Isaiah 1:21-31
A Bilingual Edition
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The original Hebrew is presented in Tiberian Masoretic dress. Vertical alignment of versets facilitates the observation of parallelisms. A verset of two to three stress units is given a line of its own, with stress units marked by the use of the maqeqeph like MT, but not always in accordance with it. Interstitial gaps of varying dimensions set off lines, strophes, and stanzas. A circulus is placed over a word if its consonantal skeleton or vocalization is at variance with MT. An introduction to the building blocks of ancient Hebrew verse, discussions of individual poems, and background essays of a technical nature are offered elsewhere.¹

The English translation is designed to enhance appreciation of the poetry of the original. The goal has been to furnish a global approximation of the poetry and prosody of the Hebrew, even if the results are necessarily piecemeal. I sometimes retain examples of enallage, chiasm, ellipsis, and inversion which perforce result in a less idiomatic rendering. Differences in the use of blank spacing define stress units, versets, lines, strophes, and stanzas. Minimal use of capitalization and punctuation is intentional. By and large capitalization marks the onset of a stanza as defined in the general rule.²

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² The general rule: ancient Hebrew verse is confined within a system of “twos and threes”: two to three “stress units” make up a “verset”; two to three versets a poetic “line”; two to three lines a “strophe”; two to three strophes a “stanza”; two to three stanzas a “section”; and two to three sections a poem, or an extensive section thereof.
Isaiah 1:21-23

How she has become a whore
the town of integrity
“full of justice
law and order lodge in her”
but now murderers!
your silver has become slag
your drink diluted with water
your rulers are rogues
associates of thieves
all of them love a bribe
and chase after gifts
the orphan they do not defend
the widow’s cause
does not come before them
Isaiah 1:24–28

Herewith the word of the Lord of Yahweh of Armies of the Bull of Israel
oh I’ll be satisfied of my foes I’ll be avenged of my enemies and turn my hand against you
I’ll smelt away your slag in a crucible remove all your dross and restore your judges as before your counselors as of yore
after that they’ll call you “citadel of justice town of integrity” Zion shall be redeemed in the judgment her repentant ones in an act of justice but he’ll break rebels and sinners alike those who take leave of Yahweh will perish
and you’ll be ashamed of the trees
in which you delighted
you will blanch because of the gardens
you preferred
and you’ll compare to a tree
of withering leaf
to a garden in which water
is lacking
and the mighty tree will be like tinder
its owner like a spark
both will burn together
with none to douse