

ISAIAH

ISAIAH 52:1-5, ZION RESTORED; JERUSALEM REDEEMED, PART 1

More revelation is now forthcoming relating to the eschatological future of the nation. It is a glorious future, a peaceful future, and a future guaranteed by the God of Israel. The following Scriptures are Messianic Kingdom truth; therefore, they have yet to occur in any way.

Isaiah 52:1-2 ¹Awake [עִיר], awake, Clothe yourself in your strength, O Zion; Clothe yourself in your beautiful [תְּפִאָּרָה] garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; For the uncircumcised [עֵרֵל] and the unclean [טָמֵא] Will no longer come into you. ²Shake [נָעַר] yourself from the dust, rise up [קוּם], O captive [שְׁבוּיָה] Jerusalem; Loose [פָּתַח] yourself from the chains around your neck, O captive [שְׁבוּיָה] daughter of Zion.

In Isaiah 51:9, the nation was calling on Yahweh to awaken and remember the Exodus when He saved the nation out of Egyptian slavery so that just as He saved them then, He should save them now. What this plea ignores is the fact that God told them how to avoid all this in the first place (Lv. 26; Dt. 28). God is not responsible for the separation, and even abandonment, the Israelites feel in terms of their relationship with Yahweh. They left Him; He did not leave them. In Isaiah 51:17, it was God who called on the nation to awaken and accept the revelation that even though they were drinking from the cup of the Lord's anger, that cup was going to be removed from them and instead be imposed on their tormentors. Here, in Isaiah 52:1, God once again calls upon the nation to awaken, but this time it will be to their redemption and glorious restoration. This will come about through the ministry of the Suffering Servant the nature of which is revealed next in Isaiah 52:13-53:12. When the nation is walking in the darkness of rebellion and therefore itself asleep, it seems to be quite out of line for the nation to accuse God of being asleep and failing to act on their behalf as He acted in the Exodus. When God calls on them to awaken, the foolishness of their request for Him to awaken becomes apparent. After all, the God of Israel never slumbers nor sleeps and accusing Him of being asleep, which implies that He is ignoring the nation's needs for protection and deliverance, is a mark of unbelief.

Psalms 121:3-4 ³He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber. ⁴Behold, He who keeps Israel Will neither slumber nor sleep.

Zion and Jerusalem represent the whole of the nation which is figuratively compared to being asleep for the duration of the time that the nation has been suffering under the divine temporal disciplinary program of the nation's Creator God. Now, the nation is called upon to awaken in order to realize their restoration.

Awake, עִיר, means to stir, to arouse, to awaken. It is used of raising something or someone to action or of motivating someone. This is an imperative verb, a command to awaken.

The beautiful garments are an allusion to the fact that Israel was to be God's "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6) and the garments are therefore priestly garments

[cf. J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*, 328]. They are certainly going to fulfill that role once the Kingdom is inaugurated. Furthering that priestly image is the fact that the city is called the "holy city." Jerusalem is uniquely God's holy city which the Old Testament makes abundantly clear, but it will also be the preeminent city of the Messianic Kingdom. The Temple will be there and the Messiah King will be on His throne there.

"She is to prepare herself for emancipation by donning her high-priestly apparel. She is to put on her strength in the place of her weakness and shameful disgrace and her beautiful garments, that is, her priestly and royal adornments, proper for her as the holy city, the seat of the Temple and service of God" [Merrill F. Unger, "Isaiah" in *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1290].

They are also to put on their strength which is strength that can only come from God, and will only be theirs when the nation is redeemed and restored. The Israelites, as with all people, have no strength apart from God. "While she has no strength to deliver herself, she does have strength to lay hold of God's promises and must exercise that strength if deliverance is to be realized." [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 360].

The impartation of strength from God to the Israelites is a Kingdom promise.

Isaiah 12:2 ²"Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; For the LORD GOD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation."

Isaiah 58:11 ¹¹"And the LORD will continually guide you, And satisfy your desire in scorched places, And give strength to your bones; And you will be like a watered garden, And like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.

This concept of putting on strength and garments suggests a new role for the nation, which is exactly the situation when the Kingdom begins. Concerning putting on new clothing, this is a general theme in Scripture that appears in other places and equally applies to pagan situations.

Belshazzar promised new clothes and new authority to the man who could read the handwriting on the wall.

Daniel 5:7 ⁷The king called aloud to bring in the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners. The king spoke and said to the wise men of Babylon, "Any man who can read this inscription and explain its interpretation to me shall be clothed with purple and have a necklace of gold around his neck, and have authority as third ruler in the kingdom."

When Joseph was elevated to second-in-command in Egypt by Pharaoh, his new status was confirmed by a change in clothing.

Genesis 41:41-43 ⁴¹Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." ⁴²Then Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put the gold necklace around his neck.

⁴³He had him ride in his second chariot; and they proclaimed before him, "Bow the knee!" And he set him over all the land of Egypt.

Joshua was given a change of clothing signifying his appointment as High Priest.

Zechariah 3:4–5 ⁴He spoke and said to those who were standing before him, saying, "Remove the filthy garments from him." Again he said to him, "See, I have taken your iniquity away from you and will clothe you with festal robes." ⁵Then I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments, while the angel of the LORD was standing by.

It is probably technically incorrect to say that the strength and the beautiful garments the nation will acquire signify a "new" role in the Messianic Kingdom as that new clothing suggested in the above Scriptures. It is true that it will be a role they have never filled before, but that is only because they rejected their assigned role from the beginning. They will finally and completely fulfill that role once the Kingdom is inaugurated. It is an "old" role in the sense that it was their original assignment, but it is a "new" role in the sense that they will only then accept their responsibility to fulfill it.

The garments are described as beautiful. Beautiful, תְּפִאָרָה, means beauty, glory, splendor, radiance, fame, and honor relating, in this context, to the state or quality of giving high attribution or status to someone. This is why many theologians believe these garments are indicating the Kingdom throne.

The uncircumcised and the unclean will not be allowed into the Kingdom and therefore they will never enter the Kingdom city. Because only those who have experienced justification salvation will enter the Kingdom, no one unclean will be able to enter the city. Once the Kingdom begins, uncircumcised Gentiles will be allowed into the city; therefore, uncircumcision must have some sort of figurative meaning in this context. Gentiles, formerly considered unclean, must also be considered clean because they will go to the holy city for various reasons. They will go there to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles (Zech. 14:16), and they will go there to learn the ways of the Lord (Is. 2:3).

Uncircumcised, עָרֵל, obviously may refer to the lack of circumcision on the part of any male who is not part of the Abrahamic Covenant community. However, it also has figurative uses that are in play here. In this context, it may be a reference to Israel's oppressors (Is. 49:26) and tormentors (Is. 51:23). God's promise is that people like these will never invade the holy city again. Figuratively, the word refers to those who are "stubborn, unbelieving, unrepentant, unhearing, uncircumcised, i.e., pertaining to a person or inner-being that is unresponsive in obedience to God" [James A. Swanson, s.v. "עָרֵל," *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)*, Logos electronic ed.].

Unclean, טָמֵא, is a word particularly used to refer to ritual uncleanness in conformance with that which the Mosaic Law declares to be impure regarding persons and animals. It may also refer to being impure or polluted in a moral sense. Throughout the nation's history, the nation has, for the most part, operated in a state of filthiness, but when the Messianic Kingdom is inaugurated, God will make the nation completely clean.

Ezekiel 24:13 ¹³“In your filthiness is lewdness. Because I *would* have cleansed you, Yet you are not clean, You will not be cleansed from your filthiness again Until I have spent My wrath on you.

Ezekiel 36:24–25 ²⁴“For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. ²⁵“Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

“The uncircumcised (‘the pagans who were “unclean” and outside the pale of covenant blessings’), as well as every unclean person ‘defiled ritually or morally’) who had hitherto forced his way into her sacred precincts and desecrated her, shall not only be kept from invading her, but also from ever again conquering her and reducing her to such depths of woe as had been her lot” [Merrill F. Unger, “Isaiah” in *Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1290-1291].

Furthermore, the concept of what constitutes the state of being unclean, if it exists at all, will most likely be different in the Messianic Kingdom. The Mosaic Law has been abolished and will not be operative in the Kingdom. There will, however, be a system of Kingdom Law established, but there is little revelation concerning the details of it. Whether something is specifically identified as clean or unclean as part of it is not known, but we may safely say that the concepts of morality and sin will certainly be included in it. In the Kingdom, the concepts of “clean” and “unclean” will probably be spiritual issues and not ritual issues of the flesh.

There are three commands issued in verse 2: shake, rise, and loose.

Shake, נָעַר, means to shake out or off, i.e., to shake oneself free from someone or something. It has the sense of moving or causing to move back and forth. This verb form is intensive and reflexive, “intensely shake yourself.” The nation is to intensely shake themselves out of the dust in which they have been existing for so long.

Rise, קָוַם, means to get up, arise, stand up referring to assuming a standing position.

Loose, פָּתַח, means to free oneself. The verb form is intensive reflexive, “intensely loose yourself.”

There is a textual issue in this verse concerning the word translated “captive.” This is possibly another command, “sit.” The word “captive” is used twice in the NASB, once in relation to “O captive [שָׁבִי] Jerusalem,” and once in relation to “O captive [שְׁבִיָּה] daughter of Zion.” The Masoretic Text has two different words for “captive” that most interpreters translate as “captive.” However, the word in connection to Jerusalem is “sit” which is thought to be connected to sitting on a throne. “The Hebrew text has שָׁבִי, a feminine singular imperative from יָשַׁב (‘sit’). Some interpret this to mean ‘take your throne’ (cf. the NIV). However, the form could be a corruption of שְׁבִיָּה (‘captive’) which appears in the parallel line. The NRSV and the NET Bible translates the word as ‘captive’” [Masoretic Text, Logos electronic ed., note on Isaiah 52:2 (שָׁבִי)].

The problem is that the text must be changed to support translating the word שָׁבִי as “captive” in connection with Jerusalem. The NET Bible translators admit that a change of text is necessary in order to support the conclusion that this word is parallel to the word translated “captive” in connection with daughter of Zion. “However, the form likely needs to be emended to שָׁבִיָּהּ (šēbīyā(h), ‘captive’), which appears in the parallel line (cf. NASB, RSV, NRSV)” [NET Bible, 2nd ed., s.v. “Isaiah 52:2,” 1305, n. j]. I don’t think we should be making those kinds of assumptions and then changing the text to suit our assumptions. The text makes good sense when the words are left as they are in the Masoretic Text.

Isaiah 52:2 ²... Sit [on your throne], Jerusalem! ... [TANAKH]

Isaiah 52:2 ²... sit enthroned, O Jerusalem ... [NIV]

Isaiah 52:2 ²... sit, Jerusalem! ... [LEB]

Isaiah 52:2 ²... sit, O Jerusalem ... [YLT, LSV]

The concept of sitting on a throne could also be an unwarranted insertion into the text, although that makes more sense simply because it at least relates to the nation’s strength and the beautiful garments aspects of the previous verse. The concept of sitting on a throne is at least related to the verb, “sit,” which makes more sense than “captive” does in this context. Jewish theologians certainly think it is related to the Millennial throne. “The Targ. reading ‘sit on a throne of glory’ probably catches the sense of what is intended. Babylon will have to go down from the throne ([Is.] 47:1) to sit in the dust, but Jerusalem will rise from the dust to sit on the throne” [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 361]. The nation no longer has to be prostrate on the ground in the dust; it is to rise to the glory God intended the nation to have by sitting free, strong, and clothed in magnificent clothing. This can only be a description of the status the nation will enjoy during the Messianic Kingdom.

The use of the reflexive verb forms, characterized by the pronoun “yourself,” indicates that the nation has an active role to play in rising up out of the dust and loosing itself from the chains in which it has been held captive. The role they play is one of finally placing their faith in Messiah when they see Him come to save them from destruction at the hands of the antichrist (Mt. 23:39). Many of them may have already done so throughout the course of the Tribulation, but they certainly must do so at the return of the Messiah, or it will be too late for all of those who continue to reject Him.

This all seems to be related to both physical and spiritual issues that the nation must be saved out of during the Tribulation, which is the climax of God’s divine disciplinary program with Israel. “Salvation is not by works or righteousness, but it does require faith. Humans cannot break the chains that bind them, but they must remove them, with His help, since God has promised that He will break them” [Thomas L. Constable, “Isaiah” in *Thomas Constable’s Notes on the Bible, Volume IV: Isaiah-Daniel*, 4:149]. It is only after the day of Jacob’s distress is finished that the restoration the following verses reveal will occur.

Everything that happened to the nation was the result of God’s reaction to the nation’s rebellion. He has allowed their captivity to take place, and He will redeem them once His purposes are served. That happened in Egypt, it happened in Babylon, it will happen

again during the Tribulation, and it happened at various times and places in between. Verses 3-6 are meant to encourage the Israelites to believe God's Word as revealed through the prophet and to respond accordingly.

Isaiah 52:3 ³For thus says the LORD, "You were sold [מָכַר] for nothing and you will be redeemed [גָּאָל] without money."

At first glance, it may seem contradictory to say that the nation was sold for nothing. Doesn't the word "sold" imply a *quid pro quo* exchange between the parties, usually involving money or other goods and services? Certainly, that is the primary meaning; however, there is a more figurative use of the word that verifies God's claim that the nation was "sold for nothing."

Sold, מָכַר, has the "nuanced sense of handing over, surrendering something such as God giving up His people" [Baker and Carpenter, s.v. "מָכַר," *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, 610]. It may mean to give up, to surrender, formally sell, i.e., to give over an object to another's possession without a *quid pro quo*, resulting in a focus on the transfer of possession as an extension of the act of selling an object or entity. "The Lord sold his people into the power of their enemies when he became displeased with them. Actually, the Israelites sold themselves: for nothing! But God would yet redeem them without money (Isa. 52:3)" [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. "מָכַר," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 504]. "[T]he word does not always mean sell, but merely refers to the handing over of something.... In many cases in the OT God sells Israel to his enemies ... All these cases should be understood as cases of war captives ..." [Willem A. VanGemeren, gen. ed., s.v. "מָכַר," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, 2:937].

"Ye have been sold; but this selling is merely a giving over to a foreign power, without the slightest advantage accruing to Him who had no other object in view than to cause them to atone for their sins, and without any other people taking their place, and serving Him in their stead as an equivalent for the loss He sustained. And there would be no need of silver to purchase the favour of Him who have given them up, since a manifestation of divine power would be all that would be required.... He always acts as the Absolute One, exalted above all earthly affairs, having no need to receive anything, but able to give everything. He receives no recompense, and gives none. Whether punishing or redeeming, He always guards His people's honour [sic], proving Himself in the one case to be all-sufficient, and in the other almighty, but acting in both cases freely from Himself" [C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Isaiah*, vol. 7, 7:495].

Even when God sold His people into captivity at various times throughout history, the nation was still His; He never gave up His ownership. He gave them over to temporal discipline according to His will, and He can redeem them out of temporal discipline according to His will. His right to rule the nation and do with it as He sees fit is why there are so many references to God's redemption and restoration of the nation; it is still His nation to redeem and restore. He was always actively ensuring the survival of the nation and the presence of a believing remnant.

Judges 3:8–9 ⁸Then the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, so that He sold [מָכַר] them into the hands of Cushan-rishathaim king of Mesopotamia; and the sons of Israel served Cushan-rishathaim eight years. ⁹When the sons of Israel cried to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the sons of Israel to deliver them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother.

“The people of God can have hope for their future ‘because’ (*kî* ‘for’ in 52:3) when God gives his people into the hands of their enemies, no compensation is paid. Therefore, there really is no formal sale or change of ownership; consequently, the people of Israel do not need to be redeemed with silver.... Thus, there is no external power that can prevent God from fulfilling his plan to redeem his people in the future” [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 419].

What does it mean to be redeemed without money? Isn't money the medium of exchange when it comes to paying the price of redemption required to free someone from slavery?

Redeemed, מָצַל, means bought or redeemed referring to an object or a person who has been delivered from danger by being purchased from indenture or slavery with a focus on the relationship of the new master. This word is also a reference to a kinsman-redeemer. “Theologically, this word is used to convey God's redemption of individuals from spiritual death and His redemption of the nation of Israel from Egyptian bondage and also from exile” [Baker and Carpenter, s.v. “מָצַלִּים,” *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, 176].

The Israelites will indeed be redeemed, but the last act of redemption for the nation's people is the redemption available through the Suffering Servant that will be revealed in Isaiah 52:13-53:12. There will be a price paid to redeem all Israel, but that price is not paid with the world's money; it is paid in the blood, the life, of the Messiah. The price has been paid, but the redemption will not actually occur until the end of the Tribulation. There is also a physical redemption of the people and the nation that occurs at the end of the Tribulation as well. As we will see, this truth is applicable to all people.

1 Corinthians 6:20 ²⁰For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

1 Corinthians 7:23 ²³You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.

1 Peter 1:18–19 ¹⁸knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, ¹⁹but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood of Christ*.

Whatever happens to Israel and the Israelites at the hands of foreigners, God will protect and preserve the nation. In the next three verses, the words “My people” are used three times emphasizing the fact that the Israelites are uniquely God's people. Apparently, some theologians claim that only part of Jacob's family went down to Egypt; however, when God uses that term to refer to the nation, the entirety of it is the intended meaning.

Isaiah 52:4 ⁴For thus says the Lord GOD [יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ], "My people went down at the first into Egypt to reside [גָּוַר] there; then the Assyrian oppressed them without cause [אֵפֶסֶת].

God's power to act is related to the title Lord God, יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ. Adonai signifies lord, master, and sovereignty leading to understanding this title as sovereign Yahweh.

The Israelites were invited into Egypt many years before to live there as resident aliens. Reside, גָּוַר, means to sojourn or to dwell in a place as an alien referring to living in the place as a stranger or as a guest, i.e., to be in a place with a focus that one is living as a guest or stranger in a place whether it is a territory, a city, or a house. Israel and his family went into Egypt at the request of Pharaoh, yet they were eventually enslaved thereby a later Pharaoh. But that fact is not mentioned here which is curious because their deliverance out of slavery seems to be the point. "Since the argument of 52:3 mentions that the people will be redeemed, the Egyptian experience may serve as a past analogical [comparison] example of God redeeming his people without needing to pay money" [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 420].

The reference to Assyria is also unclear, although it must refer to God's miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib's army (Is. 36-37). Assyria conquered the Northern Kingdom and deported most of the people, but they were never redeemed, and the Northern Kingdom was never reestablished as an independent nation, thereby removing that historical incident for consideration in this context. "Without cause" is probably better translated "for nothing." Cause, אֵפֶסֶת, means cessation or nothing which relates to a quantity of no importance. The Assyrians wasted their time and effort and gained nothing in their assault on Jerusalem, and, in fact, suffered a major defeat and lost 185,000 soldiers which must have devastated their military capabilities for some time (Is. 37:36).

"Those instances are cited to remind His people that He delivered them from the Egyptians and the Assyrians. What then would prevent Him from delivering His people from the Babylon of that day and the mystical Babylon (Rev. 17-18) of the last day?" [Merrill F. Unger, "Isaiah" in *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1291].

What is not unclear is that God has the power to redeem the nation from any and all adverse circumstances in which they may find themselves. At this point in the narrative, that seems to be the primary focus of the text.

In the next verse, the Israelites' situation in relation to those who are oppressing them and God's holy name are the focus of His revelation.

Isaiah 52:5 ⁵"Now therefore, what do I have here," declares the LORD, "seeing that My people have been taken away without cause?" *Again* the LORD declares, "Those who rule over them howl [יִלְלוּ], and My name is continually [תְּמִידָה] blasphemed [נִצָּן] all day long.

"Now therefore," which could be translated "and now," continues the thought of verse 4. What is to be done now in light of the fact that God can always deliver His people in all conditions and under any circumstances? While the Babylonian destruction of Judah

and the subsequent captivity in Babylon is still in the future, Isaiah had already warned them that Babylon was going to be a problem at some point in the near future (Is. 39:1-8). These words are applicable to Babylon, but they are also applicable to any similar future situation including, and especially, the persecution of the Tribulation judgment. Given the context of verses 1-2, the primary reference has to be to the Tribulation.

God asks the question, "what do I have here?" which is literally "what for me here?" There is no agreement concerning exactly what this means. It is probably reaching a conclusion to what has been revealed before. God's people have been taken for nothing, and they still belong to God; therefore, He is capable of redeeming them out of whatever situation that comes about. They need to understand that and realize they have a glorious future awaiting them.

Who is doing the howling? Is it the rulers who are oppressing them, or is it the Israelite rulers who are wailing over the situation in which the nation finds itself at the time in question? There is textual support for both positions.

Howl, יָלַל, means to howl, to wail, or to lament referring to making loud crying and shrill shouting noises of sorrow. It is a word expressing deep mourning or distress, even violent lamentation, over death or destruction.

If this is a reference to the oppressors, then the Qumran reading of the text is preferred over the Masoretic Text. "The reading of Isa 52:5 is doubtful; based on Qumran comparisons it is probable that the word is *hll* III, to describe the delusion of the rulers" [Willem A. VanGemeren, gen. ed., s.v. "דָּמַעַ," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, 1:977]. If this is correct, the word means boasting or mocking; therefore, this conforms with blasphemy in the next clause of the sentence, thus relating the two clauses with one another, and therefore refers to the oppressors. There are also other references in Isaiah to the concepts of mocking and blaspheming that are linked together (cf. Is. 36:4-20, 37:21-29).

If the Masoretic Text is correct, then the definition of *yā 'āl* meaning howling or wailing on the part of the nation's leadership as a lament over the nation's situation is the correct interpretation. "[T]he common usage of *yll* argues that it is a cry of anguish and defeat, and that it is thus the rulers of Israel who cry out.... If it is allowed to refer instead to Israel's general situation of being defeated before her enemies, both physical and spiritual, this figure is highly appropriate" [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 363].

There are numerous theologians on both sides of this issue. The Qumran text is by far the older text over the Masoretic Text, which usually indicates priority in terms of textual analysis. The conjunction connecting the two clauses is not a consecutive type of the conjunction, but that does not preclude linking the two together either. My opinion is that the world's rulers are depicted here as mocking Israel and dominating the nation, which is linked to the blasphemy of His name by the world.

God's name is holy and it is a serious affront to Him to blaspheme His name which is exactly what the oppressors of Israel do. Blaspheme, בָּזָא, means contempt, to spurn, to

despise, or to reject particularly to reject with contempt and derision. It refers to feeling contempt or strong dislike for an object by rejecting it as having little or no value or both by words or actions. The sense is one of despising by looking down on with disdain and possibly hatred.

The world mocks God and blasphemes His name because, in part, they think that Israel's plight signals God's failure to complete His plan for history. It appears to the world that God has abandoned Israel. If God cannot fulfill His promises to Israel, then He is a powerless God who cannot even keep His promises and He, along with the nation, are worthy of contempt. The nation has been small and insignificant, if not essentially non-existent, throughout history in relation to the rest of the world. Today, it is still a small nation with only a few million people, mostly unbelieving, that is under constant threat from Islam and from a world that hates God and therefore hates the Jewish people. The unfaithful Israelites set a bad example before the world by profaning His name in all the places of the *Diaspora*, which does not help the world see the truth concerning God's plans for the nation.

Ezekiel 36:20 ²⁰“When they came to the nations where they went, they profaned My holy name, because it was said of them, ‘These are the people of the LORD; yet they have come out of His land.’”

The world's blasphemy is constant; it never stops.

Continually, תָּמִיד, means continually, constantly, unceasing, perpetuity, regularly, i.e., a duration of time either constant or episodic, but continuous. It primarily means continuity which is something that is continuous and uninterrupted in succession. This word refers to regularly scheduled events such as the feasts, but it also refers to actions that repeatedly and continually occur although not on a set schedule which is the context here in Isaiah.

“That overwhelming proud bluster of the oppressor over captive Israel was a main reason why the Lord's *name*, which is the expression of all He is, was continually every day (a forceful pleonasm [the use of more words than are necessary to convey meaning] denoting unbroken continuousness) blasphemed, for God's name is inseparably connected with His people. Their captivity and suffering gave His enemies the opportunity to revile His name” [Merrill F. Unger, “Isaiah” in *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1291].

This is still the situation in the world. In the New Testament, Paul quoted this verse, and it has been relevant for nearly 3,000 years.

Romans 2:22–24 ²²You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God? ²⁴For “THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU,” just as it is written.

Israel has obviously played a role in the blasphemy of God's name by means of their unfaithful and rebellious behavior. “Nevertheless, the actions of the nations will prompt God's action, so that Israel, who has questioned God's delay in deliverance, will know that it is God who is rescuing them (52:6). God declares, ‘Here I am showing that I am

with you in your distress'" [Michael Rydelnik and James Spencer, "Isaiah" in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, 1086].

Of course, there is a spiritual component to all of this. If Yahweh cannot fulfill His plan for history concerning Israel and if He cannot protect and save the nation, then the world's gods are more powerful than Israel's God, or so the world thinks. The world's gods are nothing more than fronts for Satan, and the world's people are doing Satan's work within the framework of his world system that is in place at this time. Part of that work is the continual blasphemy of God predicated on what they believe is God's failure to keep His promises to Israel.

Once all of this happens and the Messianic Kingdom is inaugurated, not only Israel will realize that Yahweh is the one true God, but the world will recognize it as well. There will no longer be oppressor nations persecuting Israel to blaspheme the name of the God of Israel. "As a result of this messianic covenant [Ezek. 37:26] the Gentile nations will recognize that Israel's God is the only true God (because He has restored and reunified the nation, revived Davidic rule under the Messiah, and has returned His Presence to the midst of Israel at the Messianic Temple (v. 28))" [J. Randall Price, "Ezekiel 37:15-28: The Restoration of Israel under the One Shepherd" in *The Moody Handbook of Messianic Prophecy: Studies and Expositions of the Messiah in the Old Testament*, gen. ed. Michael Rydelnik and Edwin Blum, 1111].