

## COMMENTARY – ISAIAH – Friesen

Ivan D. Friesen. Believers Church Bible Commentary *on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009),

An author formulated the various parts into a carefully structured whole. <sup>1</sup>

**IS. 54: 1-6**

The **barren woman** alludes (암시하다) to Zion as the exile in Babylon.

In v. 4, the metaphor shifts from Zion as a barren woman to Zion as a widowed woman. Widowhood here refers to the shame and disgrace of exile. Widowhood is added on to barrenness, *the shame of your youth*. Widowhood, of course, does not mean simply the loss of a husband but also the *death* of a husband. The use of the metaphor of widowhood indicates the grimness of the exile. This grimness will not be recalled and rehearsed. The removal of the shame somehow relates to the Lord's names (54:5). Redeemer relates most closely to the removal of shame. <sup>2</sup>

**IS. 54: 7-10**

<sup>7</sup> *For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with great compassion I will gather you.* <sup>8</sup> *In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says the LORD, your Redeemer.* <sup>9</sup> *This is like the days of Noah to me: Just as I swore that the waters of Noah would never again go over the earth, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you and will not rebuke you.* <sup>10</sup> *For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the LORD, who has compassion on you.*

The word abandon suggests a complete disinterest in the fate of what is give up. It suggests desertion and renunciation of a relationship. In this case, however, the abandonment is momentary and disciplinary (54: 7-8). *In overflowing wrath* describes God's capacity for anger (Wrath of God, p. 455). But this anger is not sustained anger. The Lord's hidden face indicates a certain self-consciousness about the danger of anger becoming unbridled (굴레를 풀다). In any case, compassion, love, and redemption overshadow anger (Ex. 34:6-7) - *(a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin)* <sup>3</sup>

As God established a covenant with Noah never again to send a flood to destroy the earth, so the Lord promises never again to vent his anger by abandoning his people... A covenant of peace means more than simply the absence of war. It means material and relational well-being as well as the larger scope of God's intention for his people and for humankind through his people. <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. Believers Church Bible Commentary *on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 23.

<sup>2</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. Believers Church Bible Commentary *on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 339.

<sup>3</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. Believers Church Bible Commentary *on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 340.

<sup>4</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. Believers Church Bible Commentary *on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 340.

## **IS. 58: 1-14**

### **EXPLANATORY NOTES**

The contrasting themes of delighting in self-interest or in God-interest bind the chapter together. *To delight in (hapes)* knowing God's ways and nearness appears in 58:2. Delighting in self-interest, however defines the motive for fasting in 58:3. At the end of the chapter, abstaining from the pursuit of self-interest serves as the motive for Sabbath observance (58:13). Isaiah 58: 1-4 warns God's people collectively (using plural verbs) about rebellion in the form of bogus [false, fake] piety. Isaiah 58:5-14, on the other hand, exhorts God's people individually (using singular verbs) about the substance of bona fide [authentic, real, true] piety.

### **Sins of the House of Jacob 58: 3-4**

<sup>3</sup> *'Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?'*  
*Look, you serve your own interest on your fast-day, and oppress all your workers.* <sup>4</sup> *Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high.*

Should not God at least observe with appreciation the *form* that piety takes? No doubt the form that piety takes is noticed on high. But in God's design, form and substance belong together. .... The pursuit of self interest lies in the exploitation of workers. The Hebrew word for Workers is 'asabim, sufferers. Workers are exploited even as those who own material capital exhibit a piety separated from justice and righteousness.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Lord's Purpose for Fasting 58:5-6**

<sup>5</sup> *Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD?* <sup>6</sup> *Is not this the fast that I choose: to lose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?* <sup>7</sup> *Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?* <sup>8</sup> *Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rearguard.* <sup>9</sup> *Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.* *If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,* <sup>10</sup> *if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday.* <sup>11</sup> *The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.* <sup>12</sup> *Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.*

Three rhetorical questions [Literary *Perspective*, p. 446] dominate the next stanza (58:5). The first two are clearly rhetorical; this means that the answer (No!) is already implied in the question. At issue is self-denial as an end in itself rather than as a means toward an end. Fasting as a means of calling attention primarily to the form of piety (to humble oneself) fails to address the substance of piety. The second question develops the theme of form to include three recognizable acts of piety: bowing down, wearing sackcloth, and applying ashes. Each of these calls attention to form and, by itself, does not meet the standard of fasting chosen by the Lord. The third question employs sarcasm, again calling into question fasting centered on form.<sup>6</sup>

A new rhetorical question, this one inviting a positive response, is now put forward (58:6). The question begins on the first line and continues with a sequence of three infinitive clauses stating liberation from social oppression on lines 2 through 4 (to loose, to undo, to let go free). The various translations usually include the last line of the stanza (*and to break every yoke*) as part of the sequence, although its form is different in the Hebrew text. The stanza as a whole declares the soul of bona fide piety to be in implementing God's just order. What characterizes genuine fasting is not the pursuit of self-interest, but concern for the well-being of others.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. *Believers Church Bible Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 364.

<sup>6</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. *Believers Church Bible Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 365.

<sup>7</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. *Believers Church Bible Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 365.

### **Sharing Bread with the Hungry 58:7-9a**

Another rhetorical question inviting a positive response begins the next segment (58: 7). The specifics of liberation now emerge as caring for the impoverished and the destitute. The poor are not strangers and aliens but your own kin. Fasting as a spiritual resource for a social ethic that addresses the problems of poverty lies at the center of God's intention for his people.<sup>8</sup>

Two uses of an adverb of time (*then*), signifying a fulfillment of the rhetorical question in 58:7, conclude the segment (58:8-9a). The first sign of this fulfillment comes in four parallel phrases (*your light, your healing, your righteousness, and your rear guard*, NI), each phrase linked to a promise (58:8) .<sup>9</sup>

**Your light** refers to the clarity of insight that fasting is a spiritual source for social action. This clarity rests on the authority of the speaker (the Lord) and not merely on human insight. **Your healing** indicates restoration of social health as an accompaniment of spiritual healing. **Your righteousness** (*vindication*, NRSV note) means right behavior as the vanguard [front line, forefront] of God's people. **Your rear guard** is none other than the Lord's glory itself, guarantee of safety and security. God is in the front and at the back, protecting the one who seeks him.

The second sign of this fulfillment, also introduced by *then*, comes in the form of the age-old promise of God's presence when his people call on him in their time of need (58:9a).<sup>10</sup>

### **Conditions of the Lord's Guidance 58:9b-12**

In the NRSV and NIV, the if-clause that opens this segment is taken as a new thought (58:9b-10; note the gap in the text between the two parts of v. 9). It is clear that the removal of the yoke, already mentioned in 58:6, means the yoke of injustice, particularly accusation and slander (Brueggemann, 1998 b:191). The if-clause is completed in 58:10. Now the theme returns to the satisfaction of the hungry. In 58:7 sharing bread with the hungry constitutes a fast acceptable to the Lord. Here offering yourself to the hungry constitutes the appropriate response to God's presence. Satisfying the needs of the oppressed lies alongside this offering. When such selfless giving occurs, God's people experience illumination and the dissipation of gloom.<sup>11</sup>

It is no accident that the promise of guidance and restoration follows the forging of the people's spirituality and social consciousness (58: I I; cf. Hanson: 207). Guidance, satisfaction of needs, and strength represent blessings, although probably not in order of ascending importance, as Young suggests (1972:424). The pictures of a watered garden and a spring of water portray the prosperity of a people that receives God's guidance. Reconstruction of ruins flows from the Lord's continual guidance (58: 12). The ancient ruins may refer in general to the results of the Babylonian military campaign in Judah at the beginning of the sixth century Be, when Nebuchadnezzar's army ravaged the land (Whybray: 217). The titles *Repairer of Broken Walls* and *Restorer of Streets will, Dwellings* (NIV) applaud the process of reconstruction.<sup>12</sup>

### **Nourished on the Heritage of Jacob 58: 13-14**

A conditional sentence commending Sabbath keeping stretches over the last two stanzas of the chapter. The first stanza includes three subordinate clauses, each beginning with the conjunction *if* to introduce the conditional sentence (58: 13):<sup>13</sup>

*If you keep your feet from breaking .... from doing ....*

*If you call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD's holy day ..*

*If you honor it by not going ..... not doing .... or speaking (NIV)*

The theme of Sabbath-keeping departs from the chapter's focus on fasting. But the deeper intention of the chapter unites the two themes. At the beginning of the chapter, false piety is fasting alongside exploitation (doing as you

<sup>8</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. *Believers Church Bible Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 365.

<sup>9</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. *Believers Church Bible Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 365.

<sup>10</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. *Believers Church Bible Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 366.

<sup>11</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. *Believers Church Bible Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 366.

<sup>12</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. *Believers Church Bible Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 366.

<sup>13</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. *Believers Church Bible Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 366.

*please*, 58:3 NIV). Here at the end of the chapter, true piety is Sabbath-keeping in order to honor the Lord's holy day (not doing as you please, 58: 13 NIV). Bona fide piety includes spiritual disciplines. These disciplines attest to faith that embraces the form of piety (fasting, Sabbath-keeping) without abandoning the substance of piety (justice).<sup>14</sup>

The adverb *then* opens the main clause of the conditional sentence (58: 14). Having engaged in the spiritual discipline of Sabbath-keeping, the result is a wondrous relationship with the Lord. The Lord, in turn, honors the discipline and relationship with promises of well-being (Whybray: 219). These promises echo the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32. There Jacob is described as the Lord's "allotted inheritance" (32:9), whom he made to "ride on the heights of the land" (32: 13 NIV). Riding on the heights of the land in Isaiah 58 serves as a metaphor of prosperity. Such prosperity cannot be separated from the source of Israel's life, the faith of Jacob. The *inheritance of your father Jacob* (NIV) stands in contrast to the sins of the house of Jacob at the beginning of the chapter. The heritage continues to confront the sin. A final "Signature," indicating the Lord's authority as speaker, closes the stanza (58: 14).<sup>15</sup>

## **THE TEXT IN BIBLICAL CONTEXT**

### **Food, Shelter, Clothing**

The Bible often exhibits the principle that a person's relationship to others reveals that person's relationship to God. In Isaiah 58:7 the principle finds expression in the call to distribute the resources of food, shelter, and clothing to those in need. Here, as Brueggemann says, is "a clear, radical statement of social ethics that is at the heart of Judaism" (1998b: 189) .<sup>16</sup>

The principle that a person's relationship to others reveals that person's relationship to God appears in Deuteronomy 15: 11, where open-handedness to the poor is commanded, and in 22: 1-4, where helping a person in need is incumbent [current, present, serving] upon one who keeps the law. Ezekiel defines the righteous person as one whose life is characterized by right living that includes giving food to the hungry and clothing to the naked (18:5-9). Job asserts his integrity as a man of faith because of his regard for those in need (31: 16-23). Throughout the OT the principle is reaffirmed.<sup>17</sup>

The NT does not lose sight of the principle. Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan demonstrates the importance of showing mercy (Luke 10:25-37). In Jesus' parable of the great judgment, compassion for the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the prisoner is a key to God's blessing (Matt 25:31-46). Paul reflects this teaching when he writes that "the only thing that counts is faith working through love" (Gal 5:6). And James in his letter warns against faith in Christ that is unaccompanied by works of righteousness (2:14-26). Throughout Scripture, devotion to God is expressed in active concern for the welfare of fellow human beings.<sup>18</sup>

### **Fasting**

Fasting as a spiritual discipline occurs throughout the Bible. The Hebrew word for fasting (*\$wm*) is used seven times in Isaiah 58. A corresponding Hebrew word (*'anah*), which means *to be bowed down* but in some cases means *to be humbled by fasting*, also occurs in Isaiah 58 (once each in w. 3 and 5). The Day of Atonement is the only fast legislated in the law codes (D. Wright: 72-76). The so-called Holiness Code (Lev 19-26) includes a calendar of appointed festivals, including the Day of Atonement (Lev 23:26-32) The word *'anah* is used there to refer to self-denial, which is usually understood to mean fasting.<sup>19</sup>

The occasions for fasting are varied in the OT. They include the fast of mourning after the death of Saul and Jonathan (1 Sam 31: 13), David's fast when his child was ill (2 Sam 12: 15-23), and Ahab's fast after Elijah's

<sup>14</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. *Believers Church Bible Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 367.

<sup>15</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. *Believers Church Bible Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 367.

<sup>16</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. *Believers Church Bible Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 367.

<sup>17</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. *Believers Church Bible Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 368.

<sup>18</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. *Believers Church Bible Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 368.

<sup>19</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. *Believers Church Bible Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 368.

indictment (1 Kings 21:27). After the exile, fasts are proclaimed before the return to Jerusalem (Ezra 8:21-23) and as a support to Esther before her request to King Ahasuerus (Xerxes I; Esther 4: 15-17). There are fasts of repentance in the books of Joel (1:14) and Jonah (3:5).<sup>20</sup>

Jesus observed a forty-day fast after his baptism (Matt 4: 1-11; M. 11 L 1: 12-13; Luke 4: 1-13). His attitude toward this discipline is indicated in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 6:16-21). Jesus assumed that fasting is a legitimate spiritual discipline. Yet his emphasis was not on its publicity but on its function to energize faithful living. Luke mentions fasting and prayer together in his account of the expansion of the early church (Acts 13:3; 14:23). In general, the NT is reserved about fasting, not excluding it but also not giving it a place of priority in the life of the church.<sup>21</sup>

## **THE TEXT IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH**

### **True Evangelical Faith**

Menno Simons in his *Reply to False Accusations* (1552) gives an account of his evangelical faith, inspired in part by Isaiah 58:

All those who are born of God, who are gifted with the Spirit of the Lord, who are, according to the Scriptures, called into one body and love in Christ Jesus, are prepared by such love to serve their neighbors, not only with money and goods, but also after the example of their Lord and Head, Jesus Christ, in an evangelical manner, with life and blood. They show mercy and love, as much as they can. No one among them is allowed to beg. They take to heart the need of the saints. They entertain those in distress. They take the stranger into their houses. They comfort the afflicted; assist the needy; clothe the naked; feed the hungry; do not turn their face from the poor; do not despise their own flesh. Isa 58:7, 8. (558)

Here Menno speaks for the church and to the church, urging the alliance of faith and love. Faith and love together do not refer primarily to feelings and sentiment but especially to a commitment that addresses needs beyond self.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. *Believers Church Bible Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 368.

<sup>21</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. *Believers Church Bible Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 368

<sup>22</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. *Believers Church Bible Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 369.

## **IS. 61: 1-3 Good news of liberation**

The message of the prophet endowed with the Spirit of the Lord charts a vision of redemption. This message is cast in the form of series of infinitive clauses:

to bring good news to the oppressed,  
 to bind up the brokenhearted,  
 to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor,  
 to comfort all who mourn,  
 to provide for those who mourn in Zion,  
 to give them a garland ...

The clauses name groups burdened by hardship. The only exception to this is the fourth clause, which proclaims *the year of the Lord's favor* (61: 2a).<sup>23</sup>

Central to the proclamation of a Jubilee year in Lev. 25 is the notion of liberty for Israelites who have experienced loss of land and other economic hardship. Is. 61 as well, liberty has a central place in the proclamation of the year of the Lord's favor. But beyond this specific reference to liberty in Lev. 25 and Is. 61, there is an emphasis in both texts on a general amnesty for the impoverished and downtrodden.<sup>24</sup>

Hanson has pointed out that Is. 61:1-3 in particular renews the message of the servant in Is. 42 for its own time and place (223-24). In Is. 42 and 61 the servant is presented as a pattern of Spirit-filled confidence in God, for the individual and the community, living out the call to be God's agent of redemption.<sup>25</sup>

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### Composition of the Book of Isaiah

Themes and subjects shift, often abruptly, from one direction to another. This would seem to argue for disunity and discontinuity. It is important to say, therefore, that the organic unity is not a simple but a composite unity.<sup>26</sup>

For a very long time both Jewish and Christian scholars have questioned whether chapters 1-39 were written by a different author than chapter 40-66. A clear break in historical background and literary style occurs between chapters 39 and 40 creating two main sections. (A further break between chapters 55 and 56 is sometimes suggested, creating a three-part structure of the book: chaps. 1-39, 40-45, 56-66). An example of historical criteria supporting a two-part structure of the book is the reference to temple, land, and kingship as ongoing realities in chapters 1-39 but as things of the past in chapters 40-66. An example of literary criteria is the occurrence of the name *Isaiah* sixteen times in chapters 1-39 and never in chapters 40-66. Further comparison of the two parts indicates numerous differences of style and imagery. Among these differences are the introduction of the servant of the Lord after chapter 40 (in chaps. 41-53), recurrent imperatives (e.g., in chaps. 52-55), an explicit monotheism (e.g., chaps. 41-42), and reinterpretation of the exodus traditions (e.g., chap. 43).<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. *Believers Church Bible Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 386.

<sup>24</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. *Believers Church Bible Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 387.

<sup>25</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. *Believers Church Bible Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 387.

<sup>26</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. *Believers Church Bible Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 441.

<sup>27</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. *Believers Church Bible Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 441.

### Dogmatic approach

This orientation is claiming a single authorship of the book of Isaiah saying “ The eighth-century BC prophet Isaiah wrote the entire book. This approach places primary emphasis on the face value of the text rather than taking the larger context of a book’s meaning into consideration. Those who hold this approach contend that the thematic unity of chapters 1-39 and 40-66 is at least as significant as the differences. This method maintains that the testimony to Isaiah as author of the entire book bearing his name, in early Judaism and throughout the NT period and beyond, deserves serious attention. According to this view, it seems doubtful that a great prophet such as the one who wrote chapters 40-66 would be anonymous. ... A dogmatic approach wants to protect the Bible from the excesses of much modern thought, such as relativism or fragmentation of the text.<sup>28</sup>

### A historical-critical approach

A second approach, heavily influenced by scientific method, is dialectic in its orientation. “Dialectic” means discussion and reasoning by means of dialogue as a method of intellectual investigation. This approach, often called historical critical, includes widely diverse schools of thought, most of whom argue from literary and historical evidence for multiple authorship of the book of Isaiah over several centuries ... A historical-critical approach wants to explore the Bible with tools available through the scientific method.<sup>29</sup>

### Blend the two approaches

... the message of Isaiah of Jerusalem gave for an eighth-century-BC audience were subsequently reinterpreted for the needs of later generations, particularly exilic and postexilic audiences in the sixth century BC and beyond. .... **The sixth century BC** was a time of immense upheaval for the Judeans of the Southern Kingdom. There were Babylonian threats followed by invasion and deportation in the first two decades of the century. Then Babylon itself fell in 539 BC, and under Cyrus the Persian the Judean exiles were given the opportunity to return to Judah and rebuild their temple. ..Therefore, the communities and the theological issues of the sixth century BC were different from those of the eighth century BC. No doubt that there was continuity between these communities, but the experience of invasion and deportation created new realities for the exiles in Babylon.<sup>30</sup>

Two examples of the contrasting communities and issues of the eighth and sixth centuries exhibit these different realities. In the Southern Kingdom of the **eighth century BC**, there was important social-justice issues that grew out of increasing affluence. So Isaiah of Jerusalem used the metaphor of a vineyard to denounce injustice and to warn about judgment (Is. 5:1-10).

**In the late sixth century**, however, an heir of Isaiah’s prophetic vision addressed repatriated 송환 exiles living under deprivation and needs, speaking about a happy future when people would again plant vineyards and build houses (65:17-25). **In the eighth century** there was a spiritual torpor 마비 in which the leaders of the Southern Kingdom were incapable of clear ethical decision making. The language for this is *a spirit of deep sleep* (Is. 29:10). **Two centuries later** the exiles were faced with different kind of spiritual crisis: idolatry on a grand scale in Babylon. So a spiritual descendant of the eighth-century Isaiah presented an expose of Babylonian idolatry addressed to exiles who were using these images. The argument against idols is another kind of deep sleep: *their eyes are shut, so that they cannot see* (Is. 44:18).<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. *Believers Church Bible Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 442.

<sup>29</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. *Believers Church Bible Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 442.

<sup>30</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. *Believers Church Bible Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 442.

<sup>31</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. *Believers Church Bible Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 443.

Friesen's solution to the question of composition begins with a consideration of the book of Isaiah as a whole and then looks for connections between the various parts that make up the whole. In this process of composition, there were authors who wrote out of their different historical contexts and who were inspired to reinterpret for their own particular circumstances texts that were handed down to them.<sup>32</sup>

**JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS (445) - refer to article in the commentary in Jeremiah by Martens, P. 145-146, 299-300.**

The English word "justice" is a translation of the Hebrew noun *mispal*, built from the root word *spt*, meaning "to procure justice for" or "to decide" or "to settle" something. The English word "righteousness" is a translation of the Hebrew noun *sedeq/sedaqah*, meaning "what is right" or "what is just."<sup>33</sup>

In the OT justice and righteousness are often found in tandem (e.g., Gen 18:19; I Kings 10:9; Pss 33:5; 72:2; 89:14; 97:2; Prov 8:20; Jer 9:24; Ezek 45:5; Amos 5:24). In these pairings justice and righteousness are understood both as something that God does and as something that God expects of his people.<sup>34</sup>

In Isaiah and other OT prophets, justice is something that one *does*. It is important to have the right attitude about justice, but unless one *does justice*, the right attitude means little.<sup>35</sup>

In the courtroom, for example, the poor are not to be defrauded 속이다 by laws written and enacted for the benefit of the rich (Isa 3:13-15). On the contrary, the elders and princes are to see to it that the poor are protected. Doing justice, however, extends beyond the courtroom and into everyday life (Isa 56:1). Political leadership must give evidence of doing justice, but in the end justice is the responsibility of everyone.<sup>36</sup>

Justice and the love of justice are defining characteristics of God (Isa 5:16; 28:17; 30:18; 33:5; 61:8). But the Bible testifies that God's justice must be reflected in humankind, who is created in the image of God. In the words of Isaiah's vision, humankind is called upon to love justice and to do it (Isa 1:17).<sup>37</sup>

Rights has to do with right relationships. When used of God, righteousness includes truthfulness in speech (Isa 45:19), covenant keepings (41:10), and delivering and guiding his people (e.g., Pss 5:8; 31:1; 71:2; 89:16). When used of people, righteousness includes what is ethically right: honesty (Gen 30:33), integrity (Deut 6:25), truthfulness (Zech 8:8). The application of ethics is to be found among judges, rulers, kings and among God's people everywhere.<sup>38</sup>

von Rad's careful analysis of righteousness with reference to God and to Israel makes the important point that *sedeq/sedaqa* refers to relationships. Righteous persons (*sediqim*) take seriously the claims laid upon them by their relationship to the Lord, who embodies justice and righteousness. In the Hebrew Bible, God's righteousness is something that God is and does with a view toward shaping God's people in the same direction. It is at this point, that von Rad's analysis is inadequate. On the other hand he emphasizes the impossibility that humans can perform sufficient obedience to God. In this view there is an unwillingness to conceive of the human capacity by God's empowerment to do what is right.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. Believers Church Bible Commentary on *Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 443

<sup>33</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. Believers Church Bible Commentary on *Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 445.

<sup>34</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. Believers Church Bible Commentary on *Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 445.

<sup>35</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. Believers Church Bible Commentary on *Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 445.

<sup>36</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. Believers Church Bible Commentary on *Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 445.

<sup>37</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. Believers Church Bible Commentary on *Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 445.

<sup>38</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. Believers Church Bible Commentary on *Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 445-446.

<sup>39</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. Believers Church Bible Commentary on *Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 446.



The book of Ezekiel offers an example of the righteous person imitating God's righteousness. The underlying assumption in Ezekiel 18 is that the righteous person has the capacity to do "what is just and right" (18:5). What this entails is a voluntary application of the Lord's ways rather than insisting on one's own way. And the key for doing this in Ezekiel 18 is repentance, turning from evil and committing oneself to making relationships right.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ivan D. Friesen. *Believers Church Bible Commentary on Isaiah 40-66* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2009), 446.