

A HEBREW EXEGESIS OF ISAIAH 62:6-9 THE AFFIRMATION OF ZION'S FUTURE BLESSINGS

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Abstract

The book of Isaiah is really interesting to explore. Many conflicts occurred there, both in relation to God and with other nations. In this study, spiritual, social-ethic and political background will be scrutinized to assist to understand Isaiah chapter 62 comprehensively. Spiritual life of God's people is declined in the book of Isaiah because of idolatries and nations. Hebrew people make idols out of trees and worship pagan wooden idols (40:18-20; 44:9-20). Not only will God give to His redeemed Zion all that is necessary but in addition, He will appoint watchmen upon her walls that she may receive the utmost in protection. It is clear Isaiah is not exclusively interested in the interpersonal and social relationship structures within Israel. He is also concerned with the broader canvas of international politics. During Isaiah ministry, it was a time of great political turmoil for the nation of Judah because facing the opposition that coming from the north and east.

Keywords: Promise, Protection, Blessing

Exegetical Outline

The affirmation of Zion's future blessings. (6-9).

- A. Yahweh's providence is declared in positive statement (6)
- B. Yahweh's blessing in areas of His people life (7-9).
 - a. Assurance of His promise in terms of reestablishment (7).
 - b. Assurance of His promise in terms of protection (8).
 - c. Assurance of His promise in terms of delights (9).

Translation

v. 6: On you wall, O Jerusalem, I will set my watchers Every day and every night continually, they will not silent Those who profess¹ YHWH, take no rest² for yourselves.

v. 7: Let you not give a rest to him Until he will establish And until he will set up Jerusalem as a song in the earth

v. 8: YHWH swore by his right hand and his mighty forearm

If I will never give again the grain as a food for your enemies

¹ Literally, call upon. However, HALOT describes as praise in hymns or profess.

²Be not Silent.

And son of foreigners will never drink from
your fresh wine which you toiled in her
v. 9: Because those who gather it, they
will eat it, and they will praise YHWH
And those who collect it, they will drink
from it in the court of my sanctuary

Historical Background

In this study, spiritual, social-ethic and political background will be scrutinized to assist to understand Isaiah chapter 62 comprehensively. Spiritual life of God's people is declined in the book of Isaiah because of idolatries and nations. Hebrew people make idols out of trees and worship pagan wooden idols (40:18-20; 44:9-20).³ In addition to idolatry as such, Isaiah also mentions a number of different cultic sites of various kinds: the sacred trees and

gardens which become centers for pagan sacrifices (1:10-15; 2:8; 10:11; 43:22-24).⁴ Isaiah employs prophetic images for the covenant-breaking idolatry and worship of other gods by adultery and illicit sexual intercourse.⁵ J.D. Smart also adds that their spirituality is inclined to assume that the survival of their city depended on their defensive measures or diplomatic activity than God.⁶

From roughly 810 until 750 B.C, Judah had enjoyed a peace and prosperity, both economic and military expansion, they had not known since the time of Solomon.⁷ However, these affluences were enjoyed by wealthy class only.⁸ Oppression goes right to the heart of Israelite society and the ones, who are in a position of power in society, able to do the oppressing. The poor were exploited and abused.⁹ This is including the

sacrifices are offered to foreign deities.

³Although the idol passage are particularly noteworthy, idolatry and its dangers are a continuing interest of the book as a whole. Among other things, this is evidenced by the large number of different words used in Isaiah to denote idols. There are nine terms that Isaiah uses to describe idolatry. *Elil* occurs 8 times (2:8, 18, 20; 10:10, 11; 19:1, 3; 31:7) and Isaiah employs this word for idol. *Atsav* and *otsev*, both also meaning idol, occur three times between them in 10:11, 46:1 and 48:5 and a further synonym, *aven* is found in 66:3. In addition, there are words which describe specific forms of image such as *pasil* (4 times, in 10:10; 21:9; 30:22; 42:8), and its cognate *pesel* (the most commonly occurring of these words in Isaiah, appearing 9 times, all in 40-55, 40:19, 20; 42:17 44:9, 10, 15, 17; 45:20; 48:5), which both mean "graven image", and two words for "molten image", *masekah* (30:22 and 42:17) and *neseh* (41:29 and 48:5). Furthermore, the root *chmd*, meaning "desire", and hence "object of desire", is used in the context of pagan worship in 1:29 and 44:9, and *elohim* is used in its plural sense, "gods", in 8 verse (21:9; 36:18, 19, 20; 37:12, 19 (twice); 41:23 and 42:17). Further discussion see Andrew Davies, *Double Standards in Isaiah Re-evaluating Prophetic Ethics & Divine Justice* (Netherlands, Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2000), 95-96.

⁴ Isaiah implies, some sort of fertility rites where the people "burn with lust" (57:5; see also 1:29; 65:3; 66:17); the sacred sites on the mountains (57:7) and in the valleys (57:6); as well as the Asherah poles (*asherim*) and altars (17:8; 27:9; 36:7; 65:3) where

⁵ Susan Ackerman notes that the similarity between the Hebrew words for the two places where sexual and spiritual covenant relationship are established - and broken, for that matter - *mishkav*, "bed" (vv. 7, 8), and the common word for the "shrine", *mishkan*. Susan Ackerman, 'Sacred Sex, Sacrifice and Death: Understanding a Prophetic Poem', *Bible Review* 6 (Feb. 1990), 39.

⁶ Isaiah reminds them of Yahweh's promise to David and He is the only one worth calling refuge and protection. Those nations deserve neither fear nor reliance. J. D. Smart, *History and Theology in Second Isaiah* (Philadelphia: Epworth, 1965), 263.

⁷ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapter 1-39* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 5.

⁸ The taxation and exploitation of the trade routes from north to south through the land bridge of Palestine cause rapid economic growth, even extravagance for the wealthy class.

⁹ The particular concern God expresses for the poor in 3:14-15 is not unique, for the poor and also widows and orphans are the most notable among the small number of groups whose needs are particularly addressed

denial of the right proper access of poor and underprivileged to the judicial system.

It is clear Isaiah is not exclusively interested in the interpersonal and social relationship structures within Israel. He is also concerned with the broader canvas of international politics.¹⁰ During Isaiah ministry, it was a time of great political turmoil for the nation of Judah because facing the opposition that coming from the north and east. The leaders of Jerusalem tend to rely on alliances and political relationship to get assistance. Nevertheless, the political agenda of Isaiah is “quietness and confidence”, “returning and repentance” (30:15), reliance upon Yahweh’s protection. All of the nations are Yahweh’s agents,¹¹ and Isaiah believes also that Yahweh expect all the nations of the earth to acknowledge his dominion, to serve and worship him (2:2-24; 25:3), to reverence him and tremble at his presence (64:2), and that, to this end, Yahweh proposes to send emissaries to the furthest nations on earth who have not heard his name, so that they too might come to Jerusalem and worship him (66:18-20).¹²

Commentary
The affirmation of Zion’s future blessings. (6-9)

¹⁰ Davies elucidates that the term of politics is relationship between nations and empires on a global basis. Davies, *Double Standards in Isaiah Re-evaluating Prophetic Ethics & Divine Justice*, 59.

¹¹ The nations are Yahweh’s agents in bringing disaster to Judah. This is the connection in which the nations first appear as they have devastated Judah because it turned its back on Yahweh. The first of the great Middle Eastern empires, Assyria, is the means of disaster that stops one step short of bringing the state down. The second, Babylon, takes the one extra step. The extent of Yahweh’s sovereignty is underlined by the fact that it can also influence the way the nations can bring disaster to each other at points that do not directly involve Judah (19:1). On the other hand, nations can be also Yahweh’s agents in delivering and restoring Judah. Further discussion read John Goldingay, *New International Biblical*

A. Yahweh’s providence is declared in positive statement (6a)

Continuity with 62:1-5 is established by repetition of the refusal to be silent.¹³ In fact, 1-5 and 6-9 are variations on the same theme, although Isaiah does not give much parallel on verse 6-9 like 1-5.¹⁴ This table below will indicate the similarities 1-5 with 6-9.¹⁵

1a	I cannot keep silent	6	I have set watchmen . . . They shall not silent
1b	Until . . .(the coming of the salvation of Jerusalem).	7	Until . . .(the coming of the salvation of Jerusalem).

It is given still more emphasis by the fact that two terms connected with one another in verse 1, “keep silent” and “restrain oneself”, are here in verse 6 balanced by other pair, “keep silent” and “rest”. The context is same.

Not only will God give to His redeemed Zion all that is necessary but in addition, He will appoint watchmen upon her walls that she may receive the utmost in protection.¹⁶ This idea is strengthened by preposition לַיְצִי which has a locative

Commentary on Isaiah (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. 2001), 21.

¹² Davies, *Double Standards in Isaiah Re-evaluating Prophetic Ethics & Divine Justice*, 60-83.

¹³ Verse 1 is אֲשַׁכֵּט אֶלֶּם and verse 6 is אֲשַׁכֵּט אֶלֶּם.

¹⁴ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66 A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: The Anchor Bible, 2003), 238.

¹⁵ Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 373.

¹⁶ This passage cannot be made the basis for an appeal to an exilic date for the prophecy, inasmuch as the walls are already standing. It is upon these walls of Jerusalem, which are in existence that God will place the watchmen.

function. God appointed watchmen on her wall.¹⁷ שְׁמֹרֵי־הַיָּם indicates that the primary function of this term is that of the lookout on the city wall or tower (Jud. 7:19; Jer. 51:12; Ps. 127:1).¹⁸ These people are committed to keeping alert and active on its behalf, day and night, continually.

B. The watchmen on the walls are further described in the second half of the verse as הַמְזַכְּרִים אֶת־יְהוָה, keeping Yahweh in remembrance of Jerusalem.¹⁹ The participle expresses the thought of calling something to God's attention, engaging in importunate prayer.²⁰ Their duty is making continuous prayer for the arrival of salvation. This continues idea of prayer is strengthened by the last clause, "let there be no cessation to you".²¹

Yahweh's blessing in areas of His people life (7-9)

¹⁷ There are some interpretations in terms of identity of watchmen. First is heavenly being. The second is human either prophets or people to whom he addresses his proclamation. Further discussion can be read from Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 373 and Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66 A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 238.

¹⁸ This term can signify also the bodyguard responsible for protecting the person of the ruler (1 Sam. 28:2), a palace guard (2 Kgs. 11:5), a military scout (Judg. 1:24), or the keeper of the royal wardrobe (2 Kgs. 22:14). The term can be used of temple personnel, principally Levites (Num. 3:21; Ez. 44:14) and the priest-guardians of the threshold (2 Kgs. 12:10; 22:4).

¹⁹ The Hebrew *mazkirim* can also mean that the prophets keep "putting God in remembrance." When God "remembers," it does not mean He has forgotten. It is a way of saying He goes into action and does something about the situation. These watchmen-prophets will not stop calling on God to act until He fulfills His promise to make Jerusalem "the praise of the earth." See Horton, *Isaiah*, 443.

²⁰ While the function attached to the state office of *mazkir* are still not entirely clear, they seem to have included the writing and persevering of official records. 2 Samuel 8:16; 20:24; 1 Kings 4:3; 2 Kings

Verse 6 and 7 are related to each other, although verse 6 focuses on what God does for Jerusalem and verse 7 emphasizes what the watchers and remembrancers do for Jerusalem. Isaiah seems present a chiasmus to depict those verses.²² In addition, at this part, Isaiah reiterates some words as hinges to describe different topic.²³

Assurance of His promise in terms of reestablishment (7)

In this verse, Isaiah elucidates more of the purpose and the time of their ministry. The purpose is they will not him a rest. They will bring their prayer continually until two things happen which is denoted by two prepositions עַד. This reminds us to the final words of verse 1, "until her salvation goes forth as brightness", are matched in verse 7b by "until he establishes Jerusalem a praise in the earth". The same end is envisaged in both cases. And it is so to be assumed that

8:18, 37 = Isa. 36:3, 22. The term could be translated somewhat literally as "remembrancer" and if we are to believe Herodotus, the Persian king Darius I had a servant whose task was to keep repeating to him, after the disastrous defeat at Marathon, "Master, remember the Athenians." We might then say that "remembrancer" of 62:6 are performing the standard prophetic task of intercession, following the example of Abraham and Moses as paradigmatic prophetic figures (Gen. 20:7; Ex. 5:22-23; 8:8; 32:11-14). See Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66 A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 239.

²¹ Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 378.

²²A God's blessing to Jerusalem (Protection).

עַל־חַוְמֹתַיִךְ יְרוּשָׁלַם הַפְקֹדְתִי שְׁמֹרֵי־

B The Duration of His Blessing for Jerusalem (Protection). כָּל־הַיּוֹם וְכָל־הַלַּיְלָה תִמְיֵד לֹא יִחָשֵׁוּ. (6b).

C The Faithfulness of His Servants Ministry.

הַמְזַכְּרִים אֶת־יְהוָה אֶל־דָּמִי לָכֶם. (6c).

C' The Faithfulness of His Servants Ministry

וְאֶל־תִּתְּנוּ דָּמִי לִי. (7a).

B' The Duration of His Servants for Jerusalem עַד־

וְעַד־. (7b).A' God's blessing to Jerusalem

(Salvation). יְשִׁים אֶת־יְרוּשָׁלַם תְּהִלָּה בְּאֶרֶץ. (7c).

²³ Verse 7 repeats the words יְרוּשָׁלַם and דָּמִי. On the other hand, verse 9 reiterates the verbs שָׁתָה and אָכַל.

the final part of the poem, verse 1, follow directly on verse 6.²⁴ The word עַד which is so strongly emphasized in both places and is the thing that gives the chapter its tense and vivid bearing upon the future. First of all, their intercessory prayer will not give a rest to Yahweh until he fulfills his promises regarding Zion (chapter 60). Second, the time of their ministry will not stop until Jerusalem has been divinely transformed into the city that evokes praise from the whole earth for what Yahweh has done. In short, not only there is to be no cessation to the ones who pray fervently, but they also are not to give cessation to God, until He has made Jerusalem as the praise on the earth.²⁵

b. Assurance of His promise in terms of protection (8)

This verse, like verses 1 and 6, begin with an oracle of Yahweh, this time introduced by a most solemn oath which undergirds his words of promise. The first line is the promise of God in terms of Zion's protection. The second and last lines describe the areas of His protection, which are in foods and drinks (main or premier needs of human being).

It would be natural to think that the oath sworn by Yahweh is a response to the round the clock intercessory prayer of the prophetic lookouts, even though what is promised falls somewhat short of the glowing picture presented elsewhere in 60-62. The solemn, public pronouncement of an oath followed a more or less fixed formula and was accompanied by

significant gestures.²⁶ עָזָו וּבִזְרוּתָם may refer both to the gesture of uplifted hand and arm associated with taking an oath (Ex. 6:8; Deut. 32:40) and the divine power which he has committed himself to use to fulfill his promise (51:5:59:16).²⁷ The content of the oath itself refers to the work of God in His providence in which He had given Zion's corn into the hands of her enemies.²⁸ On the other hand, it also denotes that the actions of nations lie in the hands of God and that they do not act apart from His will and permission.²⁹

The fate of having worked hard to grow wheat (אֶת־דָגָן) and grapes (תִּירוֹשׁ) of traditional descriptions of Israel's land, only to witness their being taken and eaten by strangers, features as a curse in covenant formulations (Deut. 28:30, 33) and as a threat in prophetic diatribe (Amos 5:11; Mic. 6:15).³⁰ This particular pledge Yahweh had given was to assure Zion ('your' is feminine singular) that she will never again experience the sanctions imposed on those who broke the covenant whereby the product of their labor was divinely assigned to others (Deut. 28:30-33; Am. 5:11; Mic. 6:15). This immunity from the curse of futile endeavor relates to Zion's future glory as guaranteed by the sovereign power of Yahweh and it is for this the watchmen are fervently praying.³¹

c. Assurance of His promise in terms of delights (9)

Verse 9 brings a fresh point of view to bear. The first two lines refer back to the grain of

(Collingswood, N.J: The Spearhead Press, 1971), 467.

²⁸ He had permitted the enemies to rob and plunder Zion of what rightfully belonged to her.

²⁹ Young, *The Book of Isaiah Chapter 40 through 66*, 471.

³⁰ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66 A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 240.

³¹ Mackay, *Isaiah 40-66*, 537.

²⁴Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 378.

²⁵Young, *The Book of Isaiah Chapter 40 through 66*, 471.

²⁶Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66 A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 239.

²⁷Mackay, *Isaiah 40-66*, 537. The right hand and the strong arm of God are figurative of God's power, manifested in His redemptive actions on behalf of Israel. See Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah*

the previous verse, and the concluding couplet to the new wine. This verse refers to the bringing of the first-born of cattle and the first-fruits of grain and wine to offer them to God at the great festivals. They celebrated at the temple and gave thanks to God for the new harvest and grain and for the vintage, struck up the note of festal joy, and rejoiced before God.³² In the ceremonial ordinances of the Old Testament, the first fruits were eaten in the sanctuary with rejoicing before Yahweh (Deut. 12:17-18; 14:23-26; 16:9-17) and here is the consummation of what the rituals signified is predicted as coming true in heightened fashion in the new Zion.³³ The uses of verb לָלַחַם suggests that there may be a reference here to the bringing of such offerings to Yahweh as an offering of praise (Lev. 19:24; Jdg. 9:27).³⁴

The suffix refers to the corn and new wine which just mentioned, as is shown by the verbs eat and drink. The purpose of the verse is to show that those who have a right to the corn will eat it and those who have a right to the new wine will drink it. The language is figurative, carrying out the picture of life in ancient Israel. The eating results in praise to the covenant God of Israel and the drinking is to take place in the courts of my holiness. According to the law, the food was to be consumed before the Lord, in sanctuary (Deut. 14:22-27). This thought is evidently at the basis of the prophecy. These types and symbols denote that redeemed Zion men will enjoy abundantly the presence of the Lord and will serve and worship Him.³⁵

³² Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 378.

³³ Mackay, *Isaiah 40-66*, 538.

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