *gamal* (both participles) for “suckling child and weaned child.” The former is found in participle form in 49.23: “Kings shall be your foster fathers and their queens your nursing mothers.” The latter is found last in 3.11 as “shall be done” and next in 28.9: “those who are weaned from the milk.” Obviously both *yoneq* and *gamal* are younger than that the *nahar* (‘little child’) of vs. 6. In the verse at hand, this child, symbol of innocence, will “play” or *shahaḥ* which fundamentally means to stroke, to overspread and is noted last in 6.10 as “shut.”

Vs. 9: They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Two verbs relative to destruction by the wolf, leopard, lion, bear, asp and adder in the past few verses: “hurt and destroy” or *rahaḥ* and *shachat*, the former being noted last in 9.17 and the latter in 1.4. They pertain to the Lord’s mountain which is “holy” or *qodesh* (cf. 6.13) most likely is the temple in Zion with allusions to Sinai, the two being considered close to identical. “Those who were driven out to the land of Egypt will come and worship the Lord on the holy mountain at Jerusalem” [27.13].

*Dehah* is the noun for “knowledge,” closely related to the more common *dahath*, and has five other biblical references. “Whom will he teach knowledge and to whom will he explain the message” [28.9]? While such *dahah* will cover the earth—not unlike the waters of the primeval chaos in Genesis and the flood at Noah’s time though this time it will be beneficial—the Lord’s “holy mountain” will be the only landmass that will stand out amid all this water. However, forgetfulness of this water persists. Consider the image of a fish being in the water yet unaware of it.

Vs. 10: In that day the root of Jesse shall stand as an ensign to the peoples; him shall the nations seek, and his dwellings shall be glorious.

“In that day,” a phrase first found in 2.11 and remarked upon frequently throughout Isaiah by reason of it being akin to a *kairos* event. In the context at hand, this *yom* (‘day’) will occur once the flood, if you will, of divine knowledge mentioned in the previous verse has enveloped the earth. Unlike earlier dealings in Isaiah with human wickedness, this divine knowledge comes about because the “Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” [Gn 6.5].

Because Mount Zion will be the only land above the water of divine knowledge, on it will be located the “root” of Jesse or *shoresh* (cf. vs. 1 but not noted) which was planted there once King David transferred the ark of the Lord to Jerusalem described in Chapter Six of Second Samuel. Although a root is beneath the ground, this one will show its fruit by becoming an “ensign” or *nes* (cf. 5.26) for all to behold which means a standard or flag, often with military connotations. This *nes* simply won’t be set up but “will stand” or *hamad* (cf. 10.32 but not noted there), a verb connoting permanence. Following through with this image, we could say that the people are on the new ark floating upon the waters of divine knowledge as they await making landfall with Mount Zion. Once they reach it, they discover that it is the source of this knowledge.

The “nations” (*goy*, cf. 10.6) more specifically imply non-Israelites compared with the more general term *ham* or “peoples.” In sum, both will be attracted to Zion, having seen it from afar off, *darash* being the verb for “seek” (cf. 9.13, implies treading).

Once the peoples and nations have landed at the shores of Mount Zion, they will recognize that the new king from Jesse’s root will have “dwellings” which will be “glorious.” *Menuchah* more specifically means rest or refuge compared with a place to live though quite applicable to Zion. “This is rest; give rest to the weary; and this is repose” [28.12]. *Kavod* is a noun (cf. 10.18) and by reason of its brightness intimates a lighthouse of sorts. Thus the text reads literally as “rest of glory.”

## 8 December, Immaculate Conception

9) *Their partiality witnesses against them; they proclaim their sin like Sodom, they do not hide it. Woe to them! For they have brought evil upon themselves. 10) Tell the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their deeds. 11) Woe to the wicked! It shall be ill with him, for what his hands have done shall be done to him. 12) My people—children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, your leaders mislead you and confuse the course of your paths. 13) The Lord has taken his place to contend, he stands to judge his people. 14) The Lord enters into judgment with the elders and princes of his people: "It is you who have devoured the vineyard, the spoil of the poor is in your houses. 15) What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor?" says the Lord God of hosts. Genesis 3.9-15*

The following is taken from “Expansions on the Book of Isaiah” also posted on this home page.

Vs. 9: Their partiality witnesses against them; they proclaim their sin like Sodom, they do not hide it. Woe to them! For they have brought evil upon themselves.

“Partiality” is rendered as *hakarath peneyhem* or literally the “cutting (*karath*) of their faces,” the noun indicative of a part which can be detrimental to the whole. The verb *hanah* or “witnesses” is used which fundamentally means to answer. “Hyenas will cry in its towers and jackals in the pleasant palaces” [13.22].

This is the second mention of Sodom (cf. 1.10) which for the Israelites is the most shameful comparison that can be made. The brief but poignant ‘*ovy* (‘woe’) cuts to the quick and is used with the singular *nephesh* (cf. 1.14) or soul (i.e., ‘to them’).

*Nagad* means “proclaim” which has the idea of manifesting, almost of parading about. “What I have heard from the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, I announce to you” [21.10]. There is no direct mention of this in the Genesis account; perhaps Isaiah has in mind memories which have accumulated over the years concerning Sodom’s destruction which continues to make a profound impact on Israel. Yet Israel resembles Sodom in that the people failed to hide their sin, the nature of which isn’t spelled out but intimated by association with that town.

*Gamal* means “brought” as well as to give, to repay, here with respect to *rah* (‘evil,’ cf. 1.16). “According to all that the Lord has granted us” [63.7]. So if this is true, the same fate that befell Sodom (and Gomorrah) awaits Israel.

Vs. 10: Tell the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their deeds.

If Sodom (and by implication, Gomorrah) were mentioned in the previous verse, shift in attention to the “righteous” or *tsadyq* (cf. 5.23) can intimate or at least trigger in the minds of Isaiah’s listeners the few survivors of those two cities, that is to say, Lot and his family. The common adjective *tov* (i.e., good) is used for “well.”

*Mahalal* is the noun for “deeds” (cf. vs. 8). And so this righteousness which had been accumulated gradually in a hostile environment represented by Sodom becomes something resembling the quail and manna which had nourished Israel in the Sinai wilderness.

Vs. 11: Woe to the wicked! It shall be ill with him, for what his hands have done shall be done to him.

‘*Ovy* (cf. vs. 9) or “woe” applies here to the “wicked” or *rashah*, most likely the recipients of *rah* (cf. vs. 9). “Who acquit the guilty for a bribe” [5.23].

*Gemul* as “shall be done” connotes repayment as noted in vs. 9. Such *gemul* from one’s own hands is the exact opposite of eating the fruit of one’s deeds in the previous verse.

Vs. 12: My people—children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, your leaders mislead you, and confuse the course of your paths.

*Hamy* or “my people” is used twice in poignant fashion, the Lord being pretty much on the verge of dismay. This verse hearkens back to vs. 4, “boys their princes, and babes shall rule over them.” *Halal* is a participle with multiple meanings such as to defile, to glean, and here translates as “children.” “In company with men who work iniquity” [Ps 141.4]. In the verse at hand, these children are “oppressors,” the participle *nagas* being used (cf. vs. 5). As for the women...usually considered unfit for governance...they will “rule” (*mashal*, cf. vs. 4) literally “in (*b-*) them” or in the people.

*Ashar* is a participle for “leaders” (cf. 1.17) who instead of leading, “mislead” or *tahah* which means to err or wander. “For those who lead this people lead them astray” [9.16]. They also cause confusion, *balah* or fundamentally to swallow down or consume. “And he will destroy on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples” [25.7]. Such *balah* is done not just with regard to “paths” (*orach*, 2.3) but their “course” or *derek* (cf. 2.3), the former being a more poetical term and here as governing the various directions of *derek*.

Vs. 13: The Lord has taken his place to contend, he stands to judge his people.

*Natsav* means “taken (his) place” which connotes being ready to do something and can refer to the temple at Jerusalem. “And at my post I am stationed whole nights” [21.8]. From this position of permanence the Lord is prepared both to “contend” or *ryv* (cf. 1.23) and to “judge,” the verb *dyn* also referring to the exercise of authority or rule. “That he may judge his people” [Ps 50.4].

Vs. 14: The Lord enters into judgment with the elders and princes of his people: "It is you who have devoured the vineyard, the spoil of the poor is in your houses.

The previous verse has the Lord standing to judge his people, that is, taking a position visible to all. Here he enters “judgment” or *mishpat* (cf. 1.27) with the preposition *b-* (in) prefaced to it. This noun’s verbal root is *shaphat* (cf. 3.2) which differs from *dyn* whose definition is given in the previous verse. Entry isn’t in the literal sense of walking in but intimates beginning to effect *mishpat*. The Lord is about to do this with the leaders or “elders and princes,” *zaqen*, cf. vs. 5 and *sar*, cf. vs. 4. Both groups have taken over the property of people unjustly, vineyard suggestive of grapes and therefore wine.

*Hany* is the noun for “poor” found in the next verse. The Lord calls stealing what little they possess as “spoil” or *gezelah*. To store up such meager possessions can suggest

that the elders and princes are holding them as a kind of ransom or intimidation. “He does not oppress anyone but returns what he took in pledge for a loan” [Ezk 18.7].

Vs. 15: What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor?" says the Lord God of hosts.

This is more a rhetorical question put in the Lord’s mouth by Isaiah and receives no response nor is any expected under the circumstances. Just posing it causes shame. The verb “mean” isn’t in the Hebrew text. *Daka*’ is the verb for “crushing” and found next in 53.10: “Yet it was the Lord’s will to crush him.” Even worse than this crushing is *tachan* or “grinding” not just the poor but their faces not unlike in a mill as 47.2 illustrates: “Take millstones and grind flour; take off your veil.”

### 11 December, Third Sunday of Advent

*1) The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus 2) it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. 3) Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. 4) Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you." 5) Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped; 6) then shall the lame man leap like a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert...10) And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Isaiah 35.1-6 & 10*

The following is taken from “Expansions on the Book of Isaiah” also on this home page.

Vs. 1: The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus

This verse continues into the next one. The three words “wilderness, dry land and desert” contrast with the devastation recounted in the previous chapter which is destined to remain forever. The words are *midbar* (cf. 32.16), *tsyah* and *haravah*. The second is found next in 41.18: “I will make the wilderness (*tsyah*) a pool of water and the dry land springs of water.” The third connotes sterility and is found in 33.9 but not noted there.

The verb *sus* is akin to *sus* (the letter *samech*) connoting a leaping up and down and pertains to the first two words. The verb *gyl* (cf. 29.19) suggests dancing as in a circle and applies to the third noun. In addition to this *gyl*, the desert will “blossom” or *parach* (cf.

27.6) like the “crocus” or *chavatsleth* which has one other biblical reference, Sg 2.1: “I am a rose of Sharon.

Vs. 2: it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God.

This verse flows seamlessly from the previous one.

*Parach* is used a second time with respect to the crocus of the previous verse, the English adverb “abundantly” being rendered in Hebrew as a second use of the verb and reads literally something like “blossoming will blossom.” Not only this, the desert will “rejoice” or *gyl*, the second use of this verb as with *parach*. Such *gyl* will take the form of “joy and singing,” *gylah* and *ranan*. The former is derived from *gyl* and has one other biblical reference, 65.18: “But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create.” The latter is a verb (infinitive) noted last in 26.19.

Lebanon is renowned for cedars (cf. 14.8) which went into the construction of Solomon’s temple, hence the essence of its “glory” or *kavod* (cf. 24.16). To Carmel and Sharon belong “majesty” or *hadar* found last in 5.14 as “nobility” but not noted there. In other words, these three places endowed with natural beauty and resources will fill the wilderness, dry land and desert. Once established, they will see the divine “glory and majesty,” *kavod* and *hadar*.

Vs. 3: Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees.

Reference to weak hands and feeble knees concerns the returning exiles and is reminiscent of Heb 12.12: “Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees.” The two verbs in the verse at hand are *chazaq* (cf. 28.2) and *amats*. The latter suggests being alert as well as hardened and found next in 40.26.

Vs. 4: Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you."

*Mahar* is the participle for “fearful” and fundamentally means to be hasty or rash as in 32.4. Instead of this attitude the Lord bids the exiles to be “strong” and not to “fear,” *chazaq* (cf. vs. 3) and *yare’* (cf. 25.3).

The Lord will come with “vengeance” or *naqam* (cf. 34.8) as well as “recompense” or *gemul* (cf. 3.11).

*Yashah* is the verb for “save” noted last in 33.22. Note that all three are to happen in the indeterminate future as with all the promises in this chapter.

Vs. 5: Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

Note the similarity of the two verbs, “opened and unstopped” or *paqach* and *patach*. The former more specifically refers to eyes as is the case at hand and found next in

37.17: "Open your eyes, O Lord, and see." The latter is more suggestive of loosening and found last in 26.2 but not noted there.

Vs. 6: then shall the lame man leap like a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert;

Three words of special force: 1) *dalag* or "leap" as in Sg 2.8: "Behold, he comes, leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills," 2) *ranan* or "sing for joy" (cf. vs. 2) and 3) *baqah* (cf. 7.6). With respect to #3, *midbar* and *haravah* are mentioned (cf. vs. 1).

Vs. 10: And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

*Padah* is the verb for "ransomed" (cf. 29.22) who here belong to the Lord implying that he had paid a price for these people. In other words, the Lord had engaged in negotiations with the Lord's enemies enabling his people to return and then come to Zion with singing, *rinah* (cf. 14.7). The route they will follow is that Holy Way in vs. 8. Because Zion (Jerusalem is in an elevated position), people will have to go up there which means this *rinah* consisted of those "songs of ascents" or Psalms 120-134.

The "joy" or *simchah* (cf. 30.29) which is everlasting will act as a crown, the result of singing in common these songs of ascent.

"Joy and gladness" or *sason* and *simchah* are both found together in 22.13. Their exact opposite are "sorrow and sighing" or *yagon* and *anachah*. The former is found next in 51.11: "and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." The latter is found last in 21.2 but not noted there.

## 18 December, Third Sunday of Advent

*10) Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, 11) "Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." 12) But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test." 13) And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? 14) Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Isaiah 7.10-14*

This excerpt is lifted from "Expansions on the Book of Isaiah" also on this homepage.

7-Vs. 11: Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven."

In a sense, vs. 10 forms part of vs. 11, an introduction: "Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz." "Again" is the verb *yasaph* which means to increase as noted in 1.13. It's as though

the divine words grew within King Ahaz until it culminated in a decision related to that double *'aman* of the previous verse.

With this notion of *yasaph* in mind, the Lord bidding King Ahaz to ask for a sign is more or less to reflect such *yasaph* back to him. The verb *sha'al* ('ask') uses the preposition *l-* (to) reading literally "ask to you." The asking is with respect to a "sign" or *'oth* (found next in vs. 14) which represents that which at the moment can't be seen.

The Lord puts this asking in term of two (vertical) opposites: "Sheol (cf. 5.14) and "heaven," the latter being *mahal* which connotes more an ascent compared with the common *shamym*, suggestive of a vault. *Mahal* is found last in 6.2 as "above." These two opposites have the adjectives "deep and "high" describing them, *hamaq* and *gavoah* (cf. 5.16), both being verbs. The former is for King Ahaz to make deep his request. "Its fire pit has been made deep and wide" [30.33]. And so we have Ahaz situated in the middle point between these two extremes.

7-Vs. 12: But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test."

Even though King Ahaz was in dire s, he felt that he was being set up by the mediating words of Isaiah. When being presented with the request to ask for a sign, Ahaz must have paused as he looked first at the ground and then raised his eyes to the sky. He thought he could get out of this by refusing an answer, thinking it to be a test, the verb being *nasah* which connotes putting on trial. "They willfully put God to the test by demanding the food they craved" [Ps 78.18]. Perhaps King Ahaz was thinking of this incident with Israel in the desert which had serious consequences.

7-Vs. 13: And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also?"

This verse conveys a sense of the Lord being offended and snapping back somewhat angrily to King Ahaz who refused to ask for a sign. Immediately he addresses the king as "house of David" which intimates that all Israel is implicated.

*La'ah* is the verb for "weary" (cf. 1.14) with regard to the king's subjects. So when the Lord applies this *la'ah* to himself, he is hitting home in a big way because Ahaz knew exactly what was involved.

7-Vs. 14: Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanu-el.

The Lord knew that Ahaz would refuse an *'oth*...a "sign"...so he had one prepared beforehand which perhaps was as far removed from the king's thinking as possible and prefaces it with an exclamation, "behold" or *hineh* (cf. 3.1).

The *'oth* at hand consists of a "young woman" or *halmah*, a girl of marriageable age (compare with *betulah* or a virgin, not the same). Her identity isn't given which is secondary to the child to whom she will give birth although to Ahaz she must have been

visibly pregnant. “Therefore the maidens love you” [Sg 1.3]. This verse is applied to the Virgin Mary and birth of Jesus announced by an unidentified angel to Joseph: “and they will call him Immanu-el which means ‘God with us’” [Mt 1.23]. Almost certainly this same angel was present with the Lord and King Ahaz, kept it in mind and therefore was well prepared later on to act in a similar fashion with Joseph, Mary’s husband. In this way the angel was bound to get it right.

## 25 December, Christmas Day (and a Sunday)

*1) But there will be no gloom for her that was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. 2) The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined. 3) You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. 4) For the yoke of his burden and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. 5) For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire. 6) For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9.1-6*

This excerpt is taken from “Expansions on the Book of Isaiah,” also on this homepage.

Vs. 1: But there will be no gloom for her that was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

This verse is 8.23 in the Hebrew text.

*Muhaph* is the noun for “gloom,” the only use of the term in the Bible whose verbal root suggests darkness and is similar to *mahuph* in 9.22. It is related closely to the presence of “anguish” or *mutsaq* (note similarity in sound) which has two other biblical references, Job 36.16 and 37.10, the former being cited here: “to a spacious place free from restriction.” “For her” most likely is Jerusalem living in fear of the Assyrian invasion.

The Lord singles out Zebulun and Naphtali, both of which had suffered the most during the Assyrian invasion and had been “brought into contempt” or *qalal* noted last in 8.21. It suggests having been cursed, that is, by the Lord through the agent of the Assyrians. Both Zebulun and Naphtali are mentioned in a quote of this verse (a different version) and the next in Mt 4.15: “Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the

sea along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.” This is cited at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry when he resided in Capernaum “which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali” [vs. 14].

Note the contrast between two times or *heth* which is not unlike the Greek *kairos*, a proper time or opportunity where the notion of temporal duration is secondary: that which is former and that which is latter.

The verb *kaved* (cf. 6.10) as “will make glorious” with respect to the *derek* or “way” (cf. 3.12) of the sea suggests travel and transport of merchandise by the Mediterranean Sea. This making *kaved* will start there and extend inland, hence the mention of Galilee beyond the Jordan, that region designated as “of the nations” (*goy*, cf. 2.4), a term which often applies to non-Israelites.

9-Vs. 2: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.

Compare “darkness” or *choshek* (cf. 8.22) with *muhaph* of the previous verse which is more in reference to the light of the sun. To have walked in such darkness is not to know where one is going. As for the “light” (*or*), nothing is said regarding its source but seems to appear not at once illuminating the darkness but more as a guiding beacon even though it is called “great.” Compare with the Magi who came to Jesus at his birth: “We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him” [Mt 2.2].

A second category, if you will, follows those who walked in darkness, persons who dwelt in a land of “deep darkness” or *tsalmaveth* which is a compound of *tsel* (shadow) and *maveth* (death). They may be called resides of Sheol or the underworld (cf. 7.11). “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil” [Ps 23.4]. For persons in this *tsalmaveth* the same light or *or* has “shined” upon them, the verb being *nagah* which has five other biblical references, one of which is 13.10: “The moon will not give its light.” Here the light is above shining below compared with the people who have seen a great light, that is, from a distance.

In Mt 4.14 after having quoted the above two verses, we have “From that time on Jesus began to preach. ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.’”

9-Vs. 3: You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.

*Ravah* is the verb for “multiplied” which can mean to become great and is found last in 1.15 but not noted there whereas here it is used with respect to *goy* or “nation” (cf. vs. 1). Compare this multiplication with *gadal* (cf. 1.2) or “increased” which also refers to becoming great usually in the sense of growth. Here such *gadal* implies an organic growth, one from within, concerning the nation (Israel) or more accurately, it’s “joy” or *simchah* which has an air of gladness about it. “Joy and gladness are taken away from the orchards” [16.10].

The verbal root to *simchah* (again as ‘joy’) or *samach* translates as “rejoice” with respect to harvest. “Even the pine trees and the cedars of Lebanon exult over you” [14.8]. Another verb is used for the second “rejoice” or *gyl* which means to dance in a circle, to leap for joy. “Let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation” [25.9]. In the verse at hand, *gly* gives the image of conquerors after a battle gathered around a campfire when they share the enemy’s spoil among them.

9-Vs. 4: For the yoke of his burden and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

The elements of oppression and slavery are presented in the context of the “day” (*yom*, cf. 3.7) of Midian, this term being not unlike a *kairos* event transcending the limits of space and time yet including them. Reference to Midian concerns Gideon’s stunning defeat recounted in Chapter Seven of Judges, of three hundred men who overwhelmed a massive army.

Here “yoke, staff and rod” are symbols of oppression which can be broken by a small band of determined people. Note the three terms which are similar in that they are used as sticks for punishment or beating. They are “broken” or *chatat* (cf. 8.9) which connotes fear:

1) *Hol* as related to *sovel* (‘burden’) where the two are found in 10.27: “In that day their burden will be lifted from your shoulders.” [10.27].

2) *Mateh* as related to *shekem* (‘shoulder’): “Woe to the Assyrian, the rod of my anger” [10.5] and 10.27 cited in #1.

3) *Shevet* (also it refers to ‘tribe’) as related to *nagas* (‘oppressor,’ cf. 3.12). For the alternate meaning, see 49.6: “to raise up the tribes of Jacob.”

9-Vs. 5: For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.

This verse continues the image of Gideon’s victory over Midian or rather, its aftermath when the remnants of the battle will be destroyed. Perhaps Isaiah had in mind how the Midianites turned against each other unwittingly: “When the three hundred trumpets sounded, the Lord caused the men throughout the camp to turn on each other with their swords” [Jud 7.22].

*Rahash* is the noun for “trampling” and fundamentally means noise, tumult. “The Lord Almighty will come with thunder and earthquake and great noise” [29.6]. It modifies “warrior” or *sahan* (participle) from which is derived *se’on* or “battle.” Both are the only uses in the Bible.

*Simlah* means “garment” used by both men and women, usually an outer one, and noted last in 3.7.

9-Vs. 6: For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

*Yeled* is the noun for “child” along with the verb from which it is derived, *yalad* (‘is born’) found last in 8.18 but not noted there. Note two uses of “to us” (*lanu*) which brings home the point although neither the name nor the parents of the child is known. It could be Maher-shalal-hash-baz of 8.1, the child Isaiah was commanded to have by the prophetess. Still, there is no clear link between the two, and the child in the verse at hand disappears from the scene as quickly as he has appeared. Perhaps the Magi had this passage in mind once they got word concerning “the one who has been born king of the Jews” [Mt 2.2]. Although they had seen his star, this seems to have occurred after they got word of the child’s birth. Thus we lack any information about how the Magi discovered this—deliberately so—in order that the reader discover it on his own.

*Misrah* is the noun for “government” which has one other biblical reference in vs. 7. The verbal root is *sarah* which fundamentally means to place in a row, to set in order. Such rule will be placed on the child’s “shoulder” or *shekem* noted in vs. 4. Although this *misrah* isn’t spelled out, most likely it will be a king according to the line of David who is mentioned in the next verse.

The four names of this mysterious child with an important destiny are:

1) “Wonderful Counselor” or *Pele’ Yohets*. The first word is a noun suggestive of being distinct and therefore set apart. “You have done marvelous things” [25.1]. The second word is a participle of the verb *yahats* found last in 8.10.

2) “Mighty God” or *Gibor* found last in 5.22 which often refers to a warrior’s prowess in battle.

3) “Everlasting Father” or *‘Avyhad*, the only use of the term which is a compound of ‘*av* (father) and the verb *yahad* (to appoint).

4) “Prince of Peace” or *Sar-Shalom*. The first is found last in 3.14 and the second is the well known word for peace found in the next verse.

## 1 January, Solemnity of Mary

22) *The Lord said to Moses,* 23) *"Say to Aaron and his sons, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them,* 24) *The Lord bless you and keep you:* 25) *The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you:* 26) *The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.* 27) *"So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them."* Numbers 6.22-27

This is one of the most recognizable passages in scripture, used for a multitude of occasions because it's so generic. It begins with two instances of "saying" or *davar* which is more word as expression, not unlike the Greek *logos*: first the Lord to Moses and Moses to Aaron and his sons and they to the Israelites. While *davar* seems split into several parts in reality it is one and the same involving three persons (more if you include Aaron's sons). The terminus of *davar*, if you will, is Israel.

This *davar* filtering through two persons ends up as a blessing, *barak* which fundamentally means to bend the knee as in homage. *Barak* which originates in *davar* then moves on to the people where it, along with a divine keeping, applies to them. *Shamar* is the verb for this keeping and is used often with regard to observation of the Torah.

From *barak* and *shamar* the divine *davar* moves on to the Lord's facing shining ('*or*) upon the people and being gracious to them. The preposition '*el* is used for "upon," more literally as "to you" as the direction of this shining. *Chanan* is the verb meaning to be gracious or to be inclined favorably.

From this '*or* and *chanan davar* next moves to the Lord raising (*nasa'*) his countenance upon the Israelites, the preposition '*el* again being used literally as "to you." Once this happens, *davar* becomes an agent of peace or *shalom*, one of those well known words difficult to translate accurately but connotes a sense of wholeness and completion.

And so the divine *davar* is accomplished in one fell swoop and is comprised in a the six-fold transmission of *barak*→*shamar*→'*or*→*chanan*→*nasa'*→*shalom* (bless, guard, light, grace, lift up and peace). Finally Aaron and his sons (as priests) place the Lord's name upon Israel which results in a blessing. Note the similarity of sound with regard to *sum* and *shem*, put and name.

## 8 January, Epiphany

*1) Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. 2) For behold, darkness shall cover the earth and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. 3) And nations shall come to your light and kings to the brightness of your rising. 4) Lift up your eyes round about and see; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far, and your daughters shall be carried in the arms. 5) Then you shall see and be radiant, your heart shall thrill and rejoice; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. 6) A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord. Isaiah 60.1-6*

The following is lifted from *Expansions on the Book of Isaiah* posted on this same home page.

Vs. 1: Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

The divine injunction to “arise (*qum*, cf. 49.8) and shine” (‘*or*, found in 27.11 but not noted there) fittingly come after the misdeeds detailed in the previous chapter. The noun ‘*or* or “light” (cf. 59.9) is the same spelling as its verbal root. Such light is similar yet different from the Lord’s “glory” or *kavod* (cf. 59.19) which fundamentally connotes heaviness.

The verb “has risen” or *zarach* (cf. 58.10) pertains to the Lord, that his glory has happened already, and that the people are to respond by *qum* and ‘*or*.

Vs. 2: For behold, darkness shall cover the earth and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you.

“Behold” or *hineh* (cf. 51.22) serves to contrast the light and arising of vs. 1 with “darkness and thick darkness” or *choshek* (cf. 59.9) and *haraphel*. For the latter, cf. Ex 20.21: “Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was.” Both are to take place in the indefinite future compared with the past-ness of light in the previous verse. Also both are to “cover” the earth and peoples, *kasah* (found in 59.6 but not noted there).

The conjunctive *v-* or “but” is important here, leading from a picture of gloom to the Lord who will “arise” upon the people, *zarach* (cf. vs. 1) after which his “glory” or *kavod* (cf. vs. 1) will be visible upon the people. That is to say, those who are not of Israel will behold this sight.

Vs. 3: And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.

*Goy* (cf 58.2) is the noun for “nations” compared with *ham* in the previous verse for “peoples,” the former more intended to set off Israel from others. Also mentioned are kings or rulers of these *goy*.

Note the similarity yet difference with regard to “light and brightness,” ‘*or* and *nogah* (cf. 59.9), the latter connoting splendor. *Nogah* is associated with *zerach* or “rising” and is the only use of this term in the Bible derived from *zarach* as in vs. 2 which connotes scattering or diffusion.

Vs. 4: Lift up your eyes round about and see; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far, and your daughters shall be carried in the arms.

This verse is reminiscent of 49.18: “Lift up your eyes round about and see; they all gather, they come to you. As I live, says the Lord, you shall put them all on as an ornament, you shall bind them on as a bride does.”

*Nasa'* (cf. 57.15) or "lift up" to the instances of *qum* and *zarach* already mentioned though it is more active and has the sense of elevating, if you will. Such lifting up to see implies that the people had their eyes downcast, were too absorbed by their sins as recounted in Chapter Fifty-Nine. The scene for this can be on the walls of Jerusalem.

*Qavats* (cf. 56.8) is the verb for "gather" and is applied specifically to sons and daughters of those within...not physically, but as part of the nation of Israel, those who have been taken captive and remained in exile. The arms carrying the daughters are not specified, that is, they could belong to those who had taken them captive and now are returning them, being captive in turn.

Vs. 5: Then you shall see and be radiant, your heart shall thrill and rejoice; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you.

In the previous verse the Lord bids the people to lift up their eyes and see whereas here they actually are seeing which makes the "radiant" or *nahar* (cf. 2.2), a verb which fundamentally means to flow as a river, etc. With that in mind, mention of the sea's "abundance" (*hamon*: cf. 33.3 as 'tumult') as coming to the people makes sense as well as the "wealth" or *chayl* (cf. 10.14) of the nations.

Vs. 6: A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.

Here and in the next few verses several places are mentioned starting with Midian (cf. 10.26) and Ephah to the south, the latter being the only mention in Isaiah. Sheba is also to the south in Arabia. The gifts of gold and frankincense are not as important as these people coming (to Jerusalem's temple) for praising the Lord, this being the noun *tehilah* (cf. 48.9).

## 15 January, Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

3) *And he said to me, "You are my servant, Israel in whom I will be glorified."* 4) *But I said, "I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my right is with the Lord, and my recompense with my God."* 5) *And now the Lord says, who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honored in the eyes of the Lord, and my God has become my strength –* 6) *he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."* Isaiah 49.3-6

This year we have a rather long Ordinary Time inserted between after the Christmas season and Ash Wednesday which is 1 March. Nevertheless, there's a certain awkwardness in this season, more as an anticipation of a change of seasons, from winter into spring.

The following is lifted from *Expansions on the Book of Isaiah* posted on this same home page.

49-Vs. 3: And he said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified."

Here the servant is identified as the nation of Israel as a whole. *Pa'ar* (cf. 44.23) is the verb for "glorified" which fundamentally means to adorn, to beautify.

49-Vs. 4: But I said, "I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my right is with the Lord and my recompense with my God."

*Yagah* is the verb for "labored" (cf. 43.24) is more suggestive of weariness than *havad* from which "servant" is derived.

"Vain, for nothing and vanity" or *ryq* (cf. 30.7), *tohu* (cf. 45.19) and *hevel* (cf. 30.7) are strong words but are not spelled out. Presumably the servant had withdraw, if you will, his sword and arrow (cf. vs. 2) and exercised them but to no avail. Nevertheless, his "right" is with the Lord, *mishpat* (cf. 42.4) as well as his "recompense or *pehulah* (cf. 40.10). These words echo 40.10: "behold, his reward is with him and his recompense before him."

49-Vs. 5: And now the Lord says, who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honored in the eyes of the Lord, and my God has become my strength –

Before the Lord speaks in the next verse, the servant feels it necessary to state his purpose despite the setbacks mentioned somewhat vaguely in vs. 4. The divine purpose is to bring back Jacob and to gather Israel, *shuv* (cf. 47.0) and *yasaph* (cf. 43.9). The former is active whereas the latter is passive, that such gathering (the verb fundamentally means to increase) is done more on their own.

*Kavad* is the verb for "honored" (cf. 43.23) and *hoz* is "strength" (cf. 45.24). Thus the servant's experience is rejection countered by awareness that the Lord is sustaining him.

49-Vs. 6: he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

*Qalal* (cf. 30.16) is a verb for “light” which has the alternate meaning of to curse. Note that with regard to Israel the Lord mentioned restoring (*shuv* as in the previous verse) those of Israel who have been “preserved,” *natsyr*, the only use of this noun in the Bible, *natsar* (cf. 47.6) being the verbal root. Perhaps this intimates those who have remained faithful to worship of the Lord instead of going after idols.

*Yeshuhah* (cf. 33.6) is to reach the “Ends of the earth, *qatseh* where as noted in 43.6, is conceived as the base where the firmament comes down upon it, not unlike being covered by a bowl.

The verse at hand is quoted in part in Acts 23.47: “I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth.”

## 22 January, Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

*1) But there will be no gloom for her that was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. 2) The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined. 3) You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before thee as with joy at the harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. Isaiah 8.23-9.3 NB: 9.1 is 8.23 in the Hebrew text.*

The following is lifted from *Expansions on the Book of Isaiah* posted on this same home page.

Vs. 1: But there will be no gloom for her that was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

This verse is 8.23 in the Hebrew text.

*Muhaph* is the noun for “gloom,” the only use of the term in the Bible whose verbal root suggests darkness and is similar to *mahuph* in 9.22. It is related closely to the presence of “anguish” or *mutsaq* (note similarity in sound) which has two other biblical references, Job 36.16 and 37.10, the former being cited here: “to a spacious place free from restriction.” “For her” most likely is Jerusalem living in fear of the Assyrian invasion.

The Lord singles out Zebulun and Naphtali, both of which had suffered the most during the Assyrian invasion and had been “brought into contempt” or *qalal* noted last in 8.21. It suggests having been cursed, that is, by the Lord through the agent of the Assyrians. Both Zebulun and Naphtali are mentioned in a quote of this verse (a different

version) and the next in Mt 4.15: “Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.” This is cited at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry when he resided in Capernaum “which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali” [vs. 14].

Note the contrast between two times or *heth* which is not unlike the Greek *kairos*, a proper time or opportunity where the notion of temporal duration is secondary: that which is former and that which is latter.

The verb *kaved* (cf. 6.10) as “will make glorious” with respect to the *derek* or “way” (cf. 3.12) of the sea suggests travel and transport of merchandise by the Mediterranean Sea. This making *kaved* will start there and extend inland, hence the mention of Galilee beyond the Jordan, that region designated as “of the nations” (*goy*, cf. 2.4), a term which often applies to non-Israelites.

Vs. 2: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.

Compare “darkness” or *choshek* (cf. 8.22) with *muhaph* of the previous verse which is more in reference to the light of the sun. To have walked in such darkness is not to know where one is going. As for the “light” (*or*), nothing is said regarding its source but seems to appear not at once illuminating the darkness but more as a guiding beacon even though it is called “great.” Compare with the Magi who came to Jesus at his birth: “We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him” [Mt 2.2].

A second category, if you will, follows those who walked in darkness, persons who dwelt in a land of “deep darkness” or *tsalmaveth* which is a compound of *tsel* (shadow) and *maveth* (death). They may be called resides of Sheol or the underworld (cf. 7.11). “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil” [Ps 23.4]. For persons in this *tsalmaveth* the same light or *or* has “shined” upon them, the verb being *nagah* which has five other biblical references, one of which is 13.10: “The moon will not give its light.” Here the light is above shining below compared with the people who have seen a great light, that is, from a distance.

In Mt 4.14 after having quoted the above two verses, we have “From that time on Jesus began to preach. ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.’”

Vs. 3: You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.

*Ravah* is the verb for “multiplied” which can mean to become great and is found last in 1.15 but not noted there whereas here it is used with respect to *goy* or “nation” (cf. vs. 1). Compare this multiplication with *gadal* (cf. 1.2) or “increased” which also refers to becoming great usually in the sense of growth. Here such *gadal* implies an organic growth, one from within, concerning the nation (Israel) or more accurately, it’s “joy” or *simchah*

which has an air of gladness about it. “Joy and gladness are taken away from the orchards” [16.10].

The verbal root to *simchah* (again as ‘joy’) or *samach* translates as “rejoice” with respect to harvest. “Even the pine trees and the cedars of Lebanon exult over you” [14.8]. Another verb is used for the second “rejoice” or *gyl* which means to dance in a circle, to leap for joy. “Let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation” [25.9]. In the verse at hand, *gly* gives the image of conquerors after a battle gathered around a campfire when they share the enemy’s spoil among them.

## 29 January, Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

*3) Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land who do his commands; seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the wrath of the Lord...12) For I will leave in the midst of you a people humble and lowly. They shall seek refuge in the name of the Lord, 13) those who are left in Israel; they shall do no wrong and utter no lies, nor shall there be found in their mouth a deceitful tongue. For they shall pasture and lie down, and none shall make them afraid." Zephaniah 2.3; 3.12-13*

This excerpt should keep in mind the first two verses which calls Israel a “shameless nation” and speaks of the “day of the wrath of the Lord.” While this pertains to the majority of the people, nevertheless some are fortunate not to belong to this category. They are called humble because they are suffering oppression and perhaps more noticeably, neglect for their fidelity. To be humble in this context means being passed over and ignored which can be used to a great benefit. It can be said that they are operating openly while not being paid attention to and have a greater freedom than their compatriots.

After the precautionary note of vss. 1-2, vs.3 speaks of those who’ve suffered under these dire conditions, namely, the humble or *hanav*, an adjective connoting meekness and poverty. Despite Israel being called shameless and subject to divine wrath, all along such persons were seeking the Lord, *baqash* fundamentally having the sense of touching or feeling. In other words, there are engaged in a striving which implies intimacy, not groping, if you will. Along with this *baqash* the humble are doing the Lord’s commands and seeking righteousness as well as humility. As for the third word, it’s of the same root as *hany*, *hanavah*. In this light it could be said that those who are *hany* are seeking what’s proper to themselves and don’t have to go far to acquire it.

Despite the singling out of what apparently is a remnant of Israel, the Lord implies that even this remnant can be reduced further. That is to say, the *hany* may be hidden on the day of the Lord’s wrath, ‘*aph* meaning nose from which breath comes and *satar* suggestive

of putting a veil over one's face. No one knows for certain when this day will come. However, it can be sensed from afar by reason how sensitive the *hany* are to the intensity of Israel's shameless Israel behavior as noted in vs. 1. The verb there is *kasaph* meaning to be pale, as though the blood is draining from Israel's collective face out of shame. Being attentive to it is a sure sign of the Lord becoming more angry, building up breath in his nose ('*aph*), if you will, before releasing its fury. The *hany* will know when this '*aph* will explode while the others won't.

The text skips several verses of woes regarding various nations in Israel's vicinity as well as Israel herself. Indeed, what's described there is a good thing to hide from...veil oneself from (i.e., *satar*). It moves on to vs. 12 which takes up again the theme of those who are humble (*hany*) as well as lowly or *dal* which also means ignoble and weak. Though less common than *hany*, it's has a greater sense of dejection. Perhaps this second group (the first being the 'humble of the land') is a further reduction of the remnant just spoken of. This time the reduced number will seek refuge in the Lord's name, *chasah* suggestive of trust and fleeing. They will hear the divine name and once they do, will allow it to take up residence in themselves.

The concluding verse in the Zephaniah passage says that this second reduction, if you will, or reduced number of survivors, will conduct themselves virtuously. Such a manner of living enables them to both pasture and lie down, *ravats* being the second verb which evokes the image of quadrupeds; they fold their legs under them when laying down. The same idea is found in the well known verse from Ps 23: "He makes me lay down in green pastures." Both verbs from the verse at hand suggest making permanent a dwelling of those who are poor and lowly.

## **5 February, Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

*7) Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? 8) Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. 9) Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, Here I am. "If you take away from the midst of you the yoke, the pointing of the finger and speaking wickedness, 10) if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. Isaiah 58.7-10*

The following is lifted from Expansions on the Book of Isaiah posted on this home page.

Vs. 7 is the third rhetorical question (the first as the second sentence in vs. 5) put forth by the Lord who doesn't expect an answer but wishes to shame the people into repentance. It has echos in Jesus' parable (Mt 25.31-46) about the great judgment when he identifies himself with various types of afflicted persons. Recognition of him in them is the condition for showing mercy. The chief difference, however, is that the verse and others like it pertain to fellow Israelites.

Vss. 8-9 we have the small word "then" or 'az plays a crucial role, indicative of whether Israel accepts or rejects the Lord's injunctions which he has laid out in a powerful way. Note the emphasis upon that which is luminous: "light ('or, cf. 42.6), dawn, spring up (*tsamach*, cf. 45.8; it can be like the dawn), glory (*kavod*, cf. 48.11)." The second use of 'az or "then" shows the correspondence between two pairs:

1) Calling and answering, *qara'* (cf. vs. 1) and *hanah* (cf. vs 5, again with one of its various meanings).

2) Crying (*shavah*, cf. 32.5 but not mentioned there) and saying (the common verb 'amar as in 45.19).

The yoke, symbol of oppression, is in the midst of the people which indicates that for a long time they had subjected both fellow citizens and foreigners to their service.

In vs. 10 we have the third use of 'az or "then" which brings to conclusion what the Lord says in essence in vs. 6. Both pouring oneself out and satisfying are essential for allowing Israel's "light" ('or, cf. vs. 8) "rise" (*zarach*). "And the glory of the Lord has risen upon you" [60.1]. Until then this double act of *puk* and *savah* (cf. 55.2) remains in the darkness. As for *puk*, cf. Ps 240.8: "Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked."

'*Aphelah* or "gloom" (cf. 29.18) is more intense than *choshek* (cf. 47.5) or "darkness" in that it connotes obscurity and thus forgetfulness.

## 12 February, Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

*15) If you will, you can keep the commandments, and to act faithfully is a matter of your own choice. 16) He has placed before you fire and water: stretch out your hand for whichever you wish. 17) Before a man are life and death, and whichever he chooses will be given to him. 18) For great is the wisdom of the Lord; he is mighty in power and sees everything; 19) his eyes are on those who fear him, and he knows every deed of man. 20) He has not commanded any one to be ungodly, and he has not given any one permission to sin. Sirach 15.15-20*

Use of the verb *ethelo* (to wish, to will) is a nice way to start off this excerpt because it puts the person addressed at ease. In other words, you don't get the sense of an impending obligation to keep the commandments though it's better to do so. As for the keeping at hand, *suntereo* means not just a following but one done together or with, hence the preposition *sun-*. In other words, we can call it a more social way of being responsible both with God and with other persons. Coupled with it is to act faithfully, literally as to make or do an acceptable faith of good will, *eudokia* meaning contentment as well as being the object of desire. Hence we have not a bad way to present living a godly life although Sirach isn't minimizing what's involved.

Vs. 16 gets more serious, if you could put it like that. The choice now is seen as one between two opposites, fire and water which translates in vs. 17 as one between life and death. The choice is entirely up to each individual, the verb here being *eudokeo*. Like *eudokia* in the last paragraph it centers around content but tends more as here with satisfaction. That should make the choice automatically in favor of what's better. Note the adverbial preface of *eu-* meaning well.

Vs. 18 shifts attention away from human choice to divine wisdom or *sophia* which originally means technique, the doing well of something as with skill. This broadens out the common use of the word, making it more inclusive and better, something attractive. Such wisdom is upon what the Lord sees. Note two uses of the preposition *epi-* or upon: 1) free standing as upon those who fear him and 2) prefaced to the verb *gignosko*, literally as a knowing-upon, a more intense form of knowledge as well as acquaintance.

Above all else the Lord doesn't wish anyone to suffer *asebeia*, a difficult word to translate adequately and in general pertains to a lack of piety or respect whether it be to God, country or family. Should the Lord permit such *asebeia*, that would be equivalent to allowing a person become opposite of himself, to deny being made in the divine image and likeness. Then there's the issue of not having permission to commit sin, *anesis* meaning a loosening or relaxing.

### **19 February, Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**

*1) And the Lord said to Moses, 2) "Say to all the congregation of the people of Israel, You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy...17) You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason with your neighbor lest you bear sin because of him. 18) You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord. Leviticus 19.1-2 & 17-18*

This excerpt begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “and.” It is very frequent in Hebrew, showing the close succession of events and their connection with each other. It ties in with the same opening words going all the way back to Chapter Eleven, “And the Lord said.” Although the subject matter of that chapter is some way back, the conjunctive makes it and all that comes in between alive in here and now to us who are reading it.

As very frequently in the Bible we have the Lord using the common *davar*, to speak in the sense as to express, not simply give off pronouncements and all that. Once the Lord *davar* to Moses, Moses is to *davar* to the entire congregation. While this reveals a transmission of speech as utterance, essentially there’s no time gap between the Lord initiating it and the people receiving it, Moses being in between. We could say that he has a better perception of what’s going on than both sides by reason of middle position.

The Lord wishes Israel to be holy, *qadesh* essentially meaning to be separate, apart. Israel being thus apart is a reflection of the Lord’s apartness which he claims (‘I...am holy’). Such apartness will be put to the test in a severe way later on when Israel enters the land of Canaan to possess it. Quickly and unfortunately it will fall apart, worship of native divinities being the prime agent of downfall. Thus in the long run *qadesh* will apply to a remnant, a theme that emerges with various captivities experienced by the Israelites or those who’ve been left behind because they had been deemed not so much as worthless but of no real value for their captors. Hence the notion of *qadesh* migrates to these people who carry on with their faith while the bulk of their fellows fade away.

Keeping in mind the apartness of being *qadesh*, the text skips vss. 2-16 and begins with vs. 17 where the Lord speaks of the need not to hate one’s brother. The intervening verses deal with revering family members, offering of sacrifices, reaping of one’s fields and various injunctions based essentially upon the Ten Commandments. So when we arrive at vs. 17, we find that emphasis is upon not hating which is easier than loving; nevertheless, it’s a start in that direction. Any hatred is located in one’s heart (*levav*) meaning it can be hidden and not known to the person involved. Thus carrying around sin because of him can be equally invisible but just as harmful in the *levav* as it would be if made manifest.

The same is applicable concerning taking vengeance and bearing a grudge which is against one’s one people, an expansion, if you will, of the above mentioned brother which can apply to an immediate family member or neighbor. And so this excerpt from Leviticus closes with the command to love (*ahav* suggests desire. Longing) one’s neighbor as oneself which obviously brings up Jesus’ command to love one another. Although difficult to practice, the very last words offer a hint to overcome this, “I am the Lord.” If the Lord presents his people with this fact, it’s easier to tie in with the idea of *qadesh*, of being holy

in the sense of being apart. Since Israel is similarly *qadesh*, this can be extended to assuming a more impartial, even transcendent view of things which will spill over into loving one's neighbor despite it being next to impossible from the human point of view.

## 26 February, Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

*14) But Zion said, "The Lord has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me." 15) "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. 16) Behold, I have graven you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me. Isaiah 49.14-15*

A very short excerpt but good to have it this way because of the poignancy involved. Prior to it we have an eloquent tale of return from exile and the Lord's care for his people. This makes the opening statement all the more remarkable, for it it brings the joy of the previous verses to a grinding halt. At first you find it difficult to believe that Zion could have ignored all that went before and raises this question in vs. 14. Second thought reveals that indeed it isn't terribly surprising. For example, run through the scriptures and observe the embarrassingly huge number of instances where Israel is called hard-hearted, stubborn and the like. Also the statement at hand can be taken as a kind of pouting. In this instance Israel had full awareness of the Lord's kindness already depicted but that made her both angry and jealous. Other people are involved meaning that attention isn't focused exclusively upon her. So why should we be surprised in light of this?

Zion expresses her sentiment of abandonment and isolation by the verbs *hazav* and *shakach*, forsake and forget, both acting as one in what she believes is actual fact. Note that the first has "Lord" whereas the second has the personal pronoun, "my Lord." She uses this more familiar address to garner sympathy, but in her heart she knows it won't work. The Lord sees through her pouting, and she knows it, so the two are playing a game, the winner, of course, being the Lord.

Then without missing a beat (and much to Zion's surprise), the Lord addresses her with a rhetorical question, one he puts to her directly, not expecting a response but to shake her out of her self-complacency and desire to remain in her pouting mood. No, the Lord does not forget Zion which is likened to a child at the breast and deserving of compassion. The verb for the latter is *racham* which involves compassion of an especially tender kind. From it is derived the noun for bowels, appropriate since the Lord speaks of the womb.

Vs. 15 contains "forget" twice which is more important in a chiefly oral society as is the case at hand. The transmission of information and more importantly, identity, was done by

word of mouth which means closer attention is required. Just as crucial is the one-on-one contact with other people as opposed to the distance and security offered by a written document. To reassure Zion that he hasn't forgotten her, the Lord takes this verbal-ness, if you will, and transfers it over into something visible for all to see. He does it by engraving Israel not just upon his hands but on the palms of his hand. Palms make immediate contact with objects as opposed to other parts of the hand meaning that whatever the Lord does, there is Zion between him and the deed at hand. As for the verb engrave, *chaqah* also means to draw or to paint and from it derives a noun meaning an appointed time.

As for the walls, they refer to Jerusalem in which Zion is situated. For the Lord to have them before him continually means he is acting as a watchman but more than that. A watchman is situated upon the walls of a city whereas the Lord is outside at some distance looking straight on.

### **1 March, Ash Wednesday**

*12) "Yet even now," says the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping and with mourning; 13) and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and repents of evil. 14) Who knows whether he will not turn and repent and leave a blessing behind him, a cereal offering and a drink offering for the Lord, your God? 15) Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; 16) gather the people. Sanctify the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children, even nursing infants. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her chamber. 17) Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep and say, "Spare your people, O Lord, and make not your heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, "Where is their God?" 18) Then the Lord became jealous for his land and had pity on his people. Joel 2.12-18*

Here at the beginning of Lent the call to repentance so eloquently put by Joel involves the entire nation of Israel. Thus it's easy to apply this to the church summoned to repentance for a period of forty days before Easter in preparation for that day. While fasting is part of the deal, being aware that it's a time to be separate for forty days is more important, especially within the context of a secular culture. Such is the meaning of the verb *qadash* found in vs. 16, "sanctify" or more accurately, set apart. And so being set apart in modern culture is more than withdrawing from it. Rather, emphasis upon *qadash* helps you become more aware of being enveloped by the time span of forty days. In sum, it's more practical and immediate for anyone to practice. At the same time it requires a certain discipline to keep the two modes of time in balance, the forty days and the regular, linear one of daily life.

“Also now” is the literal rendering of this passage’s opening words coming just after mention of the “day of the Lord” which most people won’t be able to bear. There are three instances of the verb *shuv* (return): with one’s whole heart, to the Lord who is both *chanun* and *rachum* (gracious and merciful) and the possibility, albeit not fully certain, that those being addressed (most likely the nation of Israel) will repent. Also they will leave a blessing behind, that is, in the wake of a person’s *shuv* which takes the form of an offering. The possibility of this not happening is put in a rhetorical question for the people to ask themselves both collectively and individually. Do you or do you not want to do it?

This threefold *shuv* takes the form of calling a solemn assembly or *hatsarah* which is applicable to festivals and has three other biblical references, one other being in 1.14 not unlike the one at hand: “Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly.” Once this *hatsarah* has been gathered, the congregation is to be sanctified, *qahal* being a different term usually applicable to the nation of Israel as a whole. So we can say that *hatsarah* or a festival type of assembly is transformed into a *qahal* by reason of it being sanctified, *qadash* meaning to set apart and the verbal root for holy. Within this *qahal* are those ranging from infants to elders, another way of saying that everyone is summoned, there being good reason for urgency with the “day of the Lord” [vs. 11] at hand.

Once everyone is present in the temple area, the priests are to beg the Lord to spare his people, *chus* also meaning to have pity or compassion, especially so that they won’t become a byword or *marshal* among nations around them. *Marshal* can mean a proverb as well as song, something easily remembered and transmitted.

This passage concludes with a rather abrupt statement that Lord shows jealousy and pity, *qana’* and *chamal*. The first also means to envy (with respect to the land) and the second, to be mild (with respect to the people). Ensuing verses spell this out by the Lord furnishing food supplies and driving out other nations which pose a threat to Israel.

## 5 March, First Sunday of Lent

7) Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. 8) And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. 9) And out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil...1) Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, `You shall not eat of any tree of the garden'?" 2) And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of

*the garden; 3) but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" 4) But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die. 5) For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6) So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate. 7) Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons.*  
Genesis 2.7-9 & 3.1-7

The following is excerpted from *Expansions upon the Book of Genesis* posted on this homepage. Because the passage at hand is rich, only the first part (2.7-9) is noted here. The second part can be accessed by referring to that document.

*Yatsar* is the verb for “form” which stands in contrast to the chiseling of *bara’* (to create) noted earlier. As for *yatsar*, there comes to mind the fashioning of an object as a potter does with clay, artist-like. So instead of the removal action associated with chiseling (and therefore *bara’*), here we have a true formation, the first time in Genesis when a form is brought into existence, and that implies plasticity. “Dust” or *haphar* is the main ingredient at hand for the form, a fine powdery substance composed of ‘*adamah*. Thus *haphah* has a reddish hue from the color of ‘*adamah*. To get the proper consistency for clay, you don’t add water all at once—that would be too much like the waters of 1.2—but in a measured fashion. Thus ‘*ed* is a kind of sprinkling which fits the description here to keep the *haphar* from being neither too dry nor too wet but just right. For some things, more ‘*ed* is added and for others, less; so with man, God adds just the correct amount of ‘*ed*.

Once man is brought into being from dust, he stands there like a statue, lifeless, not the case with the *bara’* which is responsible for the six days of creation. The beings created then were “chiseled” into life immediately. It was otherwise with man which involved a two-fold process, the first when he was made into something statue-like not yet endowed with life. The second step consisted of breathing the breath of life into this statue. The verb here is *naphach* which implies exhalation (as opposed to inhalation) and scattering. There had to be a place of entry for *naphach* into the newly created man, standing there lifeless. At first our modern mouth-to-mouth method of resuscitation makes us think this would be the way to transmit...inhale...breath. However, God chose the nostrils (‘*aph*), the primary means by which we breathe. And so God makes man exhale in the same way he does which is taken as a sign that truly he is alive.

*Neshmah* is the term for “breath of life” and comes from the verbal root *nasham*, to pant. It is associated with a woman in labor as in Is 42.14: “Now I will cry out like a woman in

travail, I will gasp and pant.” Note that the Genesis verse does not have *neshmah* alone but identifies it with life itself. Since this word implies intense and quick deep inhalations, the picture of man that emerges is one endowed with liveliness and quickness, not simply standing there, quite different than when he was a lifeless statue as noted in the last paragraph. The result? “Man became a living being.” That is to say, ‘*adam*, or the one composed of *haphah*, the dust from the red earth (‘*adamah*), did not turn into something else but “became” (the verb to be is used here) a *nephesh* or soul which was alive. *Nephesh* is not derived from the same verbal root as *neshmah* (‘breath of life’) but from one meaning to take breath. In short, we have a being comprised of red earth and breath. Surely the other living beings of the days of creation were similar but not identified as such.

*Yatsar* is the verb for “form,” the first time it is used, and stands in contrast to the chiseling of *bara’* (to create) which we had seen earlier. As for *yatsar*, there comes to mind the fashioning of an object as a potter does with clay, artist-like. So instead of the removal action associated with chiseling (and therefore *bara’*), here we have a true formation, the first time in Genesis when a form is brought into existence, and that implies plasticity. “Dust” or *haphar* is the main ingredient at hand for the form, a fine powdery substance composed of ‘*adamah*. Thus *haphah* has a reddish hue from the color of ‘*adamah*. To get the proper consistency for clay, you don’t add water all at once—that would be too much like the waters of 1.2—but in a measured fashion. Thus ‘*ed* is a kind of sprinkling which fits the description here to keep the *haphar* from being neither too dry nor too wet but just right. For some things, more ‘*ed* is added and for others, less; so with man, God adds just the correct amount of ‘*ed*.

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**12 March, Second Sunday of Lent**

1) Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2) And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing. 3) I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves." 4) So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. Genesis 12.1-4

The following is excerpted from *Expansions upon the Book of Genesis* posted on this homepage.

To date the Book of Genesis recounted ten major events: the days of creation, the expulsion of the man from the garden of Eden, the first murder, the city of Enoch, the worldwide flood, the re-colonization of the flooded earth, the settlement in the land of Shinar, the confusion of languages, the descendants of Shem and finally, the birth of Abram. All are a prelude to Abram presented against humanity which enjoyed communion with God, had lost it and regained it only to lose it once again. Abram emerges on the scene against the double whammy of the confusion of languages and scattering (*balal* and *puts*) of 11.7-8. At the conclusion of Chapter Eleven's notations it was remarked that God compelled Abram to leave his native land and get as far out of sight of the tower of Babel as possible. Despite his not being associated with it, the tower loomed over everyone and every place as a constant reminder of the confusion that had occurred there. That means Abram had to make a break with his direct ancestry, his father Terah (cf. 11.27), and left Ur of the Chaldeans for the land of Canaan (cf. 11.31). "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you." Three times God includes "your" to emphasize the attachment Abram had with his heritage, a radical break, one in line with the nomadic existence of 11.2: "as men migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar." Then again, perhaps this readiness to pick up and leave wasn't radical for Abram. After all, he was a nomad and very much used to moving around. What makes this change of locale significant is that Abram moved out of that orbit of nomadic territory for one completely beyond his familiarity.

As for the three-fold command to leave (*halak* is the verb, 'to go,' with the implication of walking), it is set against the background of 'erets, *moldeleth* and *beyth* (country, kindred, house). Walking was the conventional mode of transportation along with four-footed animals for transport which means that Abram moved slowly from these three things so dear to him. It gave him plenty of time to reflect on what he was doing. En route Abram passed many people and places dear to him which must have given reason to pause as to what he was doing. All the while Abram was pondering the divine words uttered to him. His ready obedience must have come into question though we don't have any specifics.

Thus Abram was not unlike Noah, the latter leaving familiar territory for a confined ark followed by a land that had been wiped out by flood waters. As he left his native land, did Abram witness that bow in the clouds promised to Noah, a reminder of God's covenant "between me and you and every living creature of all flesh" [9.15]? He must have on several occasions, for that gave him strength during his slow, tedious walking through his country, kindred and house until finally he left them behind, well out of sight. As for that bow, never do we hear of people referring to it as a covenant because other forms of this relationship with God supplanted it.

Abram's goal isn't clear to him, just the order to leave and leave at once, not unlike the Israelites later who left Egypt for a destination unknown to them. However, it turned out to be the land of Canaan (vs. 5) which wasn't mentioned in God's initial command. That became clearer as he left Haran because like his ancestors, Enoch and Noah, Abram was walking with God. Although Lot came along, he was unaware of this invisible companion and must have wondered why Abram walked with such lively steps at the age of seventy-five. The same applied to those in their retinue, not having a clue as to Abram walking (apparently) all alone and apart from their group. With hindsight Abram appears heroic, though he must have jumped at the chance of leaving his native land which had been tainted by the confusion of language and scattering of his ancestors. Thus he welcomed the opportunity to leave that environment. With this in mind, the words addressed to Abram to go "to the land that I will show (the verb is the common *ra'ah*, to see) you" made him bolt even though he had to walk through the part of his own country, kindred and father's house. Thus Abram's walking was done in earnest. His family and relatives were glad to see him leave as well, not unlike the Israelites urged on by the Egyptians who "were urgent with the people to send them out of the land in haste" [Ex 12.33].

Another reason for Abram to depart was "I will make of you a great nation." Who in their right mind wouldn't want to be remembered for that? While the details aren't clear, they do come from the Lord which is a sure-fire guarantee it will succeed. Furthermore, the Lord throws in three more benefits: first he will bless (*barak* being the common verb) Abram, make his name great and this with the purpose of him becoming a blessing (*berakah*). So sandwiched in between the Lord's promise to bless Abram in the future and him becoming a recipient of this blessing, we have his name becoming great. The purpose of *barak* is for other people to find *berakah* in him, not especially for himself. In other words, this blessing is intended to set the previously corrupt and distorted history of mankind straight. While it doesn't do so in a way to include all humanity at once, it is a start which will take root, flourish and persist despite the continued sinful behavior of humanity. Vs. 3 continues with "I will bless those who bless you and him who curses you I will curse." In addition to *barak* the Lord introduces a curse, *qalal* being the verb as noted in 8.21 with regard to the Lord "never again cursing the ground because of man." So with blessing and

cursing, there's an interchange between Abram and God. At the end of these promising verses God adds that all the earth's families shall be blessed in him implying that he is a new Adam not being driven from the garden of Eden but being asked to forsake his country, kindred and father's house. It was a kind of re-entry into the garden of Eden. After the tragedy of Adam's expulsion, the flood and scattering of people God said enough is enough. You can pick up his determination that it will succeed not so much by what Abram said (i.e., nothing) but by his swift and decisive response: "So Abram went as the Lord had told him" [vs. 4].

Accompanying Abram is Lot ("Terah was the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran; and Haran was the father of Lot,' 11.27) who, by reason of being mentioned at the outset of Abram's departure, is more important than his wife, Sarai. Lot was the only kinsman who grasped the uniqueness of Abram, that somehow God had communicated a wonderful message to him of which he desired to be a part. Furthermore, he saw Abram's unhappiness with the people among who he had been living and was quick to pick up on this. They discussed it often which eventually lead to both being disposed to leave once and for all that people whose language had been confused and which showed no signs of being remedied. Vs. 4 throws in for good measure that Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. The next verse continues with Abram taking Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son. So if Abram was seventy-five, both Sarai and Lot were much younger, she being "very beautiful" [vs. 14] and he being Abram's nephew. So it must have been quite a sight with these three principle characters leavening their homeland for places unknown. As typical of someone setting out on a journey, each man brought all their possessions, the Hebrew word being *rekush* which applies to that which had been acquired as well as earned. "And he (Jacob) drove away all his cattle, all his livestock which he had gained, the cattle in his possession" [31.18]. The other object of the verb *rakash* (from which *rekush* is derived) is "persons that they had gotten in Haran" where the singular noun *nephesh* (soul) is used for "person."

### **19 March, Third Sunday of Lent**

*3) But the people thirsted there for water, and the people murmured against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?" 4) So Moses cried to the Lord, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." 5) And the Lord said to Moses, "Pass on before the people taking with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand the rod with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6) Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it that the people may drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7) And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the faultfinding of the children of Israel, and*

*because they put the Lord to the proof by saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?" Exodus 17.3-7*

The following is excerpted from *Expansions on the Book of Exodus* posted on this home page.

Vs. 2 has the familiar refrain: "Therefore the people found fault with Moses and said 'Give us water to drink'" [vs. 2]. *Ryv* is the verb for "found fault" which more specifically means to contend, to strive as well as to plead a cause. It signifies a more serious rift than previously experienced at Marah or Sin between Israel and Moses, so to engage in *ryv* was as close to open conflict if ever there was one. "The herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen" [Gen 26.20]. Moses responded that it is not with him that they are engaging in *ryv* but "Why do you put the Lord to the proof?" That is to say, why are you instigating this *nasah* (-*h* or the letter *ayin* compared with the letter *hei* as in *nasah* of vs. 1)? "There (Masah) he proved them" [15.25]. Both here at Rephidim and Masah the people murmured (the familiar *lun*) against Moses, not the Lord, due to a lack of water. In short, the people did not pay attention to Moses' question. Such murmuring must have been more palpable in the wilderness with countless tents spread out all over, each tent seething with anger. From a vantage place on a ledge one could hear this murmuring begin like a low-grade buzzing sound that grew into a rumble until it engulfed the entire campsite. That's why vs. 4 has Moses crying out (*tsahaq*), "They are almost ready to stone me." For another reference to this verb, see 15.25: "And he cried to the Lord," the instance being at Marah.

"Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel." Thus begins vs. 5 with a direct response from the Lord who heard the *tsahaq* from Moses. Chances are that when Moses complied to *havar* (pass on), he did so either early in the morning or in the evening when they were out gathering manna or quails, not during the midday heat when they were inside their tents...and murmuring. Note that Moses did not *havar* alone but with "some of the elders" or those skilled or proven men mentioned in the last paragraph, pretty much for protection. *Havar* also intimates that both moved along rather quickly so as to avoid being accosted or even stoned but slow enough to make their presence known, a way to show who was in charge. Vs. 5 continues with "take in your hand the rod with which you struck the Nile, and go." *Mateh* is this "rod" last noted in 14.16 ('and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it'), the same one which was involved, for example, in being changed into serpent before Pharaoh (cf. 7.10). Once Moses took in hand his *mateh* (he must have kept it safely stored away after the Red Sea crossing for such an emergency as this), he went...to where is not stated immediately but hastened his passing-on or *havar* with the elders.

“Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb” [vs. 6]. This is the first mention of Horeb since 3.1, “the west side of the wilderness” where Moses had been keeping watch over the flock of Jethro, priest of Midian. As for Jethro, he is mentioned at the beginning of Chapter Eighteen, so Moses was in familiar territory. Apparently Rephidim, where the people complained about a lack of water for the second time, was close to Horeb. Perhaps some of the older Israelites recalled his self-imposed exile there and therefore felt more confident in his leadership. Was he going to settle the people in this area? Chances were slim because the desert could not support such a multitude. As for the form of this standing (*hamad*) by the Lord on the rock, we have no details. It could be either as a burning bush much earlier at Horeb or as a pillar of cloud and fire at the Red Sea. This rock could have been a boulder or promontory though *tsur* is a fairly general term. Compared to Moses’ earlier encounter at Horeb, he isn’t commanded to remove the sandals from his feet; apparently this place was not “holy ground” [3.5]. In the verse at hand, Moses is bidden to strike (*nakah*) the rock just as he had struck the Nile, turning it into blood (cf. 7.20). That means Moses had to approach the *tsur* on which the Lord was standing and with his staff hit the *tsur* which he did “in the sight of the elders of Israel” (‘sight’ here literally reads as ‘in the eyes of’). These were the same elders (the number isn’t given) mentioned in vs. 5 who would report back to the people to verify the incident). En route to this *tsur* on which the Lord stood—we can presume the elders were unaware of the Lord, just Moses—they must have discussed with him his earlier experiences at Horeb, of how the Lord had appeared in a burning bush and thus set in motion the whole enterprise of leaving Egypt. As far as the elders not seeing the Lord, that was no problem, really. They were more interested in preventing the people from dying of thirst. Once Moses had struck this rock, the Lord vanished from his sight.

“And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah because of the fault-finding of the children of Israel and because they put the Lord to the proof by saying, ‘Is the Lord among us or not?’” [vs. 7]? The proper name Massah is the noun for temptation or trial. “When disaster brings sudden death, he mocks at the calamity of the innocent” [Job 9.23]. As for Meribah, it means contention or strife, derived from the verbal root *ryv* as in 17.2: “Therefore the people found fault with Moses.” As for the verbal root *ryv*, it is mentioned in 17.2: “Why do you (i.e., Moses speaking to the Israelites) find fault with me?” And so the two place names are commemorations of a sort with regard to the Israelites contending with the Lord and Moses. The issue for the people was whether or not the Lord was “among” them (*qerev*) which in Hebrew is a noun indicative of closeness, of being in between the people, as it were. “That you may know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth” [8.22]. Such *qerev* had been manifested from the Passover, through the Red Sea and afterwards. Despite these clear manifestations, thirst in the desert was so overpowering that it blotted out all concerns for things spiritual.

## 26 March, Fourth Sunday of Lent

*The Lord said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, seeing I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons."..6) When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before him." 7) But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature because I have rejected him; for the Lord sees not as man sees; man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."...10) And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord has not chosen these." 11) And Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but behold, he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and fetch him; for we will not sit down till he comes here." 12) And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. And the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is he." 13) Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah. 1Samuel 16.1, 6-7 & 10-13*

The following is excerpted from *Expansions on First Samuel* also posted on this homepage.

This chapter begins on both a note of humour and irritation: humour in that the Lord confronts Samuel with his sullen attitude insofar as he's saying to the prophet "Get on with your life." However, the Lord has something in mind for Samuel of which he had an intimation, albeit dimly.

*Aval* is the verb for "grieve" found last in 15.35, the point for which the Lord is rebuking Samuel. How this takes place isn't spelled out but left to our imagination. *Aval* is used with the preposition *'el-* prefaced to "Saul" rendering it literally as "to Saul." Despite hostility towards Saul, Samuel retained a soft spot for the king but never...never...would admit it.

*Ma'as* or "rejected is found last in 15.26. Samuel must have been delighted to receive a divine confirmation of Saul's rejection as well as straight-forward admittance that the Lord caved into the people's demand for a king. Nevertheless, the Lord did not belabor the issue but respected the people's decision.

Apparently Samuel had a "horn" (*qeren* noted last in 2.10 as 'power') at the ready, standing by for emergencies, if you will, for various purposes. He may have used the horn for other kinds of anointing when active as a judge. Although Samuel had an inkling of a new candidate for king ('a neighbor of yours,' 15.28), he knows only in part, that he belongs to the family of Jesse. In the meanwhile Samuel couldn't help but get out of his

mind who this mystery man was since as judge he had passed through Bethlehem many a time. So when the Lord said “go,” Samuel rushed to Bethlehem as quickly as possible. All this going from one place to another throughout First Samuel was mostly on foot. While making such arduous treks, the people as well as individuals like Saul and Samuel involved had plenty of time to reflect on what they were about to do and how they were to do it. Furthermore, seldom or even did people set out alone on a journey, so always they had company.

The verb for “provided” is *ra’ah* or to see (cf. 15.35) which here Samuel does not yet participate in.

As mentioned earlier, Samuel must have known Jesse but not so much his eleven sons because during his days as circuit judge they were either too young or some weren’t even born. Although Eliab is mentioned two more times in First Samuel, he fades off the scene. Yet there must have been something special that got Samuel’s attention because Eliab is the first son mentioned. It could have been not unlike Saul who was “a handsome man” [9.2]. Yet Samuel must have kept that experience fresh in his mind during this critical choice. He didn’t want to repeat the choice of another Saul.

So when Samuel was assessing Eliab the Lord speaks to him...not in the literal sense but as pointed out in vs. 3. *Navat* is the verb for “look” which implies beholding or having respect (cf. 2.32), here with respect to Eliab’s “appearance” or *mar’eh* which derives from the verb *ra’ah* (to see). “For he was but a youth, ruddy and comely in appearance” [17.42]. Just in case Samuel had forgotten his experience with Saul’s first dramatic impression, the Lord reminds him not to judge by appearances. “I have rejected him,” the verb being *ma’as* (cf. vs. 1). Again, with the possibility of self-deception in mind, the Lord pretty much shouts out to Samuel that he sees (*ra’ah*, cf. vs. 1) not as man sees.”

The Lord makes a clear distinction between “outward appearance” and “heart.” The first reads literally as “sees (*ra’ah*) to the eyes” and the latter has *lev* (cf. 14.32), “sees (*ra’ah*) to the heart.”

The rest of Jesse’s sons aren’t mentioned as though the author of First Samuel wanted to get this choice over with, having begun by mentioning three sons by name, a sign one of them would be chosen. Perhaps in desperation Jesse made these remaining sons to pass by Samuel one right after the other to get it over with.

Samuel was fully aware that Jesse had one more son but was curious as to why he didn’t bring him along with the others. He had a feeling that this son, considered unimportant, was the right man. While Samuel was asking this more or less rhetorical question, the

brothers who had passed before Samuel and had experienced rejection were more curious than ever as to resolving this unusual test. While Jesse had each present himself, it isn't clear whether Samuel told them the reason for his action. Chances are they had a high opinion of Saul for having defended Israel and were not privy to Samuel's insight. If they had known this, no doubt they would run as far away as possible from assuming the mantle of kingship.

Note that in response to Samuel's question Jesse begins with "behold" (*hineh*, cf. 15.22) which here belies some surprise and even embarrassment that this son had been left out of the picture. Samuel bids Jesse to get this son as quickly as possible without revealing why. However, Jesse and the rejected sons pretty much knew the result beforehand. The time between getting the youngest son and bringing him back must have dragged on for all involved. In the meanwhile, the sons were grumbling among each other as to why this, their youngest brother, might be the chosen man. They were on the verge of becoming like Joseph's brothers who had sold him into slavery, but to their credit we have no record as to any betray on their part that occurred under David's kingship.

The name of the person whom Jesse sends to fetch David isn't given, most likely a servant, because Jesse didn't trust his other sons. Samuel had rejected them, the reason not being made known as they passed before him. At the same time, given Samuel's reputation as judge, they had an inkling that something big was about to happen, and they were left out of it in favor of their youngest brother who wasn't present.

*Adam* is the verb for "ruddy" and implies being dyed red, for this verb occurs four times in Exodus with respect to the dying of rams' skins. "Tanned rams' skins, goatskins, acacia wood" [Ex 25.5]. From this verb derives the proper name Adam, the first man, because he was taken from the red-colored earth (*'adamah*). In sum, David made a stunning physical appearance, especially to Samuel, who perhaps hadn't seen him before because he was an infant during his earlier passages through Bethlehem as a judge.

"Arise" or *qum* (cf. 15.13) can be taken as a way of getting the attention of Jesse and his sons who were sitting around waiting from the arrival of David. It too is a way of saying to them something like snap out of it and pay attention. Immediately Samuel orders "anoint (*mashach*, cf. vs. 3) him" as though he bade someone else to do it whereas he was the only qualified person to perform the ceremony. It was a collective way of saying that everyone has to arise now and get down to business.

As soon as the brother heard the word *mashach* they realized David was set apart for something big, even king. This may have caused some consternation because Saul remains the legitimate ruler. Was Samuel setting up a rival in an attempt to divide Israel and

therefore proclaim himself king? Although it isn't recorded, Samuel must have spent considerable time explaining to Jesse and his brothers about the rejection of Saul. Perhaps some didn't buy his interpretation, seeing that it was Samuel, not the Lord, who had a grudge against their king.

Samuel had a store of oil for such purposes used last when he had anointed Saul as king. We don't have any details as to its kind, most likely olive, nor if Samuel used this oil for ceremonial purposes when he had been judge. Note that Samuel anoints Saul "in the midst of" his brothers, *qerev* (cf. 4.3 as 'among') meaning that which is interior to anything. Samuel wanted to make sure these men were solemn witnesses, to insure that they would support their youngest brother and not thwart him later on. In other words, with David *qerev* his brothers, they were sworn to obeisance even if they murmured among themselves. By no means were they to follow the example of Joseph's brothers. As with Saul's anointing, there doesn't seem to be any words as part of this ceremony, just the act of pouring oil upon the person's head..

*Tsalach* is the verb for "came mightily" just as it had done with Saul (cf. 10.6). The major difference is that in David's case the divine *ruach* (also cf. 10.6) was with him "from that day forward."

Once this brief but poignant ceremony had been accomplished, Samuel departs immediately which is fairly typical in such instances. He doesn't linger around to give advice or encouragement to David nor to his brothers. The anointing had been done, and that was that. Yet David and everyone present were left wondering what to do next, how to interpret Samuel's gesture. If the anointing made David king, he had to deal with Saul who was the legitimate ruler over Israel. In other words, a strange situation that could border upon treason.

## 2 April, Fifth Sunday of Lent

*12) Therefore prophesy and say to them, "Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you home into the land of Israel. 13) And you shall know that I am the Lord when I open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. 14) And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken, and I have done it, says the Lord." Ezekiel 37.12-14*

This excerpt is situated within the context of the dry bones which the Lord bids Ezekiel to bring back to life, they being representative of the "whole house of Israel" [vs. 11]. Here prophesy and speaking (the common verb '*amar*') are one and the same, *nava'* meaning

literally to cause to bubble, to pour forth words abundantly. Note, however, that they haven't been buried but left out to bleach in the sun. At the same time the bones have some life in them which is why they say among themselves that they've been dried up and hope has been lost. Such a lament couldn't be ignored which is why the Lord at last relented and sent Ezekiel to restore them to life.

Vs. 12 has *hineh* or "behold," a way to grab attention for something dramatic about to happen. The Lord speaking through Ezekiel says that he will open their graves, this in contrast to the bones being scattered about on the valley floor as mentioned above. The graves can be taken as the valley as a whole in contrast to '*adamah* or land which is more the physical earth compared with '*erets*, land in the sense of being a nation. So the dryness of the bones represent absence from Israel as having been forced into exile though "home" doesn't appear in the Hebrew text.

Thus when the Lord himself opens the graves with Ezekiel standing there looking on and waiting for the right opportunity to prophesy or *nava'*, immediately they will recognize him, *yadah* being the verb "to know" which implies knowledge in the intimate sense. Such is what the Lord is looking for, this immediacy which can only be fulfilled once back in Israel after the act of opening and raising from her graves.

Note that the bones have been restored in vs. 10 through the breath or *ruach* from the four winds (cf vs. 9) which isn't the same as the *Ruach* or Spirit of God. Refer also to vs. 5 which says "I will cause *ruach* to enter you, and you shall live." However, the *Ruach* as opposed to *ruach* in vs. 14 differs in that the Lord will place it directly within Israel. In other words, first the *ruach* must assemble the bones after which the *Ruach* will enter them. This is done with the express purpose of bringing this nation back from exile to its own land or '*adamah* as noted above. The first and second mention of '*adamah* can be overlooked in light of the dramatic imagery at hand, but in many ways it is what this passage is communicating.

Finally once back in her own land after having been in exile which reduced Israel to a heap of dried bones, the Lord brings up for a second time the vital importance of knowing (*yadah*) that he has spoken, *davar* being used which is more as giving expression to oneself. Such *davar* results in action or Israel realizing...*yadah*...that the Lord has been responsible for her return from exile.

The only person who could identify with this is Lazarus whom Jesus rose from the dead. Surely he must have reflected time and time again upon what Ezekiel had done as foreshadowing his own resurrection. At the same time he could face his second death with an equanimity that was unparalleled.

## 9 April, Palm Sunday

4) *The Lord God has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him that is weary. Morning by morning he wakens, he wakens my ear to hear as those who are taught.* 5) *The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I turned not backward.* 6) *I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I hid not my face from shame and spitting.* 7) *For the Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been confounded; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame.* Isaiah 50.4-7

The tongue of persons who've been taught or *lamad* means that they underwent training, this verb also intimating that they have accustomed themselves to it. Most likely the teaching involved is that of the Torah, so once those who've been *lamad* in Torah, they can, in turn, *lamad* others. However, this *lamad* has a specific end: to sustain or *huth* persons who are weary. More precisely, knowledge in the intimate sense of *yadah* is required for this, so approaching and putting it into action isn't a casual matter but requires care before doing it. Such is the value of *yadah* in this instance. As for *huth*, it's the only use of the verb in the Bible and connotes a certain hastening. It is effected by a word or *davar* which as the previous section notes, means speaking as expression. The enlivening nature of such *davar* is suited ideally for anyone who is weary, *yahaph*.

Morning by morning or literally "in morning in morning" suggests continuous, even relentless, action on the Lord's part, of sustaining his servant or waking him, *hur* which also means to arouse. Such rousing is done with respect to the servant hearing or *shamah* but only in that special way characterized by *lamad*. So to awake in and by itself is very different from awake in order to *lamad*. The Lord opening the servant's ear is equivalent to the *hur* of his ear in vs. 5. The reason for such emphasis is not to make the servant rebellious nor to turn his back, *sug* suggestive of drawing back, of withdrawal.

Once the servant has received the same tongue of those taught...*lamad* in Torah...can he face those who torment him. *Natan* is the verb for "gave" meaning to hand over to such persons who most likely were observing the servant in his act of *lamad* and waiting for the right opportunity to strike him, not being open to such *lamad*.

Having been grounded in *lamad* and exposed to abuse, the servant will be helped by the Lord, *hazar* connoting being defended by him, this verb being used with the preposition *l-*, literally as "to me." The immediate effect of *hazar* is avoid being confounded or *kalam* which also means to reproach or be treated shamefully. And to be treated such means to

abandon *lamad* of Torah. *Kalam* may be compared with *bosh* or put to shame as well as to be confused, again, with regard to *lamad*.

## 16 April, Easter Sunday

34) And Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality...37) the word which was proclaimed throughout all Judea beginning from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: 38) how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. 39) And we are witnesses to all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; 40) but God raised him on the third day and made him manifest; 41) not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42) And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead. 43) To him all the prophets bear witness that every one who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." Acts 10.34; 37-43

The very act of opening one's mouth as Peter does here shows that he is about to speak both with authority and great anticipation by his listeners. The context is an invitation by the centurion Cornelius. Peter felt obliged to fulfill his ministry with Jews only, so the fact that he had accepted despite frank hesitation in vs. 28 shows he saw something special in this centurion. Furthermore, Cornelius was a ranking member of the oppressive Roman army, so Peter suspected something unusual was at work.

The opening of Peter's mouth takes on added significance by reason of vs. 33: "Now we are all here present in the sight of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord." The words that now follow from Peter expound upon what he has been commanded, *prostasso*, a verb with military connotations and hence familiar to Cornelius. Peter expresses a certain astonishment at the way God shows no partiality, that is, he doesn't favor Jews over Gentiles. The verb here is *katalambano* which implies a seizing, a sudden realization and astonishment with regard to divine *prosopolemptes*. This term means literally "acceptor of faces," a way of saying to have favorites which God clearly does not possess.

In contrast to the exclusivity of *prosopolemptes* there is the word or *rhema* which is more proper of what is said compared to what is expressed as is the case with *logos*. It started after having been baptized by John and (at this juncture) has reached all Judea. In sum, *rhema* flows from the *Logos* or Christ, this not being present here but can be intimated. According to Matthew, the very beginning of proclaiming the gospel can be pinpointed to

when Jesus chose his disciples in Mt 4.17: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” And so it’s associated closely with Jesus’ baptism and therefore John. Peter says that Jesus was anointed with both the Holy Spirit and power or *dunamis*, the two being mentioned together in Lk 4.14: “And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee,” this just prior to his beginning his ministry. As for the anointing, refer to vs. 18 where Jesus quotes from Isaiah: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.” Thus anointing, Spirit (*Pneuma*) and *dunamis* work as one. As for anointing, there’s no pouring out of any oil, the “wind” by the *Pneuma* being more than efficacious than oil for this purpose.

So between the inauguration of the ministry of Jesus and his death-resurrection Peter mentions briefly that he cured people, especially those in the devil’s grip. This seems to be the beginning of a transition where instead of focusing upon what Jesus had done to the essence of his mission. If this can be communicated successful as to this group of people, automatically they will go out and do the same as Jesus. Furthermore, the death and resurrection are very recent events, so it’s natural for Peter to be preoccupied by them and to share this with others. Peter is clear that God chose only a few as witnesses or *martus*, this term being used here twice, vss. 39 and 41. In order to forestall any doubts or objections Peter says that he and the disciples ate and drank with Jesus after his resurrection.

Peter sums up his ministry which, in light of what he has just said about Jesus, flows directly from it by reason of having been chosen, the verb *procheirotoneo* meaning literally to be chosen (in advance) by hand. Although this verb isn’t mentioned with regard to Jesus choosing the disciples at the beginning of his ministry, it can intimate that, thereby tying in with Peter’s words in this excerpt. In other words, the beginning of Jesus ministry which involves anointing, Spirit and power are continuous...working now...with the ministry of Peter. *Procheirotoneo* is reminiscent of the Lord choosing David as king from among his brothers: “For the Lord sees not as man sees; man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart” [1Sam 16.7].

The immediate goal of this emphasis upon proclaiming and ministry is to make people aware of Jesus being judge both of the living and dead. To say it on his own would be presumptuous for Peter, but he backs it up by reference to the prophets who, like him, are *martus* or bear witness, *martureo*. Thus Peter goes beyond the more immediate time span of Jesus starting out, his deeds and then his death and resurrection. Instead he appeals to the venerable tradition of prophets. His listeners seem to be primarily non-Jews (cf. Acts 10.28-29) which means that most likely they had scanty knowledge of Israel’s prophetic tradition. That means they would have to do more research into it which is why a bit later on once the Spirit fell upon them “they asked him to remain for some days.” During this

time Peter would introduce these non-Jews into the prophetic tradition, pointing out passages, especially from Isaiah, with regard to Jesus. That, in turn, would set in motion a whole process of catechesis or instruction in the faith.