

# EXPOSITION OF ISAIAH

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by

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Dec 2025

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### Canonical Context

All 66 inspired books of the Protestant canon relate to the progressively revealed Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of the Bible, but not in the same way. Each book either *carries* the metanarrative,<sup>1</sup> *contributes* to it but does not carry it,<sup>2</sup> or *contemplates* the metanarrative.<sup>3</sup> A book's placement into one of these three categories does not necessarily depend on genre, even though a correlation frequently exists. Rather, a book's categorization depends on its contents and its relationship to other books.<sup>4</sup>

In the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of Scripture, the following compose the major elements of the story:

Table 1: Elements of the Metanarrative of Scripture

Setting:	Heaven and earth	Gen 1–2
Hero:	God the Father	Gen 1–2
Hero's desire:	Image bearers to rule the earth	Gen 1:26–28
Problem:	Image bearers gave their rule to the serpent	Gen 3
Solution (the plot):	Promise seed will strike the serpent and restore rule to image bearers	Gen 3:15–Rev 19
Turning point:	The Cross	Gospels
Climax:	The Great Tribulation	Rev 6–19

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<sup>1</sup> The carrier category refers to biblical books that carry the primary plotline of the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of the Bible. Many books of historical narrative and certain parts of prophetic books fall into this category because they carry the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative. Such books describe the outworking of the promise in Genesis 3:15–16.

<sup>2</sup> The contributor category refers to biblical books that contribute to, but do not carry, the plot of the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of the Bible. Most prophetic books and certain parts of the NT epistles fall into this category because while they do not carry the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative, they contribute important (often prophetic) information about that metanarrative. Additionally, certain historical narratives run in parallel to one another (e.g., Kings and Chronicles, the four Gospels). In these cases, 1–2 Kings function as the carrier and 1–2 Chronicles as the contributor. Among the Gospels, Matthew functions as the carrier and the other three as contributors.

<sup>3</sup> The contemplator category refers to biblical books that neither carry nor contribute to the plot of the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative of the Bible. Rather, these books reflect upon (contemplate) the realities of that narrative. Books of wisdom, poetry, and most NT epistles fall into this category, because in light of the Genesis 3:15 promised seed having come, they address how the people of God should live until he returns to establish his kingdom.

<sup>4</sup> For this reason, certain biblical books fit into more than one of these three categories.

Resolution / denouement:	Image bearers again rule the earth	Rev 20–22
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As shown in Table 1, the Bible as a whole presents God as the hero of the story who desires his image bearers to rule the world on his behalf. This metanarrative begins in the book of Genesis and concludes in the book of Revelation. Genesis presents the setting,<sup>5</sup> the characters,<sup>6</sup> the plot problem,<sup>7</sup> and the beginning of the rising action. The problem identified in Genesis 3 did not change God’s desire for his image bearers to rule the world. The prophecy of Genesis 3:15–16 indicates a war between the serpent’s seed and the woman’s seed. This battle is the central conflict in the entire biblical narrative; a conflict not resolved until Revelation 20. In this prophecy, God promised the seed of the woman—a man—would defeat the serpent, restore humanity to the garden, and restore rule of the earth to God’s image bearers. The anticipation of this promised seed drives the plot of the biblical narrative. The entire plot of the metanarrative thus revolves around how Genesis 3:15–16 comes to fruition. This prophecy reaches the first phase of its fulfillment in Revelation 20 in the thousand-year kingdom of Christ on earth, and its final phase of fulfillment in Revelation 21–22 in the new heaven and earth.

Whereas Deuteronomy 16–18 delineates the roles of judges, kings, priests, and prophets, so-called “Deuteronomic history” plays out in Joshua–2 Kings as the judges, kings, priests, and prophets fail to produce covenant faithfulness in the “holy nation” of “royal priests.” Just as post-flood humanity had descended into rebellion at the tower of Babylon (Gen 11), the failure of these offices results in the chosen nation’s exile east into the new Babylon, echoing the exile east of the garden.<sup>8</sup> As the metanarrative progresses through the story’s carriers (Genesis–Kings in the OT), Yahweh elected the nation Israel to be his inheritance (Deut 32:9) and to function as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod 19:6). The Gentile nations, by contrast, Yahweh gave to the “sons of God” (Deut 32:8), a reference to the fallen angels. The Pentateuch therefore identified the Gentiles as serpent-seed nations—those who rule the earth with the serpent (Gen 4:7). The Mosaic Covenant (i.e., the Law, the Torah) governed the relationship between Yahweh and Israel. Accordingly, Israel’s obedience would bring covenant blessings, while infidelity would result in covenant curses (see Deut 28; also Lev 26). If the Pentateuch was aimed primarily at why the Israelites should enter the promised land and how to live in covenant fidelity and so enjoy blessing in the land, the rest of Deuteronomic history (Joshua–Kings) describes how the nation’s covenant infidelity resulted in banishment from the land and Babylonian exile. Moses had established four offices in Israel: judges, priests, kings, and prophets (Deut 16–18). Deuteronomic history (Joshua–Kings) successively revealed the failure of each office to establish a lasting righteousness in the nation, and how the nation’s covenant infidelity resulted in banishment from the land into Babylonian exile. The book of Judges described the failure of the judges (chs. 3–16) and the Levites (chs. 17–21) and set the stage for

<sup>5</sup> Heaven and earth, Genesis 1–2.

<sup>6</sup> God, the hero of the story; mankind, the object of God’s desire; and the antagonist, the serpent.

<sup>7</sup> Despite God’s desire for mankind to rule the earth on his behalf, the man and woman gave their rule over to the serpent (Gen 3).

<sup>8</sup> Gary E. Schnittjer, *Torah Story: An Apprenticeship on the Pentateuch*, second edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2023), 38.

the failure of the levitical high priest (1 Sam 1–7), the kings (1 Sam 9–2 Kgs 25), and the prophets (1 Kgs 17–2 Kgs 13).<sup>9</sup> The prophets Elijah and Elisha, and even the so-called “good” Judean kings who effected spiritual and cultic reformation (e.g., Asa, Joash, Hezekiah, and Josiah) ultimately failed to bring about lasting righteousness. During Manasseh’s reign, when Isaiah likely compiled the final form of his book, wickedness pervaded the land of Judah. Isaiah lambasted the failure of the leaders to bring about righteousness in the land required for the nation Israel to function as a servant of Yahweh, as per Yahweh’s intent. Instead, Isaiah explained that Yahweh’s Servant, Immanuel, the righteous Branch, the Redeemer, would suffer on behalf of the servant Israel so that the righteous remnant would be regathered in the restoration and able to function as Yahweh’s servants at that time. But transforming Jerusalem from its then-current state as a murderous harlot (1:21) into a glorious and holy city (ch. 66) would require a purifying judgment. Yahweh would use Gentile nations to discipline and judge Judah. This judgment included the desecration of Jerusalem, destruction of the temple, and the slaughter of much of the population of Judah. Yet just as the judgment was certain, so was the restoration. Isaiah therefore encouraged the faithful remnant to continue trusting God through the coming judgments because they would participate in the honored community in the kingdom age. For the unbelieving majority of Judah, including its wicked leaders, Isaiah wrote to encourage repentance from covenant violations and to trust in Yahweh, lest they experience the shame and condemnation of eternal judgment. The book of Isaiah, then, does not *carry* the plot of the Messiah-redeemer-rule metanarrative. Rather, it provides extensive prophetic details as well as reflections on the metanarrative in respect to Judah’s then-current situation in Isaiah’s day, up to the Babylonian sacking of Jerusalem, the exile, and restoration. For these reasons, the book of Jeremiah therefore functions as a *contributor* and a *contemplator* of the Messiah-redeemer-ruler metanarrative.

## Occasion

### Who?

The text identifies as “The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz” (1:1). Since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, however, the study of Isaiah has focused on the book’s alleged authorial disunity. Propositions of so-called Deutero-Isaiah, Trito-Isaiah and beyond (up to six “Isaiah” figures) dominate the field of Isaiah studies. The majority of scholars hold to multiple authors, and even some conservatives lean this way as well. Typically divided (at least initially) into chs. 1–39 and chs. 40–66, such scholars argue for different authors of (at least) these sections based on supposed differences in historical situatedness, alleged theological differences, and alleged differences in language and style. However, such arguments have valid responses and are by no means determinative in the authorship of Isaiah. Regarding historical situatedness, that “First Isaiah” focuses on Assyria as primary antagonist and “Second Isaiah,” Babylon, is no proof of authors writing in different time periods. The same goes for different situations regarding the Jerusalem temple (e.g., ch. 6 and Isaiah’s commission in the temple as compared to chs. 63–64, where the temple is destroyed). For those affirming the inspiration of Scripture and the reality of

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<sup>9</sup> David Klingler, “Validity in the Identification and Interpretation of a Literary Allusion in the Hebrew Bible” (PhD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 2010), 210.

predictive prophecy, writings concerning the future prominence—and destruction—of Babylon pose no difficulty. Regarding the alleged theological differences, it is said that chs. 1–39 emphasize Yahweh’s majesty, while chs. 40–66 focus on the universality of his rule. However, this argument is unpersuasive because it is no problem for one author to focus on complementary—not contradictory—elements of theology for their literary or rhetorical purposes in their writing. Regarding supposed differences in language and style, early proponents of numerous authors overstated their case in this area. More recent studies have shown, to the contrary, many similarities of language and style between the “two halves” of Isaiah. Yet even if not, differences in language and style do not necessitate multiple authors. A skilled author (as clearly Isaiah was) could easily change their style depending on their literary purposes.<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, multiple arguments favor the single authorship of Isaiah. First, the text itself gives no indication of other authors, editors, or compilers. There is nothing in the text which necessitates non-Isaianic authorship. In all the latter prophets, the opening verse identifies the author of the entire work. Isaiah follows this pattern as well. Second, the New Testament authors affirmed Isaianic authorship. Whether John, who quoted from Isaiah 6 and Isaiah 53 and attributed both to Isaiah (John 12:38–41), the Ethiopian eunuch reading from Isaiah 53 (Acts 8:28), or others, no attribution is given to anyone aside from Isaiah. Seven NT references from chs. 1–39 and five from chs. 40–66 are all attributed to Isaiah.<sup>11</sup> Third, historical Jewish and Christian tradition held to Isaianic authorship of the entire work until the advent of German critical scholarship in the late eighteenth century.

Fourth, the division of Isaiah at ch. 40 actually follows a common rhetorical approach used by the prophets. For example, Ezekiel’s prophecies concerning the destruction of Jerusalem (Ezek 1–32) are proven historically in Ezekiel 33, thus lending credibility to his status as a true prophet of Yahweh (rhetorically, this builds his authorial and prophetic *ethos*). Based on his validated predictions in historically provable events, his audience should therefore trust his predictions concerning the restoration of Israel (Ezek 34–48). Jeremiah invoked the same rhetorical approach, though his text is not so neatly divided. Like Ezekiel, a significant rhetorical component of the book of Jeremiah involved validating his legitimacy as a prophet of Yahweh. The inclusion of a narrative about Jerusalem’s fall in 586 BC (Jer 39) showed that his previous prophecies concerning the Babylonian judgment on Judah had come to pass. This served as an ethical and logical argument for why Jeremiah’s audience should listen to him regarding his future prophecies of Israel’s restoration. In the book of Daniel, the narratives (chs. 1–6) also establish the *ethos* of Daniel. The narratives demonstrate his validity as a revealer of mysteries, an interpreter of dreams, one who can correctly foretell future events, and one who was blameless before the Mosaic Law (and willing to die to uphold it) and blameless before Gentile kings. The narratives thus establish his credibility and provide the rationale for why his audience should trust his visions concerning future events (Dan 7–12). Thus, like Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, Isaiah’s predictions relating to Yahweh’s protection of Jerusalem against Assyria came true as reported in the narrative of chs. 36–37. This verifiable historical fact (from the audience’s

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<sup>10</sup> For a full discussion of authorship issues, see Tremper Longman III and Raymond B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 303–11.

<sup>11</sup> Longman III and Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 307.

perspective) provided rationale for why they should listen to Isaiah's prophecies of the future regarding Babylon, Cyrus, and Israel's ultimate restoration (chs. 40–66).

Isaiah's name יְהִיּוֹשֵׁעַ means "Yahweh saves" or "Yahweh is salvation." Isaiah was married and had at least two sons (7:3; 8:3). Perhaps in line with Hebrews 11:37, the pseudepigraphal work *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* recorded how Manasseh executed Isaiah by having him sawn in two. While we are unable to validate the historicity of this claim, Isaiah did live at least until Sennacherib's death (37:37–38) ca. 681, placing him solidly into the reign of Manasseh (ca. 687–642 BC).

### When?

The text indicates that Isaiah ministered during the reigns of Uzziah (ca. 791–740 BC), Jotham (ca. 740–732 BC), Ahaz (ca. 732–716 BC), and Hezekiah (ca. 716–687 BC). Yahweh's commissioning of Isaiah in the Jerusalem temple occurred in the year Uzziah died (ca. 640 BC) (6:1) indicates that he probably did not minister for very long during Uzziah's reign. We can thus safely place his early ministry at / near the end of Uzziah's life. Isaiah was likely quite young at that point. At the other end, assuming that Isaiah wrote the entire composition, the inclusion of Sennacherib's death (37:37–38) ca. 681 BC means Isaiah lived into the reign of Manasseh (ca. 687–642 BC) as well. Thus, Isaiah had a lengthy ministry spanning at least six decades from the 730's BC to the 680's BC. We can only guess how far on either side of that range he might have ministered. Again assuming Isaianic authorship (see section above), Isaiah probably completed his book in the 680's BC or perhaps the 670's BC during Manasseh's reign. In any case, the covenant violations for which Isaiah condemned Judah were only characteristic of Ahaz (ca. 732–716 BC) and Manasseh (ca. 687–642 BC). Bracketing Ahaz were the righteous kings Uzziah, Jotham and Hezekiah (2 Kgs 15, 18). While Ahaz's reign could conceivably constitute the setting of Isaiah, the prominence given to Hezekiah may suggest that the final composition of—and indeed, the occasion for—Isaiah *followed* Hezekiah's lifetime during the reign of Manasseh, rather than preceding it during the time of Ahaz. Furthermore, the narrative told in 2 Kings 21 indicates that Yahweh's plan to destroy and exile Jerusalem arose on account of Manasseh's acts of evil. As the exile and restoration are major themes in Isaiah, an assumed setting during Manasseh's reign most naturally fits the message of Isaiah.

### To Whom?

Isaiah apparently wrote the final form of the book during Manasseh's reign (see 37:37–38, and the section above on "When?"). Even though Manasseh eventually repented near the end of his life, his reign was characterized by evil and the promotion of all manner of abominable practices in Judah (2 Kgs 21:1–18; 2 Chron 33:1–19). Isaiah repeatedly called out the evil leaders of Judah and urged their repentance, for example: "Hear the word of Yahweh, you rulers of Sodom" (1:10) ... "Your princes are rebels" (1:23) ... "Wash! Make yourselves pure! ... Cease to do evil!" (1:16) ... "Seek justice!" (1:17), etc. It was to these rebellious leaders and their followers that Isaiah urged to repent and so join the faithful remnant of Judah. Isaiah further warned the unrighteous of their coming condemnation should fail to repent (e.g., 65:1–7, 11–12; 66:1–6, 15–16, 24).

Yet Isaiah also addressed the believing remnant. For example, he offered them encouragement, "Tell the righteous that it will go well with them, for they will eat the fruit of their deeds" (3:10), relief, "Comfort; comfort my people" (40:1), and eschatological hope for

their participation in the Jerusalem restored by Yahweh's Servant (e.g., chs. 60–62; 65:8–10, 17–25; 66:7–14). The remnant, therefore, had to endure patiently through the distressing times of purification which would include judgment from foreign nations and exile, while waiting for Immanuel to come, take the place of the wicked leaders of the nation, and transform Jerusalem from a murderous prostitute (1:21) into a glorious and righteous city (ch. 66).

Thus, Isaiah wrote to a Judean audience during Manasseh's time, and he explicitly included two groups within that audience: the unbelieving majority and the faithful remnant.

### Where?

The text does not explicitly indicate the location of composition. However, Isaiah received his commission in the Jerusalem temple (ch. 6), was in Jerusalem during Sennacherib's siege (chs. 36–37), and his book contains a great preoccupation with Zion / Jerusalem from its current abysmal condition (ch. 1) to its glorious eschatological state (e.g., 66:20–24). Indeed, the prophet twice indicated that his vision concerned Judah and Jerusalem (1:1; 2:1). Additionally, as the capital city and the location of Yahweh's temple, the Judean prophets generally ministered in the environs of Jerusalem. From all these points, it seems quite reasonable to conclude that Isaiah spent most of his ministry in or near Jerusalem, including the composition of this book.

By the time Isaiah completed with work (at least 681 BC, as per the death of Sennacherib [37:37–38]), the Northern Kingdom of Israel had long since fallen (ca. 722 BC). Given that the vision concerned Judah and Jerusalem (1:1; 2:1), we may reasonably conclude that the location of the audience was also in Judah and Jerusalem.

### Why?

One scholar has noted the difficulty of interpreting Isaiah: "Nearly every line of Isaiah has been the subject of widely ranging opinion."<sup>12</sup> While this paper cannot hope to reasonably resolve all the interpretive issues, it will nevertheless endeavor to present an articulation of how and why Isaiah sought to persuade his audience.

Isaiah completed the final form of this book in 681 BC or later (possibly the 670's BC, but likely not later than that), well into the time of king Manasseh. Manasseh's reign (ca. 687–642 BC) was characterized by idolatry, child sacrifice, bloodshed, and occultic practices to such an extent that his evil exceeded that of the Canaanite nations (2 Kgs 21:1–9). In fact, Manasseh's prolific works of evil served as the catalyst for Yahweh's determination to exile Judah as he had Samaria (2 Kgs 21:10–15). At its core, the book of Isaiah functions as a call to repentance for the unbelieving majority, and a call to faithful endurance for the believing remnant. Isaiah explained how Jerusalem had become a corrupt and murderous prostitute because of the wickedness of the rulers. Whereas the rulers of Judea and Jerusalem had failed to function as Yahweh's righteous servants, Yahweh would send his true Servant, Immanuel, to suffer on behalf of the nation. This Servant would restore Jerusalem and make it into a glorious and holy city. This restoration, however, would involve a process of judgment and exile on the Judeans—including the faithful remnant—at the hands of Gentile nations. The remnant would therefore need to patiently endure and not fear the purification process because they could look

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<sup>12</sup> Longman III and Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 303.

to the judgment of the Gentile nations as well as Jerusalem's restoration for hope. The unbelieving majority, however, should fear because they would face judgment as Yahweh's enemies alongside the Gentile nations. Isaiah's prophecies concerning protection from the Assyrian threat (which appear in chs. 1–35) become realized in the historical narrative (chs. 36–37). This accurate prediction functioned to validate Isaiah as a true and legitimate prophet of Yahweh, and therefore served as the rationale for why the Judeans should believe him concerning his prophecies of Babylon, exile, the return under Cyrus, the suffering Servant, and the eschatological restoration of the remnant and Jerusalem (chs. 40–66).

### **Genre**

Like many of the latter prophets, the final form of the works includes a variety of genres. Within Isaiah, scholars have identified various genres such as poetry, hymns, prose, parables, narrative, covenant lawsuits, taunts, literary drama, woes, and apocalypse, among others. It is perhaps best, overall, to classify the entire document in its final form as a prophetic literary work.

### **Proposed Message Statement**

In order to address Judah's covenant violations during Manasseh's reign and Yahweh's responsive plan for Jerusalem's judgment, exile, and restoration, the prophet Isaiah, likely from Jerusalem, wrote a prophetic literary work ca. 680 BC in order to explain that the failure of Judah's rulers to function as Yahweh's servants would result in the nation's judgment and exile, but that Yahweh's Servant, Immanuel, would suffer on behalf of the nation and offer eschatological restoration to the faithful remnant, so that (1) the unbelieving majority would repent of their covenant violations and hope in Yahweh, and (2) the believing remnant would fearlessly and patiently endure the time of purification while awaiting the promised eschatological restoration.

## Use of Rhetoric in Isaiah

Classical rhetoric employs three modes and three species of rhetoric. The three modes of rhetoric include *logos*,<sup>13</sup> *pathos*,<sup>14</sup> and *ethos*.<sup>15</sup> The three species include judicial,<sup>16</sup> epideictic,<sup>17</sup> and deliberative<sup>18</sup> rhetoric.<sup>19</sup> Isaiah wrote with two deliberative purposes in mind. For the unbelieving majority in Judah, he intended them to repent of their covenant violations and hope in Yahweh, thus joining the righteous remnant. For the believing remnant, Isaiah intended that they fearlessly and patiently endure the time of purification (i.e., judgment) while awaiting the promised restoration of Jerusalem. In service of these complementary deliberative purposes, Isaiah offered an abundance of emotional appeals as well as logical and ethical arguments.

Emotionally, Isaiah's many contrasting visions of glory and honor in the restored Jerusalem for the penitent with the horrid judgment and destruction of the wicked established both hope and fear as incentives to repent and join the believing remnant (*pathos*). Logically, the path of faith would result in the superior outcome (*logos*). Ethically, Isaiah established two major appeals to credibility (*ethos*). First, he regularly emphasized the glory, majesty, power, and sovereignty of Yahweh in order to persuade his audience of the certainty of his prophecies. Second, Isaiah's prophecies concerning protection from the Assyrian threat (which appear in chs. 1–35) become realized in the historical narrative (chs. 36–37). This accurate prediction functioned to validate Isaiah as a true and legitimate prophet of Yahweh, and therefore served as the rationale for why the Judeans should believe him concerning his prophecies of Babylon, exile, the return under Cyrus, the suffering Servant, and the eschatological restoration of the remnant and Jerusalem (chs. 40–66). All of these rhetorical appeals function in service of Isaiah's overall deliberative purpose that (1) the unbelieving majority would repent of their covenant violations and hope in Yahweh, and (2) the believing remnant would fearlessly and patiently endure the time of purification while awaiting the promised eschatological restoration.

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<sup>13</sup> The rhetoric of *logos* employs logical arguments intended to appeal to rational principles found within the author's discourse.

<sup>14</sup> The rhetoric of *pathos* employs arguments intended to arouse an emotional reaction and play upon the audience's feelings.

<sup>15</sup> The rhetoric of *ethos* makes ethical appeals on the basis of credibility: good character or authority.

<sup>16</sup> With judicial rhetoric, the author seeks to persuade the audience to make a judgment about events that occurred in the past. This judgment often deals with questions of truth or justice, and can be positive (a defense or "apology" of correctness / innocence) or negative (a prosecution, emphasizing guilt).

<sup>17</sup> With epideictic rhetoric, the author seeks to persuade his audience to hold or reaffirm a certain point of view in the present time. The author wants to increase (or decrease / undermine) his audience's asset to a certain value or belief. To this end, epideictic rhetoric will frequently use examples of *praise* and *blame*.

<sup>18</sup> With deliberative rhetoric, the author seeks to persuade the audience to take (or not take) some action in the (often near) future. Deliberative rhetoric deals with questions of self-interest and future benefits for the audience, and appears in the form of exhortation (positive) or warning (negative).

<sup>19</sup> For a complete discussion of classical rhetoric in biblical studies, see George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, Studies in Religion (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

## Proposed Outline

- I. Introduction (1:1–31)
- II. Preview of judgment and restoration (2:1–4:6)
- III. Judgment of exile (5:1–30)
- IV. Prophetic commission (6:1–13)
- V. Narrative comparing Ahaz and Isaiah (7:1–9:6 MT [9:7])
- VI. Israel’s arrogance and downfall (9:7 MT [9:8]–10:4)
- VII. Announcements regarding Assyria (10:5–34)
- VIII. Vision of the kingdom and its Branch (11:1–12:6)
- IX. Oracles of judgment (13:1–23:18)
- X. Eschatological ruin and restoration (24:1–27:13)
- XI. The desert and the garden (28:1–35:10)
- XII. Sennacherib’s judgment (36:1–37:38)
- XIII. Hezekiah’s failure (38:1–39:8)
- XIV. A new exodus (40:1–48:22)
- XV. Yahweh’s Servant (49:1–55:13)
- XVI. Contrasting destinies (56:1–59:21)
- XVII. Vindication of Zion and her people (60:1–63:6)
- XVIII. Isaiah’s lament (63:7–64:11 MT [64:12])
- XIX. Jerusalem restored (65:1–66:24)

## Proposed Argument Exposition

Isaiah's **introductory vision (1:1–31)** functioned as a jarring warning to the Judean audience of Manasseh's time, and as a preview of the entire book's content. The identification of covenant violations, wicked leadership, and a purification process involving judgment for the wicked and salvation for the penitent are all introduced here, but developed more fully later in the book. With these elements, Isaiah intended to evoke the emotional responses of fear for the wicked and hope for the penitent (*pathos*) based on the authority of Yahweh's speech (*ethos*) and the logic of covenant violations resulting in covenant curses (*logos*).

Isaiah's introduction to this section as a vision, יְהִי, concerning Judah and Jerusalem (1:1) established the central theme of the book. Whereas Jerusalem at the beginning is a murderous prostitute (1:21) and likened to Sodom and Gomorrah (1:9–10), Yahweh's purification process of judgment, exile, and restoration will result in a holy, radiant, and righteous Jerusalem in the eschaton (1:26; see also chs. 65–66). Through that process, the rebellious sinners will perish (1:28) but the penitent righteous will be saved (1:26–27).

The calling of heaven and earth as witnesses (1:2) recalls Moses' invocation of the same (Deut 30:19) regarding Israel's choice pertaining to the Mosaic Covenant. For them, obedience meant life, and disobedience, death. The calling of witnesses establishes a courtroom setting (covenant lawsuit) and would alert the Judean audience that they are being charged with covenant violations which included forsaking Yahweh (1:4), persisting in rebellion (1:5), injustice (1:12, 16, 17, 23), and bloodshed (1:15, 21). These charges will be expanded later in the book. The present reality of covenant curses in the land (1:6–7) further serves as proof of covenant violations (*logos*).

Isaiah's identification of Yahweh as the speaker (1:2) also added *gravitas* to his introduction because of the appeal to authority (*ethos*). Isaiah wanted to terrify his audience (*pathos*) so that they would be in the right frame of mind to heed his commands to (1) hear Yahweh's word (1:10), cease their meaningless offerings (1:13), wash and cleanse themselves (1:16), and learn to do right and seek justice (1:17). His identification of the wicked rulers in Jerusalem as Yahweh's enemies (1:24) also functioned to evoke fear in the audience (*pathos*). They had the choice to be purified by Yahweh (1:18). That Isaiah particularly indicted the leaders (1:10, 23) and envisioned their replacement by righteous leaders (1:26) foreshadows Yahweh's Servant.

Lastly, Isaiah's identification of the faithful remnant and the unbelieving majority as two groups within Israel with opposite destinies (1:27–28) established the choice Isaiah offered his readers. They could remain enemies of Yahweh and so face destruction and disgrace, or they could repent, join the faithful remnant, and be rewarded with restoration in the eschaton. Isaiah will spill significant amounts of ink writing of the contrasting destinies of these two groups in an effort to convince the unfaithful to repent.

Thus, Isaiah's introduction (1:1–31) served to confront particularly the leaders of Jerusalem in Manasseh's day. By appealing covenant curses, charges of covenant violations, and Yahweh's condemnation, Isaiah demonstrated how the leaders had made themselves enemies of Yahweh. Yahweh's plan to purify Jerusalem meant the judgment and perishing of the wicked, and was intended to instill a holy fear into the Judean audience (*pathos*) so that they would listen to Isaiah's words and repent, thus joining the believing remnant and the promised hope of eschatological restoration. In these ways, Isaiah's introduction contributed to his overall deliberative purpose that (1) the unbelieving majority would repent of their covenant violations

and hope in Yahweh, and (2) the believing remnant would fearlessly and patiently endure the time of purification while awaiting Immanuel and the promised eschatological restoration.

Table 2: Isaiah's indictments against the leaders of Jerusalem, Judah, and Israel

- 1:10 – leaders of Jerusalem called “leaders of Sodom”
- 1:23 – leaders are rebels and thieves who love bribes and do not enact justice
- 1:26 – Yahweh will restore righteous leaders
- 2:7 – the leaders have amassed silver, gold, horses and chariots contra Deut 17
- 2:22 – the leaders trusted in mere men for support
- 3:2–3 – Yahweh to remove from Judah and Jerusalem all the heroes, warriors, judges, prophets, diviners, elders, captains, men of rank, counselors, skilled craftsmen, and clever enchanters (i.e., all the leaders)
- 3:4 – Yahweh to replace Judah's leaders with children
- 3:6–7 – Judah will desire to make common men their leader, but none will accept
- 3:12 – women and children will rule over Judah
- 3:14–15 – Yahweh will judge the elders and leaders for ruining Judah
- 3:16–4:1 – Yahweh will judge the arrogant leading women of Jerusalem
- 5:7 – bloodshed and distress in Judah implicates wicked leaders
- 5:23 – woes against those with power to enact justice but who accept bribes
- 7:1–25 – Ahaz an example of wicked Judean king who refused to trust Yahweh
- 9:14–15 MT [9:15–16] – elders, dignitaries, and prophets of Israel misled the people
- 10:1 – leaders of Israel made unjust laws and oppressive decrees
- 10:2 – leaders of Israel withheld justice and consumed the poor
- 22:3 – leaders of Jerusalem are fleeing cowards
- 22:15–19 – Shebna (palace administrator in Jerusalem) serves as an example of a prideful leader whom Yahweh will humble
- 26:13–14 – Judah's rulers are punished with death and no remembrance
- 28:15–22 – the covenant with death made by the rulers of Jerusalem will be annulled by Yahweh, resulting in their destruction by the overwhelming scourge
- 31:1 – the leaders of Judah relied on Egypt's horses and chariots rather than Yahweh
- 33:18 – the corrupt leaders will be forgotten at the time of restoration
- 39:1–8 – Hezekiah's pride and careless attitude toward the future of Jerusalem
- 51:13 – none of Jerusalem's sons can guide her
- 56:10–12 – Israel's drunken leaders are blind, greedy, and without understanding
- 59:15–16 – Israel's leaders unable to establish justice
- 63:5 – no one in Israel could achieve salvation

In his **preview of judgment and restoration (2:1–4:6)**, Isaiah contrasted the hope of the believing remnant for participation in the glorious eschatological restoration of Jerusalem (2:1–4; 4:2–6) with the fear and judgment coming upon the wicked in Judah (2:5–4:1). Structurally, the hopeful visions bracket the judgment. Isaiah indicted the leaders of Judah and

Jerusalem and lay the blame at their feet for the coming judgment.<sup>20</sup> This section primarily employs emotional rhetoric by offering hope for the faithful and intense fear for the wicked (*pathos*), in an effort to persuade the unbelieving majority to repent and join the believing remnant.

Isaiah's vision of the elevation of Mount Zion in the eschaton (2:1–4) presents a glorious picture which invites the participation of the Judean audience. That the God of Jacob sets the law, teaches his ways, judges between nations, and enforces worldwide peace (2:3–4) prepares the audience for Isaiah's invitation that the house of Jacob to walk in the light of Yahweh (2:5). This serves as a direct application for the Judean audience of Manasseh's time. The fact that the Gentiles from all nations (2:2–3) stream to Mount Zion has the effect of eliciting jealousy (see also Deut 32:21) on Isaiah's Judean audience (*pathos*). Since participants from all the other nations experience the glorious regeneration of Zion, it amplifies the fear of the Judeans—for whom Zion is their birthright and natural home—missing out on its glory.

Isaiah's vision of judgment (2:6–4:1) functions to indict the guilty leaders of Judah and Jerusalem and portray the intense distress they will experience with Yahweh's judgment unless they should repent. The leaders' guilt most clearly becomes evident: ““My people, your leaders are misleading you, and they confuse the course of your paths” … Yahweh enters into judgment with the elders of his people and its princes. “And you! You have devoured the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses! Why do you crush my people and grind the face of the poor?” declares the Lord Yahweh of hosts” (3:12, 14–15). It is these leaders—including the leading women of Jerusalem (3:16–4:1)—that Isaiah chided for their idolatry (2:6, 8, 18, 20), pride, and arrogance (2:9, 11–17; 3:9). Unless these leaders repented and experienced salvation like the righteous (3:10), they would experience the terrifying wrath of Yahweh on the day of his exaltation and judgment (2:10–17, 19–21; 3:8, 9, 11, 13). Thus, Isaiah sought to persuade repentance among his audience in light of the terrifying judgment Yahweh would bring upon them (*pathos*).

In Isaiah's next vision of the Jerusalem's eschatological restoration (4:2–6), the judgment has produced a purifying effect whereby the wicked are removed and only the holy and righteous ones remain. In place of the evil leaders of Manasseh's day, Yahweh would install his “Branch” (נֶגֶד נָמָס) (4:2). This vision highlights that only the faithful remnant participates in the restoration (4:2, 3). Whereas the Judeans had previously needed to endure wicked leaders, in the eschaton, Yahweh himself would be the refuge for his people (4:5–6) and his “Branch” would lead them (4:2). This noting of the Branch anticipates the Servant Isaiah will describe later in the book. The vision functions to persuade the wicked of Isaiah's day to repent because only the

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<sup>20</sup> This aligns perfectly with the historical narrative account in 2 Kings 21, where Manasseh's wickedness is attributed as the cause for Yahweh's determination to exile the nation to Babylon: “So Yahweh spoke by the hand of his servants the prophets, saying, ‘Because Manasseh the king of Judah committed these detestable things and did evil more than the Amorites did who were before him and caused even Judah to sin with his idols, therefore, thus says Yahweh the God of Israel, ‘Look, I am bringing disaster upon Jerusalem and Judah about which the two ears of all who hear it will tingle. I will stretch out over Jerusalem the measuring line of Samaria and the plumb line of the house of Ahab, and I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes the dish; he wipes it and turns it on its face. I will give up the remainder of my inheritance, and I will give them into the hand of their enemies. They shall become as prey and as spoil for all their enemies, because they have done evil in my eyes and were provoking me from the day that their ancestors came out from Egypt up to this day.’ Moreover, Manasseh shed very much innocent blood until he filled Jerusalem from one end to another, apart from his sin which he caused Judah to sin by doing evil in the eyes of Yahweh’” (2 Kgs 21:10–16).

righteous remnant will survive and participate in the restoration. The wicked, on the other hand, Yahweh will purge in the judgment. This argument is primarily emotional (*pathos*) as it relies on the emotions of fear and hope, but also a logical one: the audience should repent since repentance results in the superior outcome (*logos*).

Thus, Isaiah's preview of judgment and restoration (2:1–4:6) expanded the first vision's (1:1–31) offer of hope amidst the promise of judgment. Yahweh would bring a purifying judgment upon Judah, and only the righteous remnant would experience life in the cleansed Jerusalem. The process of purification through judgment would remove Jerusalem's wicked leaders and Yahweh would replace them with his righteous leader. Unless they repented and joined the faithful and righteous remnant, they would face a fearful judgment from which they could not hide. In these ways, this section contributed to Isaiah's overall deliberative purpose that (1) the unbelieving majority would repent of their covenant violations and hope in Yahweh, and (2) the believing remnant would fearlessly and patiently endure the time of purification while awaiting Immanuel and the promised eschatological restoration.

In his announcement of the coming **judgment of exile (5:1–30)**, Isaiah employed the parable of the vineyard (5:1–7) and six oracles of woe (5:8–30) in order to explain (1) the rationale for the coming Babylonian exile, and (2) its inevitability. This section functioned to elicit a fearful emotional response (*pathos*) at the dread of Yahweh's judgment.

The parable (5:1–7) demonstrated how Yahweh had done everything possible to produce "good fruit" (i.e., covenant faithfulness) but instead all his efforts were met with "bad fruit" (i.e., wickedness and covenant infidelity). Thus, the audience could not blame Yahweh for the coming exile. Indeed, in a case of judicial rhetoric, Yahweh called for the audience to "judge between me and my vineyard" (5:3). The audience could only rationally conclude that they were guilty and Yahweh was righteous.<sup>21</sup> Isaiah thus pointed to the covenant infidelity of Judah (5:7, 8, 12, 18, 20, 23, 24) resulting in not only Yahweh's covenant curses against the land, sky, and people of Judah (5:5, 6, 10, 15, 24, 25), but also the curse of exile (5:13) brought about by a foreign nation which would overpower Judah (5:26–30). With no indication of the possibility of relenting for penitence (as sometimes occurs in the case of prophetic threats), the coming exile represented a certain judgment. The announcement of judgment, then, purely functions to elicit fear (*pathos*). Isaiah intended the fear to drive the rebellious Judean audience of Manasseh's day to repent and join the righteous remnant. Merely one phrase of comfort (5:17) offered hope to the faithful remnant (*pathos*) that Yahweh's actions would result in their benefit. In these ways, this section contributed to Isaiah's overall deliberative purpose that (1) the unbelieving majority would repent of their covenant violations and hope in Yahweh, and (2) the believing remnant would fearlessly and patiently endure the time of purification while awaiting Immanuel and the promised eschatological restoration.

Isaiah's **prophetic commission (6:1–13)** contributed to the credibility of Isaiah as a legitimate prophet of Yahweh (*ethos*) and established his function to Judah as the "sent one" of Yahweh whose words would continue to meet resistance until the time of their exile. Like the faithful remnant, Isaiah's guilt was removed and his sins atoned for (6:7). But preceding this atonement was his acknowledgment that both he and his people were unclean (6:5)—this is what

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<sup>21</sup> A difficult conclusion to reach for a people who called evil good, and good evil (5:20).

Isaiah wanted to the proud and unbelieving majority to admit. In this, his actions serve as a paradigm (model) for his audience to follow. That his words would be proclaimed until the ruin of Judah and the exile of the people (6:11–13) reinforced the previous chapter’s announcement of the certainty of coming judgment. The Judean audience would largely become calloused against Isaiah’s words. In spite of the coming judgment, the righteous remnant was not left without hope, for the “seed of holiness” would remain in the tree stump (6:13) (*pathos*).

Thus, this section functioned to bolster the credibility of Isaiah as a prophet (*ethos*). The audience should listen to Isaiah’s words because he was divinely commissioned, and his words would stand until such time as Judah faced utter devastation. The vision therefore prepares the audience to accept Isaiah’s call to repentance (for the unbelievers) and faithful endurance (for the believers). In these ways, this section contributed to Isaiah’s overall deliberative purpose that (1) the unbelieving majority would repent of their covenant violations and hope in Yahweh, and (2) the believing remnant would fearlessly and patiently endure the time of purification while awaiting Immanuel and the promised eschatological restoration.

In his **narrative comparing Ahaz and Isaiah (7:1–9:6 MT [9:7])**, the prophet constructed a contrast between himself and Ahaz. On the one hand, Ahaz failed to trust Yahweh against the lesser foes of Ephraim and Aram (7:1–2, 12) and so Yahweh would send the greater foe of Assyria against Ephraim, Aram, and Judah as a punishment for Ahaz’s lack of faith (7:17–8:10). Those who followed Ahaz’s example would ultimately stumble (8:14–15) and find themselves in the darkness of judgment (8:19–22). By contrast, Isaiah trusted in Yahweh (8:17–18) and could hope in the great light of Immanuel, the Son, reigning from Jerusalem and fulfilling the Davidic Covenant (8:23–9:6 MT [9:1–7]).

This contrast served several rhetorical purposes. First, Isaiah functioned as a paradigm of faith (a positive example) in which he intended the audience to follow. Second, Ahaz served as case-in-point of Jerusalem’s wicked and unfaithful leaders. This contributes to Isaiah’s argument that all the bad leaders would give way to the Servant who would be the ultimate leader of Judah and Israel. Third, the contrast in outcomes (fearful gloom and utter darkness vs. great light; cursing God vs. trusting God; Yahweh hiding his face vs. being revealed; military defeat vs. victory, peace, and worldwide rule) establishes the emotional basis (fear vs. hope) and the logical basis (superior vs. inferior outcomes) for why the audience should place their faith in Yahweh as Isaiah did (*pathos* and *logos*). Ironically, Ahaz trusted in Assyria instead of Yahweh against the fearful alliance of Ephraim and Aram, so Yahweh would bring Assyria to destroy him. In these ways, this section contributed to Isaiah’s overall deliberative purpose that (1) the unbelieving majority would repent of their covenant violations and hope in Yahweh, and (2) the believing remnant would fearlessly and patiently endure the time of purification while awaiting Immanuel and the promised eschatological restoration.

In a brief section on **Israel’s arrogance and downfall (9:7 MT [9:8]–10:4)**, Isaiah poetically portrayed Yahweh’s anger at the Northern Kingdom’s prideful self-reliance (9:8–9 MT [9:9–10]), failure to seek Yahweh (9:12 MT [9:13]), wickedness (9:17 MT [9:18]), and unjust and oppressive leaders (10:1–2) resulting in their assured destruction (9:7, 10–11, 13, 16, 18, 19 MT [9:8, 11–12, 14, 17, 19, 20]; 10:3–4). From the historical perspective of the Judean audience ca. 680 BC, the fall of Samaria had already occurred (ca. 722 BC) and was a

historically verifiable event. First, the fact that Isaiah had foretold of such judgment in Ahaz's day (ca. 732–716 BC)<sup>22</sup> contributed to Isaiah's standing as a legitimate prophetic voice who spoke the future as revealed by Yahweh (*ethos*). Second, Yahweh's assured destruction on account of Israel's arrogance and failure to trust him served as an example of why Yahweh's certain punishment would come upon Judah as well. The example established Yahweh's character as a judge and as one who fulfills his own words. The Judean audience could thus be certain that Yahweh's promises via Isaiah's prophecies of judgment, exile, and return for them would also come true (*logos* and *ethos*). Third, the intensity of Yahweh's judgment would contribute to the fear of his coming wrath upon Judah, so contributing to Isaiah's message that the audience repent lest they be judged (*pathos*). In these ways, this section contributed to Isaiah's overall deliberative purpose that (1) the unbelieving majority would repent of their covenant violations and hope in Yahweh, and (2) the believing remnant would fearlessly and patiently endure the time of purification while awaiting Immanuel and the promised eschatological restoration.

Isaiah's **announcements regarding Assyria (10:5–34)** serves multiple functions within the book. It bolstered Isaiah's prophetic credentials (*ethos*), warned the unbelieving majority of the certainty of the judgment Isaiah predicted for them (*pathos*), and offered the faithful remnant hope in Yahweh's ability to deliver and restore them (*pathos*).

First, Isaiah's prophetic prediction of Assyria judging Judah (10:6, 12) and its later fulfillment (chs. 36–37) serve to reinforce Isaiah's status as a legitimate prophet and spokesman for Yahweh (*ethos*). From the historical perspective of audience in Manasseh's day (ca. 680 BC or 670's BC), Sennacherib's siege (ca. 701 BC) and even Sennacherib's death (37:37–38) ca. 681 BC were verifiable facts of history. That Isaiah had correctly predicted these events meant his other prophecies regarding the yet-future judgment, exile, and restoration of Judah would also be fulfilled as Isaiah stated. Therefore, the unbelieving majority's fear of those predicted events (*pathos*) should drive them to repent and trust in Yahweh, and the faithful remnant's hope in restoration (*pathos*) to continue trusting in Yahweh.

Second, this announcement also foretold of judgment on Assyria for its actions against Judah. Isaiah's predictions that Yahweh would punish the king of Assyria (10:12) and wipe out his army (10:16–19, 33–34) reached their fulfillment in Hezekiah's day when the angel of Yahweh slaughtered 185,000 Assyrian troops (37:36) thus ending the siege.<sup>23</sup> Even though Sennacherib's death occurred ca. 681 BC some twenty years after the siege of Jerusalem (ca. 701 BC), Isaiah's placement of the death of the 185,000 and Sennacherib's death in close succession (37:36–38) show how Yahweh's judgment on "The Assyrian" indeed came to pass as Isaiah predicted (10:5, 12, 16–19, 33–34). Such a fulfillment would offer hope to the faithful remnant and given them cause not to fear the coming judgment of Babylon. Indeed, the surviving remnant of Israel who truly relied on Yahweh (10:20–23) in Hezekiah's time (future to the time the prophecy was first uttered, but historical from the time of the final composition of Isaiah) would serve as a positive paradigm (model) of what Isaiah wanted his audience to do. Isaiah's

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<sup>22</sup> Isaiah's oracle would originally need to have been made during Ahaz's reign (which began in 732 BC), but prior to 722 BC (the fall of Samaria) to have any prophetic relevance.

<sup>23</sup> The warriors of Sennacherib are explicitly mentioned in 10:16, and the metaphors in 10:16–19 likewise apply to the same group, namely, the 185,000 who are killed by the angel of Yahweh (37:36).

exhortation that those in Zion not fear the Assyrians (10:24) would extend rhetorically to Isaiah's audience in Manasseh's day (and beyond) not to fear the Babylonians but to trust in Yahweh.

Thus, with his announcements regarding Assyria (10:5–34), Isaiah further contributed to his own credibility as a prophet and thus the rationale for why the audience should heed his exhortations (*ethos*). His prophecy also offered fear and hope, respectively, for the unbelieving majority and the righteous remnant (*pathos*). In these ways, this section contributed to Isaiah's overall deliberative purpose that (1) the unbelieving majority would repent of their covenant violations and hope in Yahweh, and (2) the believing remnant would fearlessly and patiently endure the time of purification while awaiting Immanuel and the promised eschatological restoration.

Isaiah's **vision of the kingdom and its Branch (11:1–12:6)** presented the glorious hope of Judah and Israel's restoration and peace under Yahweh's righteous ruler. For the believing remnant, it offered a vision of hope that would allow them to patiently endure through the coming purification / judgment (*pathos*). For the unbelieving majority, it presented an incentive to repent and trust in Yahweh and join the righteous remnant because life in the kingdom represented a superior outcome to judgment (*logos* and *pathos*).

That the righteous Branch comes up from the stump of Jesse (11:1) connects back to the hope of the holy seed remaining in a tree stump following intense judgment (6:13).<sup>24</sup> The character and actions of the righteous Branch, the ruler of Israel, strongly contrast with Isaiah's depiction of the leadership of his day. Table 3 below presents these contrasts.

Table 3: Contrasts between the Righteous Branch and the rulers of Isaiah's day

Israel's wicked rulers	The Righteous Branch
Yielded only bad fruit (5:2, 4)	Yielded fruit (11:1)
Inflamed / drunk with wine (5:11–12)	Has Yahweh's Spirit of wisdom, counsel, understanding, and knowledge (11:2)
Described as briers and thorns (9:17 MT [9:18])	Described as a "stump" yielding fruitful life (11:1)
Their "justice" (צִדְקָה) is actually "bloodshed" (קָדְשָׁה) and their "righteousness" (הָקְדָשָׁה) is actually "a cry of distress" (הָקְדָשָׁה) (5:7) <sup>25</sup>	Will judge in righteousness (11:3–4)
Do not defend the orphan and widow (1:23). Robbed the poor (3:14–15). Denied justice to the innocent (5:23). Issued oppressive and unjust decrees to deprive the poor and withhold justice from the oppressed (10:1–2).	Will righteously judge the poor and needy (11:4)
Acquit the guilty for a bribe (5:23)	Will kill the wicked (11:4)
Made Zion a place of violence, corruption, and bloodshed (1:21; 3:14–15)	Will transform Zion into a place of righteousness, justice, and peace (11:3–9)

<sup>24</sup> The tree stump in 6:13 (קָדְשָׁה) is a different Hebrew word than the stump in 11:1 (עֵתֶל), but conceptually they are equivalent. Like the cutting down of a tree, judgment would occur in Judah leaving only a remnant, a stump. But out of that stump / remnant would come the holy seed, the "shoot" (11:1), the righteous Branch (רָשָׁה) who would revitalize the nation.

<sup>25</sup> Isaiah employed a word play (a pun) twice in this verse.

Brought desolation to land and cities (1:7; 3:1–5)	Will produce ordered restoration and harmony with creation (11:6–9)
Deprived Judah of the knowledge Yahweh (1:2), and would go into exile without knowledge (of Yahweh) (5:13)	Will make the earth full of the knowledge of Yahweh (11:9)
Failures led to exile (5:13)	Will restore and regather the Israelites in the Promised Land (11:10–12)
Enmity between Israel and Judah (7:1–2)	Peace between Israel and Judah (11:13)
Arameans and Philistines devoured Israel (9:11–12)	Ephraim and Judah vanquish the Philistines (11:14)
King of Assyria is like the mighty floodwaters of the Euphrates sweeping into Judah (8:7–8)	Euphrates dried up into a stream (11:15)

As demonstrated above in Table 3, Isaiah portrayed the extreme contrasts between the righteous Branch and the wicked rulers of Isaiah's day. On the one hand, this contrast functioned to condemn the existing leaders by showing how short of the ideal they fell. Rhetorically, this would impel their repentance. On the other, the righteous remnant of Isaiah's day could look forward with hope to the time of glorious restoration when Israel and Judah would be restored, reunified, and regathered under a righteous leader. The hopeful vision would promote their patient endurance through the time of purifying judgment. The vision of the righteous Branch and his rule prepared Isaiah's readers for his later announcements of the coming Servant who would transform Jerusalem from its then-current abysmal status into a glorious and righteous city.<sup>26</sup>

The poems of praise presenting the words of the eschatological remnant upon their restoration (12:1–3, 4–6) function as a paradigm (model) of the faith Isaiah intended for his readers: "I will trust and not be afraid ... Yahweh himself is my strength ... he has become my salvation" (12:2). This would encourage the righteous remnant to continue trusting in Yahweh while awaiting the Branch, while exhorting the unbelieving majority to join the remnant by placing their faith in Yahweh.

Thus, Isaiah's vision of the kingdom and its Branch (11:1–12:6) presented the glorious hope of Judah and Israel's restoration and peace under Yahweh's righteous ruler. For the believing remnant, it offered a vision of hope that would allow them to patiently endure through the coming purification / judgment (*pathos*). For the unbelieving majority, it presented an incentive to repent and trust in Yahweh and join the righteous remnant because life in the kingdom represented a superior outcome to judgment (*logos* and *pathos*). In these ways, this section contributed to Isaiah's overall deliberative purpose that (1) the unbelieving majority would repent of their covenant violations and hope in Yahweh, and (2) the believing remnant would fearlessly and patiently endure the time of purification while awaiting Immanuel and the promised eschatological restoration.

Isaiah's **oracles of judgment (13:1–23:18)** demonstrated that Yahweh would judge / humble the proud and haughty, and they functioned to address several problems among Isaiah's audience in Manasseh's day. First, the Judeans variously feared or trusted in the Gentile nations

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<sup>26</sup> The Branch and the Servant are, of course, one and the same. The Branch / Servant is the one who will transform Jerusalem from its corruption (ch. 1) into its glory (ch. 66).

surrounding them. But Isaiah wanted to direct his audience's fear and trust away from the nations and toward Yahweh. Isaiah's oracles of judgment against Babylon (13:1–14:23; 21:1–10), Assyria (14:24–27), Philistia (14:28–32), Moab (15:1–16:14), Damascus (17:1–14), Cush and Egypt (18:1–20:6), Edom (21:11–12), Arabia (21:13–17), and Tyre (23:1–18) indicating the devastation Yahweh would enact upon these nations demonstrated why the Judeans should neither fear those Gentile nations nor place their trust in them. Logically, since Yahweh would overpower them, the Judeans should not fear them (*logos*). For the same reason, the Judeans should not trust in those nations (*logos*).<sup>27</sup>

Second, the Judeans trusted in their *own* strength as well. The inclusion of an oracle against Jerusalem (22:1–25) in the midst of the Gentile nations would have a powerful rhetorical effect for the Judean audience. The Judeans could not expect Yahweh to shatter the Gentiles' pride and arrogance (13:11, 19; 14:11–17; 16:6) in order to humble them (23:9) while ignoring the exact same sins in Judah (*logos*). Isaiah had already noted the pride of Judah multiple times (2:11, 12, 17; 3:16; 5:15). Instead, Yahweh's wrath toward the Gentiles paralleled his anger at Judah's pride (22:11–14). Isaiah thus portrayed multiple examples of the proud being humbled in these oracles:

- Babylon as a nation (13:11–14),
- The king of Babylon / the proud angelic being (14:12–17),<sup>28</sup>
- Moab (16:6),
- Shebna in Jerusalem (22:15–19),
- Tyre (23:9).

This pattern of the proud being humbled was earlier established in Judah with Ahaz's pride resulting in destruction (ch. 7). Isaiah's portrayal of Shebna as a character who exemplified the prideful being humbled (22:15–19) and then replaced by the faithful servant Eliakim (22:20–24) also typifies Yahweh's removal of the wicked and prideful leaders of Isaiah's day and their replacement by the righteous Servant. Isaiah therefore used the oracles to drive the fear of judgment into the proud, unbelieving majority of Judah in Manasseh's day (*pathos*).

Lastly, the oracles also pointed to the salvation of those who trust in Yahweh, whether in Israel (14:1–2) or among Gentile nations like Cush (18:7), Egypt (18:8–22), or Assyria (19:23–25). Isaiah thus exhorted the unbelieving majority to join the righteous remnant by trusting in Yahweh. If Yahweh would save Gentiles and call them "my people" (יִשְׂרָאֵל, used of Egyptians, 19:25), then how much more those of Yahweh's inheritance (19:25)?

Thus, the judgment oracles (13:1–23:18) repetitiously make the point that Yahweh will judge / humble the proud, but save those who trust in him. Isaiah intended the Judeans to humble themselves and trust / fear Yahweh, because (1) since Yahweh would judge the Gentile nations, they should not fear them, (2) since Yahweh would judge the Gentile nations, neither

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<sup>27</sup> Isaiah made this point quite explicit in ch. 20. At a time when Judah was trusting for the protection of Egypt, Yahweh would allow Assyria to capture Egypt and Cush. The Judeans would see this and rightly observe: "See what has happened to those we relied on, those we fled to for help and deliverance from the king of Assyria! How then can we escape?" (20:6).

<sup>28</sup> Early Genesis established how those aligned with the Serpent rule with him on the earth (Gen 4:7). Thus, the oracle is spoken against *both* the ruler of Babylon and the angelic power residing behind him, the "Morning Star" who fell from heaven (14:12). While difficult to validate with certainty, it's not unreasonable to think of this dark angelic person as the Serpent.

should they trust in them, and (3) since Yahweh will judge and humble *all* the proud and haughty, the Judeans themselves would face Yahweh's wrath unless they trusted in him, so receiving his salvation. These arguments create the logical basis (appeal to superior outcomes) and emotional basis (fear vs. hope) for why they should repent and trust in Yahweh (*logos* and *pathos*). In these ways, this section contributed to Isaiah's overall deliberative purpose that (1) the unbelieving majority would repent of their covenant violations and hope in Yahweh, and (2) the believing remnant would fearlessly and patiently endure the time of purification while awaiting Immanuel and the promised eschatological restoration.

Having proclaimed Yahweh's sovereignty over the individual nations (chs. 13–23), Isaiah's vision on **eschatological ruin and restoration (24:1–27:13)** universalized Yahweh's sovereignty over the entire earth and its history. Isaiah's argument here consisted of logical and ethical appeals: because Yahweh held in his hands the destiny of the earth, its nations, and its people, Isaiah's Judean audience should trust in Yahweh rather than the nations or themselves (*logos* and *ethos*). The eschatological visions of ruin for the wicked, as contrasted against resurrection and glory for those who trust in Yahweh, also elicit the contrasting emotional responses of fear and hope (*pathos*).

Elements of this section contributing to Yahweh's *ethos* include the following:

- His devastation and ruining of the earth (24:1–5),
- The universal exaltation of Yahweh's name (24:14–16),
- Yahweh's glorious reign from Zion / Jerusalem putting the sun and moon to shame (24:23),
- His swallowing up of death forever (25:8),
- The existence of even Gentile nations which will keep faith with Yahweh (26:2),<sup>29</sup>
- His power to both resurrect the righteous remnant (26:19, 21) and keep the wicked rulers dead (26:14).

Elements of this section contributing to the fear of judgment (*pathos*) include:

- The cessation of normal activities of joy (24:7–12),<sup>30</sup>
- The threat of inescapable judgment (24:17–18),
- Yahweh's violent shaking of the earth itself (24:19–20),
- Moab's destruction (25:10–12),
- Yahweh's humbling of the wicked rulers who failed to learn righteousness and their staying dead (as opposed to the righteous who rise again) (26:5–6, 9–10, 13–14),

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<sup>29</sup> This element would function to provoke the jealousy of the Israelites (see Deut 32:21).

<sup>30</sup> The identity of the “ruined city” (24:12) is perhaps left intentionally ambiguous. On the one hand, Isaiah had just discussed the judgment of many Gentile nations (chs. 13–23), so one of the cities mentioned therein may have been in mind. Thus, it could refer broadly to the destruction of many cities. On the other hand, the entire book concerns Jerusalem (1:1; 2:1) and Yahweh's plan to transform and restore it. Jerusalem was also singled out amidst the Gentile nations (ch. 22). It seems appropriate then, that Isaiah would have intended Jerusalem as the referent for his mentions of a **נִגְדָּה**, “village” or “town,” (24:10; 25:2, 3; 26:5) or **רִשְׁתָּה**, “city,” (24:12; 25:2; 26:1; 27:10). In this case, the threat for the Judean / Jerusalem-based audience becomes more palpable and fearsome.

- Yahweh's intense punishing sword (27:1),
- The desolation and lack of Yahweh's favor and compassion for those without their guilt atoned (27:9–11).

Elements of this section contributing to the hope (*pathos*) for those trusting in Yahweh include:

- The joyful worship of Yahweh (24:14–16),
- The glorious reign of Yahweh from Zion with its elders (24:23),
- Yahweh removing all sadness (25:8),
- Yahweh removing Israel's disgrace from the earth (25:8),
- The promise of perfect peace (26:3),
- The trustworthiness and steadfastness of Yahweh (26:4)
- Their resurrection (26:19, 21),
- Israel's restoration like a fruitful vineyard (27:2–6),<sup>31</sup>
- The fulfillment of the Israel's land promise (27:12, see Gen 15:18–21),<sup>32</sup>
- The regathering of Israel's exiles and their restoration to Jerusalem (27:12–13).

Isaiah's eschatological vision of the righteous remnant (1) framing their salvation based on their trust in Yahweh (25:9) and (2) the song of Judah (26:1–4), serve as paradigms (examples) of faith for Isaiah's audience to follow. Isaiah wanted his audience to align themselves with such examples because they could hope in the resurrection and restoration while waiting for Yahweh's wrath to pass by (26):

Thus, in an effort to persuade his audience to trust in Yahweh, Isaiah's vision of eschatological ruin and restoration (24:1–27:13) offered ethical, logical, and emotional appeals. Ethically, Yahweh possessed universal power over everything and everyone, and would accomplish his intended ends (*ethos*). He had power to eternally condemn as well as to resurrect and restore. Logically, then, Isaiah's audience should trust in Yahweh because it would lead to the superior outcome (resurrection and restoration vs. death and condemnation) (*logos*). The hope envisioned in the restoration and the fear of judgment for the wicked both contributed to the same end (*pathos*). All Isaiah's appeals demonstrated the folly of refusing to humble oneself to Yahweh, and promoted the benefits of doing so. In these ways, this section contributed to Isaiah's overall deliberative purpose that (1) the unbelieving majority would repent of their covenant violations and hope in Yahweh, and (2) the believing remnant would fearlessly and patiently endure the time of purification while awaiting Immanuel and the promised eschatological restoration.

In his contrast of **the desert and the garden (28:1–35:10)** Isaiah's six woes (28:1; 29:1, 15; 30:1; 31:1; 33:1) caution that a wasteland of death (ch. 34) awaited those who failed to trust in Yahweh, while a garden awaited those who do (ch. 35). The woes also contain prophetic

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<sup>31</sup> This fruitful vineyard accords with the fruitfulness of the righteous Branch (11:1) and contrasts with the parable of Israel and Judah as an unfruitful vineyard (5:1–7).

<sup>32</sup> The borders mentioned by Isaiah (the Euphrates to the Wadi of Egypt, 27:12) appear to match those listed in the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 15:18–21).

previews of divine protection of Jerusalem from Sennacherib's siege ca. 701 BC which demonstrate Yahweh's power to protect those who trust in him, in contrast to the certain destruction of those who trust in foreign alliances rather than in Yahweh.

Isaiah's first woe (28:1) to Ephraim contrasted the Israelite king as a trampled wreath and fading flower (28:1–4) against Yahweh of hosts as a glorious crown and beautiful wreath for the righteous remnant (28:5–6). Isaiah intended the fall of Samaria's king to warn his Judean audience against the folly of trusting in human leaders rather than Yahweh. Indeed, the rulers of Jerusalem, like drunkards, entered a covenant with death (28:15), but they could not trust that manmade plan because Yahweh would annul it (28:18) and ensure their destruction according to his plan (28:18–29). The Ephraimites and the leaders of Jerusalem served as negative paradigms (examples) for Isaiah's audience (*ethos*). Their prophesied destruction (although it was now an *historical* destruction from the perspective of Isaiah's readers) functioned to persuade Isaiah's audience to avoid the path of rebellion which led to destruction, and instead repent and trust Yahweh.

Isaiah's second woe (29:1–14) promised the certainty of judgment for Ariel (Jerusalem) on account of their false worship and unresponsiveness to his words. The third woe (29:15–24) castigated those in Jerusalem who thought their wicked plans (i.e., alliances with Gentile nations) would go unnoticed by Yahweh. But the ruthless and wicked would be cut down while the righteous remnant is restored and brought to the garden. These woes contributed to Isaiah's message of judgment for the proud, but deliverance to the humble who trust in Yahweh (29:19), and therefore why the audience should repent and trust in Yahweh (*logos* and *pathos*).

Isaiah's fourth woe (30:1–33) against the stubborn sons who refused to trust Yahweh demonstrated the folly of ignoring Yahweh's grace and salvation. Ironically, trusting in Egypt would only lead to Egypt shaming Judah (30:2–5), and trusting in horses would lead to their flight (30:16–17). The Judeans' hardened response to prophecy (30:8–11) disregarded Yahweh's desire to offer compassion, salvation, and justice in the kingdom age (30:15, 18–27) and would only lead to judgment (30:12–14).

Isaiah's fifth woe (31:1–9) again warned the Judeans against trusting in Egypt. As a prophetic / historical proof of Yahweh's power,<sup>33</sup> Isaiah foretold (31:3–9) the fall of the 185,000 Assyrians (37:36). This functions ethically to bolster the credibility and power of Yahweh (*ethos*) to demonstrate why the Judeans should trust in Yahweh. Unlike Egypt which consisted of mere mortals, Yahweh *actually* had the power to stop kings and armies, therefore they should trust in him (*logos*). The faithful remnant could trust Yahweh to establish his righteous king (32:1–4) and bring them to the garden (32:15–20). The complacent and overconfident women of Jerusalem, however, should tremble and fear on account of the coming judgment (32:9–14).

Isaiah's sixth woe (33:1–24) warned of the certain failure of foreign alliances (33:7–8) and their leading to a desert waste (33:9) and judgment (33:10–14), while only the righteous would be protected by Yahweh (33:2–4) and could dwell in the blessings of Yahweh's presence (33:5–6, 15–24). Continuing that exact line of thought, Yahweh's anger at all the Gentile nations (34:1–4) is particularized with the nation of Edom, which he will destroy in vengeance (34:5–8) and turn their land into a fiery and uninhabitable wasteland (34:9–17). By contrast, the redeemed will experience joy at the desert's transformation into a verdant garden and a restored Zion

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<sup>33</sup> Prophetic from the time of original utterance; historical from the point of view of the final form of the book of Isaiah and the audience of Isaiah.

where only the righteous walk (35:1–10). In the six woes, Isaiah had likewise employed the contrasting imagery fiery judgment and a desert waste for the rebels (29:6; 30:33; 32:13–14; 33:8–9, 11–12, 14) and a lush garden paradise for the redeemed (e.g., 29:17; 30:25; 32:15–20) in order to differentiate the outcomes of the righteous who trust in Yahweh (blessing) and the wicked who do not (judgment).

Thus, Isaiah's contrast of **the desert and the garden (28:1–35:10)** presented the two paths that lay before his audience. On the one hand, they could repent of their covenant violations and trust in Yahweh, so leading to their experience of the “garden”—a restored Zion, land, and righteous leadership. On the other, they could continue to reject Yahweh and trust in themselves, foreign nations, and their “covenant with death.” But this path would only lead to the fiery judgment of Yahweh and a “desert”—a wasted and deserted land void of human life. Isaiah's presentation of the outcomes for these two paths established the logical and emotional basis for his argument. Logically, trusting in Yahweh would lead to the superior outcome (*logos*). Emotionally, the hope associated with the restoration surpassed the fear associated with judgment (*pathos*). Since Yahweh was all-powerful in his dealings with the nations and his plan for his righteous ruler (*ethos*), trusting in him over any other option represented the better choice (*logos*). And for the righteous remnant of Isaiah's day, they would need to continue hoping in their all-powerful God for the hope of resurrection and the restoration of Zion under the righteous Branch, Immanuel, in the midst of the purifying judgment. In these ways, this section contributed to Isaiah's overall deliberative purpose that (1) the unbelieving majority would repent of their covenant violations and hope in Yahweh, and (2) the believing remnant would fearlessly and patiently endure the time of purification while awaiting Immanuel and the promised eschatological restoration.

Isaiah's account of **Sennacherib's judgment (36:1–37:38)** served as a narrative demonstration with several purposes. First, it exemplified Yahweh's all-powerful ability to protect the faithful remnant and to judge kings and nations (*ethos*). Yahweh's historically verifiable protection of Hezekiah and the residents of Jerusalem from Sennacherib demonstrated how he could deliver those who trusted in him. It also portrayed the judgment of those who mocked Yahweh and those trusting in him (36:4–10, 15, 18–20) when the angel destroyed the 185,000 (37:36) and Sennacherib died (37:38). Both of these judgments occurred as per Isaiah's predictions about Assyria (8:6–10; 10:5–19, 25–34; 30:31; 31:4–9).

Second, the narrative functioned to bolster Isaiah's credibility as a legitimate prophet of Yahweh (who knows the end from the beginning) because he had previously predicted the judgment of the Assyrian king (8:6–10; 10:5–19, 25–34; 30:31; 31:4–9) (*ethos*). Isaiah's historically fulfilled prophecies thus lend credibility to his yet-future predictions because logically, if his past predictions were fulfilled, so would his future prophecies (*logos*). This conclusion lends gravity to Isaiah's entire message (*ethos*) and therefore functioned to persuade the audience to heed Isaiah's words.

Third, the narrative demonstrated the contrasting outcomes between Ahaz who refused to trust Yahweh (ch. 7) with Hezekiah, who did. Both narratives included explicit mention of the aqueduct of the Upper Pool on the road to the Launderer's Field (7:3; 36:2). Both involved the threat of Assyrian forces against Jerusalem (7:17–20; 36:1). But Ahaz's distrust (7:12) contrasted with Hezekiah's trust (37:14–20) and resulted in destruction for Ahaz (7:17–25) but deliverance for Hezekiah (37:21–38). For the audience, Hezekiah's trust in Yahweh thus served as a paradigm (example) for them to follow (*ethos*).

Fourth, the narrative demonstrated Yahweh's promise of protection for the faithful remnant. Hezekiah's request that Isaiah pray for the remnant of Jerusalem (37:4) and Yahweh's positive response concerning the remnant, and specifically their fruitfulness (37:31) and their going out from Jerusalem and Mount Zion (37:32) connected back to Isaiah's previous promises concerning the restoration of the remnant in the kingdom (e.g., 10:20–22; 11:11–16; 28:5–6). The temporal deliverance of the remnant in Hezekiah's day thus served as a demonstrable act of Yahweh's eschatological deliverance of the remnant and thus a reason to trust in Yahweh (*logos* and *ethos*).

Fifth, Hezekiah's trust in Yahweh contrasts with not only Ahaz, but with all of the evil leaders whom Isaiah had lambasted (see Table 2 above) and produces the anticipation that perhaps Hezekiah is the righteous Branch and the leader whom Israel will be waiting for. This narrative expectation, however, will be removed once Hezekiah's personal failures become obvious in chs. 38–39.

Thus, Sennacherib's judgment (36:1–37:38) validates Isaiah's status a prophet (*ethos*), demonstrates Yahweh's power to both judge and deliver (*ethos*), provides a paradigm of trust in Yahweh for Isaiah's audience to follow (*ethos*), and demonstrates the contrasting between the faithful who receive deliverance (Hezekiah) and the faithless who get destroyed (Ahaz). The difference in outcomes presents the logical case for trusting Yahweh (*logos*). In these ways, this section contributed to Isaiah's overall deliberative purpose that (1) the unbelieving majority would repent of their covenant violations and hope in Yahweh, and (2) the believing remnant would fearlessly and patiently endure the time of purification while awaiting Immanuel and the promised eschatological restoration.

Isaiah's account of **Hezekiah's failure (38:1–39:8)** demonstrated that despite Hezekiah's stellar response to both the Assyrian threat against Jerusalem (chs. 36–37) and the divine healing he received (ch. 38), he actually was not the righteous Branch who would rule in Jerusalem and bring restoration (ch. 39). Hezekiah's humble response to his renewed lease on life (38:10–20, especially 38:15) was undercut by his prideful response to the Babylonian envoy (39:1–4) and his careless attitude toward Jerusalem's fate following his lifetime (39:5–8). The prophecy of Babylonian invasion (39:5–7) builds upon Isaiah's predictions regarding Yahweh's use of Babylon against Judah (chs. 13–14), and prepared the audience for what is to come. The faithful remnant would need to trust Yahweh as Hezekiah had despite the coming purifying judgment. Even though Hezekiah represented a paradigm of faith in Yahweh for Isaiah's audience (chs. 36–38), he failed as a leader of Judah. The audience would need to continue in faith while awaiting Immanuel, the righteous Branch, and the unbelievers, if they were to participate in the restoration, would need to humble themselves before Yahweh as Hezekiah had (*ethos*). In these ways, this section contributed to Isaiah's overall deliberative purpose that (1) the unbelieving majority would repent of their covenant violations and hope in Yahweh, and (2) the believing remnant would fearlessly and patiently endure the time of purification while awaiting Immanuel and the promised eschatological restoration.

In his description of **a new exodus (40:1–48:22)**, Isaiah appealed to the hope of restoration following judgment (*pathos*), Yahweh's incomparability (*ethos*), Israel's identity as the chosen servant of Yahweh (*ethos*), Yahweh's own servant who will establish justice on earth (*pathos*), and the promise of Babylon's judgment by Cyrus (*pathos*), in order to encourage his Judean audience during Manasseh's reign to trust in Yahweh. Having already established his

prophetic credentials as a legitimate spokesman for Yahweh by predicting verifiable events from the historical perspective of his audience (chs. 1–39), Isaiah's readers could be certain that his future visions would also come to pass. This is further emphasized by Isaiah's repetition of the motif about Yahweh's ability to declare events before they happen (41:22–23; 42:9; 43:9; 44:7; 46:10; 48:3, 5, 6).

First, Isaiah encouraged his Judean audience to trust in Yahweh by presenting the hope of restoration. He contrasted the nation's anticipated judgment under Babylon (ch. 39) with a visionary portrait of a “new exodus” for the Israelites as they return to the Promised Land from the nation's purifying judgment of exile (40:2–4, 11, 29–31).<sup>34</sup> Isaiah wrote his description of this restoration with an abundance of uplifting language intended to evoke a strong emotional response (*pathos*): “Comfort, comfort my people” (40:1); “[Yahweh] tends his flock like a shepherd … [he] carries them close to his heart” (40:11), “Do not fear, for I am with you … I will strengthen you and help you” (41:10), “I will sustain you and rescue you” (46:4) etc. Such language demonstrated Yahweh's love and would have the effect of engendering a positive response. This new exodus would be caused by Yahweh himself and by the instrument of his ḥaṣid, “anointed one,” Cyrus (44:24–46:13; 48:14–15). With Yahweh's regular insistence in this section that he alone declares the future (e.g., 41:22–23; 42:9; 43:9; 44:7, etc.) Isaiah's readers could be certain of this coming event. The refining judgment on the nation would result in a remnant saved for the sake of Yahweh's glory (48:10–11), but the wicked would not experience this peace (48:22).

Second, Isaiah encouraged his Judean audience to trust in Yahweh by elevating the majesty and incomparability of Yahweh (*ethos*). Isaiah demonstrated this by highlighting:

- The strength of Yahweh (40:10),
- His incomparability in all creation (40:12, 25–26; 46:5),
- His unfathomable wisdom (40:13–14, 28),
- His greatness as compared to the nations, which are nothing (40:15–18),
- His greatness as compared to idols (40:18–20, 41:22–29; 44:9–20),<sup>35</sup>
- His unique ability to declare the future before it happens (41:22–23; 42:9; 43:9; 44:7; 46:10; 48:3, 5, 6),
- His sovereignty over kings and kingdoms (40:23–24; 41:1–6; 43:13; 44:6), the very thing Isaiah had just demonstrated with both Ahaz (ch. 7) and Sennacherib (chs. 36–37),
- His eternality (40:28; 43:10),
- His status as the Creator (40:28; 44:24; 45:7–8, 12, 18; 48:13),
- His fearlessness in judgment (41:1),
- His transformation of the desert into a well-watered garden (41:17–20),
- His uniqueness as God (43:10; 44:6, 8; 45:5; 46:9),
- His uniqueness as savior (43:11–12; 45:20).

These characteristics of Yahweh constitute ethical appeals for why Isaiah's audience should return to Yahweh (i.e., covenant fidelity) and align themselves with Yahweh's unalterable plan for the nation (*ethos*).

<sup>34</sup> Isaiah frequently evoked imagery and language of the exodus (e.g., 43:2, 16–17, 20; 48:21).

<sup>35</sup> Contributing to the idea of Babylon's judgment: the gods of Babylon would prove impotent (46:1–11) to save Babylon from Cyrus, the “man” of 46:11.

Third, Isaiah encouraged his Judean audience to trust in Yahweh by appealing to their identity (*ethos*) as Yahweh's chosen people and elect servant (41:8–10; 43:1–7, 10, 21; 44:21). Because of this status as the elect nation of Yahweh, all their enemies would perish (41:11–16). Yet, because Israel had failed to fulfill its role by praising Yahweh (43:21) and had wearied Yahweh with their sins and offenses (43:24), judgment was necessary (43:26–28) and Yahweh would raise up the new servant in Israel's place (see next paragraph). Even so, Yahweh promised to bless the offspring of Jacob with his Spirit (44:1–5) and redeem the nation (44:21–23). Because of this gracious act, Isaiah intended his audience to repent of (especially) their idolatry and return to covenant fidelity (44:22). This constitutes an ethical appeal based on the identity of the audience as Israelites chosen by Yahweh and given to a particular—and inevitable—future for the nation. Isaiah essentially argued the Judeans should act in alignment with their true identity (*ethos*).

Fourth, Isaiah encouraged his Judean audience to trust in Yahweh by foretelling of Yahweh's Servant. Unlike the servant Israel (42:17–23) which would be judged by Yahweh for their covenant infidelity (42:24–25), Yahweh's servant would establish justice on the earth (42:1–9), the very thing Israel should have done. Isaiah had already mentioned this Servant previously in his book as the righteous Branch (4:2; 11:1) and Immanuel (7:14). In contrast to Isaiah's long list of indictments against the leaders of Judah (see Table 2 above), this Servant will establish the kingdom and reign in righteousness and justice.

Fifth, Isaiah encouraged his Judean audience to trust in Yahweh by foretelling of Babylon's destruction. Even though Yahweh would use Babylon as a means of judgment upon Israel (47:6), neither the gods of Babylon nor the conjurer's magic spells nor any ransom would be able to deliver Babylon from the coming judgment of Cyrus, the "man" (46:11) "anointed" by Yahweh (45:1) to fulfill his purposes with Israel (44:28; 45:4, 13). The impotence of the Babylonian gods (46:1–11) served a secondary function to persuade the Judeans of the futility of serving powerless idols who, unlike Yahweh, could not see the future (48:3–6). Since Cyrus would restore the Israelites to Jerusalem and allow them to rebuild the temple, he would need to overpower the Babylonians who held Israel captive. Thus, in alignment with Babylon's judgment foretold in chs. 13–14, the inevitable judgment on Babylon noted here (chs. 46–47) would provide hope for the righteous remnant that Yahweh would sovereignly orchestrate kings and kingdoms to bring about the restoration (*pathos*). For the unbelieving majority, the hope of participation in the restoration functioned as an appeal to repent and join the faithful remnant (*pathos*).

Thus, Isaiah's description of a new exodus (40:1–48:22) proclaimed five major reasons why his Judean audience in Manasseh's day should trust in Yahweh. Isaiah's own proven credibility as one who prophetically foretold future events (chs. 1–39) validated Yahweh's own incomparability in declaring the future (*ethos*), and Yahweh's foretelling of Cyrus' role, Babylon's judgment, Israel's restoration, and Yahweh's servant all function to produce hope (*pathos*) based on the established character of Yahweh (*ethos*).<sup>36</sup> In these ways, this section contributed to Isaiah's overall deliberative purpose that (1) the unbelieving majority would repent of their covenant violations and hope in Yahweh, and (2) the believing remnant

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<sup>36</sup> The same message of hope and restoration would of course apply to the generations of Judeans who actually experienced the exile.

would fearlessly and patiently endure the time of purification while awaiting Immanuel and the promised eschatological restoration.

In his vision of **Yahweh's Servant (49:1–55:13)**, Isaiah appealed to prophecies concerning the Servant who would suffer on behalf of Israel—and the Gentiles—to bring them salvation and life in the kingdom so that the Judean audience in Manasseh's reign would repent and trust in Yahweh, thereby gaining participation in the joyful and blessed kingdom of the Servant. This section persuades by (1) offering promises of restoration in the kingdom based on Yahweh's character (*ethos*), (2) offering the hope of participation in the joyful restoration of Jerusalem in the kingdom for those who trust Yahweh in contrast to the fearful judgment for those who refuse (*pathos* and *logos*), and (3) prophecies about Yahweh's Servant will make all of the above possible (*ethos*).

First, Isaiah encouraged his Judean audience to trust in Yahweh because the eschatological restoration of Jerusalem depended on Yahweh's character (*ethos*). Isaiah pointed to Yahweh who cut Rahab to pieces (51:9), dried up the sea (51:10),<sup>37</sup> was the Maker of Israel (51:13), set the heavens and earth in their place (51:16), declared events before they occurred (52:6), was the God of all the earth (54:5), and provided his Servant (i.e., the Messiah) who would suffer on behalf of the servant Israel, atone for her sins, and grant those trusting in Yahweh the ability to serve him (54:17). Yahweh's higher thoughts and ways (55:9), deep compassion (54:7), everlasting loyal love for Jerusalem (מִלְאָכָל עַזְּךָ, 54:7–10), covenantal fidelity sworn by oath (54:9–10), and his word which does not return void (55:10–11) would bring the righteous remnant to restoration in order to serve him (54:17; 55:12–13). These elements all serve to build up Yahweh's character, thus making both himself and his offer of restoration more appealing to Isaiah's audience and bolstering their ability to trust in such a character (*ethos*).

Second, Isaiah encouraged his Judean audience to trust in Yahweh by offering the hope of participation in the joyful restoration of Jerusalem in the kingdom exclusively to those with faith (*pathos* and *logos*). In the New Exodus, Jerusalem would be redeemed and restored as a holy city (52:1, 9; 54:11–12) and comforted by Yahweh (52:9), the enemies of Israel subdued (49:22–23; 51:23; 54:3, 14, 17), the desert wasteland made into a garden like Eden (51:3), the land full of joy and rejoicing (49:13; 51:3, 11; 52:8–9; 54:1), the sons of Jerusalem taught by Yahweh (54:13), and a righteousness from Yahweh (54:17). These benefits of the servants of Yahweh (54:17) and the characteristics of the kingdom would elicit much hope (*pathos*). They must accept the invitation in order to become servants (55:1–3). They must trust in Yahweh (50:10), seek Yahweh (51:1; 55:6) and call upon him (55:6), forsake their wicked ways and thoughts (55:7), and turn to Yahweh who will mercifully pardon them (55:7). Should they do this, then an eternal salvation outlasting the heavens and earth would be theirs (51:6). Isaiah portrayed this faith as walking in the light of Yahweh (50:10). On the other hand, those who lit their own fires and torches (i.e., trusted in themselves) would lie down in torment as per the will of the Servant (50:11). Since life in the kingdom represented a far superior outcome than judgment, the path of faith was the more logical choice (*logos*). Thus, the elements contribute to Isaiah's argument that his audience should trust in Yahweh.

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<sup>37</sup> A reference to the first exodus under Moses. Such language and allusions firmly establish the regathering of the Israelites and the restoration of Jerusalem as a New Exodus. See also 49:9–12, 18, 20–23; 50:2; 51:10; 52:12.

Third, Isaiah encouraged his Judean audience to trust in Yahweh by revealing prophecies about Yahweh's Servant who will make the restoration possible (*ethos*). Whereas no leader was found from among the sons of Jerusalem (51:18), Yahweh's Servant (the Messiah) would (1) restore Israel (49:5–6), (2) bring salvation to the Gentiles (49:6), (3) restore the Promised Land to Israel (49:8), (4) guide the Israelites on a New Exodus (49:9–12, 18, 20–23; 50:2; 51:10; 52:12), (5) and suffer (50:3, 6–8) and die (53:8, 9, 10) on behalf of Israel's sins (53:5, 8, 11, 12), but would then see life (53:10, 11). Unlike the servant Israel, Yahweh's Servant would not rebel or turn away (50:5). Because of the actions of this righteous and suffering Servant, Zion and her people could be redeemed and restored in the eschaton. Isaiah intended such promises tied to the righteous Servant of Yahweh to produce great hope among his readers (*pathos*).

Thus, Isaiah's vision of Yahweh's Servant (49:1–55:13) pointed to the (messianic) Servant who would suffer on behalf of the “un-serving” servant Israel in order to redeem and restore Jerusalem and her people so that they would serve Yahweh. The characteristics of the kingdom for those trusting in Yahweh contrast with judgement for those who did not, so presenting a strong emotional and logical argument for trusting in Yahweh (*pathos* and *logos*). That Yahweh tied such restoration to his own character and reputation served as an ethical appeal (*ethos*) to trust Isaiah's vision, and so to repent and trust Yahweh. In these ways, this section contributed to Isaiah's overall deliberative purpose that (1) the unbelieving majority would repent of their covenant violations and hope in Yahweh, and (2) the believing remnant would fearlessly and patiently endure the time of purification while awaiting Immanuel and the promised eschatological restoration.

Isaiah's revealing of the **contrasting destinies (56:1–59:21)** of the righteous and the wicked contributed to his argument that the unbelieving majority should repent and place their trust in Yahweh. This section employed emotional and logical appeals which focused on contrasting outcomes based on one's choice to trust in Yahweh or not (*pathos* and *logos*).

Emotionally, the hope and peace associated with the righteous remnant served as an argument to repent and join the remnant, while the descriptions of judgment for the unbelieving would elicit a fearful emotional response (*pathos*). To the righteous would come blessing (56:2), peace (57:2, 19), inheritance of the land (57:13; 58:14), healing (57:18–19; 58:8), comfort (57:18), restoration (57:18; 58:12), the protection of Yahweh (58:8), guidance (58:11), provision (58:11), and joy (58:14). These benefits contribute to the emotional and logical argument for why the unbelievers in Isaiah's audience should repent and join the righteous remnant (*pathos* and *logos*). On the other hand, the destiny of those propagating injustice, bloodshed, and idolatry (57:3–10) would involve Yahweh's anger (57:16; 59:18), retribution (59:18), lack of peace (57:20–21),<sup>38</sup> and a designation as Yahweh's enemies (59:18). While the unbelieving majority may have insisted on their own righteousness, it was merely superficial obedience (58:1–5). But Yahweh demanded true obedience (58:5–14). Their sins had caused a rift with Yahweh (59:2) not because of his powerlessness to save (59:1), but because of their covenant infidelity (59:2–8). In line with Isaiah's vision of Yahweh's Servant (49:1–55:13) effecting righteousness, Isaiah again noted how Israel's drunken leaders were blind, greedy, and without understanding (56:10–

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<sup>38</sup> See also 48:22; 50:22.

12) and unable to establish justice (59:15–16). Therefore, Yahweh himself would effect righteousness and salvation (59:16–17) when the Redeemer came to Zion (59:20).

Furthermore, the fact that people from far and wide (outside of Israel) would join the remnant in their faith in Yahweh contributed to the fear of exclusion from an honored community (*pathos*). That even eunuchs (56:4) and foreigners (56:3, 6) from all nations (56:7, 8; 59:19) would be gathered to worship Yahweh established an honored community with unexpected participants, so creating anxiety among Isaiah's audience of exclusion from this honored community (*pathos*). This community would function as Yahweh's servants (56:6) and receive many benefits (see previous paragraph).

Thus, by foretelling of the contrasting destinies (56:1–59:21) of the righteous and the wicked, Isaiah emphasized for his Judean audience during Manasseh's reign the hope and the benefits associated with repenting and trusting in Yahweh (*pathos* and *logos*). He also forecasted the doom of the unbelievers and laid aside their possible excuses (*pathos* and *logos*). Their judgment would come not because Yahweh couldn't or wouldn't save, but because of their own unrepentant sin. Indeed, the Redeemer would come to Zion and bring restoration to the city and the remnant. Furthermore, the participation of people from many nations in the eschatological restoration established the honored community of which exclusion was disgraceful (*pathos*). In these ways, this section contributed to Isaiah's overall deliberative purpose that (1) the unbelieving majority would repent of their covenant violations and hope in Yahweh, and (2) the believing remnant would fearlessly and patiently endure the time of purification while awaiting Immanuel and the promised eschatological restoration.

Isaiah's vision of the **vindication of Zion and her people (60:1–63:6)** cast a glorious image for the righteous and restored Jerusalem and the honored community privileged with enjoying life therein. No longer would Jerusalem be a murderous harlot (1:21), but a righteous and holy city freed from the presence and effects of the wicked. This vision functioned to offer hope to the righteous remnant for their certain future, and to persuade the unbelieving majority to repent trust Yahweh. Instead of the judgment and condemnation that a vengeful God (61:2; 63:1–6) would inflict upon his enemies, they would gain participation in the honored community and the benefits of the restored Jerusalem (*pathos* and *logos*).

The vision portrayed the restored Jerusalem (61:4) as a city of righteousness (60:17, 21; 61:3, 10, 11; 62:1–2), joy (60:5; 61:3, 7), peace (60:17), riches (60:5–7, 9, 11, 17; 61:6–7), security (60:17–18; 62:8–9), comfort (61:2), and honor (62:6–7). Yahweh would regather the righteous remnant to Jerusalem (60:4, 9), reward (61:6; 62:11) and honor (61:9) them, enter an everlasting covenant with them (61:6),<sup>39</sup> and vindicate them before their enemies (60:14; 62:2). Unlike the failed leaders of Judah (63:5) this honored community would serve Yahweh (61:6). The righteous from among the Gentiles would likewise be included in the honored community (60:3, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13; 61:5, 11; 62:10). The inclusion of Gentiles in the blessed and honored community as unexpected participants would elicit anxiety and jealousy among Isaiah's audience that they could be excluded from this honored community (*pathos*), thus having a persuading function to join the remnant by repentance and trust in Yahweh. Alternatively, they would be counted among Yahweh's enemies and face ruin (60:12), vengeance (61:2), and the wrathful

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<sup>39</sup> While not specified within the text, this is likely a reference to the New Covenant. See this author's exposition of Jeremiah which contains a detailed excursus on the New Covenant.

judgment of Yahweh's Redeemer who will remove the wicked from the earth (63:1–6).<sup>40</sup> This alternative would evoke a fearful emotional response (*pathos*).

Thus, in his vision of the vindication of Zion and her people (60:1–63:6), Isaiah contrasted the benefits of unbelievers joining the righteous remnant by faith in Yahweh and so experiencing the blessings of the restored Jerusalem in the kingdom, against the fearful vengeance and judgment of Yahweh's Redeemer / Servant (*pathos*). By virtue of its superior outcomes, the path of faith was the more logical choice (*logos*). Isaiah also increased the appeal and jealousy of the Judean audience (fear of missing out) by highlighting the participation in the honored community by Gentiles from all nations (*pathos*). In these ways, this section contributed to Isaiah's overall deliberative purpose that (1) the unbelieving majority would repent of their covenant violations and hope in Yahweh, and (2) the believing remnant would fearlessly and patiently endure the time of purification while awaiting Immanuel and the promised eschatological restoration.

**Isaiah's lament (63:7–64:11 MT [64:12])** functioned as one last persuasive effort to convince his audience of their own guilt (judicial rhetoric) and leave them in an emotional state of despair and angst (*pathos*) in preparation for the final warnings in chs. 65–66 for the wicked. If the Judean audience in Manasseh's day recognized and admitted their own guilt, along with the associated terror of punishment, this would powerfully persuade them to repent and trust in Yahweh.

This lament functioned to demonstrate Israel's culpability (judicial rhetoric). Despite the abundance of Yahweh's loyal love (־ָמֵן), compassion, goodness, and salvation to the nation (63:7–9)—and especially during the Exodus (63:11–14)—Israel had grievously rebelled (63:10). Their godly lineage (63:16) would not overcome their covenant infidelity and failure to trust in Yahweh which resulted in the separation the chosen nation and their God (63:15–19). Isaiah's prophetic-retrospective lament about the desolation of Jerusalem and destruction of the temple (63:18; 64:9–10 MT [64:10–11]) reflected the reality of the pervasive sin in Israel (64:4–6 MT [64:5–7]). Since the sins of Manasseh's generation would result in the desolation of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple (see also 2 Kgs 21:10–15), Isaiah used this vision as a means of establishing the guilt of his audience (judicial rhetoric) and leaving them in a state of despair (*pathos*).<sup>41</sup> Isaiah's concluding question regarding Yahweh punishing them beyond measure (64:11 MT [64:12]) left the reader in a place of tension and ambiguity causing emotional angst (*pathos*). This emotional state would prepare the audience to receive the final warnings in chs. 65–66 concerning the fate of the wicked. In this way, Isaiah's lament (63:7–64:11 MT [64:12]) contributed to Isaiah's overall deliberative purpose that (1) the unbelieving majority would repent of their covenant violations and hope in Yahweh, and (2) the believing remnant would fearlessly and patiently endure the time of purification while awaiting Immanuel and the promised eschatological restoration.

Isaiah's vision of the **Jerusalem restored (65:1–66:24)** functioned to contrast the fate of the righteous remnant and the wicked, unbelieving majority. His glorious description of

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<sup>40</sup> Part of the salvation of the remnant includes the removal of the wicked from the earth (63:5–6).

<sup>41</sup> The mention of the temple's destruction does not necessitate an author other than Isaiah. Rather, Isaiah ca. the 8<sup>th</sup> century offered a prophetic reflection on what the sins of Manasseh's generation would cause.

the restored Jerusalem in the “new heavens and new earth” (65:17)<sup>42</sup> would elicit a hopeful and longing response in his audience (*pathos*), resolving the tension introduced in Isaiah’s lament (63:7–64:11 MT [64:12]) (see section above). The glorious vision for the faithful remnant contrasted against the terrifying destiny of the unrepentant wicked (*pathos*). As elsewhere, the contrasting outcomes constitute a logical appeal since the path of faith would result in the more beneficial outcome (*logos*).

Concerning the destiny of the unrepentant wicked, Isaiah pointed to their obstinate rebellion despite his availability to be found (65:1–5). They would experience the full wages of their sins (65:6–7). Yet, in answer to Isaiah’s question at the conclusion of his lament if they would be punished beyond measure (64:11 MT [64:12]), the punishment would not extend to the entire nation (65:8–9). The faithful remnant who served Yahweh would not perish, but inherit the land (65:9–10). The wicked, however, would meet be slaughtered (65:11–12). Isaiah’s contrasts between Yahweh’s servants and the wicked (65:13–16) show the diametrically opposed outcomes between the two groups. The glorious vision of life in the restoration (65:17–25) offered tremendous hope (*pathos*) for the remnant, and an incentive for the unbelievers to join the remnant by faith and so participate in the restoration. But they could only participate by humbling themselves (66:2). Those who performed superficial acts of religion but failed to humble the heart (66:3) would be judged (66:4–6). The restored Jerusalem would have her “children”—the remnant—(66:7–11) who would experience Yahweh’s peace and comfort (66:12–13) while functioning as his servants to go to their brethren (Jews) among the Gentile nations to bring them as worshipers to Zion from all nations (66:18–21). Thus, the failure of the leaders of Israel and Judah in Isaiah’s day to serve Yahweh resulting in a purifying judgment leads to Yahweh sending his Servant to suffer on behalf of the servant Israel in order to produce a purified remnant of Jews who will serve Yahweh and bring their brethren to worship Yahweh, so resolving the problem of failed leaders in Israel. The participation of Israelites from all the nations in the worship of Yahweh in the restored Jerusalem (66:19–21) functioned to elicit jealousy in the Judean audience for the fear of missing out on participating in the glorious and restored community of Israel (*pathos*). The final sober warning concerning the rebels (66:24) contrasted the fate of the remnant with the unbelievers, and was designed to elicit fear and longing to *not* be among the loathsome dead being looked on by the righteous (*pathos*). Isaiah intended this horrid image to drive his audience to trust in Yahweh.

Thus, in his vision of Jerusalem restored (65:1–66:24), Isaiah amplified the stark contrasts in destiny between the righteous remnant and the unbelieving majority. The alternating visions of glory and judgment, honor and shame, and beauty and abhorrence, all function to elicit an emotional response: hope for the believing remnant and fear for the unbelieving majority (*pathos*). The believers could trust in Yahweh through the coming purifying judgment because of their certain participation in the restoration of Jerusalem. Isaiah intended the unbelieving majority to feel the emotional weight of future judgment and the intense loss of missing out on the glorious restoration of Jerusalem (*pathos*). But should they humble themselves and trust in Yahweh, they could gain participation in the restoration. These appeals contributed to Isaiah’s overall deliberative purpose that (1) the unbelieving majority would repent of their covenant violations and hope in Yahweh, and (2) the believing remnant would fearlessly and patiently

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<sup>42</sup> Based on the descriptions of

endure the time of purification while awaiting Immanuel and the promised eschatological restoration.

At the level of the whole the book, Jerusalem in Manasseh's reign had become a murderous harlot (1:21). But Yahweh intended to transform this harlot into a glorious and holy city with righteous servants of Yahweh (ch. 66). Since all the rulers of Israel and Judah failed to serve him and thus produce righteousness, Yahweh would send his Servant, Immanuel, the Redeemer, to suffer on behalf of the nation's sins. This Servant would gain salvation for the trusting remnant and judge the unpenitent rebels through Gentile nations and through his own punishing hand. Isaiah wanted the remnant to fearlessly endure through the purifying judgment of destruction and exile because of their hope in the restoration, where they would finally function as Yahweh's servants. Isaiah further wanted the unbelieving majority of Manasseh's day to repent of their covenant violations and trust in Yahweh. Participation in the glorious restoration of Jerusalem and the threat of judgment both functioned as incentives to repent. Either way, Isaiah had validated his status as a legitimate prophet by foretelling that Yahweh would protect Jerusalem from Assyria and judge its king. Since his previous prophecies came true, the audience could be certain that his prophecies of the future would likewise come to pass.

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