

Isaiah 1:2-20

A Bilingual Edition

John F. Hobbins

www.ancienthebrewpoetry.typepad.com

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 *maqeph* 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

¹ See the writer's "Regularities in Ancient Hebrew Verse: An Overview," and supporting essays, at www.ancienthebrewpoetry.typepad.com.

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 1:2-6

ישעיהו א 2-6

Hear o heavens
give ear o earth
Yahweh has spoken
sons I reared and raised
and they rebelled against me

an ox knows its owner
an ass its master's pen
Israel does not know
my people do not consider

O errant nation
iniquity laden people
brood of evildoers
miscreant sons
who abandoned Yahweh
despised Israel's Holy One
turned back

where shall one strike you again?
you go on turning away
the whole head is injured
the whole heart sick

from sole of foot to head
no soundness in it
sore and gash
raw wound
not drained
not dressed
not softened with oil

שָׁמְעוּ שָׁמַיִם
וְהִאֲזִינִי אֲרֶץ
כִּי־יְהוָה דִּבֶּר
בָּנִים גִּדַּלְתִּי וְרוֹמַמְתִּי
וְהֵם פָּשְׁעוּ בִּי

יָדַע שׂוֹר קַנְיָהוּ
וְחֹמֹר אֲבוֹס בְּעֻלְיוֹ
יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יָדַע
עַמִּי לֹא הִתְבּוֹנֵן

הוּא | גְּזִי חָטָא
עִם כָּבַד עוֹן
זֶרַע מְרֻעִים
בָּנִים מִשְׁחִיתִים
עֲזָבוּ אֶת־יְהוָה
נֶאֱצָו אֶת־קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל
נָזְרוּ אַחֲרָיו

עַל־מָה תִּכּוּ עוֹד
תּוֹסִיפוּ סָרָה
כָּל רֹאשׁ לְחַלְיָי
וְכָל לֵבָב דְּוָי

מִכַּף־רַגְלִי וְעַד־רֹאשׁ
אֵין בּוֹ מָתָם
פָּצַע וְחִבּוּרָהּ
וּמִכָּה טְרִיָּה
לֹא זָרוּ
וְלֹא חִבְּשׁוּ
וְלֹא רִכְּכָה בְּשֶׁמֶן

Isaiah 1:7-9

ישעיהו א 7-9

Your land a desolation
your cities consumed with fire
your soil in your sight
of which foreigners eat
a desolation like a storm's devastation

and lovely Zion left over
like a hut in a vineyard
like a lean-to in a melon patch
the city preserved

if Yahweh of Armies
had not left us a remnant
soon we'd have been like Sodom
to Gomorrah compare

אַרְצְכֶם שְׁמָמָה
עָרֵיכֶם שָׂרְפוֹת אֵשׁ
אֲדָמְתְּכֶם לְנִגְדְּכֶם
זָרִים אֹכְלִים אֹתָהּ
וְשְׁמָמָה כְּמַהֲפַכַת זָרִים

וְנוֹתְרָה בַת־צִיּוֹן
כְּסֹכָה בַכְּרָם
כְּמִלּוּנָה בְּמִקְשָׁה
כְּעִיר נְצוּרָה

לוֹלֵי יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת
הוֹתִיר לָנוּ שְׂרִיד
כְּמַעֲט כְּסָדָם הָיִינוּ
לְעַמּוּרָה דְּמִינוּ

Isaiah 1:10-15

ישעיהו א 10-15

Hear the word of Yahweh
notables of Sodom
give ear to our God's instruction
people of Gomorrah
what to me are your many slaughters?
says Yahweh
I am sated with whole-burnt rams
fat of fed beasts
blood of bullocks
lambs and he-goats
I'm not pleased that you come
to see my face
who asked this from your hand
that you trample my courts
Do not continue
bringing offerings
its savor is false
to me an abomination
new moon and sabbath
calling of convocation
I cannot abide
assembled evil your new moons
your seasons my soul hates
they're a burden to me
I'm weary of bearing them
and when you spread out your hands
I'll hide my eyes from you
no matter how much you pray
I will not listen
your hands are covered with blood

שמעו דבר יהוה
קציני סדם
האזינו תורת אלהינו
עם עמרה
למה לי רב-זבחיכם
יאמר יהוה
שבבעתי עלות אילים
וחלב מריאים
ודם פרים
וכבשים ועתודים
לא חפצתי כִּי־תבאו
לראות פני
מי־בקש זאת מידכם
רמס חצרי
לא תוסיפו
הביא מנחת
שוא קטרת
תועבה היא לי
חדש ושבת
קרא מקרא
לא אוכל
און ועצרה חדשיכם
ומועדיכם שנאה נפשי
היו עלי לטרח
גלאיתי נשא
ובפרשכם כפייכם
אעלים עיני מכם
גם־כִּי־תרבו תפלה
אינני שמע
ידיכם דמים מלאו:

Wash get clean
 remove your evil doings
 from before my eyes
 cease dealing harshly
 practice dealing kindly
 seek after justice
 correct the violent
 defend the fatherless
 plead for the widow

 Come let's settle the case
 says Yahweh
 though your sins be like scarlet robes
 they'll turn white as snow
 though red as crimson dye
 they'll become like fleece

 if you acquiesce and obey
 you'll eat of the good of the land
 if you refuse and revolt
 you'll be eaten by the sword
 Yahweh's mouth has spoken

רְחֹצוּ הַזְּפוּ
 הִסְרִיּוּ רָע מֵעֲלֵיכֶם
 מִנֶּגֶד עֵינַי
 חֲדְלוּ הָרַע
 לַמְדוּ הַיָּטִב
 דְּרְשׁוּ מִשְׁפָּט
 אֲשֶׁרוֹ חָמוּץ
 שִׁפְטוּ יָתוֹם
 רִיבוּ אֶלְמָנָה

 לְכוּ־נָא וְנִכְחָה
 יֹאמֶר יְהוָה
 אִם־יְהִי חֲטָאֵיכֶם
 כְּשָׁנִים כְּשֶׁלֶג יִלְבִּינוּ
 אִם־יֵאָדִימוּ כַתּוֹלַע
 כְּצֹמֶר יְהִי

 אִם־תֹּאבוּ וְשָׁמַעְתֶּם
 טוֹב הָאָרֶץ תֹּאכְלוּ
 אִם־תִּמְאָנוּ וּמְרִיתֶם
 חָרַב תֹּאכְלוּ
 כִּי־פִי יְהוָה דִּבֶּר