

A Royal Garment for the Greater-One-than-David: An Exegetical Analysis of Isaiah 7:14

by Jules Grisham

Table of Contents:

1. Introduction	2
2. Preliminary Analysis of Isaiah 7:1-16	4
3. The Question of Immanuel's Identity	10
The Single Fulfillment Christological View	10
The Single Fulfillment Non-Messianic View	16
The Single Fulfillment "Hezekiah-as-Messiah" View	19
The Double Fulfillment View	22
4. Conclusion	24
Appendix A	26
Appendix B	37
Appendix C	43
Bibliography	44

1. Introduction

The question of the identity of Isaiah's Immanuel has been the source of a remarkable amount of academic debate and contention during the last few centuries, with some arguing that he is Christ alone, others holding that he was a child of Isaiah, and still others that he was Hezekiah, king of Judah – while among these latter two, some from each have subscribed to the so-called “single fulfillment” view, and again others have subscribed to “double fulfillment.” One thing that emerges from any significant study of the passage is that these issues are not easily resolved. The passage seems to contain an irreducible complexity; it is characterized by an elusive quality which refuses to be tamed in its entirety.

But from another vantage point – that of faith – the passage is quite clear. The apostle Matthew provides us with its authoritative interpretation in the first chapter of his Gospel, writing: “Now all this took place that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which translated means, ‘God with us.’” (Matthew 1:23) Simply put, the prophesy uttered by Isaiah some eight centuries earlier had at last found its fulfillment and meaning in the person of our Lord, Jesus Christ. And all who profess to be Christians, who subscribe to the Bible as being God's very and infallible Word, are bound in a real sense to accept and adopt this interpretation as our own.

That said, however, we must confess that the issues of irreducible complexity and recurrent perplexity arise again when we try to read the passage according to the norms of our standard grammatico-historical method. That is, ordinarily, we will read, say, an Old Testament passage and will try to determine its meaning in the context of its original setting – allowing of course for later application and fulfillment (as in, for example, Christ). But when we approach this passage in Isaiah using the normal methodological approach, we end up in tangles, having to sort through innumerable questions of grammar, structure, and prophetic intent.

In this paper we will examine some of these issues as they have been given expression by various commentators thinking and writing from various traditions. We will then attempt to draw some conclusions of our own. We will argue that the key for properly interpreting Isaiah 7:14 (in terms of its Old Testament context) is to read it as part of a larger unity of inter-linked prophetic passages, which together constitute the seventh through twelfth chapters of the book of Isaiah. These chapters are united by a number of motifs, but perhaps most importantly for our purposes, by two interlocking themes: first, the message that God's promises to the House of David, which he made over two hundred years earlier during that king's reign (2 Samuel 7:11b-16), would stand and, indeed, would be gloriously fulfilled; second, the call through Isaiah that the faithful of the nation not fear, but trust in the Lord for their salvation. These two currents of thought powerfully undergird the passage, and we will argue that we ought to interpret 7:14 in light of them.

Moreover, we will see that the outworking of these themes in chapters 7-12 is grounded in the profound theological notions which Isaiah sets forth in chapter 6. Specifically, we read there the nature of the prophetic ministry to which he is being called:

Render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears dull, and their eyes dim,
Lest they see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts – and return
and be healed. (Isaiah 6:9)

Chapters 7-12 represent an application of this principle, by which Isaiah was sent to proclaim a divine message of hope and comfort to the House of David – in the person of Ahaz – but was instead rejected by the faithless king, whose hardness of heart toward God's Word-bearing agent made him blind to his own folly. This is a key, then, for understanding our passage: in a very real sense, Isaiah's related battery of prophesies in chapters 7-12 only make sense, only fully hang together, if they are heard or read with the ears and eyes of faith. And seen thus, the object of these passages can only be, in their totality of focus, Jesus Christ. And knowing that he is the one in whom

the promises to the House of David find their ultimate glory and end, then indeed we will not fear, but rest, and trust in him.

2. Preliminary Analysis of Isaiah 7:1-16¹

“Ahaz son of Jotham son of Uzziah, king of Judah,” may have been enthroned as co-regent with his father since as early as 744 B.C.,² per 2 Kings 17:1, where it is reported that Hoshea became king of Israel (732) “in the twelfth year” of Ahaz’s reign. But the son assumed operational control of the kingdom in 735, when, as we read in 2 Kings 16:1, he became king “in the seventeenth year of Pekah son of Remaliah,” king of Israel (752-732). It is interesting to note, however, that Jotham apparently lingered on, perhaps in some figurehead capacity, until about 751 (this per 2 Kings 15:30, where it is reported that Hoshea became king – again, 732 – “in the twentieth year of Jotham.” With Jotham’s passing in 731, Ahaz assumed sole rule, and reigned in Jerusalem for sixteen years (731-715).

In any event, the young king – he was twenty years old when he began to rule (2 Kings 16:2) – was immediately faced with a major international crisis. Pekah, king of Israel, and Rezin, king of Aram, were attempting to forge an anti-Assyrian coalition to stem the rising tide of that nation’s military power. Ahaz had refused to join the alliance, and as a result, the two kings had invaded Judah with the stated goal of deposing Ahaz and replacing him with “the son of Tabeel” (Isaiah 7:6) – presumably a disgruntled countryman of Ahaz who would be more amenable to their schemes than the legitimate king had been. We read that, when the House of David (that is, Ahaz) was informed of this invasion, “his heart shook – and the heart of his people – as the trees of the forest shake from the face of the wind.” (7:2) His response was to turn to the enemy of his enemies for help; he would appeal to the Assyrians for assistance against the combined forces of Israel and Aram.

¹ All Scriptural quotes are my own translation, unless otherwise specified. See Appendix B for my translation of chapters 7-12.

² All dates henceforth will be B.C. unless otherwise specified.

At this point Isaiah was instructed by the Lord to go and meet with Ahaz, and to bring his son with him. The son's name, Shear-jashub, was symbolic, and meant "a remnant will return." This notion of a remnant picks up from 6:13, and refers to that small part of the total population of the covenant nation which will remain faithful to the Lord – the "holy seed" who will survive the approaching judgment. "Though a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid waste" (i.e., even the remnant will be overcome by disaster), but this "stump in the land" will remain. What was the intended effect, then, there before Ahaz, of Shear-jashub's presence? Certainly, the fact that he bore a sign-name, and was essentially a walking reminder of Isaiah's dire prophetic warnings, would have had to have entailed large negatives for Ahaz! Yet there was also comfort in the message, in that, through it all, the faithful would remain. Not all would be lost.

In any event, the divine message which Isaiah was to relate to Ahaz was, "Be [thou] careful, and be calm. Fear not, nor let thy heart be faint." (v. 4) He referred to the two kings as "smoldering stubs of firewood," indicating their fast-diminishing ability to inflict further damage. "Thus says the Lord YHVH [that is, the Lord in his kingly aspect; the Great King of the covenant, Ahaz's suzerain]: It will not stand, nor will it come to pass." (v. 7)

Verses 8 and 9 are crucial, as we shall see, for here God points out that the power of these two kingdoms is based upon nothing more substantial than the kings (the "heads") who lead them; should these heads be lost, the power that they harness would dissipate and be lost, too. (And, indeed, Isaiah predicts just that – that "within sixty-five years Ephraim will be shattered from being a people."³) But implicit in this statement is a decisive contrast: while the power of these kingdoms is founded upon the impermanence of their leaders, that of Judah is founded upon the Lord YHVH. As Rezin fails, so fails Aram; as Pekah fails, so fails Israel. But should Ahaz fail, the Lord yet abides, and his covenant promises yet stand. In short, the House of David is stronger than Ahaz, backed as it

³ The northern kingdom would fall to the Assyrians in 722 and its population deported. By 670, a new population of Samaritans would be settled on the land, intermarrying with those Israelites who remained.

is by the Sovereign God. No matter how weak a link in the Davidic dynastic chain Ahaz may know himself to be, still the head of Judah is the Lord, and the Lord is committed to the House of David.

“If you will not believe,” the Lord concludes conditionally, switching to the second person plural, “you will not be established.” You – any of the individual representatives of the House of David – must stand firm in covenant faithfulness, or you will not stand at all. But conversely, if you do stand firm, you will experience the blessings of my covenant commitment to the heirs of David’s throne.

Now the Lord speaks again (through Isaiah) to Ahaz, instructing him in the second person singular to ask for a sign. But Ahaz feigns piety. “I will not ask, nor will I test YHVH.” Here, absurdly, Ahaz is essentially citing Scripture to God (but out of context; see Deuteronomy 6:16: “Ye shall not put YHVH your God to the test, as ye tested him at Massah”), in order to disobey a word from God’s prophet! But he who piously refused to test the Lord thus himself fails the test of faithfulness. In rejecting Isaiah’s prophetic authority – in rejecting God’s power to reveal his will through his special messenger – he has rejected God’s word, acceptance of which is always the criterion of true belief. And in rejecting God’s word, he is rebelling against his suzerain.

Now Isaiah’s address shifts once again to the plural: “Hear ye now, O House of David...” The Lord is speaking to Ahaz, but as to one who, though the current representative of the dynasty, is become wholly unworthy of the splendid robes of the Anointed One, which he wears, as it were, in his capacity as the living embodiment of the Davidic king. It is as to the throne and its splendor, which awaits the advent and seating of the truly righteous king, that the prophet speaks, even if it now be occupied by this insignificant squatter. “You don’t fool me with your pious display,” we might paraphrase Isaiah as saying next. “Do you now presume to fool God by it, too?” And we note that, whereas in verse 11 Isaiah had spoken of “thy God,” now in verse 13 he has shifted pointedly to “my God.” Ahaz has rejected the word of God’s messenger, and has thus rebelled against his Lord.

Therefore [that is, in light of the fact that Ahaz has rejected the offer of establishment through faith] the Lord himself will give you [plural: the House of David] a sign: behold, הַעֲלֵמָה

[the virgin, or the maiden] is with child and will bear a son, and she will call his name Immanuel [lit. “with us is God”]. Curds and honey will he eat when he knows to reject evil and to choose good. (v. 14-15)

For when the boy will not yet know to reject evil and to choose good, [the land whose two kings you are dreading will be forsaken – NAS]. YHVH will bring upon thee and upon thy people and upon the House of thy father [such] days [as] which have not come since the day Ephraim seceded from Judah – the king of Assyria! (v. 16-17)

Whatever this sign means, whatever may be the identity of either “Immanuel” or “the virgin/maiden,” and whether we should divide it thus or keep it together as one single prophetic message, we will discuss shortly. But clearly, it is given as a sign given to the House of David, in the person of Ahaz, in the context of his having rejected the word of God. For now, let us only note two things: first, that we have here a second example of a child bearing a sign-name, and that, as we shall see, this motif of “sign-children” is the thread which runs through and unites the material in chapters 7-12; and second, that though Matthew quotes only the first part of this Immanuel prophesy, making it by far the more familiar portion, yet we must include the words on the boy’s eating “curds and honey” in (at least) verse 15 as inseparable from the content of the preceding verse. That is, it is not just to the event of a birth that the sign points, but to an element of duration. When the boy attains to the age of moral discernment, he will be eating “curds and honey.”

What are we to make of this reference to “curds and honey”? Is this a sign of abundance, purposely evocative of the “land flowing with milk and honey”? In Judges 5:25, we read Deborah’s song of praise for Jael’s having slain Sisera: “He asked for water and she gave him *milk*; in a magnificent bowl she brought him *curds*.” (Italics mine.) And when the three men appeared to Abraham by his tent in Mamre, “he took curds and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and placed [these] before them.” (Genesis 18:8)⁴ We see, then, the connection between curds and milk; clearly, eating “curds and honey” was not in and of itself indicative of hardship. But a good case can

⁴ I have always been startled by this passage, as it seems to indicate an outrageous violation of the dietary laws. True, this was before the giving of the Law and the advent of the theocratic administration; surely, however, this passage must have stood out and surprised its Law-keeping readers and hearers, especially in that the one served was none other than the Lord! The rabbis explain that the curds and milk were served separately, before

be made that it does indicate deprivation. That is, “curds and honey” indicate natural plenty, but in a context in which cultivation of the land has been abandoned. David Payne puts it well, writing that such a diet implies “the loss of what would nowadays be called the benefits of civilization; living on potatoes and blackberries might be a modern parallel.”⁵

When judgment comes upon Judah, all that bounty upon which the occupants of the land have come to rely, will, insofar as it arises from their own industry, their own cultivation, be obliterated. The land will be returned to a more “wild” state. But in this wild state, the natural abundance of the land will feed the people. The boy’s eating curds and honey is indicative of this situation, which itself bears resemblance to God’s providing his people with manna in the wilderness. The people will be forced back into a position of reliance upon the Lord, who will yet provide for them out of the natural bounty of the land he had given them.

Turning once again to Ahaz, we see that the crux of the matter was that he had been asked to trust in the Lord rather than in his own *realpolitik*-driven schemings (v. 4). He had been assured by the prophet that through covenant faithfulness, manifested in believing in and acting according to God’s word as it came to him through God’s prophetic instruments, his kingship would be established (v. 9). But, for hard-hearted Ahaz, the way of trusting the Lord seemed the way of weakness in this time of desperate crisis; his desire to escape from the two kings’ onslaught was so desperate as to blind him to all else, such that he deemed it necessary to align with the Assyrians and thus to buy short-term military power. But had he considered the expense? Did he not realize that seeking out and submitting to Assyria as suzerain overlord would entail catastrophic circumstances for his nation? Could he not imagine the heavy price that would come with the “friendship” of such predators as the Assyrians? Did he not realize that in leaving the protected non-alignment it had enjoyed for so long and entering the vicious Near Eastern great powers game, he was exposing his nation to disaster? Did

the veal, such that the Law was not violated. But this is not what the text says. I have never found a satisfactory answer to this question.

⁵ David F. Payne, “Isaiah,” *The International Bible Commentary* (ed. F.F. Bruce; Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986) 727.

he not see that bowing to Assyria as Great King was rebellion against the Greater King, his Lord?

The answer to all these would seem to be, no; he was faithless and thus was blind. Rejecting the God whose help he could not see, he sought out the only help which he could see – Assyria – and in so doing brought the assurance of disaster upon his nation.

Thus it was the king's stubborn insistence on self-reliance, even as it set his nation upon a march of folly, which the sign of Immanuel addressed. The issue was, as it always is, one of trusting God. But Ahaz rejected God, choosing instead to trust in his own cleverness – and in his alliances. The good news which the sign promised was that within a very short time, the threat from Aram and Ephraim would be no more (v. 16). Their plots and schemes would not stand, nor would they come to pass (v. 7). But now, in light of Ahaz's rejection of the Lord's condition of faithfulness, it was revealed that his plots and schemes would not stand either. The one to whom he had turned for help – the king of Assyria – would descend upon the nation with destructive power (v. 17). But through it all, "a remnant will survive" (Shear-jashub), because "God is with us" (Immanuel). Thus, Immanuel's eating of curds and honey would represent the condition of the nation in those coming days, when the faithful remnant would have been forced back into a condition of basic reliance on God – a reliance which their appointed shepherd, Ahaz, had rejected.

Isaiah had admonished Ahaz not to fear the plots of Rezin and Pekah, but to trust in God's revelation in order that he might be established. Ahaz rejected those words, but it would be the faithful remnant who would accept them and inherit their promises. They would fear the Lord (8:13), not "smoking stubs of firewood" like the kings of Aram and Israel. And they would say, in the day of their redemption, "Behold, God is my salvation. I will trust, and will not be afraid." (12:2)

So we see, in the final analysis, the double-edgedness which the promise of "God with us" entails. For the faithful it is the promise of redemption, preservation, and salvation unto joy; while for the faithless it is equally the promise of God's judgment upon them. Surely the Lord God is present with his people both in blessings and in judgment. And we are reminded once again of 6:9-

10, where we read how words of truth spoken to the faithless heart often have the effect of hardening that heart, while the same words spoken to the heart of faith are “life.” (Deuteronomy 32:47). Surely, God’s word is a double-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12), bringing light to the faithful and darkening even that darkness which already existed for the faithless.

3. The Question of Immanuel’s Identity

There are several views on the identity of Isaiah’s “Immanuel” of 7:14, but four main ones, to which we will refer to as the Single-Fulfillment Christological (or “Christ-only”) view, the Single-Fulfillment Non-Messianic (or “Sign-only”) view, the Single-Fulfillment “Hezekiah-as-Messiah” view, and the Double Fulfillment view, respectively. We will briefly analyze each one in turn, exploring its strengths and weaknesses, and will then conclude by evaluating them altogether.

The Single-Fulfillment Christological View

This view holds that when Isaiah spoke the words of his prophesy in verse 14, he was referring directly and only to Christ. The single greatest strength of this view is its grounding in the authoritative interpretation of the passage in Matthew 1:23, and its greatest weakness is that, from a grammatico-historical methodological approach to Isaiah, it makes comprehending the passage in its own context rather difficult – if not impossible.

Accordingly, the **first problem** which one might reasonably put forward in arguing against this Christ-only reading is in determining what relevance such a birth – 730 years hence – would have on Ahaz. To this, advocates of this view would point out what we discussed above: that the offer to ask for a sign had been made as between Ahaz himself (“thee”) and his (“thy”) God (v. 11), but that once rejected, the Lord is pointedly no longer “thy” (Ahaz’s) but “my” (Isaiah’s) God, and the Lord-given sign is directed no longer to Ahaz individually (“thee”) but to the House of David corporately (“you”), and all the nation in it. The relevance of this sign, therefore, was to the House of David as a whole, as it answered the question of what the dynasty’s fate was to be, by focusing upon the virgin

birth of the future glorious king.⁶ In short, the sign, having been rejected by its intended recipient, was no longer a matter of invitation, but of prediction.

The **second problem** is grammatical. Logically, if the prophesy pointed to Christ and to him alone, we would expect it to read, “Behold, the virgin *will* conceive...” But in fact a present or even past condition is indicated by the Hebrew phrase הַנְּהָה הָעֵלְמָה הָרָה. The key here is that had הָרָה been a participle (הַרְהוּ), then it would have worked with the הַנְּהָה to indicate future time. But as the vowels are as written (הָרָה), it serves in the sentence as a verbal adjective, modifying הָעֵלְמָה (the virgin); thus we should read, “Behold, the virgin is with child...” So of course the obvious next question is, how can the conception point to Christ if it’s already an existent situation? This phrase bears close resemblance to Genesis 16:11 (the annunciation to Hagar of Ishmael’s already-conception) and to Judges 13:5 (the annunciation of Samson’s already-conception to the wife of Manoah). No one argues that these phrases are future in meaning. Why then should we make that case for Isaiah 7:14, except to force a Christological reading? Delitzsch provides a reasonably good and plausible answer to this question, arguing that Isaiah is caught up in the moment of the prophetic vision; he is “seeing” the virgin with child as present before his eyes, though it be yet future.⁷ In summary, we see that the already-and-present quality of the phrase does not necessarily bar its being directed solely toward a future fulfillment.⁸

And even if we were to adopt the “conception-already” view, and say “הָעֵלְמָה has conceived,” we would still have a startlingly marvelous message, for it would point to the picture of a virgin with child. It is true, as we shall see, that we need not translate עֵלְמָה as “virgin,” that we

⁶ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah* (trans. William Pringle; Albany, OR: Books for the Ages [AGES Software Version 1.0], 1999) v. 7:14.

⁷ F. Delitzsch, F., *Commentary on the Old Testament: Isaiah, Volume 7* (trans. James Martin; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 216-17.

⁸ I must admit to being somewhat perplexed by one aspect of this discussion. I had thought that vowel points were a much later addition to the text. Why then are we forced to read it as with the latterly added vowel points? Why can’t we argue that the word should properly be read as a participle and then simply read it as

may rightly translate it as “maiden.” Yet even this must admit to some difficulty. There is a jarring quality which inheres in the phrase, which is only removed if we consciously evacuate all connotation of virginity from **עַלְמָה**. And this brings us to our next problem:

Problem three is the question of how we ought to translate the Hebrew word **הַעֲלָמָה**. Doing so as “the virgin” is of central importance for sustaining the Christological view, because that – the fact of a virgin birth – and that alone is a miracle so startling as to be called a sign for all the House of David to expect.

For what wonderful thing did the Prophet say, if he spoke of *a young woman who conceived* through intercourse with a man? It would certainly have been absurd to hold out this as a *sign* or a miracle. Let us suppose that it denotes a young woman who should become pregnant in the ordinary course of nature; everybody sees that it would have been silly and contemptible for the Prophet, after having said that he was about to speak of something strange and uncommon, to add, *A young woman shall conceive*. It is, therefore, plain enough that he speaks of *a virgin* who should conceive, not by the ordinary course of nature, but by the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit.⁹

We find several instances of the word in the Old Testament.¹⁰ First, in Genesis 24:43, Rebecca is referred to as **הַעֲלָמָה** (translated by the NAS as “the maiden”), after having been described in verse 16 as both **הַנַּעֲרָה** (“the girl”) and **בְּתוּלָה** (“a virgin”). Second, in Exodus 2:8, Miriam, the sister of Moses, is described as **הַעֲלָמָה** (translated by the NAS as “the girl”). Third, in Isaiah 7:14, the NAS translates **הַעֲלָמָה** in our passage as “the virgin.” Fourth, in Psalm 68:25, we see a reference to **עַלְמוֹת** (translated by the NAS as “maidens”) playing timbrels as the procession enters the sanctuary. Fifth and sixth, **עַלְמוֹת** are referred to in Song of Solomon 1:3 and 6:8 as being in the king’s company, though neither as queens nor as concubines; the NAS translates both

such? I don’t know the answer to this question, and have been unable to find any helpful comments on the issue.

⁹ Calvin, *Isaiah*, 7:14.

¹⁰ See Appendix C, on the usage of **הַעֲלָמָה** in the Old Testament.

instances as “maidens.” Seventh, and finally, we have a more potentially controversial use of the term in Proverbs 30:19. Here is my translation:

- (18) There are three [things which] are surpassingly wonderful [or: too difficult] for me; four [which] I have not understood:
(19) The way of the eagle in the heavens; the way of a serpent on a rock; the way of a ship in the middle of the sea; and the way of a man **בְּעַלְמָה**.

The issue here is that each of the “wonderful things” involve mysteries of deep patterns of movement. There is an implication here in the last of the wonder of courtship-unto-consummation. The phrase is translated in the NAS as “with a maid.” It is difficult to see how courtship alone is indicated, given the other three movement-related sights, but Hindson argues for this, as follows:

The meaning here is obviously that of the natural attraction and affection of men for girls. The expression is not one of lust, but of the mystery of human affection. The juxtaposition of the next verses by the compiler provides a contrast between the natural blessing of the virtuous maid and the evil of the adulterous woman. Therefore, the picture here should be taken as that of a virgin maid.¹¹

At the very least, then, **הָעַלְמָה** certainly means “the maiden,” and indicates a young woman of marriageable age, older than a mere girl, still unwed, though perhaps betrothed – very much like Mary in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. And if **עַלְמָה** is not the technical, legal word in Hebrew for indicating a virgin, it nevertheless cannot be reasonably maintained that virginity is not to be assumed, in the Old Testament context, of an unmarried maiden. Here is Machen on the issue:

It may be readily admitted that *‘almah* does not actually indicate virginity, as does *bethulah*; it means rather “a young woman of marriageable age.” But on the other hand one may well doubt in view of the usage, whether it was a natural word to use of anyone who was not in point of fact a virgin.¹²

And, finally, we should note, first, that the Jewish translators of the Septuagint used the Greek word for “virgin,” *παρθενος*; and second, that it was from this version that Matthew faithfully

¹¹ Edward E. Hindson, *Isaiah's Immanuel* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979) 39.

¹² J. Gresham Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1930) 288, cited in Hindson, *Immanuel*, 39-40.

conveyed its meaning. At the very least, then, among the Alexandrian Jews of the third century B.C., the prevailing notion was that to be an **עֵלְנָזָר** was to be a virgin.

The **fourth problem** is related to the first one (the question of relevance to Ahaz), and has to do with the relation of the Immanuel prophesy to the rest of the passage. The simplest possible reading – done without reference to any text or texts beyond the scope of the passage itself – would seem to indicate that (1) Immanuel’s birth was imminent, for (2) it was he who would be eating curds and honey (v. 15-16), and (3) this eating of curds and honey would be within just a few years of his birth (v. 16), and (4) this time span would be tied both to the obliteration of the threat posed by the two kings and to the coming of Assyria upon Judah in judgment (v. 15-17). Opponents of the Christological view would argue that the Christ-only interpretation becomes thus forced when applied to the rest of the passage.

Responding to this question of the contextual time-factor which is admittedly so important a part of the prophesy, Young responds by arguing that the issue which is of relevance to Ahaz is not the identity of the child but the shortness of time before the threat will be gone. He writes that Immanuel’s “birth and growth, though in prediction, are a picture of the brief time until destruction will come upon Judah’s enemies.”¹³ Belcher concurs with this duration-in-the-sign motif, arguing that while the passage itself (7:14-15) is predictive of the Messiah, there is a contextualizing motif in 8:1-4, which reinforces part of the message of the sign, reminding them of its essential contextual aspect of short-lived duration. In other words, Isaiah’s account in chapter 8 of the naming and birth (in that order) of a third sign-child, Maher-shahal-hash-baz [“Swift the spoil, speedy the plunder”], was itself a sign which pointed also to the contemporary aspect of the Immanuel sign as well.¹⁴

One traditional Christological response to the problem of duration is to argue that **הַיְנָעָר** (“the boy”) in verse 16 announces a shift in focus from the future vision of Immanuel’s virgin birth to that of Shear-jashub, there beside Isaiah. Here is Calvin on this issue:

Many have been led into a mistake by connecting this verse with the preceding one, as if it had been the same child that was mentioned. They suppose that it assigns the reason, and that the particle **כִּי** (*ki*) means *for*. But if we carefully examine the Prophet's meaning, it will quickly be apparent that he leaves the general doctrine, to which he had made a short digression, and returns to his immediate subject. After having founded the hope of the preservation of the city on the promised Mediator, he now shows in what way it will be preserved.¹⁵

And Matthew Henry:

Here is another sign in particular of the speedy destruction of these potent princes that were now a terror to Judah, v. 16. "Before *this* child (so it should be read), this child which I have now in my arms" (he means not Immanuel, but Shear-jashub his own son, whom he was ordered to take with him for a sign, v. 3)...¹⁶

In response to this argument, we must admit that, while such a shifting of focus to Shear-jashub in mid-sentence is possible, it does seem rather a forced reading of the text. Inserting a radical break in semantic intention between verses 15 and 16 simply does not seem to flow naturally out of the context of Isaiah's writing, but feels imposed by adherence to a specific and exclusive interpretation. This complaint brings us to the next major outlook in our discussion:

The Single Fulfillment Non-Messianic View

Advocates of this view would argue that those who hold the Christological view are merely imposing a New Testament interpretation on a text which provides, of itself, no warrant to do so. As we shall see, the basic advantages of this view are, first, that it does not require "the maiden" to be a virgin at the time of conception, and second, that it resolves the duration issue, allowing for the sign to be fulfilled in its contemporary setting. The **first problem** with this view (and an insurmountable one at that – for Christians anyway) is that it ignores the authoritative interpretation by the New Testament! But for unbelievers, this is not an issue of concern.

The basic principle implicit in this view would be to interpret the passage less as a search for the identity of Immanuel than as an evaluation of Isaiah's sign-names. Accordingly, 8:18 would be a

¹³ E.J. Young, *Studies in Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954) 196-98.

¹⁴ Dick Belcher, Jr., Class Notes (*Isaiah-Malachi*, Summer 2001).

¹⁵ Calvin, *Isaiah*, 7:14.

key verse: “Behold, I, and the children whom YHVH has given [to] me, are signs and wonders in Israel from YHVH of Hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion.” Isaiah (“YHVH saves”), Shear-jashub (“A remnant will return”), Immanuel (“God is with us”), and Maher-shahal-hash-baz (“Swift the spoil, speedy the plunder”) are all signs and wonders in Israel. Advocates of the non-Messianic view would argue that the issue at stake in the sign of Immanuel is neither the occurrence of some miraculous birth nor the preservation of monarchy in person of some Messiah, but rather one of duration. It is the shortness of time which provides the exegetical key for the sign, as it points to the imminent end of the threat posed Rezin and Pekah.

In other words, they would continue, we would all agree that the signs to which Isaiah, Shear-jashub, and Maher-shahal-hash-baz point are not fulfilled in their actual persons, but rather that they point to fulfillment in crucial events and principles; therefore, we should approach the sign of Immanuel likewise. Immanuel is first and foremost a symbol for a concept which Isaiah intends to convey. The actual bearer of the sign-name may or may not be Isaiah’s son; he may or may not be identical to the Maher-shahal-hash-baz of 8:1-4; but none of this matters. The sign is the important thing, not the person. And the sign in this case expresses both a key principle (that God will be with his people) and a prophesy with regard to extent of time.

With regard to the nature of these signs in Isaiah, here is VanGemeran (though let us hasten to note that he is by no means an advocate of the non-Messianic view):

A true prophet might give a sign verifying that the Lord had sent him. The sign (*ot*) verified the prophet’s having been sent by the Lord (Ex. 3:12; Deut. 13:2) and witnessed to the authenticity of his message... [He identifies several types of signs: miracles, special events, the prophet himself, an object lesson. Isaiah 7:14-25 he groups with 2 Samuel 12:16-19 (in which David’s first son by Bathsheba dies) as “a designation of a specified time.”¹⁷

And specifically with regard to the Isaiah’s “name theology” in chapters 7-12:

The sign of God’s presence is the Immanuel prophesy (7:14). The name Immanuel (“God is with us”) is a part of the name theology found in the prophesy of Isaiah: “Here am I, and the children the LORD has given me. *We are signs and symbols in Israel from the LORD*

¹⁶ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary: Isaiah to Malachi* (Hendrickson Publishers, 1991) 38.

¹⁷ Willem A. VanGemeran, *Interpreting the Prophetic Word* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990) 33.

Almighty, who dwells on Mount Zion” [8:18, emphasis VanGemen’s]. The names of Isaiah (“Yahweh is salvation”) and his sons (Shear-jashub [“a remnant will return”] and Maher-shahal-hash-baz [“booty will very quickly be taken”]; see 7:3; 8:3) convey the essence of the book: (1) Yahweh is the source of salvation; (2) Yahweh will spare a remnant for himself; and (3) Yahweh’s judgment is coming.”¹⁸

Therefore, if we are convinced that the significance of the sign points not to the identity of the boy – nor still less to that of his mother – then we are freed, as it were, from all “Messianic baggage” in the determination of his identity. Thus, advocates of this view could argue, Immanuel might be the newborn son of any given woman standing nearby as Isaiah spoke. But the use of the definite article before עִלְמָה, as well as the existence of several parallels between 7:14-17 and 8:1-4, point to Isaiah himself as the most likely father of Immanuel. In light of all of this, the most obvious reading would be to identify the Immanuel of chapter 7 with the Maher-shahal-hash-baz of chapter 8. As a matter of linguistics and style, this identification neatly accounts for the parallels between their birth (by which the phrase “conceive and give birth” is used in both) and the short duration which is so crucial an aspect of the purpose of each one’s sign-function (i.e., “before the boy knows...”). This identification thus shows the Immanuel prophesy as being fulfilled in the act-prophesies of Isaiah, in the first verses of chapter 8.

But we are now confronted with **two minor problems**. First, there is the question of whether it is plausible that one boy should be given two names. To this we might answer probably not, but not necessarily not! See 2 Samuel 12:25, where Nathan gives Solomon the name Jedidiah, a name which we never hear addressed to that king again. Besides, strictly speaking, Jesus is not named Immanuel either, but we would probably use the same Jedidiah argument to explain the identification. Second, we see that in chapter 7 it is the mother who names Immanuel, while in chapter 8 it is the father who does so. There seems to be no easy resolution to this last, if we are to continue to argue that Isaiah is Immanuel’s father.

¹⁸ VanGemen, *Prophetic Word*, 260.

Even so, these are minor problems, as we mentioned. But there is a **second problem** with the non-Messianic view which is far more serious – so serious in fact as to undermine the entire emphasis on Immanuel as being merely a sign pointing to a principle. It arises when we ask the question, But are we in fact free to rid ourselves of the “Messianic baggage” to which we referred above? Or is the Messianic motif an essential component of his sign-identity? Recall that chapters 7-12 are a thematically-linked unity. We have found further evidence for this unity arises from our very emphasis on “name theology,” as that is seen clearly to be a pattern throughout the course of these chapters. The problem is that through the sweep of these six chapters there emerges a clear, overwhelming, and inescapably *royal* motif. The argument that we are to interpret the passage as “signs and symbols” only, without seeking to find the identity of the sign-bearing person begins to break down as a result of the sheer extent and magnitude of royal imagery being put forward by Isaiah with regard to Immanuel.

In 8:8, Isaiah refers to the land itself as “Immanuel.” This is a strange thing to do for what was only supposed to be a symbol of the concept “God is with us.” Rather, Isaiah seems to be directing us to consider the parallels between the sign-words themselves, the nature of the sign-bearer’s birth, and the somehow-connection between the sign-bearer and the land. Such an identification of land and person comes closest in the king, who is the embodiment of the kingdom and its land, “in whom” his people have their place before God. (This is, of course, typical of Christ’s kingship.) And surely we see that the glorious passage of 9:1-6 points unquestionably to a king – indeed, to one whose glory would far outstrip even David. The child of 9:6, to whom is applied the four superlative royal titles “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace,” is presented to us – as was Immanuel, we have seen – as already present. This cannot be written off as a mere sign or symbol only, nor can we identify such a person with any son of Isaiah. VanGemeren writes:

According to [Isaiah], the Messiah (1) descends from David, (2) has the Spirit of God, (3) enjoys a Father-Son relationship, (4) brings in a new era of peace, prosperity, and righteousness, and (5) establishes a new community (9:2-7; 11:1-9).¹⁹

Such a royal child as this must either have been already present in fact in Judah, or we must follow Delitzsch's determination that Isaiah is speaking with prophetic vision of a future event as being present before his eyes. In either case, such royal imagery effectively undermines the notion that Immanuel is "just" a son of Isaiah, or still more, "just" a sign or symbol. Calvin's words on the issue seem appropriate here:

As to those who think that it was Isaiah's son, it is an utterly frivolous conjecture; for we do not read that a deliverer would be raised up from the seed of Isaiah, who should be called *Immanuel*; for this title is far too illustrious to admit of being applied to any man.²⁰

The Single Fulfillment, Hezekiah-as-Messiah View

This brings us to the next view, which holds that King Hezekiah was the child to whom Isaiah's prophesy in these chapters referred. The advantage of this view, like that of the preceding non-Messianic one, is that it avoids the issue of "the virgin" and handles the question of duration as arising and being fulfilled in its immediate context. But unlike the non-Messianic view, takes into account the distinctly royal, and distinctly Messianic, motifs which saturate these chapters.

According to Klausner, for example, "Isaiah spoke here of Hezekiah, who would usher in a golden age. But when this did not become a complete reality, the prophet looked to the future for a more complete fulfillment of this hope."²¹

Several of the rabbis expressed this notion of Hezekiah's having been the Messiah in far less compromising terms. Here are three quotes from the Talmud, cited from Abraham Cohen's book, *Everyman's Talmud*:

¹⁹ VanGemeren, *Prophetic Word*, 261.

²⁰ Calvin, *Isaiah*, 7:14.

²¹ J. Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), 56-57, cited in Hindson, *Immanuel*, 47.

- Hezekiah, King of Judah, likewise perceived the Holy One, blessed be He, by himself, since it is written concerning him: ‘Butter and honey shall he eat, when he knoweth to refuse the evil and choose the good’ (Is. 7:15).²²
- Rabbi Hillel declared: ‘Israel has no Messiah (yet to come) since he already enjoyed him in the days of Hezekiah.’²³
- Jochanan ben Zakkai addressed the following cryptic remark to his disciples from his death-bed: ‘Prepare a seat for Hezekiah, king of Judah, who is coming’ (Ber. 28b). His words are usually understood as foreshadowing the advent of the Messiah; and if that be so, this eminent Rabbi of the first century identified him with Hezekiah.²⁴

Another source for source for this notion that Hezekiah was the Messiah – a view which constitutes what might be referred to as “Jewish Post-Millennialism” – may be found in J.H. Hertz’s commentary on the Pentateuch:

- [Note on 9:5-6. These are] two verses from a later prophesy, concerning Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz, then but a lad. His righteous reign will lift Judah from the degenerate condition into which it had sunk. Hezekiah will be the leader of the ‘holy seed,’ the indestructible faithful Remnant in Israel.²⁵
- [Note on 9:5.] *A child is born unto us:* Hezekiah had already been given promise of the qualities of heart and mind that pointed to him as the future regenerator of his people.²⁶
- [Note on 9:6.] *For ever:* i.e., during the days of Hezekiah. (Rashi)²⁷

The **first problem** with the Hezekiah-as-Messiah view is really a most basic one, which is that Hezekiah would already have been born by the time Isaiah pronounced his prophesy! We read in 2 Kings 18:2 that he was twenty-five years old when he became king. Since he became king in 715, he would have been born no later than 740 – five years before the date of the prophesy. Speaking of those who advocated view that Hezekiah was Immanuel in his own time, Calvin wrote:

Those who apply this passage to Hezekiah are excessively impudent; for he must have been a full-grown man when Jerusalem was besieged. Thus they show that they are grossly ignorant

²² Num. R. XIV.2, cited in Abraham Cohen, *Everyman’s Talmud* (New York: Schocken Books, 1975) 2.

²³ Sanh. 98b, cited in *Ibid.* 346.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 346-47.

²⁵ J.H. Hertz, ed., “Haftorah *Yithro* (Isaiah 6:1-7:6; 9:5-6),” *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs: Hebrew Text, English Translation, and Commentary* (London: Soncino Press, 1976) 9:5-6. Note that 7:7-9:4 are omitted from this Haftorah!

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 9:5.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 9:6. How Rashi equates 715-686 to “forever” is quite beyond me!

of history. But it is a just reward of their malice, that God hath blinded them in such a manner as to be deprived of all judgment.²⁸

But now we come to the **second problem**, according to which even if we were to grant the possibility – remote in terms of the biblical evidence on dates, but even should we concede of such a possibility – of Hezekiah’s having been born five years later, in 735, we are confronted by the intractable problem of the sheer magnitude of glory which Isaiah assigns to the reign. If included among the Messiah’s titles are to be such exalted ones as “Mighty God,” then Hezekiah, great as he was, was no Messiah. To counter this, it may be argued that the exalted titles of 9:6 are not titles at all, but Hezekiah’s throne name, Pele-joetz-el-gibor-aviad-sar-shalom (Wonderful in counsel is the mighty God, father of eternity, prince of peace).²⁹ But this does seem forced – as a name it is overlong, and it is not the natural reading in the Hebrew. But should we concede even this second element as possible, still Hezekiah could not have been the Messiah prophesied by Isaiah – if only for the obvious reason that the glory envisioned for his reign in no way came to pass. Great though he surely was, he passed the kingdom along to Manasseh, who proceeded to rule Judah in such manner as to guarantee God’s coming judgment upon the nation.

To put it another way: Hezekiah was no Messiah; he wasn’t even greater than David, but only pointed back to that king’s glory. The mainstream Talmudic tradition concedes this point, and awaits the Messiah still. Here is one more account from the Talmud, but this one takes Hillel’s Hezekiah-as-Messiah view to task:

The Holy One, blessed be He, wished to make Hezekiah the Messiah and Sennacherib Gog and Magog; but the attribute of Justice spoke before Him: ‘Sovereign of the Universe! David, king of Israel, who composed so many songs and praises in Thy honour, Thou has not made Messiah, and wilt Thou make Hezekiah the Messiah for whom Thou has performed so many miracles and yet he did not compose one song for Thee?’³⁰

²⁸ Calvin, *Isaiah*, 7:14. Calvin must be assuming the earlier possible date for Hezekiah’s birth, 754. Then, he would have been 25 at the start of his co-regency with Ahaz in 729. But this dating becomes difficult to maintain if we follow accession ages and date reigns back to Uzziah’s time – but that’s another paper!

²⁹ Hertz, *Pentateuch*, 9:6.

³⁰ Sanh. 94a, cited in Cohen, *Talmud*, 346-47.

The Double Fulfillment View

We arrive, then, at the double fulfillment view, advocated by those who believe that Matthew's Gospel provides the authoritative interpretation of the prophecy's ultimate fulfillment, but who also believe that the passage must have a more contextually significant original meaning than is granted by the Christological view. This approach essentially asks the question, What does the passage say in itself, to the extent possible without reference to other, later sections of Scripture – though remembering to take other Scripture into account in its interpretation?

Accordingly this view is able to handle several of the problems which have dogged the Christological view. First, it keeps the focus on the contemporary significance of the sign to its original recipients, and retains the classic definition of a sign as being, “by definition a pointer in the contemporary situation towards a more distant event.”³¹ Second, it accepts that “the virgin” is not the only possible concept implied by הַעַלְמָה. Third, it shifts the question of the sign's significance from Immanuel's identity and the fact and nature of his birth to the principle expressed by his name and the time duration which will be indicated by his life – a shifting of focus which seems to fit well the “name theology” which pervades these chapters of Isaiah. Fourth, it argues that the most likely reading of the Hebrew is that the woman is already pregnant. And fifth, it restores the unity of the prophesy through verse 17 and beyond, without having to cut it at the end of verse 15 so as to make the text refer back to Shear-jashub.³²

The double fulfillment view is founded upon the notion that prophetic passages in the Old Testament speak in real ways to the context in which they were originally spoken and composed. The signs and symbols were intended to and did mean real things to the people who received them. But, double fulfillment advocates would continue, these prophesies also occur in the course of redemption

³¹ David F. Payne, “Isaiah,” *The International Bible Commentary* (ed. F.F. Bruce; Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986) 726-27.

³² *Ibid.*.

history. Whatever interim fulfillments they may come to in their own time, these prophecies find their ultimate fulfillment in Christ.

Against this view, some have argued that it undermines valid exegesis, as the following:

If one read only the New Testament, it would be safe to say that he would never suspect the possibility of dual-fulfillment, because the New Testament indicates that the predictions refer directly to Christ.³³

One of the most persistent hermeneutical sins' is attempting to place two interpretations on one passage of Scripture, thereby breaking the force of the literal meaning and obscuring the picture intended.³⁴

But if these arguments should prevail, how are we to read Matthew 2:15, where the apostle quotes Hosea 11:1 ("Out of Egypt have I called my Son") as applying to Christ, whereas it is clear that in the original context it referred to Israel. The concept of successive fulfillment, which allows the interim fulfillment to have been Israel in the original Old Testament setting, but then shows how its ultimate fulfillment came in Christ, the true Israel. Or again, when in Matthew 2:18 the apostle cites Jeremiah 31:15 ("A voice is heard Ramah, weeping and great mourning; Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more"), clearly the prophet's original meaning was focused upon the fall of the kingdom, but Matthew, writing from his later, and more complete, vantage point on the whole of redemption history, was able to see the passage's greater fulfillment in Christ.

Yet for all the problems this approach presumes to fix, we are left where we began, uncertain of who this Immanuel might have been in the original context. The irreducible problem in all this is that Isaiah's Immanuel and Messianic prophecies really do point to one child, the God-man, Jesus Christ. No one else can presume to wear the glory inherent in these words.

4. Conclusion

³³ Barton Payne, "So-Called Dual Fulfillment in Messianic Psalms," *Printed Papers of the Evangelical Theological Society* (1953 meeting at Chicago) 64, cited in Hindson, *Immanuel*, 20.

³⁴ Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Wilde, 1956) 87, cited in *Ibid.*, 21.

Isaiah had come to Ahaz, with his sign-bearing son at his side and with God's very word to offer the king. "Be thou careful, and be calm. Fear not, nor let thy heart be faint," he had advised the king. Rezin's and Pekah's invasion would not stand. "If you will not believe, then you will not be established." But Ahaz, seeing Shear-jashub and hearing Isaiah's words with eyes blinded and ears deafened by faithlessness, rejected this offer of peace with God, and embarked on a course of great folly which would culminate some 150 years later with the destruction of his kingdom. Ahaz had rejected God, and so God had rejected him (as we saw when "thy" God became "my" God, and when the intimate address ("thou") shifted to the more general and plural form ("ye")). As an individual Ahaz was dispensable.

But the Lord had also made promises to David, and had entered into a covenant with him and with his House forever (2 Samuel 7). The House of David would persist – it had to persist until the coming of the Greater One than David. And God's promises to this House, along with the subsequent words of his prophets – most particularly, perhaps, those of Isaiah here in chapters 7-12 – together made a gorgeous garment of impossible splendor. This was the robe which every king was to wear in his role, at his particular moment in time, as the Anointed One of God's covenant people, embodying the hopes of the nation and the glory of the land in his own person. However badly the Anointed One should wear this robe of glory, yet God's promises to the House of David would stand.

The tension inherent between God's unconditional commitment to his covenant promises and the conditionality of the faith of so many from among his own people was resolved in the emerging prophetic image of the remnant, the faithful seed. Immanuel embodied this remnant, as its royal hope and yearning. This vision, that a child born of a virgin would grow up to be called "Mighty God" – this can only be Jesus Christ. Without the eyes of faith, we are necessarily vexed by this passage. It fails to resolve into a coherent pattern. No one else can fit the mold to which Isaiah's words give form. And so eyes that began peering in darkness find themselves straining in greater darkness still – lest they turn and be healed.

APPENDIX A: Interlinear Comparison of Four English Translations

(1)

Now it came about (NAS)

Now it came to pass (NKJ)

in the days of (NAS, NKJ, NRS)

When (NIV)

Ahaz (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)

the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, (NAS, NKJ)

son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, (NRS)

son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, was king of Judah, (NIV)

that Rezin the king of Aram (NAS)

that Rezin king of Syria (NKJ)

King Rezin of Aram (NRS, NIV)

and (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)

Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, (NAS, NKJ)

King Pekah son of Remaliah of Israel (NRS)

Pekah son of Remaliah, king of Israel (NIV)

went up (NAS, NKJ, NRS)

marched up (NIV)

to Jerusalem to wage war against it, (NAS)

to Jerusalem to make war against it, (NKJ)

to attack Jerusalem, (NRS)

to fight against Jerusalem, (NIV)

but (NAS, NKJ, NRS)

but they (NIV)

could not (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)

conquer it. (NAS)

prevail against it. (NKJ)

mount an attack against it. (NRS)

overpower it. (NIV)

(2)

When it was reported to (NAS)

And it was told to (NKJ)

When (NRS)

Now (NIV)

the house of David (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)

saying, (NAS, NKJ)

heard that (NRS)

was told, (NIV)

the Arameans (NAS)

Syria's forces (NKJ)

Aram (NRS, NIV)

have camped in (NAS)

are deployed in (NKJ)

had allied itself with (NRS)

has allied itself with (NIV)

Ephraim, (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)

his heart and the hearts of (NAS)

so his heart and the heart of (NKJ)

the heart of Ahaz and the heart of (NRS)

so the hearts of Ahaz and (NIV)

his people (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)

shook (NAS, NRS)
were moved (NKJ)
were shaken, (NIV)
as the trees (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)
of the forest (NAS, NRS, NIV)
of the woods (NKJ)
are shaken (NIV)
shake (NAS, NRS)
are moved (NKJ)
by the wind. (NIV)
with the wind. (NAS, NKJ)
before the wind. (NRS)

(3)

Then the LORD said to Isaiah, (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)
Go out now, (NAS, NKJ)
Go out, (NRS, NIV)
to meet Ahaz, you and your son Shear-jashub, (NAS, NRS)
to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-Jashub your son, (NKJ)
you and your son Shear-Jashub, to meet Ahaz (NIV)
at the end of the (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)
conduit of (NAS, NRS)
aqueduct from (NKJ)
aqueduct of (NIV)
the upper pool, (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)
on the highway to the fuller's field. (NAS, NKJ, NRS)
on the road to the washerman's field. (NIV)

(4)

And (NAS, NKJ, NRS)
say to him, (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)
Take care, (NAS)
Take heed, (NKJ, NRS)
Be careful, (NIV)
and (NAS, NKJ)
be calm, (NAS)
keep calm, (NIV)
be quiet, (NKJ, NRS)
and (NIV)
have no fear, (NAS)
do not fear, (NKJ, NRS)
don't be afraid, (NIV)
and do not be fainthearted (NAS)
or be fainthearted (NKJ)
and do not let your heart be faint (NRS)
do not lose heart (NIV)
because of (NAS, NRS, NIV)
for (NKJ)
these two (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)
stubs of smoldering (NAS)
stubs of smoking (NKJ)
smoldering stumps of (NRS)
smoldering stumps of (NIV)
firebrands, (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)

on account of (NAS)
for (NKJ)
because of (NRS, NIV)
the fierce anger of Rezin and (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)
Aram (NAS, NRS, NIV)
Syria (NKJ)
and the son of Remaliah; (NAS, NKJ, NRS)
and of the son of Remaliah; (NIV)

(5)
Because (NAS, NKJ, NRS)
Aram, (NAS, NRS, NIV)
Syria, (NKJ)
with Ephraim (NAS, NRS)
Ephraim (NKJ, NIV)
and the son of Remaliah (NAS, NKJ, NRS)
and Remaliah's son (NIV)
has planned evil against you, (NAS)
have plotted evil against you, (NKJ)
has plotted evil against you, (NRS)
have plotted your ruin, (NIV)
saying, (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)

(6)
Let us (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)
go up against Judah (NAS, NKJ, NRS)
invade Judah, (NIV)
and terrorize it, (NAS)
and cut off Jerusalem (NKJ)
and trouble it, (NRS)
let us tear it apart (NIV)
and (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)
make for ourselves a breach in its walls (NAS)
conquer it for ourselves (NKJ)
let us make a gap in its wall for ourselves, (NRS)
divide it among ourselves, (NIV)
and set up (NAS)
and set (NKJ)
and make (NRS, NIV)
the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it. (NAS)
the son of Tabeel king in it. (NRS)
a king over them, the son of Tabel. (NKJ)
the son of Tabeel king over it. (NIV)

(7)
Therefore (NRS)
Thus says (NAS, NKJ, NRS)
Yet this is what (NIV)
the Lord God, (NAS)
the Lord GOD, (NKJ, NRS)
the Sovereign LORD says, (NIV)
It shall not stand, (NAS, NKJ, NRS)
It will not take place, (NIV)

nor shall it (NAS, NKJ)
and it shall not (NRS)
it will not (NIV)
come to pass. (NAS, NKJ, NRS)
happen. (NIV)

(8)

For the head of (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)
Aram (NAS, NRS, NIV)
Syria (NKJ)
is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)
Rezin; (NAS, NKJ, NRS)
only Rezin; (NIV)
now within another (NAS)
within (NKJ, NRS, NIV)
sixty-five years Ephraim will be (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)
shattered, (NAS, NRS)
too shattered (NIV)
broken, (NKJ)
so that it is no longer (NAS)
so that it will not be (NKJ)
no longer (NRS)
to be (NIV)
a people; (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)

(9)

and (NAS)
the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)
the son of Remaliah. (NAS, NRS)
Remaliah's son. (NKJ)
only Remaliah's son. (NIV)
If you (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)
will not believe, (NAS, NKJ)
do not stand firm in faith, (NRS)
do not stand firm in your faith, (NIV)
you (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)
surely (NAS)
shall not (NAS, NKJ, NRS)
will not (NIV)
last. (NAS)
be established. (NKJ)
stand at all. (NRS, NIV)

(10)

Then (NAS)
Moreover (NKJ)
Again the LORD spoke (NRS, NIV)
the LORD spoke again (NAS, NKJ)
to Ahaz, (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)
saying, (NAS, NKJ, NRS)

(11)

Ask (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)

a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; (NAS, NKJ)

a sign of the LORD your God; (NRS)

the LORD your God for a sign, (NIV)

make it (NAS)

ask it either (NKJ)

let it be (NRS)

whether (NIV)

deep as Sheol (NAS, NRS)

in the depth (NKJ)

in the deepest depths (NIV)

or (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)

high as heaven. (NAS, NRS)

in the height above. (NKJ)

in the highest heights. (NIV)

(12)

But Ahaz said, I will not ask, (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)

nor will I test the LORD. (NAS, NKJ)

and I will not put the LORD to the test. (NRS)

I will not put the LORD to the test. (NIV)

(13)

Then he said, (NAS, NKJ)

Then Isaiah said, (NRS, NIV)

Listen now, (NAS)

Hear now, (NKJ, NIV)

Hear then, (NRS)

O house of David, (NAS, NKJ, NRS)

you house of David, (NIV)

Is it (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)

too slight a thing for you (NAS)

a small thing for you (NKJ)

too little for you (NRS)

not enough (NIV)

to try the patience of men, (NAS, NIV)

to weary men, (NKJ)

to weary mortals, (NRS)

that (NAS, NRS)

but (NKJ)

you will (NAS)

will you (NKJ, NIV)

you (NRS)

try the patience of (NAS, NIV)

weary (NKJ, NRS)

my God (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)

as well? (NAS)

also? (NKJ, NRS, NIV)

(14)

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)

behold, (NAS, NKJ)

look, (NRS)

a virgin (NAS)

the virgin (NKJ, NIV)

the young woman (NRS)

will be with child (NAS, NIV)

shall conceive (NKJ)

is with child (NRS)

and bear a son, (NAS, NKJ)

and shall bear a son, (NRS)

and will give birth to a son, (NIV)

and (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)

she will call His name (NAS)

shall call His name (NKJ)

shall name him (NRS)

will call him (NIV)

Immanuel. (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)

(15)

He will eat curds and honey (NAS, NIV)

He shall eat curds and honey (NRS)

Curds and honey

he shall eat, (NKJ)

at the time (NAS)

that (NKJ)

by the time (NRS)

when (NIV)

he knows enough (NAS, NIV)

he may know (NKJ)

he knows how (NRS)

to refuse evil (NAS)

to refuse the evil (NKJ, NRS)

to reject the wrong (NIV)

and choose (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)

good. (NAS)

the good. (NKJ, NRS)

the right. (NIV)

(16)

For (NAS, NKJ, NRS)

But (NIV)

before the (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)

boy (NAS, NIV)

child (NKJ, NRS)

will know enough (NAS)

shall know (NKJ)

knows how (NRS)

knows enough (NIV)

to refuse evil (NAS)

to refuse the evil (NKJ, NRS)

to reject the wrong (NIV)

and choose (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)

good, (NAS)
 the good, (NKJ, NRS)
 the right, (NIV)
 the land (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)
 whose two kings you dread will be forsaken. (NAS)
 that you dread will be forsaken by both her kings.
 (NKJ)
 before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted. (NRS)
 of the two kings you dread will be laid waste. (NIV)

(17)

The LORD will bring (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV) the king of Assyria (NKJ)
 on you, on your people and on (NAS)
 on you and on your people and on (NRS, NIV)
 upon you and your people and (NKJ)
 your father's house (NAS, NKJ)
 your ancestral house (NRS)
 the house of your father (NIV)
 such days as have never come (NAS)
 days that have not come (NKJ)
 such days as have not come (NRS)
 a time unlike any (NIV)
 since the day that (NAS, NKJ, NRS)
 since (NIV)
 Ephraim (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)
 separated (NAS)
 departed (NKJ, NRS)
 broke away (NIV)
 from Judah – (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)
 he will bring (NIV) the king of Assyria. (NAS, NRS, NIV)

(18)

And it will come about (NAS)
 And it shall come to pass (NKJ)
 in that day (NAS, NKJ, NIV)
 On that day (NRS) that (NAS, NKJ)
 the LORD will whistle for (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)
 the fly (NAS, NKJ, NRS)
 flies (NIV)
 that is in (NAS, NKJ)
 that is at (NRS)
 from (NIV)
 the remotest part of the rivers (NAS)
 the farthest part of the rivers (NKJ)
 the sources of the streams (NRS)
 the distant streams (NIV)
 of Egypt, and for (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)
 the bee (NAS, NKJ, NRS)
 bees (NIV)
 that is in (NAS, NKJ, NRS)
 from (NIV)

the land of Assyria. (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)

(19)

And (NAS, NRS)
they will all come and settle (NAS, NRS, NIV)
they will come and, all of them will rest (NKJ)
on (NAS)
in (NKJ, NRS, NIV)
the steep ravines, (NAS, NRS, NIV)
the desolate valleys, (NKJ)
on (NAS)
and in (NKJ, NRS, NIV)
the ledges of the cliffs, (NAS)
the clefts of the rocks, (NKJ, NRS)
the crevices in the rocks, (NIV)
on (NAS, NIV)
and on (NKJ, NRS)
all (NKJ, NRS, NIV)
the thornbushes, (NAS)
thorns (NKJ)
the thornbushes, (NRS, NIV)
and (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)
on (NAS, NRS)
in (NKJ)
at (NIV)
all (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)
the watering places. (NAS)
pastures. (NKJ)
the pastures. (NRS)
the water holes. (NIV)

(20)

In that day (NAS, NIV)
In the same day (NKJ)
On that day (NRS)
the Lord will (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)
shave with (NAS, NKJ, NRS)
use (NIV)
a razor, hired (NAS, NRS, NIV)
a hired razor, (NKJ)
from regions (NAS)
with those from (NKJ)
from (NIV)
beyond the (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)
Euphrates – (NAS)
the River – (NKJ, NRS, NIV)
that is, with (NAS)
with (NKJ, NRS)
the king of Assyria – (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)
to shave (NIV)
the head (NAS, NKJ, NRS)
your head (NIV)
and the hair of (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)

(25)

And as for all the hills (NAS, NRS)
As for all the hills (NIV)
And to any hill (NKJ)

which (NAS, NKJ)
that (NRS)

used to be (NAS, NRS)
could be (NKJ)
once (NIV)
cultivated (NAS, NIV)
dug (NKJ)
hoed (NAS)
with (NAS, NKJ, NRS)
by (NIV)
the hoe, (NAS, NKJ, NIV)
a hoe, (NRS)
you will (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)
not go there for fear of briars and thorns; (NAS, NKJ, NRS)
no longer go there for fear of the briars and thorns; (NIV)
but (NAS, NKJ, NRS)
they will become a place (NAS, NRS)
it will become a range (NKJ)
they will become places (NIV)
for pasturing oxen (NAS)
for oxen (NKJ)
where cattle are let loose (NRS)
where cattle are turned loose (NIV)
and (NAS, NKJ, NRS, NIV)
for sheep to trample. (NAS)
a place for sheep to roam. (NKJ)
where sheep tread. (NRS)
where sheep run. (NIV)

APPENDIX B: Translation of the Passage and Surrounding Material

Isaiah 7:1-9:7, 10:20-12:6

Chapter 7

- (1) And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz son of Jotham son of Uzziah, king of Judah, [that] Rezin king of Aram went up – and Pekah son of Remaliah, king of Israel – [to] Jerusalem to war against it, but was not able to fight it.³⁵
- (2) And it was told to the House of David, saying, “Aram rests upon³⁶ Ephraim.” And his heart shook – and the heart of his people – as the trees of the forest shake from the face of the wind.
- (3) And YHVH said to Isaiah, “Go [thou] out now to meet Ahaz – thou and Shear-jashub³⁷ thy son – to the end of the water course of the upper pool, on the causeway to the fuller’s field,
- (4) and say to him, ‘Be [thou] careful, and be calm. Fear not, nor let thy heart be faint from these two stubs of smoking firebrands, at the hot anger of Rezin and Aram and [of] the son of Remaliah,
- (5) on account of [the fact] that Aram has planned evil – [along with] Ephraim – against thee, saying,
- (6) “Let us go up into Judah and terrorize it,³⁸ and divide it [up] for ourselves, and let us set up the son of Tabeel [as] king in the midst of it.”
- (7) Thus says the Lord YHVH: It will not stand, nor will it come to pass.
- (8) For the head of Aram is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin – but in another sixty-five years Ephraim will be shattered from [being] a people –
- (9) And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah. If ye will not believe, then [surely] ye will not be established.”³⁹
- (10) Then YHVH spoke again⁴⁰ to Ahaz, saying,
- (11) “Ask [thou] for thyself a sign from YHVH thy God. Make [it] deep as Sheol or high as above.”
- (12) But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, nor will I test YHVH.”
- (13) Then he said, “Hear [ye] now, [O] House of David. Is it a [too] little a thing for you to weary⁴¹ men, that you will weary⁴² my God also?
- (14) Therefore the Lord himself will give [to] you a sign: behold, the *’almah* is with child and is bearing a son; and she will call his name Immanuel.⁴³
- (15) Curds and honey will he eat when he knows to reject evil and to choose good,
- (16) for before the boy will know to reject evil and to choose good, the ground⁴⁴ whose two kings thou art dreading will be forsaken.
- (17) YHVH will bring upon thee and upon thy people and upon the House of thy father [such] days [as] which have not come since the day Ephraim seceded⁴⁵ from Judah – the king of Assyria!
- (18) “And it will come to pass in that day [that] YHVH will whistle for the fly which is at the extremity of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee which is in the land of Assyria.

³⁵ Or, “mount an attack against it.” (NRS)

³⁶ Or, “has allied itself with.” (NRS)

³⁷ Lit. “a remnant will return.”

³⁸ Or, “cause it to dread.”

³⁹ Or, “will not stand at all.” (NRS)

⁴⁰ Lit. “added to speak.”

⁴¹ Or, “try the patience of.”

⁴² Or, “try the patience of.”

⁴³ Lit. “with us is God.”

⁴⁴ Or, “land.”

⁴⁵ Or, “departed.”

- (19) And they will come and settle, all of them, in the wadi-beds [beneath] the cliffs,⁴⁶ and in the clefts of the rocks, and in all the thornbushes, and in all the watering places.
- (20) In that day the Lord will shave, with a razor hired from regions beyond the River – [even] the king of Assyria – the head and the hair of the legs;⁴⁷ and it⁴⁸ will remove the beard as well.
- (21) And it will come to pass in that day [that] a man will keep alive a heifer of [the] herd and two sheep.⁴⁹
- (22) And it will come to pass [that] from the abundance of milk produced he will eat curds, for curds and honey will everyone remaining in the midst of the land eat.
- (23) And it will come to pass in that day [that] every place which used [once] to be there a thousand vines, at a thousand [pieces of] silver,⁵⁰ will be for briars and for thorns.
- (24) He⁵¹ will come there with arrows and bow, because the entire land will be briars and thorns.
- (25) And [as for] all the hills which used to be tilled⁵² with the hoe, thou wilt not go there, [for] fear of briars and thorns,⁵³ and it will become [a range] for pasturing of oxen and for trampling by sheep.”

Chapter 8

- (1) Then YHVH said to me, “Take [thou] for thyself a large tablet and write on it in common script,⁵⁴ Maher-shahal-hash-baz⁵⁵
- (2) And I will cause faithful witnesses to testify for me – Uriah the priest and Zechariah son of Jeberechiah.”
- (3) Then I approached the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. And YHVH said to me, “Call [thou] his name Maher-shahal-hash-baz,⁵⁶
- (4) for before the boy will know to call out ‘My father’ or ‘My mother,’ the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria, it will be carried off before the king of Assyria.”
- (5) Then YHVH spoke [lit. “added to speak”] to me again, saying,
- (6) “On account of [the fact] that this people has rejected the waters of Shiloah, which flow gently [by], and rejoice [in] Rezin and the son of Remaliah,
- (7) now therefore, behold, the Lord is bringing upon them the waters of the River, mighty and many – the king of Assyria and all his glory. And it will go up over all its channels and will go over all its banks.

⁴⁶ Or, “on the steep ravines.” (NAS)

⁴⁷ Lit. “the hair of the feet.” I.e., pubic hair, per the Tanakh verse note. See *Tanakh: A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (New York: The Jewish Publication Society, 1985).

⁴⁸ “It” here would seem at first glance to refer to the “razor,” God’s implement of this judgment activity, but תֵּעַר (razor) is masculine, and תִּסְפֶּה (remove, consume, sweep away) is feminine singular. For this reason I wonder whether the reference here might be to דְּבוּרָה (bee) a female singular word identified in verse 18 with the coming Assyrian invaders? While this works grammatically, a reference to the “razor” would certainly make more sense.

⁴⁹ Or, “two goats.” (NIV)

⁵⁰ The Tanakh’s verse note adds: “I.e., all the best farm land, corresponding to the hairiest parts of the body.”

⁵¹ Referring to אִישׁ, the any given “man” of verse 21.

⁵² Lit. “hoed.”

⁵³ The Tanakh translates this differently: “But the perils of thornbush and thistle shall not spread to any of the hills that could only be tilled with a hoe” – that is, per its verse note, to “marginal farm land, too rocky for the plow, corresponding to areas of the body with scant hair.”

⁵⁴ Or, “with a man’s pen.” (NKJ)

⁵⁵ Lit. “Swift [the] spoil, speedy [the] plunder.”

⁵⁶ Lit. “Swift [the] spoil, speedy [the] plunder.”

- (8) And it will sweep on into Judah. It will overflow⁵⁷ [its borders] and transgress⁵⁸ [the land]. Over the neck will it reach. And the spreading of its wings will be [unto] the fullness of the breadth of thy land, [O] Immanuel.⁵⁹
- (9) Be [ye] broken, [O] peoples, and be shattered. And give ear, all remote places of the earth: Clothe yourselves, but be shattered.⁶⁰ Clothe yourselves, but be shattered.⁶¹
- (10) Devise [ye] a plan, but it will be frustrated. Speak [ye] a word, but it will not stand. For with us is God.”⁶²
- (11) For thus did YHVH speak to me, with strength of hand, and admonished me against walking in the way of this people, saying,
- (12) “Ye will not say, ‘Conspiracy,’ [in regard] to all that this people will say, ‘Conspiracy.’ And ye will not fear what it fears,⁶³ nor will ye be in dread [of such].
- (13) YHVH of Hosts – him will ye regard as holy. And he will be your fear, and he your dread.
- (14) And he shall be [for] a sanctuary. But for the two houses of Israel, [he shall be for] a stone of striking and a rock of stumbling, and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, a snare and a trap.
- (15) And many among them will stumble. They will fall and be broken, and they will be snared, and captured.”
- (16) Bind [thou] up the testimony. Seal the teaching⁶⁴ among my disciples.⁶⁵
- (17) And I will wait for YHVH, who is hiding his face from the House of Jacob – indeed, I will wait eagerly for him.⁶⁶
- (18) Behold, I, and the children whom YHVH has given [to] me, are signs and wonders in Israel from YHVH of Hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion.
- (19) And when they say to you, “Seek [ye out] the ghosts and the familiar spirits⁶⁷ who chirp and moan,” should not a people seek [out] its God? [Or will they look] unto the dead on behalf of the living?
- (20) To the instruction⁶⁸ and to the testimony!⁶⁹ If they will not speak according to this word, [it is] because there is no dawn for them.⁷⁰

⁵⁷ Lit. “it overflowed,” or “it engulfed.” פָּלַח here is not a qal waw consecutive perfect like the verbs preceding and following it, but is a simple qal perfect.

⁵⁸ Or, “pass through.” (NAS)

⁵⁹ Lit. “with us is God.” See verse 10 and note. The Tanakh translates the verse differently: “But with us is God, whose wings are spread as wide as your land is broad.” I think the context favors my translation, which accords with the NAS, NKJ, NRS, and NIV.

⁶⁰ Or, “be dismayed.”

⁶¹ Or, “be dismayed.”

⁶² Lit. “Immanuel.” Note the parallel between verse 8 (“...to the fullness of the breadth of thy land – God is with us!”) and verse 10 (“...it will not stand – God is with us!”). God will be present with his people in judgment and in blessing.

⁶³ Lit. “its fear.”

⁶⁴ Or, “law.”

⁶⁵ The Tanakh ends the quote begun at verse 6 here. The NAS, NKJ, and NIV all end it at verse 15.

⁶⁶ Or, “and I will hope in him.”

⁶⁷ Or, “mediums and spiritists.” (NAS, NIV)

⁶⁸ Or, “law.”

⁶⁹ The NRS translates this section differently, continuing the quotation through to this verse: “Consult the ghosts and the familiar spirits that chirp and mutter; should not a people consult their gods, the dead on behalf of the living, for teaching and for instruction?” This is plausible, but I think that the context supports my translation (and that of the NAS). Isaiah follows this up by saying that anyone who doesn’t “speak according to this word” is not, to phrase it gently, on the path to light, which would indicate his approval – indeed, his certification – of the quote. Clearly, this is not his intent.

- (21) And they will pass through [the land],⁷¹ hardened and voracious. And it will come to pass that they will be hungry, and be angry, and will curse their king and their God, and will turn [their faces] upward.
- (22) Then they will look to the land, and behold: distress and darkness, gloom of anguish, and banishment [unto] darkness.

Chapter 9

- (1) But [there will be] no [more] gloom for her⁷² who was in anguish. As in the former time he cursed the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, [so] afterwards he will glorify [it] – the way of the sea, the region beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.
- (2) The people – those walking in darkness – have seen a great light; those who dwell in the land of deep darkness – a light has shone upon them.
- (3) Thou hast multiplied the nation; thou hast magnified [its] joy; they have rejoiced before thee as [like] the joy at the harvest, as men rejoice when they apportion spoil.
- (4) For thou has broken the yoke of their burden, and the staff upon their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor,⁷³ as [in] the day of Midian.
- (5) For every war-sandal trod⁷⁴ in [battle] tumult, and cloak rolled in blood, will be [used] for burning – [as] fuel for [the] fire.
- (6) For a child has been born to us – a son has been given to us – and dominion is upon his shoulders. And he has called his name Wonder, Counselor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace.⁷⁵
- (7) To the increase of [his] dominion and of peace, there will be no end, [there] upon the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it in judgment and in righteousness, from now and forevermore. The zeal of YHVH of Hosts will do this.

(9:8-10:19 omitted here)

Chapter 10

- (20) And it will come to pass in that day [that] the remnant of Israel – and those who have escaped of the House of Jacob – will never again rely upon the one who struck them [down],⁷⁶ but will in truth rely upon YHVH, the Holy One of Israel.
- (21) A remnant will return⁷⁷ – the remnant of Jacob – unto the mighty God.⁷⁸

⁷⁰ Lit. “for him” (masculine singular, as in “such a one of these”). Following the example of the NAS, NKJ, NRS, and NIV, and for greater clarity in English, I have translated this and all other third person masculine singular references in verses 21 and 22 as plural – e.g., “they will pass” of verse 21 is lit. “he will pass,” etc.

⁷¹ Lit. “in it.” אֶרֶץ is feminine singular, and refers to “the land.”

⁷² Lit. “for it.” אֶרֶץ is feminine singular, and refers to “the land.”

⁷³ Lit. “its burden...its shoulder...its oppressor.” The singular refers to “the people,” to “the nation.” But, following the example of the NAS, NRS, and NIV, I have translated in the plural, for purposes of clarity and to retain the plural sense of these words.

⁷⁴ Or, “every boot of the booted warrior.” (NAS)

⁷⁵ There are several possible readings for the Hebrew, פֶּלֶא יוֹעֵץ אֵל גִּבּוֹר אֲבִיעֵד שֶׁר־שָׁלוֹם. Among them: (1) Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace (like my translation, five components); (2) Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace (four components – NAS); or (3) Pele-yoetz-el-gibor-aviad-sar-shalom (that is, Wonderful-in-counsel-is-the-Mighty God-Father-of-Eternity-Prince-of-Peace (one extended name).

⁷⁶ Lit. “will not add any more to rely upon its smiter.”

⁷⁷ Lit. “Shear-jashub.”

- (22) For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, [yet only] a remnant will return⁷⁹ to it. Destruction is decreed, overflowing with righteousness;
- (23) for the Lord, YHVH of Hosts, will make a complete destruction, one which is decreed, in the midst of the whole land.
- (24) Therefore, thus says⁸⁰ the Lord YHVH of Hosts, “Be [thou] not afraid, [O] my people dwelling in Zion, on account of Assyria. With a rod he will smite thee, and his staff he will lift against thee, in the way Egypt [did].
- (25) For yet a very little while and [my] indignation will be spent, and my anger [will be directed] to their⁸¹ destruction.”
- (26) And YHVH of Hosts will arouse a scourge against him⁸², like the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb. And he will lift his staff over the sea, in the way of Egypt.
- (27) And it will come to pass in that day [that] he will remove his burden from upon thy shoulders, and his yoke from upon thy neck. And [the] yoke will be destroyed on account of [thy] prosperity [lit. “on account of [the] presence of oil].

Chapter 11

- (1) And a twig will come forth from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will be fruitful.
- (2) And the Spirit of YHVH will rest upon him – a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and might, a spirit of knowledge and [of] the fear of YHVH –
- (3) to delight him [or: he will delight] in the fear of YHVH. And he will not judge [or: govern] according to the sight of his eyes, nor will he decide according to the hearing of his ears,
- (4) but in righteousness he will judge [or: govern] the poor, and he will decide with fairness [lit. “on the level”] for [the] afflicted of [the] land [or: earth]. And he will strike the land [or: earth] with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he will slay [or: execute] [the] wicked.
- (5) And righteousness will be the belt [about] his loins, and faithfulness the belt about his waist.
- (6) And wolf will abide [or: dwell] with lamb; and leopard will lie down with kid, and calf and lion cub and fatling together; and a little boy [will be] leading them.
- (7) And cow and bear will graze; their young will lie down together; and a lion will eat straw like an ox.
- (8) And the nursing child will play by the hole of a cobra [lit. “venomous serpent”]; and the weaned child will [lit. “has”]⁸³ put his hand on the hole of a viper [lit. “on the light-hole of a poisonous serpent”].
- (9) They will not harm, nor will they destroy, in all my holy mountain. For the land [or: earth] will be [or: is] full of the knowledge of YHVH, as the waters [are] cover for the sea.
- (10) And it will come to pass in that day [that] the root of Jesse, who will stand as a standard [or: banner] [for] the peoples, unto him will the nations seek. And his will be a resting place of glory.
- (11) And it will come to pass in that day [that] the Lord will again recover a second time with his hand [lit. “will add a second time to his power, to recover”] the remnant of his people who will remain, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the coastlands [or: islands] of the sea.

⁷⁸ Or, “unto Mighty God,” i.e., El-gibor (9:6).

⁷⁹ Lit. “Shear-jashub.”

⁸⁰ Lit. “said.”

⁸¹ Referring to the Assyrians.

⁸² “Him” referring to Assyria.

⁸³ פָּתַח (put, stretch out). The form here is perfect.

- (12) And he will lift up a standard [or: banner] for the nations, and will gather the banished ones of Israel, and he will assemble the scattered of Judah from the four corners [lit. “wings”] of the earth.
- (13) And the jealousy of Ephraim will depart, and those causing distress in [or: harassing] Judah will be cut off. Ephraim will not envy [or: be jealous of] Judah, and Judah will not cause distress in [or: harass] Ephraim.
- (14) And they will swoop down on the slopes of [lit. “fly on the shoulders of”] [the] Philistines westward. Together they will plunder the sons of the east – Edom and Moab sending forth their hand [that is: being obedient], and the sons of Ammon their subjects.
- (15) And YHVH will devote to destruction [or: will utterly destroy] the tongue of the Sea of Egypt, and will wave his hand over the river with his scorching⁸⁴ wind [or: spirit]. And he will strike it into [or: at the] seven wadis, and will cause [men] to tread [it] with sandals.
- (16) And there will be a highway from Assyria for the remnant of his people who will be left, as it was for Israel in the day of its coming up out of the land of Egypt.

Chapter 12

- (1) And thou wilt say in that day, “I will give thanks to thee, [O] YHVH, for [though] thou wast angry with me, thine anger is [now been] turned away, and thou comfortest me.
- (2) Behold, God is my salvation. I will trust, and will not be afraid. For Yah, YHVH, is my strength and song, and he has become my salvation [lit. “to me for salvation”].
- (3) And ye shall with joy draw waters from the springs of salvation.
- (4) And ye shall say in that day, ‘Give [ye] thanks to YHVH. Call on [or: in] his name. Make known his deeds among the peoples. Make remembrance that his name be exalted [or: set on high].’
- (5) Sing [ye] praise [unto] YHVH [or: praise YHVH in song], for he has done majestic things. This is known in all the earth [or: land].
- (6) Cry [thee] aloud, and shout for joy, [O] inhabitant of Zion, for great in thy midst is the Holy One of Israel.”

⁸⁴ Heb. עִיֵּץ Meaning uncertain. I’ve followed the NAS here.

APPENDIX C: Old Testament Usage of the Word **עַלְמָה** ('almah)

1. Genesis 24:43

Described in verse 16 as **הַנַּעֲרָה** (the girl) and **בְּתוּלָה** (a virgin), Rebecca is further described by Abraham's servant in verse 43 as **הָעַלְמָה**. Translated as "the maiden" (NAS).

2. Exodus 2:8

When Miriam, the sister of Moses, is directed by Pharaoh's daughter to summon a nurse from among the Hebrew women, she is described as **הַנַּעֲרָה**. Translated as "the girl" (NAS)

3. Isaiah 7:14

Isaiah prophesies that **הָעַלְמָה** will conceive, and will give birth to a son, and will call his name Immanuel. Translated as "the virgin" (NAS).

4. Psalm 68:25

(24) They have seen thy goings, [O] God, the goings of my God, my king, into the sanctuary.

(25) Singers have gone on before, the players of stringed instruments behind [them] amidst **עַלְמוֹת** playing timbrels.

(26) Bless [ye] God in the assemblies, [even] YHVH, from the fountain of Israel. (JDG)⁸⁵

The **עַלְמוֹת** of verse 25 is translated as "maidens" (NAS).

5. Proverbs 30:19

(20) There are three [things which] are surpassingly wonderful [or: too difficult] for me; Four [which] I have not understood:

(21) The way of the eagle in the heavens; the way of a serpent on a rock; the way of a ship in the middle [lit. "the heart"] of the sea; and the way of a man **בְּעַלְמָה**.

Translated as "with a maid" (NAS); "in youth" (Young's Literal).

6. Song of Solomon 1:3

For [their] fragrance thy oils are pleasing. [Like] purified oils [lit. "oil emptied out"] [is] thy name. Therefore have **עַלְמוֹת** loved thee. (JDG)

Translated as "maidens" (NAS).

7. Song of Solomon 6:8

There are sixty queens, and eighty concubines, and **עַלְמוֹת** without number. (JDG)

Translated as "maidens" (NAS).

⁸⁵ (JDG) will indicate my own translation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ackroyd, Peter R.. "The Book of Isaiah." *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible*. Ed. Charles M. Laymon. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971.
- Calvin, John. *Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah*. Trans. William Pringle. Albany: Books for the Ages (AGES Software Version 1.0), 1999.
- _____. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Volume 1. Ed. John T. McNeill. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960) 2.6.3.
- Cohen, Abraham. *Everyman's Talmud*. New York: Schocken Books, 1975.
- Dillard, Raymond B., and Longman III, Tremper. *An Introduction to the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994.
- Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry's Commentary: Isaiah to Malachi*. Hendrickson Publishers, 1991.
- Hertz, J.H., ed.. *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs: Hebrew Text, English Translation, and Commentary*. London: Soncino Press, 1976.
- Hindson, Edward E.. *Isaiah's Immanuel*. Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979.
- Delitzsch, F.. *Commentary on the Old Testament: Isaiah*. Volume 7. Trans. James Martin. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982.
- Payne, David F.. "Isaiah." *The International Bible Commentary*. Ed. F.F. Bruce. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986.
- Reymond, Robert L.. *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998.
- Song, Grace. "Hezekiah or Jesus: Who is the Child of Isaiah 9:6-7?" *Third Millennium Online*. Volume 1, Number 2 (March 8-14, 1999) 8; [article on-line]; available from <http://www.thirdmill.org>; Internet.
- VanGemeren, Willem A.. *Interpreting the Prophetic Word*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990.
- _____. "Isaiah." *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*. Ed. Walter A. Elwell. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989.
- Webb, Barry. *The Message of Isaiah*. BST. Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996.
- Young, E.J.. *The Book of Isaiah*. NIC. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965.