
ISAIAH 5

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David A. LeFevre

JUDAH'S SINS (5)

Chapter 5 stands alone and concludes the introductory section of the book. While chapter 1 lays out themes and key phrases that reappear many times, and chapters 2-4 contrast Jerusalem as she is and can be, chapter 5 brings the reader back to the harsh reality of Judah's present condition—sin and rebellion. It starts with a parable that sounds pleasant at first, like a love story, but soon turns to reflect the wicked conditions of the day. Most of the rest of the chapter is a recitation of six conditions among the people that are contrary to God's will, which will lead to the destruction promised in the parable. It concludes with the Lord gathering a foreign army to destroy the wicked people. It leaves us with the question: If chapters 2-4 laid out the possibility of Jerusalem (us) being exalted by God's grace, what do we do when destruction comes to the Lord's people, in spite of great promises? That question prepares us for Isaiah's call in chapter 6.

THE SONG OF THE VINEYARD (5:1-7)

Chapter 5 opens with an entrapment parable, so-called because the direct answer to the question is obvious and inescapable to the listeners (in this case, in verse 4) but the answer turns out to condemn them. The other famous entrapment parable in the Old Testament is Nathan condemning David's sin with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12:1-13). Jesus used entrapment parables in his teaching as well, such as the Two Sons (Matthew 21:28-32) and the Wicked Husbandmen (Matthew 21:33-45, both about a vineyard). Isaiah 5 is possibly influential in Zenos' much-expanded parable of the olive tree in Jacob 5, as well as other scriptural references (see Isaiah 27:2-6; Jeremiah 2:21; 12: 10-11; Ezekiel 15:1-8; Romans 11:17-24; and D&C 101:43-62). The notion of Israel being a vineyard was introduced in Isaiah 3:14.

The timing of the delivery of this chapter may well have been in the fall during the harvest season when the images of grapes and vineyards would be on many minds. Some believe that it may have been during the fall

celebration of *Sukkot* or Feast of Tabernacles where the harvest season is the focus (Motyer, 68), but I would argue that from other chapters in the Old Testament, it would appear that this feast was not being celebrated at this time (the temple was in great disrepair and Passover was not celebrated, so it's likely the others were not either; see 2 Chronicles 29-30).

1 And then let me sing to my beloved a song of my beloved about his vineyard.

My beloved had a vineyard in a very fertile hill;

2 and he dug it up, and cleared it of stones, and planted it with the choicest vine,

and built a watchtower in it, and he even hewed out a winepress in it;

then he expected it to yield grapes, but it yielded sour grapes.

3 And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, And men of Judah,

judge, between me and my vineyard.

4 What more could have been done to my vineyard That I have not done in it?

Wherefore, when I expected it to bring forth grapes, it brought forth sour grapes?

5 And now let me tell you what I will do to my vineyard:

I will remove its hedge, and it will burn;

I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled down;

6 and I will make it wasteland; it will not be pruned, nor hoed;

but there will come up briars and thorns;
I will command the clouds not to rain on it.

7 For the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of
Israel,
and the men of Judah his delightful plant;

and he expected justice,
but behold bloodshed;
for righteousness,
but behold a cry of distress.

5:1 **Now I will sing.** Perhaps Isaiah actually stood in a group of people and sang this song to them! The song starts out with gentle sounds and kind words, drawing the listener in.

5:1 **to my beloved a song of my beloved.** In verses 1-2, Isaiah starts the song singing about the beloved friend, then sings as (in the place of) the beloved friend in verses 3-4, then reveals who the friend and the vineyard are in verses 5-7. It might seem odd to refer to the Lord as “my beloved”; we tend to expect to hear that title applied to the Son by the Father. But it reflects Isaiah’s great love for Yahweh, a God he knew in all his aspects—judgment and mercy, condemnation and concern, powerful and humble.

5:1 **a very fruitful hill.** Or, “on a fertile hillside” (NIV and NASB). It is a prime location with excellent land, good drainage, and good sunshine.

5:2 **he fenced it.** Isaiah lists five things his friend did for the vineyard to give it every chance of success. First, he built a strong fence around it to keep out wild animals and marauders.

5:2 **gathered out the stones.** Second, he got rid of all the stones so the ground was rich and smooth. Judah’s hills are typically quite full of large rocks, so this is not a trivial amount of work. Often, the rocks would be used to build walls and terraces on the slopes of the hills.

5:2 **planted it with the choicest vine.** Third, he planted it with “the choicest vine.” The Hebrew is *śorēq*, a grape plant of the highest quality, as opposed to the common grape, *gepen* (both are found in Genesis 49:11 in the blessing of Judah; the first “vine” is *gepen* and the second is *śorēq*, “the choice vine”).

5:2 **built a tower.** Fourth, he built a protective tower in the middle of the vineyard to watch for enemies. This

shows dedication and care, for such a construction is costly, and manning it with a watch even more so.

5:2 **made a winepress.** Finally, he prepared for the harvest by making his own winepress. This was a significant investment and something typically done only by the very wealthy or an entire community for common use.

5:2 **he looked.** Or, “he waited” (NLT); the term is to “wait expectantly, hope” (Oswalt, 1:153). The time between starting a vineyard and getting the first grape harvest would be at least two years, and possibly more. The owner of the vineyard invested much time, effort, and money to make it successful, and waited patiently and with great anticipation for the first grapes to ripen.

5:2 **wild grapes.** In spite of all his great effort, Isaiah’s friend’s vineyard did not have a good harvest but instead gave him bad fruit. The word translated “wild grapes” literally means ‘stinking fruit.’ Compare Jeremiah 2:21.

5:3 **judge, I pray you.** Shifting to the perspective of the vineyard owner, Isaiah invites his listeners to determine the justified outcome of such a situation. Like Isaiah 1, the setting is courtroom-like, with the vineyard owner bringing the vineyard itself to trial and all of Jerusalem and Judah being the witnesses. This is the first hint that this is more than an agricultural story—vineyards are not taken to trial.

5:4 **What could have been done more.** There is no answer except that the vineyard master has done every possible thing to achieve a good harvest. Isaiah’s audience would be baffled at the outcome of rotten grapes, unable to see what else could have been done. Compare Jacob 5:41.

5:5 **I will tell you what I will do.** There is intensity in the Hebrew: ‘Now, I will make known my coming actions.’

5:5 **take away the hedge/break down the wall.** The judgment against the vineyard could be to rip out the plants and start over, or sell the vineyard and begin anew in another location. Instead, the surprising decision is to tear down the defenses so carefully built and let animals and people have free reign to eat and tread it down.

5:6 **I will lay it waste.** Or, “I will make it a wasteland” (NIV). Letting other do whatever they want in the vineyard turns it into a desolate place.

5:6 **briars and thorns.** Without any care, the weeds will proliferate and take over the former fertile hill.

5:6 ***I will also command the clouds.*** This is the first hint that the owner of the vineyard is not a mortal friend of Isaiah, but the Lord himself, who is the only one who can control the weather! On the other hand, some who had a bad harvest may have cursed their own vineyards, asking for a similar fate, so it may reflect the arrogance of the people themselves. Either way, the ancients knew that rain came when the windows of heaven were opened (Genesis 7:11; 8:2; and Malachi 3:10), tying it directly to an act of God.

5:7 ***the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel.*** The meaning of the parable is fully revealed and the players defined. Listeners have already condemned the vineyard and justified the owner's actions, which are fully within his rights under the circumstances. Now the Lord declares that Judah, being the rotten fruit of sinful behavior, will be made desolate.

5:7 ***judgment/oppression/righteousness/cry.*** The prophet uses wonderful Hebrew alliteration here (or more precisely, paronomasia) to show how the Lord has determined that Judah is rotten fruit. The desirable fruit of "judgment" (or, justice; *mišēpāt*) is contrasted with the bitterness of "oppression" (or, bloodshed, *mišēpāh*); "righteousness" (*šēdāqāh*) is compared to "cry" (or distress, *šē'āqāh*).

THE BITTER CROP: SINS AND WOES (5:8-25)

These verses condemn specific sins of the people of Judah, partitioning them with six "woes" that intimate destruction. Each woe describes the problem and the outcome or consequence of that sin. There are thus six pronouncements against Judah and Jerusalem relating to their sins (the sour grapes of the parable), which are greed (vv. 8-10), debauchery (vv. 11-12), arrogance (vv. 18-19), perversion (vv. 20-21), and injustice (vv. 22-23) (the list from Oswalt, 1:157).

Motyer sees helpful structure in the message. "The first two 'woes' (8-12), dealing with abuse of the material benefits of life, are followed by two 'therefores' (13-17); the final four 'woes' (18-23), dealing with failure in the moral and spiritual obligations of life, are likewise followed by two 'therefores' (24-30). The 'therefores' match each other. In each case the shorter of them (13, 24) explain how the judgment is suited to the foregoing sin, and the longer (14-17; 25-30) describe an act of God in total judgment" (Motyer, 70).

8 Woe unto them that join house to house,
that connect field to field,

till there **can** be no place,
that you are made to dwell alone in the land.

9 In my ears the Lord of Hosts says,

Surely many houses will be desolate,
and spacious and fair **cities** without occupants.

10 Yea, ten acres of vineyard will yield on bath,
and the seed of the homer will yield and ephah.

11 Woe unto them that rise early in the morning,
that they may pursue strong drink;
that tarry late into the night,
and wine inflame them!

12 And at their banquets they have
harps and lyres,
tambourines and flutes,
and wine,

but they regard not the deeds of the Lord,
neither do they see the work of his hands.

13 Therefore my people are exiled,
Because they lack knowledge.
and their honored men are dying of hunger,
and their masses are parched with thirst.

14 Therefore Sheol has enlarge her appetite,
and opened her mouth without measure;

and into it will descend the nobles, and masses,
and their brawlers and revelers.

15 And mankind will be brought down,
and man will be humbled,
and the eyes of the lofty will be humbled.

16 But the Lord of Hosts is exalted in judgments,
and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness.

17 Then will the lambs feed in their pasture,
and the fatlings and goats will feed among the ruins.

18 Woe unto them that pull iniquity with cords of
falsehood,
and sin with a cart rope;

19 that say, Let him hurry, let him make haste,
that we may see it;

and let the plan of the Holy One of Israel draw near and
come,
that we may know it!

20 Woe unto them that call evil good,
and good evil;

that put darkness for light,
and light for darkness;

that put bitter for sweet,
and sweet for bitter!

21 Woe unto **the** wise in their own eyes,
and clever in their own sight!

22 Woe unto **the** mighty to drink wine,
and men of strength to mingle strong drink;

23 who acquit the guilty for a bribe,
and remove from the righteous his righteousness.

24 Therefore, as the tongue of the fire devours stubble,
and the flame consumes the dry grass,

their root will be as rottenness,
and their blossoms will go up as dust;

because they have rejected the law of the Lord of
Hosts,
and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

25 Therefore, the anger of the Lord is kindled against
his people,
and he has stretched for his hand against them,

and has smitten them;
and the mountains did tremble,
and their corpses are like refuse in the streets,

For all this his anger is not turned away,
but his hand is stretched out still.

5:8 **Woe**. In Isaiah 1:4, 24, we see the word “Ah” in the KJV, but the Hebrew is the same as that translated “Woe” in this chapter. It represents a call to pay attention because divine judgment is following, coupled with a lament for the need to say it. “Woe” appears six times in this chapter (verses 8, 11, 18, 20, 21, and 22).

5:8 **join house to house/lay field to field**. As the footnote for this verse in the LDS scriptures explains, this means that “wealthy landowners absorb the small farms of the poor.” “Absorb” might be too kind; what they’re

doing is forcing people out of their homes and farms, using their wealth as leverage; “The eviction of peasants and the growth of massive estates was a major problem in the 8th century” (JPS, 793; compare Amos 2:6-8 where the rich use practices which are deemed legal but are called out as immoral by that prophet). At the very least, they were turning the poor into serfs on their own land. Land ownership in the Law of Moses was supposed to stay in the family to protect against this very activity—the consolidation of land into a few hands (Leviticus 25:8, 23; Numbers 27:1-11, 35; Deuteronomy 27:17). Thus this accusation is not just about social justice but about obedience to God’s law to his people; compare Micah 2:1-2.

5:9 **many houses shall be desolate**. In a typical gospel paradox, their unrighteous behavior will not result in them owning large amounts of property but instead, their houses will be empty. Because “house” in Hebrew (*baît*) can refer not only to a physical structure but to a family, such as “the house of Israel,” this has a double meaning that they will have no posterity.

5:10 **ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath**. An “acre” (literally “yoke” in Hebrew) is the amount of land a pair of oxen can plow in one day, a fairly large area; 10 “yokes” is about 5 acres today (Ludlow, 117). A “bath” is a liquid measure equal to the dry measure called an “ephah,” which was probably between about 5 and 10 gallons (Walton, 4:28). In other words, a huge vineyard gave very little wine.

5:10 **the seed of an homer shall yield an ephah**. A “homer” (literally, “donkey load”) is ten ephahs, or about 50 to 100 gallons (Walton, 4:28). In other words, they harvested just 1/10 of what they sowed. These two phrases in verse 10 demonstrate the great unproductiveness of their efforts on the land that they took from the poor.

5:11 **Woe unto them that rise up early**. The second woe is about “parties instead of piety” (JPS, 794). These people get up early and spend the whole day drinking and celebrating. This is likely an outgrowth of their immense wealth (vv. 8-10) and therefore they have no need to work.

5:12 **harp/viol/tabret/pipe**. The footnotes (LDS Bible) give some help, noting that a viol is a lyre and a tabret a drum. A harp was probably a 10-stringed, larger instrument, while the lyre had fewer strings and was smaller. A tabret could also be a tambourine. The pipe was probably a pair of hollow tubes played like a flute from a single mouthpiece (Walton, 4:28).

5:13 **my people are gone into captivity.** Or, “Thus my people are exiled” (AT). The penalty for excessive drinking and celebration is captivity or exile from the land they so actively pursued (but not just because they drank; see the note following). The Assyrians were the main group taking people away into captivity in Isaiah’s day. One estimate is that they relocated more than 1.2 million people (Walton, 4:28). The verb “gone into captivity” is in the perfect tense, meaning it’s already an accomplished fact for Isaiah (Oswalt, 1:160).

5:13 **they have no knowledge.** Because the people spend all their time in entertainment, they ignore the Lord (v. 12). As a result, they end up in “captivity,” lacking the essential knowledge about God and his plan for them. “What they did not have was the experiential relationship with God that gave life to his commandments and meaning to what he was doing in the world” (Oswalt, 1:160).

5:13 **famished/dried up with thirst.** Like those that accumulate land that in the end is useless, the ironic outcome of all their inappropriate feasting and drinking is that they are starving and parched with thirst. Compare with Amos 8:11-1 where the famine and thirst represent not being able to hear the word of the Lord.

5:14 **hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure.** “Hell” is *še’ôl*, the land of the dead which was pictured under the earth in the ancient Near East. In many cultures, it was portrayed as an animal, including in Egypt where the animal was called “Eater of the Dead” (Walton, 4:29). To take in all the great people and their wealth and power, the underworld opens wide and swallows them all down. Those who open their mouths to much drinking (v. 11) now are consumed by the great beast of death.

5:14 **their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp.** The KJV uses the plural pronoun to represent the people being swallowed by hell. However, the Hebrew is a feminine singular in all of these terms, likely pointing directly to Jerusalem (Motyer, 72).

5:15 **the mean man/the mighty man.** Harkening back to 2:9, the prophet declares that all types of men will receive this condemnation. The words used are the same as in 2:9, *’ādām* and *’iṣ*, and together represent totality more than different levels of society, as the KJV might lead us to believe.

5:16 **judgment/righteousness.** Two of Isaiah’s favorite words are used to describe Yahweh himself, to show that what makes him a God worth worshipping is not his

power, though he has that, but his goodness. He is exalted (lifted up) in justice and manifest as holy through his righteousness (NASB: “the holy God will show Himself holy in righteousness”).

5:17 **Then shall the lambs feed.** Some believe that verses 14-16 were copied here mistakenly, for two reasons. First, there is no “woe,” even though a new topic is introduced (and seven woes would make the perfect number; though see Oswalt, 1:158 and Motyer, 73, who both argue the “therefore” of v. 14 is part of the structure). Second, v. 17 seems to pick up the thought of v. 13 and carry it forward but don’t match up with the concepts in vv. 14-16. If the mis-copy happened, it must have happened early, because these verses are in the same order in the Book of Mormon (about 100 years after Isaiah) as in the KJV and MT. Because the cadence of vv. 14-16 aligns with the other ‘therefore’ section in v. 24, I think it more likely the text is original.

5:17 **shall strangers eat.** The Hebrew word for “strangers” is *grym*, while “goats” is *gdym*. A scribe somewhere miscopied the ך (“d” in goats) with a ך (“r”), making it strangers (Parry, *Harmonizing*, 269, note 57; also Parry, *Understanding*, 55, note 24). The difference is the small hook on the top of the ך, called a tittle. “Goats” is clearly correct, paralleling the lambs in the first part of the verse. The fundamental meaning is that the great houses and lands previously acquired by the wicked and filled with their possessions and parties will end up with animals quietly eating in them instead.

5:18 **with a cart rope.** The third woe pertains to those who go about parading their false lives, burdened down with iniquity as it they were pulling a cart. Back in 1:4, Judah was bearing a heavy load of sin; here is a similar image but they pull their sins behind them either dragging them (“draw iniquity with cords of vanity”; NLT: “drag their sins behind them”) or loaded in a cart too heavy for them to easily move. Note that one interpretation of the words used here leads to a different translation that might make more sense in terms of the poetry: “They draw iniquity with a ewe-rope, sin with a calf-halter” (Oswalt, 1:163). Whatever the exact words, the concept of sin being a burden is clear and the basis of the Lord’s invitation in Matthew 11:28 to come to him and have our heavy loads lightened.

5:19 **Let him make speed/that we may know it.** In the third woe, the people who know nothing about God challenge him to do what he has said, and to do it *now*! They will not believe until they see him in action (and their sarcasm shows that they do not believe it will ever

happen). The Lord issues a similar challenge to the people's false gods in 41:21-24.

5:19 **the Holy One of Israel**. In their response, the people use the same name for the Lord as Isaiah but surely in a cynical and mocking way, using what is sacred to Isaiah with derision and disdain.

5:20 **call evil good, and good evil**. The fourth woe relates to those who declare moral relativity, or even reverse morality so that what should be evil is thought of as good, and vice versa; compare Micah 3:1-2 and Moroni 7:14.

5:21 **wise in their own eyes**. The fifth woe focuses on those who rely on the wisdom of man, trusting not in God's wisdom. They believe that they know more than God and others around them. Their attitude is reflected in v. 19.

5:22 **mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink**. The final woe is directed at those who should be strong but are weak because of drunkenness. Both terms used (KJV: "mighty" and "men of strength"; NASB: "heroes" and "valiant men"; NIV: "heroes" and "champions") refer to those who fight valiantly in war. In this case, they are only heroic at drinking—not much of an honor.

5:23 **justify the wicked for reward**. Or, "acquit the guilty for a bribe" (NIV; RSV; NJB). More than just drinking, this group rewards the wicked and negates any righteous acts done by a good person.

5:24 **Therefore**. The woes are over; the judgment upon the wicked just described now comes in vv. 24-25, each verse starting with a "Therefore" to tie the judgment to the descriptions of the sins above.

5:24 **fire/flame/root/blossom**. With marvelous poetry and metaphor, Isaiah describes how fire destroys the stubble and chaff left after the harvest, causing roots to rot and blossoms to blow away in the wind with no plant left to hold them together. So Israel will be 'harvested' in judgment and the field thoroughly destroyed so no trace of their civilization is left.

5:24 **the law of the Lord/the word of the Holy One**. The parallel phrases equate these two, but the differences are also important. The "law" is *tôrāh*, the Law of Moses given to the people by the Lord. The "word" is similar but represents the Lord's words spoken through scripture, prophets, and the Spirit. One is fixed and unchanging, the other is current and living ("*Word* (*ʿimrāh*, 'saying') is the

actual 'speech' of God himself," Motyer, 73). Both are being "cast away" and "despised" by this people.

5:25 **the hills did tremble**. It's possible that Isaiah had a specific event in mind—the great earthquake in the time of Uzziah (Amos 1:1; Zechariah 14:5), something he and many of his listeners would have personally experienced.

5:25 **their carcasses were torn in the midst of the streets**. Or, "their corpses were as refuse in the midst of the streets" (NAB). Not being buried was a scandal and a curse to the dead (see Revelation 11:7-10, where the bodies of the two prophets lie in the streets for three days while their enemies celebrate their triumph). When the Lord smites the people and doesn't allow their bodies to be buried, it emphasizes their guilt and wickedness.

5:25 **his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still**. This is the first instance of a phrase repeated several times in Isaiah (see 9:12, 17, 21; 10:4; 14:26-27; 23:11; 31:3). In all of these cases, the Lord's hand is stretched out in judgment (as evidenced by the preceding phrase, "his anger is not turned away"). Starting in 11:11 (especially chapters 40 through 66), the Lord's hand reaches out instead in mercy and support to his people.

AN ENSIGN TO THE NATIONS: THE GATHERING OF ISRAEL (5:26-30)

First we see what Isaiah does in the distance, then the imagery moves closer and gains in intensity, then we begin to hear and experience it up close. It is the Lord's great power that is making it happen, because he lifts up the banner to which the people rally, and they come swiftly in his power and protection. This answers the mockers in v. 19—Yahweh's plan is happening miraculously fast. "If verse 25 teaches how to understand our environment, these verses teach how to understand history" (Motyer, 73).

Some see these verses as the coming of the destroying army that removes the wicked people—the sour grapes and the unfruitful vineyard—discussed in the rest of the chapter. The typical LDS view (Parry, 59-61; Ludlow 122-124) is to see these as a representation of the call to gather scattered Israel. The text has elements that support both ideas, and Isaiah as a whole certainly teaches them both: sometimes the Lord clearly raises the ensign to call armies to battle (13:2; 18:3; 31:9) and other times to call Israel to gather (11:10, 12; 49:22; 62:10). I believe that the call to the Gentile military

(probably Assyria) more accurately reflects the overall flow of this text but that the use of the same phrase, “ensign to the nations,” in 11:12 (and other passages) does indeed reflect a call to gather to the standard of gospel truth.

26 And he will lift up an ensign to the nations far away,
and will whistle unto them from the end of the earth;

and, behold, they will come speedily and swiftly;

27 none will be weary nor stumble among them;
none will slumber nor sleep;

neither will the belts of their waists come undone,
nor will the thongs of their sandals be broken;

28 whose arrows **will be** sharp,
and all their bows bent,

and their horses’ hoofs are like flint,
and their wheels like a whirlwind;

29 their roaring like a lion,
they will roar like young lions;

yea, they will growl, and seize the prey, and will carry
it off,
and none will rescue it.

30 And in that day they will roar against them
like the roaring of the sea;

and if **they** look unto the land, behold, darkness and
sorrow,
and the light darkened by the clouds.

5:26 **an ensign**. We get the name of our Church magazine for adults from this verse (and others, including Isaiah 11:10, 12; 18:3; 30:17; 31:9, and Zechariah 9:16). An ensign is a flag used in a military exercise to guide troops into battle. It goes well with the image in this chapter of the Lord of Hosts (vv. 7, 9, 16, and 24).

5:26 **to the nations**. The Hebrew noun rendered “nations” in the KJV is *gôyim*, a plural noun. However, the subsequent pronouns and other words are singular, not plural, making some commentators believe that, like Jeremiah 5:15, it refers to a single nation—in this case, probably Assyria (Oswalt, 1:167). ‘I will whistle to that nation from afar’ (AT).

5:26 **hiss**. Or, “he whistles” (NIV). The Lord speaks and is obeyed (Genesis 1); he also whistles and nature and men respond. Compare 7:18. Though not explicit here, in other references, the whistle is to call bees kept for their honey (e.g., 7:18; also Zechariah 10:8).

5:26 **they shall come with speed swiftly**. The army that the Lord calls with his ensign and whistle comes quickly, like bees flying across a field. This phrase begins a series of ten succinct expressions that convey by their cadence and rhythm the very concept they are describing—the swift march of an army to its goal.

5:27 **None shall be weary/none shall slumber**. The army the Lord calls comes swiftly and miraculously; they don’t suffer from fatigue, they don’t trip or fall, and they have no need for sleep. Their march to Judah is relentless and clearly divinely favored because of this miraculous conditions.

5:27 **neither shall the girdle of their loins loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken**. This represents the people’s readiness for action, whether war or work or travel, because their clothing is in good repair.

5:28 **horses’ hoofs shall be counted like flint**. Horses did not wear shoes in Isaiah’s day. The blessing here is that the horses develop very hard hoofs and thus can endure difficult terrain and conditions (Walton, 4:30).

5:28 **their wheels like a whirlwind**. The wheels of their chariots are turning so fast that they are like a tornado (Oswalt, 1:169).

5:29 **they shall roar like young lions**. Not cubs but younger lions in their prime (Motyer, 73). As a lion has great power over other animals, so the gathering hosts of Yahweh will have power and majesty. Both the lions here and the sea in v. 30 roar in response to the Yahweh’s commands.

5:30 **the roaring of the sea**. Perhaps as the people flee the army, they flee toward the sea. But the crashing of the waves there symbolically represents the same kind of a threat; there is no place to hide.

5:30 **look unto the land, behold darkness and sorrow**. Turning back from the sea, Judah looks for support from the land, but instead finds only darkness and distress.

5:30 **the light is darkened in the heavens**. So there is no mistake about the source of the great darkness, Isaiah notes that the darkness originates in the heavens themselves, where the Lord hangs the sun, moon, and stars.

REFERENCES

Bible translations:

| | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| AT – Author’s translation | NAB – New American Bible |
| JPS – Jewish Publication Society (also called Tanakh) | NASB – New American Standard Bible |
| JST – Joseph Smith Translation | NIV – New International Version |
| KJV – King James Version | NJB – New Jerusalem Bible |
| LXX – Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) | NLT – New Living Translation |
| MT – Masoretic Text (Hebrew) | RSV – Revised Standard Version |

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