

ISAIAH

ISAIAH 57:15-21, HEALING AND RESTORATION

The promise of restoration that began in verse 13 continues. It was revealed that those who take refuge in God, that is, believe in Him, will inherit the land and possess the holy mountain. There will be a way prepared to bring this believing remnant to the land where they will inherit the covenant promises and take their place in the Messianic Kingdom. This is a message of hope provided even though the nation was then, and still is, in rebellion against God.

Isaiah 57:15 ¹⁵For thus says the high [רַיָּם] and exalted [נִשְׂאָ] One Who lives [שָׂכֵן] forever [עַד], whose name is Holy [קָדוֹשׁ], "I dwell on a high and holy place, And also with the contrite [דַּכָּא] and lowly [שָׁפָל] of spirit In order to revive [חַיָּה] the spirit of the lowly And to revive the heart of the contrite.

God, who is incomparable in relation to His creation and wholly other in terms of identity, lives completely apart from His creation and yet He is present in His creation and working to superintend and maintain it. There are two concepts that describe this relationship: transcendence and immanence.

Transcendence means that God is uniquely other than everything in creation. Immanence means that "God is continuously active throughout the world providentially ... A study of providence as taught in Scripture shows that God sustains, guides, and governs all that he created ... The nature psalms reflect upon God's activity in relation to every aspect of the earth, the atmosphere, vegetation, and animal. God also preserves and governs human history, judging corrupt societies and blessing the just and the unjust with temporal benefits like the sunshine, rain, food, and drink. Through God's universal providential activity the cosmos holds together and his wise purposes of common grace are achieved" [G. R. Lewis, s.v. "God, Attributes of" *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., ed. Walter A. Elwell, 498-499].

The prophet Isaiah has been a conduit for the revelation of God's intimate involvement with Israel that was not only in the past, but continues on into the future. The Scriptures before us today are still relating to events that will not be completed until the end of history as we know it.

God's transcendence is highlighted by identifying Him as eternal and as One who lives high and exalted in a place that is high and holy. These words set Him apart from the creation, and, in this context, contrast His high, exalted, holy status as wholly other than the status of mankind which is crushed and lowly of spirit. There is nothing in these words to suggest that anything in the creation is the subject; this is describing God.

His position is high and exalted. These are not words that can be used to describe the state of mankind all of whom have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23).

High, רָם, means to raise, to lift up, to be exalted with a primary meaning of literally being raised high. In this context, it refers to being exalted, to be great, to have triumph, to have honor, that is, to have elevated status. There is obviously nothing higher than He who resides in the third heaven!

Exalted, נָשָׂא, means to be lifted up and raised lofty. The sense is to be exalted; to raise in rank, character, or status.

In this context, these words are synonymous, and they refer to the fact that God is in a position and a class that mankind cannot possibly attain.

Lives, שָׁכַן, means to dwell, to inhabit, to abide, remain, or stay referring to living or residing in a place usually for a relatively long amount of time.

Forever, עַד, means forever, eternal, for ever and ever, continual, always referring to an unlimited duration of time, without end, and without reference to other points or units of time.

This is saying that God lives in, dwells in, or inhabits eternity, while the next clause refers to the place where He dwells. Most translations use “inhabit” to translate this word (KJV, NKJV, ASV, YLT, ISV, LSV, BSB, RSV), but the meaning is that God is the eternal One. “The following clause, *inhabiting eternity*, is probably to be understood in the sense of dwelling eternally, i.e., ‘one who eternally dwells’” [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:410]. Inhabiting eternity “denotes a continuing life, a life having its root in itself, עַד שָׁכַן must mean the eternally dwelling One, i.e., He whose life lasts for ever and is always the same” [C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Isaiah*, vol. 7, 7:549].

Isaiah 57:15 ¹⁵For thus said the high and exalted One, Inhabiting eternity ... (YLT).

Isaiah 57:15 ¹⁵For thus said He who high aloft forever dwells ... (TANAKH).

The NET Bible translates this as “rules forever,” but that is based on some reasoning apart from a literal rendering of the text. “*Heb* ‘the one who dwells forever.’ שָׁכַן עַד (šō-kān ‘ăḏ) is sometimes translated ‘the one who lives forever,’ and understood as a reference to God’s eternal existence. However, the immediately preceding and following descriptions (‘high and exalted’ and ‘holy’) emphasize his sovereign rule. In the next line, he declares, ‘I dwell in an exalted and holy [place],’ which refers to the place from which he rules. Therefore it is more likely that שָׁכַן עַד (šō-kān ‘ăḏ) means ‘I dwell [in my holy palace] forever’ and refers to God’s eternal kingship” [NET Bible, s.v. “Isaiah 57:15,” 1313 n. u].

Coupled with His eternal nature is the fact that His name is Holy, קָדוֹשׁ, which means sacred or holy, but in this context is a reference to the Holy One; therefore, the word is functioning as a title for God.

The next clause reveals God’s place of dwelling as a “high and holy place.” This literally reads, “and holy high place I live [or dwell, inhabit].”

Following that, we are going to see that God will not continue to dwell in that holy high place, but He will instead dwell with the “contrite and lowly of spirit.” This is probably best understood in terms of the Triune God. First, we need to understand that God the Son is the Holy One who is the subject of this prophecy. God the Father will continue to reside where He has always been, which is on His throne in His high and holy place, while God the Son, the Davidic, Messiah King will leave the Father's throne room and take His rightful throne in Jerusalem and rule Israel and the world from there. We must not ignore the fact that He came to His people “gentle and humble in heart” (Mt. 11:29) at His First Advent. He is not uncomfortable residing in the presence of mankind. He “will dwell in Kingdom glory with redeemed Israel in the person of the Messiah” [Merrill F. Unger, “Isaiah” in *Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament*, 1310].

Contrite, אָדָּבָה, means contrite or crushed; therefore, by extension, it can mean humble or contrite. In this context, it refers to contrite which describes those who have an attitude of penitence or humility. The Lexham Analytical Lexicon defines the word as a reference to a person who expresses sorrow or pain over sin. “‘Crushed’ can also have the positive nuances of ‘humble, contrite.’ God is close to those who are brokenhearted and contrite” [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. “אָדָּבָה,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 188-189].

Lowly, נָפֵל, means humble, humiliated, lowly pertaining to a low status or rank with the focus on the person of such low status. “... its most important use is in the figurative sense of ‘abasement,’ ‘humbling,’ ‘humility.’ ... The root is also used in the admonition to cultivate a humble spirit. In Isa 57:15 God says that he dwells with those of a humble spirit and will refresh and revive them” [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. “נָפֵל,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 950-951].

This is Messianic Kingdom truth. “The tone of Isa 57:14-19 shifts to one of hope in which God promises to heal humanity and to bring rest despite human rejection of Him. The high and exalted God promises that He also dwells with the penitent. They are called contrite and lowly of spirit. The word contrite literally means ‘crushed’ and refers to those who have been brought low by discipline from God. He will revive the heart of the contrite.... The grace and mercy of God is evident in that He who is exalted above all will descend and dwell with the lowly when they turn to Him” [Michael Rydelnik and James Spencer, “Isaiah” in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, 1094].

The lowly and the contrite will be revived by God, and this will take place when the Lord returns to earth to inaugurate the Messianic Kingdom. This is obviously addressed to the Israelites, but there will be Gentiles entering the Kingdom who also need the restoration that the King will bring to the world, and they will also receive that which only He can give.

Revive, חַיָּה, means to live, to come to life. This is in the causative verb form; therefore, the reference is to cause to revive. It relates to keeping the living alive or to restore life to that which is dead, i.e., without life.

“[I]t is not the Lord's intention to leave his people thus [crushed] but rather to revive, to give (new) being to, in *spirit* and *heart*. When used together like this, *spirit* is the ability to

enter into life with gusto, and *heart* is the interior capacity for true thought, pure delight, accurate reflection" [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 358]. This can only be describing Messianic Kingdom conditions of life. This sounds like the New Covenant.

The word "for" begins an explanation of how God is going to revive the spirit and the heart of lowly in spirit and the contrite. God's anger is eventually going to abate, and He is going to have mercy on Israel. The imposition of divine temporal discipline for Israel's rebellion will come to an end. If it did not, there would be no hope for the people and their nation.

Isaiah 57:16¹⁶ "For I will not contend [ריב] forever, Nor will I always be angry [קצף]; For the spirit would grow faint [צטף] before Me, And the breath of those whom I have made.

Contend, ריב, means to strive, to contend, to dispute, and to conduct a lawsuit. The Israelites have continually disobeyed God's commands and rebelled against His authority and have therefore been placed under the disciplinary program that He devised for this situation. God also has a plan to bring the nation back into relationship with Him that will end the need for Him to contend with the nation. Other words used to translate this word into English include accuse (CSB, BSB, NIV, ISV), hostile (NET Bible), attack (LEB), and strive (YLT, LSV). Clearly, this word represents a broken relationship between God and Israel.

This word can have forensic (legal) ramifications, and it can relate to bringing legal charges. "Riv here refers to outward manifestations of God's wrath, the presentation of His charges against Israel in formal, legal fashion" [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:411]. Once God's legal requirements are met in terms of reconciliation between God and the Israelites, He will be free to dispense with His anger and enter into a peaceful relationship with His people. This will not happen until the nation recognizes the Messiah at the end of the Tribulation which then marks the end of God's divine temporal disciplinary program for the nation.

Angry, קצף, means to be angry or to be provoked to anger, both of which apply to this situation. Israel provoked God to anger and angry with them He became! It represents being in a state of strong displeasure with a focus that an action of anger often follows. "[It] refers to the relationship developed, held or expressed in various ways when there is anger, heat, displeasure held or felt within one because of what another has said or done" [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. "קצף," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 808].

Faint, צטף, means to be feeble, to be faint, to be weak. The word is related to the human spirit in this context. "Not only can man be overwhelmed with physical exhaustion, his innermost being can also languish. This term is descriptive of the individual when he observes his circumstances and then becomes aware of his separation from God. As a result he is overwhelmed" [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. "צטף," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 661-662]. In the Psalms, this word is used to refer "to the ebbing away of life as the growing weak of the *nepeš* [soul]" (Ps. 107:5) [Willem A. VanGemeren,

gen. ed., s.v. "עֲטָרָה," *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, 3:382].

"In relation to Israel the Lord is not only a God of justice and judgment, but also a God of mercy. If the Lord should always chide and punish, the spirit and soul of man could not endure it" [Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, 442].

This should reassure the Israelites that they have a future with God, but, unfortunately, they did not then, and still do not, recognize the truth of God's Word in this regard.

Constable made this Scripture all about God dealing with sinners in general, but that is not the point being made here. God is dealing with His relationship to and with Israel. Obviously, God is dealing with Gentiles as well at the same time, i.e., during the Tribulation, and some Gentiles will be reconciled with God and enter the Messianic Kingdom, but that is not under discussion here. That is an application of this situation, but it is not the primary meaning for what is happening here. Replacement theologians do the same thing, but I expect them to do that; Constable's comments on this verse surprised me.

It is significant to note that God is acknowledging that He made mankind and that He does not want to see mankind destroyed, and that is a truth that is applicable to Jew and Gentile. He therefore has a plan to revive the spirit and the heart of the lowly and the contrite. That plan involves the exercise of His wrath and judgment on Israel and on the world. However, He exercises enough restraint that neither the Israelites nor the Gentiles are totally destroyed.

Matthew 24:22 ²²"Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

Ezekiel 18:30–32 ³⁰"Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, each according to his conduct," declares the Lord GOD. "Repent and turn away from all your transgressions, so that iniquity may not become a stumbling block to you. ³¹"Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! For why will you die, O house of Israel? ³²"For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies," declares the Lord GOD. "Therefore, repent and live."

The reasons for God's anger with Israel are presented in terms of sin and rebellion. The only cure is to repent, that is, turn to Yahweh and receive a new heart and spirit which will result in life, true life. This is best understood in terms of the panorama of Israel's history as it has played out under the terms of God's temporal disciplinary program for the nation (Lv. 26; Dt. 28).

Isaiah 57:17 ¹⁷"Because of the iniquity [עֲוֹן] of his unjust gain [בְּצִעַת] I was angry and struck [נָכַה] him; I hid [סָתַר] My face and was angry, And he went on turning away [שׁוּבָה], in the way of his heart [לִב].

Iniquity, עֲוֹן, means sin, wickedness, iniquity, referring to wrongdoing with a focus of liability or guilt for the wrong incurred. "This word indicates sin that is particularly evil, since it strongly conveys the idea of twisting or perverting deliberately" [Baker and Carpenter,

s.v. "עֲוֹן," *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, 814]. "[T]he noun is collective.... [I]t denotes both the deed and its consequences, the misdeed and its punishment. Both notions are present, but sometimes the focus is on the deed ('sin'), and at other times on the outcome of the misdeed ('punishment'), and sometimes on the situation between the deed and its consequences ('guilt').... The remarkable ambivalence between the meanings 'sin as an act' and 'penalty' shows that in the thought of the OT sin and its penalty are not radically separate notions as we tend to think of them. Rather in the OT the action of man and what happens to him are presupposed to be directly related as one process within the basic divine order" [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. "עֲוֹן," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 650-651].

This describes the situation between Israel and the God of Israel. The Israelites had a choice: obey and be blessed, or disobey and be cursed (Lv. 26; Dt 28). Israel chose disobedience and curses; therefore, the nation is reaping the consequences of their choice, but that is not the end of it. God has a plan to bring Israel back to Himself as a faithful people of God.

Unjust gain, *בְּצֵעַ*, means ill-gotten, unjust, or dishonest gain, gain made by violence as a reference to valuable things obtained by theft, deception, or other immoral actions. In this context, greed may be the primary element which is a strong desire for material things as expressed in various ways. The sense is one of illegally gaining goods or money. Given the context, this word could apply to life in general and not just to financial matters.

There were many reasons for God to be angry with Israel that provided the basis for the imposition of divine temporal discipline which is characterized here as striking the nation. Unjust gain is a subset of the primary problem which is rebellion against God and His commands. All personal sins are rebellion, and "unjust gain" seems to be a figurative way of referring to all the various ways the nation sinned. Earlier in this chapter the nation's worship of pagan gods was condemned. Sin in general, including greed is, in fact, idolatry.

Colossians 3:5 ⁵Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

Strike, *נָכָה*, means to strike or smite. It may also refer to destruction, but this context is about preserving the nation from destruction, while imposing temporal divine discipline on it instead; therefore, it is revealing a non-fatal strike of some sort. The sense is to affect or afflict suddenly, usually adversely and sometimes with an implied divine agent. The verb form is causative meaning that the strike was delivered on purpose with purpose. The divine agent is not simply implied here; it is explicit: "I [God] was angry and struck him."

Bear in mind, we are talking about the nation here, and the nation Israel will not be destroyed. That does not mean that many individual Israelites will not lose their lives while undergoing God's disciplinary program; they will.

God has not only been angry at them, but He has hidden Himself from them. We cannot say He has completely abandoned them, because Israel's continued existence can only be explained by means of God's providential care of the nation. "Hiding" seems to be a

figurative expression denoting God's activity during the period of time in which He is imposing divine temporal discipline on the nation.

Hide, *סָתַר*, means to hide, to conceal. The sense is to prevent something, including oneself, from being seen or discovered. "In the more frequently attested Hiphil [causative verb form], the basic idea of 'hiding' comes forth. Perhaps its most significant use is the idiom to 'hide the face,' symbolizing broken communion, such as between God and sinful Israel" [Harris, Archer, Jr., and Waltke, s.v. "*סָתַר*," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 636]. "Hid My face" accurately reflects the sense of the verse and it may well be a Jewish idiom which would render "I hid My face," an accurate translation, but "My face" is not in the Hebrew text. A more accurate literal translation is, "I hid and I was angry" (LEB).

Despite God's disciplinary measures imposed on the nation, Israel continues to go its own way and therefore continues to experience divine temporal discipline.

Turning away, *שׁוּבָב*, means faithless, rebellious, backturning or backsliding, and apostate referring to being a person who is not trusting or relying on prior relationships which implies improper actions can follow. More specifically and in this context, "It refers to a people who are always turning away from the Lord, leaving their God, acting unfaithfully towards Him and His laws" [Baker and Carpenter, s.v. "*שׁוּבָב*," *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, 1109].

Rebellion is probably the best way to understand the concept of "turning away" in this context. Anything Israel does that violates God's commands is rebellion, and rebellion is the primary identifying characteristic of the nation's relationship with Yahweh for the preponderance of the nation's history. Israel and rebellion go hand-in-hand. Lack of faith, backsliding, and apostasy are all lesser included elements of rebellion. None of this is going to change until we reach the time period that these Scriptures represent.

To go in the way of man's heart is to be in rebellion against God. The Word of God has a lot to say about the depraved state of mankind's heart.

Heart, *לֵב*, means the heart, but it represents the mind, soul, and spirit, the inner man, the will and inclination of man. In this context, the focus is on the source of life of the inner person in various aspects with a focus on feelings, thoughts, volition, and other areas of man's inner life. The sense of the word refers to the locus of person's thoughts (mind), volition, emotions, and knowledge of right and wrong (conscience) understood as the heart. "[I]t [heart] usually refers to some aspect of the immaterial inner self or being since the heart is considered to be the seat of one's inner nature as well as one of its components" [Baker and Carpenter, s.v. "*לֵב*," *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, 536].

Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?"

Of course, God understands man's heart. In particular, He understands that in the heart of the nation, lies rebellion against Him. In other words, the heart of Israel is set on rebellion

against the God of Israel. This is figuratively described as the “way of his [Israel's] heart.” That was the situation then, and it remains the situation to this day.

Even though God sees the ways of Israel, He has committed Himself to restoring them. He can do nothing else and remain who He is according to the attributes that belong to Him as the Creator God. He cannot lie (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18), and He must fulfill the unconditional covenant promises He made to Israel's forefathers so long ago; therefore, Israel must be reconciled and restored.

Isaiah 57:18-19 ¹⁸“I have seen his ways, but I will heal [רָפָא] him; I will lead [נִקְּחָהּ] him and restore [שָׁלֵם] comfort [נְחֻם] to him and to his mourners [אֲבָלִים], ¹⁹Creating the praise of the lips. Peace, peace to him who is far and to him who is near,” Says the LORD, “and I will heal him.”

Nothing is hidden from God; He knows the heart of the nation and He knows the full extent of the nation's rebellion, but despite those facts, He nevertheless has determined to cause the nation to return to Him. He will eventually and finally do that by means of the Tribulation judgment.

Jeremiah 16:17 ¹⁷“For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity concealed from My eyes.

Heal, רָפָא, means to heal referring to cause or promoting restoration of health or a right state after being sick, diseased, injured, or in a bad state. The sense is to provide a cure for or to make healthy again whether physically or spiritually. In this context, the revelation primarily concerns spiritual healing, but we also know that physical healing is an aspect of the Messianic Kingdom (cf. Is. 65:19-20). Spiritual healing takes place in the reconciliation, and physical healing will take place in the Kingdom.

The Suffering Servant made both physical and spiritual healing available on the cross, and before the inauguration of the Messianic Kingdom, the primary problem is spiritual. Healing is accessed by faith at all times, but it will be fully realized for Israel during the Kingdom.

Isaiah 53:5, 10-11 ⁵But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.... ¹⁰But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting *Him* to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see *His* offspring, He will prolong *His* days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. ¹¹As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see *it* and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities.

The promise to heal Israel contains within it an acknowledgment that the nation has been desperately ill. The conditions that caused the need for healing will be removed, and reconciliation between God and Israel will be the result. “One who would walk in the ways of his heart is spiritually sick; hence the Lord declares that He will heal him, a figurative expression for the forgiveness of sins and the restoration to God's favor” [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:412].

Oswalt presented the replacement theology view of this Scripture which demonstrates again the fact that replacement theologians simply cannot understand what God is doing with Israel. He relates the grace God grants Israel to all believers and in so doing he makes some erroneous claims that are exactly the opposite of what is happening with Israel.

"[T]he prophet addresses those who think they are guaranteed a place in God's economy because of their birthright, but find themselves unable to live the righteousness that such a birthright calls for. God has seen their ways and he will come in his grace to empower them for that kind of living. The offer of grace is more likely to motivate sinners to turn to God, providing they know their need, than the threat of destruction, and God makes just such an offer. To those who have been crushed by sin and its effects, whose spirits are broken, the God who dwells with them offers healing without condition, and comfort without repayment. What motive to turn to him!" [John N. Oswalt, *The New International Commentary: The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 490].

I'm not so sure that the Israelites think much of or about their birthright. In Isaiah 57:4, they were called "children of rebellion," and in 57:11 they "did not remember" Him nor give Him "a thought." Most Israelites today are agnostic, atheist, or lost in Pharisaical Orthodox Judaism. It seems they had no idea about, nor were they concerned with, living in the state of righteousness for which they were created to live. They were seemingly unconcerned about the promises of blessing and cursing. They had turned to idolatry and apparently thought those gods were perfectly capable of providing whatever they needed, spiritual and physical. Oswalt is completely in error when he claims that the threat of destruction is somehow not motivation to turn to God. Many people have turned to God when they have fallen so far that they have no where to go but up. Many people have cried out to Him for deliverance when they are facing destruction. In Israel's case, that is exactly what will happen. The nation will not be saved until national destruction is staring them right in the face at the hands of antichrist and his armies. Only then will the nation turn to her Messiah in faith (Mt. 23:39) as they cry out to Him for deliverance.

Ezekiel 20:33–38 ³³"As I live," declares the Lord GOD, "surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out, I shall be king over you. ³⁴"I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out; ³⁵and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face. ³⁶"As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you," declares the Lord GOD. ³⁷"I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; ³⁸and I will purge from you the rebels and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they will not enter the land of Israel. Thus you will know that I am the LORD.

At that time, God is going to lead and restore comfort to Israel. "Everything that caused heartache, pain, violence, oppression, and loss in the past will be removed so that God's healing power might transform this evil world and create a new world based on his grace.

This all the work of God" [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture: Isaiah 40-66*, 566]. This is true, but only by means of application; the revelation here concerns Israel.

Lead, *נָהַג*, means to lead, to guide referring to directing the movements of others implying leadership and rulership. The sense is one of authority. Leadership involves leading people in the right direction or on the proper path. This is in contrast with the Israel's "ways" that have been on paths leading to rebellion. This word usually has God as the subject and, in fact, this leader will be none other than the Messiah King.

Restore, *שָׁלַם*, means to be completed, safe, whole, and fulfilled. The primary meaning is to be safe or uninjured in mind and body. This word is generally used to portray God keeping His people safe. The verb form is intensive and certainly represents that what it will take to get to this point in the nation's history is very intense. God's plan to reconcile with and to restore Israel will be completed or fulfilled at some point in the future.

Comfort, *נָחַם*, means comfort referring to that which causes one to be encouraged. The sense is one of a state of being relaxed and feeling no pain. Conversely, it indicates a cessation of discomfort, distress, or sorrow.

Restoring comfort suggests that the nation has enjoyed comfort in the past, but those periods of time have been few and short in duration. There were very few periods of comfort during the time of the Judges. King Solomon's reign was the pinnacle of Israel's comfort, and that was 3,000 years ago. There were only a few faithful kings in Judah that provided some short periods of comfort. The time in question here is the Messianic Kingdom which will then itself move on into eternity. Israel's future is bright; getting there is a problem!

Because Israel's history has been one of persecution, terror, and grief—all brought about by her stubborn rebellion—the nation has been in an extended period of mourning in many ways.

Mourners, *אֲבֵל*, refers to one mourning or grieving, i.e., a person observing mourning rites or being in a state of sorrow and grief.

Once the Messiah King saves all Israel, mourning will be a thing of the past.

God's work on Israel's behalf will create praise. The Israelites will finally, as a national whole, praise God, which is characterized as the "fruit of lips." Paganism will disappear, and praise for Yahweh will become standard operating procedure. The cessation of Israel's rebellion is implied in this. The word for create, *בָּרָא*, means a creative work that only God can do (cf. Gen. 1:1). "It is of importance to note the absolute newness of what is created, for the world 'create' suggests that God's power has been employed to bring about a startlingly new result" [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 3, 3:412].

Whether or not praise is a reference to praise in general or to the proclamation of peace or to both is unclear.

“Peace, peace” is an emphatic grammatical construction which conveys the concept of complete, perfect peace. “The duplication of a word like ‘peace’ is a Hebrew idiom for something superlative in kind and total in extent” [Thomas L. Constable, *Thomas Constable’s Notes on the Bible, Volume IV: Isaiah-Daniel*, 4:168]. This will be the first time in Israel’s history when a prolonged period of time can be characterized as “peace, peace.” This message will be in effect for everyone; Paul quoted it in Ephesians which applied it to the age of grace, although the context here is specifically dealing with Israel. In the Jewish use of the Old Testament in the New Testament, this an example of literal Old Testament Scripture with New Testament application (cf. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, “How the New Testament Quotes the Old Testament” in *Messianic Christology*, 149-150).

Ephesians 2:17 ¹⁷AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR;

The fact that healing is repeated here is another point of emphasis. The Messianic Kingdom will be a time of physical and spiritual healing for Israel and, also by application, for the world.

The last two verses return to dealing with the unsaved.

Isaiah 57:20–21 ²⁰But the wicked [רָשָׁע] are like the tossing sea, For it cannot be quiet, And its waters toss up refuse [רָפָשׁ] and mud. ²¹“There is no peace,” says my God, “for the wicked.”

Wicked, רָשָׁע, means wicked, criminal, guilty, or unrighteous. It pertains to being evil with the focus on the guilt of violating a standard. There is an element of godlessness evident in the use of this word. It is the opposite of righteousness.

Through Ezekiel, God revealed the fate of the wicked if they refused to turn to Him from their wicked ways.

Ezekiel 3:18–19 ¹⁸“When I say to the wicked, ‘You will surely die,’ and you do not warn him or speak out to warn the wicked from his wicked way that he may live, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. ¹⁹“Yet if you have warned the wicked and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered yourself.

Notice the contrast between the complete peace of Israel in the Messianic Kingdom and lack of peace for the unsaved wicked. Presumably, the lack of peace for the unsaved at the time the Messianic Kingdom is inaugurated will be experienced in Hades awaiting the Great White Throne Judgment. God will cause peace to break out in the Messianic Kingdom, and He will see to it that the wicked reap what they sow and therefore lack peace.

These people are like the noise of a roaring sea that churns up the mud and the refuse.

Refuse, רָפָשׁ, means mire, mud, refuse. "It refers to what is not desirable, makes dirty, stinks. In context, it [figuratively] refers to the moral, ethical, spiritual mire and refuse that wicked persons produce and throw out" [Baker and Carpenter, s.v. "רָפָשׁ," *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, 1073].

"The wicked contrast with the humble who take advantage of God's provision of grace. Far from being at peace, their existence is as tumultuous as the tossing sea, which is incapable of being at rest. Their constant agitation creates many other problems, like the raging sea casts up debris and mud. No *shalom* is the portion of the wicked" [Thomas L. Constable, *Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible, Volume IV: Isaiah-Daniel*, 4:168].

The concept of "no peace" for the wicked has two aspects. First, a wicked life is a life of unrest and unease. Possibly excluding true sociopaths and psychopaths, everyone has a conscience (Rom. 2:14-15), and a guilty conscience has uneasy, disquieting consequences for a life lived in unrighteousness. Second, there is no eternal rest for the unsaved wicked. We do not know the details of the torment, apart from the very descriptive "lake of fire," but a life lived eternally separated from God with no possibility of recourse must be a life of "no peace." Life is, after all, in Christ and in Him is eternal life; how awful must it be to have an eternal existence separated from the only One who provides life.