

READ The BIBLE Together



ISAIAH 13-27

28th August – 22nd October 2016

**SHALOM CHURCH, SINGAPORE
(Upholding the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith)**

Day 1 Read **ISAIAH 13:1-14:23**

In **ISAIAH 1-12**, the prophet *Isaiah* addressed Judah and Jerusalem primarily. Now in **ISAIAH 13-27**, *Isaiah* expanded his horizon to include prophecies concerning the surrounding nations.

In pronouncing God’s judgments on the nations, *Isaiah* reveals that YAHWEH is not just the God of Israel but He is God over all nations, even if they do not acknowledge Him as God. A number of years later, the prophet *Daniel* would put it this way: “. . . *that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses.*” (**DANIEL 5:21**)

After your first reading of **ISAIAH 13:1-14:23** . . .

1. What grabs your attention?
2. What questions do you have?
3. This prophecy is called ‘oracle’ (NASB/ESV) while the NKJV/KJV renders the word as ‘burden’. What does ‘oracle’ mean and why do you think the NKJV renders it as ‘burden’?

Day 2-3 Read **ISAIAH 13:1-14:23**

1. This prophecy was directed at Babylon.
 - (a) Why is Babylon’s day of judgment called ‘*the day of the LORD*’? (**Verse 6**)
 - (b) What would happen to Babylon on that day? (**Verses 19-20**)

2. Whom will YAHWEH use to bring judgment on Babylon? (**Verse 17**)

3. Why do you think God is talking about the judgment of Babylon when in fact it was Assyria who was presently threatening Judah?

4. We have stated earlier that **ISAIAH 13:1-14:23** is a prophecy against Babylon, yet **13:5-16** appear to be talking about judgment upon the whole world! How can we understand this?

At the basic level, the prophecy is against Babylon, for her iniquity (**verse 11**) and her pride (**verse 19**). Yet Babylon also doubles up as a symbol of all the nations and people of the world in our rebellion against God. In our pride, we sin and offend Him. Hence, the prophecy against Babylon also functions as a preview of God's coming judgment against rebellious mankind at the end of the ages. This is why the description of the judgment in **verses 7-10** finds an echo in **REVELATION**.

5. (a) According to **14:1-7**, what will happen to Judah as a result of God's judgment upon Babylon?

(b) What is the relevance of this for the church today?

6. (a) According to **14:9-20**, what will be the final end of the King of Babylon?

(b) Do you think this passage is speaking about the earthly king of Babylon or the "*ruler of this world*", the devil? Discuss your answer with your RTBT group.

7. What is the most important lesson you have learnt from **ISAIAH 13:1-14:23**, and how has your life changed as a result?

Day 4 Read **ISAIAH 14:24-27**

This prophecy was directed at Assyria.

1. (a) How certain can we be that this prophecy will come to pass?

(b) Did it actually come to pass?
2. (a) How would this prophecy impact the first readers of this passage?

(b) What lessons can you learn from this passage?

Day 5 Read **ISAIAH 14:28-32**

This prophecy was directed at _____.

1. When was this prophecy given?
2. What was the content of this prophecy?
3. How was this prophecy relevant to Judah?

4. What is the relevance of this prophecy for us today?

Day 6-7 Matthew Henry's Commentary on **ISAIAH 14:24-32**

We recognize that God has given gifts to the church for our edification. His gifts include godly pastors who lived in the past and faithfully explained God's truth. Matthew Henry is one such gift from God to His church. Hence we will do well to consult his commentary regularly to help us in our understanding of Scripture, after we have first studied the passage ourselves.

Take time to slowly read this extract of Matthew Henry's commentary on **ISAIAH 14:24-32**, highlighting those parts that are helpful and instructive to you:

The destruction of Babylon and the Chaldean empire was a thing at a great distance; the empire had not risen to any considerable height when its fall was here foretold: it was almost 200 years from this prediction of Babylon's fall to the accomplishment of it. Now the people to whom Isaiah prophesied might ask, "What is this to us, or what shall we be the better for it, and what assurance shall we have of it?"

To both questions he answers in these verses, by a prediction of the ruin both of the Assyrians and of the Philistines, the present enemies that infested them, which they should shortly be eye-witnesses of and have benefit by. These would be a present comfort to them, and a pledge of future deliverance, for the confirming of the faith of their posterity. God is to his people the same to day that he was yesterday and will be hereafter; and he will for ever be the same that he has been and is.

Here is (I) Assurance given of the destruction of the Assyrians (v. 25): I will break the Assyrian in my land. Sennacherib brought a very formidable army into the land of Judah, but there God broke it, broke all his regiments by the sword of a destroying angel.

Note, Those who wrongfully invade God's land shall find that it is at their peril: and those who with unhallowed feet trample upon his holy mountains shall themselves there be trodden under foot. God undertakes to do this himself, his people having no might against the great company that came against them: "I will break the Assyrian; let me alone to do it who have angels, hosts of angels, at command."

Now the breaking of the power of the Assyrian would be the breaking of the yoke from off the neck of God's people: His burden shall depart from off their shoulders, the burden of quartering that vast army and paying contribution; therefore the Assyrian must be broken, that Judah and Jerusalem may be eased. Let those that make themselves a yoke and a burden to God's people see what they are to expect.

Now (1): This prophecy is here ratified and confirmed by an oath (v. 24): The Lord of hosts hath sworn, that he might show the immutability of his counsel, and that his people may have strong consolation, Heb. 6:17, Heb. 6:18. What is here said of this particular intention is true of all God's purposes: As I have thought, so shall it come to pass; for he is in one mind, and who can turn him? Nor is he ever put upon new counsels, or obliged to take new measures, as men often are when things occur which they did not foresee. Let those who are the called according to God's purpose comfort themselves with this, that, as God has purposed, so shall it stand, and on that their stability depends.

(2): The breaking of the Assyrian power is made a specimen of what God would do with all the powers of the nations that were engaged against him and his church (v. 26): This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth (the whole world, so the Septuagint), all the inhabitants of the earth (so the Chaldee), not only upon the Assyrian empire (which was then reckoned to be in a manner all the world, as afterwards the Roman empire was, Lu. 2:1, and with it many nations fell that had dependence upon it), but upon all those states and potentates that should at any time attack his land, his mountains.

The fate of the Assyrian shall be theirs; they shall soon find that they meddle to their own hurt. Jerusalem, as it was to the Assyrians, will be to all people a burdensome stone; all that burden themselves with it shall infallibly be cut to pieces by it, Zec. 12:3, Zec. 12:6. The same hand of power and justice that is now to be stretched out against the Assyrian for invading the people of God shall be stretched out upon all the nations that do likewise. It is still true, and will ever be so, Cursed is he that curses God's Israel, Num. 24:9. God will be an enemy to his people's enemies, Ex. 23:22. All the powers on earth are defied to change God's counsel (v. 27): "The Lord of hosts has purposed to break the Assyrian's yoke, and every rod of the wicked laid upon the lot of the righteous; and who shall disannul this purpose? Who can persuade him to recall it, or find out a plea to evade it? His hand is stretched out to execute this purpose; and who has power enough to turn it back or to stay the course of his judgments?"

II. Assurance is likewise given of the destruction of the Philistines and their power. This burden, this prophecy, that lay as a load upon them, to sink their state, came in the year that king Ahaz died, which was the first year of Hezekiah's reign, v. 28. When a good king came in the room of a bad one then this acceptable message was sent among them. When we reform, then, and not till then, we may look for good news from heaven.

Now here we have, (1): A rebuke to the Philistines for triumphing in the death of king Uzziah. He had been as a serpent to them (v. 29), had bitten them, had smitten them, had brought them very low, 2 Chr. 26:6. He warred against the Philistines, broke down their walls, and built cities among them. But when Uzziah died, or rather abdicated, it was told with joy in Gath and published in the streets of Ashkelon.

It is inhuman thus to rejoice in our neighbour's fall. But let them not be secure; for though when Uzziah was dead they made reprisals upon Ahaz, and took many of the

cities of Judah (2 Chr. 28:18), yet out of the root of Uzziah should come a cockatrice, a more formidable enemy than Uzziah was, even Hezekiah, the fruit of whose government should be to them a fiery flying serpent, for he should fall upon them with incredible swiftness and fury: we find he did so. 2 Ki. 18:8, He smote the Philistines even to Gaza. Note, If God remove one useful instrument in the midst of his usefulness, he can, and will, raise up others to carry on and complete the same work that they were employed in and left unfinished.

(2): A prophecy of the destruction of the Philistines by famine and war.

(a) By famine, v. 30. "When the people of God, whom the Philistines has wasted, and distressed, and impoverished, shall enjoy plenty again," and the first-born of their poor shall feed (the poorest among them shall have food convenient), then, as for the Philistines, God will kill their root with famine.

That which was their strength, and with which they thought themselves established as the tree is by the root, shall be starved and dried up by degrees, as those die that die by famine; and thus he shall slay the remnant: those that escape from one destruction are but reserved for another; and, when there are but a few left, those few shall at length be cut off, for God will make a full end.

(b) By war. When the needy of God's people shall lie down in safety, not terrified with the alarms of war, but delighting in the songs of peace, then every gate and every city of the Philistines shall be howling and crying (v. 31), and there shall be a total dissolution of their state; for from Judea, which lay north of the Philistines, there shall come a smoke (a vast army raising a great dust, a smoke that shall be the indication of a devouring fire at hand), and none of all that army shall be alone in his appointed times; none shall straggle or be missing when they are to engage; but they shall all be vigorous and unanimous in attacking the common enemy, when the time appointed for the doing of it comes.

None of them shall decline the public service, as, in Deborah's time, Reuben abode among the sheepfolds and Asher on the sea-shore, Jdg. 5:16, Jdg. 5:17. When God has work to do he will wonderfully endow and dispose men for it.

III. The good use that should be made of all these events for the encouragement of the people of God (v. 32): What shall one then answer the messengers of the nations?

1. This implies (1): That the great things God does for his people are, and cannot but be, taken notice of by their neighbours; those among the heathen make remarks upon them, Ps. 126:2 .

(2) That messengers will be sent to enquire concerning them. Jacob and Israel had long been a people distinguished from all others and dignified with uncommon favours; and therefore some for good-will, others for ill-will, and all for curiosity, are inquisitive concerning them.

(3) That it concerns us always to be ready to give a reason of the hope that we have in the providence of God, as well as in his grace, in answer to every one that asks it, with meekness and fear, 1 Pt. 3:15. And we need go no further than the sacred truths of God's word for a reason; for God, in all he does, is fulfilling the scripture.

(4) The issue of God's dealings with his people shall be so clearly and manifestly glorious that any one, every one, shall be able to give an account of them to those that enquire concerning them.

Now 2. The answer which is to be given to the messengers of the nations is,

(1) That God is and will be a faithful friend to his church and people, and will secure and advance their interests. Tell them that the Lord has founded Zion. This gives an account both of the work itself that is done and of the reason of it. What is God doing in the world, and what is he designing in all the revolutions of states and kingdoms, in the ruin of some nations and the rise of others? He is, in all this, founding Zion; he is aiming at the advancement of his church's interests; and what he aims at he will accomplish. The messengers of the nations, when they sent to enquire concerning Hezekiah's successes against the Philistines, expected to learn by what politics, counsels, and arts of war he carried his point; but they are told that these successes were not owing to any thing of that nature, but to the care God took of his church and the interest he had in it. The Lord has founded Zion, and therefore the Philistines must fall.

(2) That his church has and will have a dependence upon him: The poor of his people shall trust in it, his poor people who have lately been brought very low, even the poorest of them; they more than others, for they have nothing else to trust to, Zep. 3:12, Zep. 3:13. The poor receive the gospel, Mt. 11:5. They shall trust to this, to this great truth, that the Lord has founded Zion; on this they shall build their hopes, and not on an arm of flesh.

This ought to give us abundant satisfaction as to public affairs, that however it may go with particular persons, parties, and interests, the church, having God himself for its founder and Christ the rock for its foundation, cannot but stand firm. The poor of his people shall betake themselves to it (so some read it), shall join themselves to his church and embark in its interests; they shall concur with God in his designs to establish his people, and shall wind up all on the same plan, and make all their little concerns and projects bend to that. Those that take God's people for their people must be willing to take their lot with them and cast in their lot among them. Let the messengers of the nations know that the poor Israelites, who trust in God, having, like Zion, their foundation in the holy mountains (Ps. 87:1), are like Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides for ever (Ps. 125:1), and therefore they will not fear what man can do unto them.

1. Share with your RTBT group what is helpful and instructive from Matthew Henry's commentary quoted in pages 5-8.

2. Take time to worship God using **ISAIAH 13-14**.

3. How can you see Christ in **ISAIAH 13-14**?

Week 2

[4th – 10th September 2016]

Day 1-3 Read **ISAIAH 15-16**

In Shalom Church, we use the New King James Version (NKJV) for our public reading and preaching of the Holy Scriptures. We affirm that the NKJV is a good and accurate English translation of the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament.

While we would normally refer to the NKJV, we should not dismiss other good and accurate English translations like the New American Standard Bible (NASB) and the English Standard Version (ESV). For **ISAIAH 15-16**, we shall read all three English translations to help us understand the Word of God in these two chapters:

<u>NKJV</u>	<u>NASB</u>	<u>ESV</u>
<p>15:1 The burden against Moab. Because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste <i>and</i> destroyed, because in the night Kir of Moab is laid waste <i>and</i> destroyed,</p> <p>² He has gone up to the temple and Dibon, To the high places to weep. Moab will wail over Nebo and over Medeba; On all their heads <i>will be</i> baldness, <i>And</i> every beard cut off.</p>	<p>15:1 The oracle concerning Moab. Surely in a night Ar of Moab is devastated <i>and</i> ruined; Surely in a night Kir of Moab is devastated <i>and</i> ruined.</p> <p>² They have gone up to the temple and <i>to</i> Dibon, <i>even</i> to the high places to weep. Moab wails over Nebo and Medeba; Everyone's head is bald <i>and</i> every beard is cut off.</p>	<p>15:1 An oracle concerning Moab. Because Ar of Moab is laid waste in a night, Moab is undone; because Kir of Moab is laid waste in a night, Moab is undone.</p> <p>² He has gone up to the temple, and to Dibon, to the high places to weep; over Nebo and over Medeba Moab wails. On every head is baldness; every beard is shorn;</p>

<p>³ In their streets they will clothe themselves with sackcloth; On the tops of their houses And in their streets Everyone will wail, weeping bitterly.</p> <p>⁴ Heshbon and Elealeh will cry out, Their voice shall be heard as far as Jahaz; Therefore the armed soldiers of Moab will cry out; His life will be burdensome to him.</p> <p>⁵ "My heart will cry out for Moab; His fugitives <i>shall flee</i> to Zoar, <i>Like</i> a three-year-old heifer. For by the Ascent of Luhith They will go up with weeping; For in the way of Horonaim They will raise up a cry of destruction,</p> <p>⁶ For the waters of Nimrim will be desolate, For the green grass has withered away; The grass fails, there is nothing green.</p> <p>⁷ Therefore the abundance they have gained, And what they have laid up, They will carry away to the Brook of the Willows.</p> <p>⁸ For the cry has gone all around the borders of Moab, Its wailing to Eglaim And its wailing to Beer Elim.</p>	<p>³ In their streets they have girded themselves with sackcloth; On their housetops and in their squares Everyone is wailing, dissolved in tears.</p> <p>⁴ Heshbon and Elealeh also cry out, Their voice is heard all the way to Jahaz; Therefore the armed men of Moab cry aloud; His soul trembles within him.</p> <p>⁵ My heart cries out for Moab; His fugitives are as far as Zoar <i>and</i> Eglath-shelishiyah, For they go up the ascent of Luhith weeping; Surely on the road to Horonaim they raise a cry of distress over <i>their</i> ruin.</p> <p>⁶ For the waters of Nimrim are desolate. Surely the grass is withered, the tender grass died out, there is no green thing.</p> <p>⁷ Therefore the abundance <i>which</i> they have acquired and stored up, they carry off over the brook of Arabim.</p> <p>⁸ For the cry of distress has gone around the territory of Moab, Its wail <i>goes</i> as far as Eglaim and its wailing even to Beer-elim.</p>	<p>³ in the streets they wear sackcloth; on the housetops and in the squares everyone wails and melts in tears.</p> <p>⁴ Heshbon and Elealeh cry out; their voice is heard as far as Jahaz; therefore the armed men of Moab cry aloud; his soul trembles.</p> <p>⁵ My heart cries out for Moab; her fugitives flee to Zoar, to Eglath-shelishiyah. For at the ascent of Luhith they go up weeping; on the road to Horonaim they raise a cry of destruction;</p> <p>⁶ the waters of Nimrim are a desolation; the grass is withered, the vegetation fails, the greenery is no more.</p> <p>⁷ Therefore the abundance they have gained and what they have laid up they carry away over the Brook of the Willows.</p> <p>⁸ For a cry has gone around the land of Moab; her wailing reaches to Eglaim; her wailing reaches to Beer-elim.</p>
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<p>⁹For the waters of Dimon will be full of blood; Because I will bring more upon Dimon, Lions upon him who escapes from Moab, And on the remnant of the land.”</p> <p>16:1 Send the lamb to the ruler of the land, from Sela to the wilderness, to the mount of the daughter of Zion.</p> <p>² For it shall be as a wandering bird thrown out of the nest; <i>so</i> shall be the daughters of Moab at the fords of the Arnon.</p> <p>³ “Take counsel, execute judgment; make your shadow like the night in the middle of the day; Hide the outcasts, do not betray him who escapes.</p> <p>⁴ Let My outcasts dwell with you, O Moab; be a shelter to them from the face of the spoiler. For the extortioner is at an end, devastation ceases, the oppressors are consumed out of the land.</p> <p>⁵ In mercy the throne will be established; and One will sit on it in truth, in the tabernacle of David, Judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness.”</p>	<p>⁹For the waters of Dimon are full of blood; Surely I will bring added <i>woes</i> upon Dimon, A lion upon the fugitives of Moab and upon the remnant of the land.</p> <p>16:1 Send the <i>tribute</i> lamb to the ruler of the land, from Sela by way of the wilderness to the mountain of the daughter of Zion.</p> <p>² Then, like fleeing birds <i>or</i> scattered nestlings, the daughters of Moab will be at the fords of the Arnon.</p> <p>³ “Give <i>us</i> advice, make a decision; cast your shadow like night at high noon; hide the outcasts, do not betray the fugitive.</p> <p>⁴ “Let the outcasts of Moab stay with you; be a hiding place to them from the destroyer.” For the extortioner has come to an end, destruction has ceased, oppressors have completely <i>disappeared</i> from the land.</p> <p>⁵ A throne will even be established in lovingkindness, And a judge will sit on it in faithfulness in the tent of David; moreover, he will seek justice and be prompt in righteousness.</p>	<p>⁹ For the waters of Dibon are full of blood; for I will bring upon Dibon even more, a lion for those of Moab who escape, for the remnant of the land.</p> <p>16:1 Send the lamb to the ruler of the land, from Sela, by way of the desert, to the mount of the daughter of Zion.</p> <p>² Like fleeing birds, like a scattered nest, so are the daughters of Moab at the fords of the Arnon.</p> <p>³ “Give counsel; grant justice; make your shade like night at the height of noon; shelter the outcasts; do not reveal the fugitive;</p> <p>⁴ let the outcasts of Moab sojourn among you; be a shelter to them from the destroyer. When the oppressor is no more, and destruction has ceased, and he who tramples underfoot has vanished from the land,</p> <p>⁵ then a throne will be established in steadfast love, and on it will sit in faithfulness in the tent of David one who judges and seeks justice and is swift to do righteousness.”</p>
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<p>⁶ We have heard of the pride of Moab— <i>He is very proud— of his haughtiness and his pride and his wrath; but his lies shall not be so.</i></p> <p>⁷ Therefore Moab shall wail for Moab; everyone shall wail. For the foundations of Kir Hareseth you shall mourn; surely <i>they are stricken.</i></p> <p>⁸ For the fields of Heshbon languish, <i>and</i> the vine of Sibmah; the lords of the nations have broken down its choice plants, which have reached to Jazer and wandered through the wilderness. Her branches are stretched out, they are gone over the sea.</p> <p>⁹ Therefore I will bewail the vine of Sibmah, with the weeping of Jazer; I will drench you with my tears, O Heshbon and Elealeh; for battle cries have fallen over your summer fruits and your harvest.</p> <p>¹⁰ Gladness is taken away, and joy from the plentiful field; in the vineyards there will be no singing, nor will there be shouting; no treader will tread out wine in the presses; I have made their shouting cease.</p> <p>¹¹ Therefore my heart shall resound like a harp for Moab, and my inner being for Kir Heres.</p>	<p>⁶ We have heard of the pride of Moab, an excessive pride; <i>even</i> of his arrogance, pride, and fury; his idle boasts are false.</p> <p>⁷ Therefore Moab will wail; everyone of Moab will wail. You will moan for the raisin cakes of Kir-hareseth as those who are utterly stricken.</p> <p>⁸ For the fields of Heshbon have withered, the vines of Sibmah <i>as well</i>; the lords of the nations have trampled down its choice clusters which reached as far as Jazer <i>and</i> wandered to the deserts; its tendrils spread themselves out <i>and</i> passed over the sea.</p> <p>⁹ Therefore I will weep bitterly for Jazer, for the vine of Sibmah; I will drench you with my tears, O Heshbon and Elealeh; for the shouting over your summer fruits and your harvest has fallen away.</p> <p>¹⁰ Gladness and joy are taken away from the fruitful field; in the vineyards also there will be no cries of joy or jubilant shouting, no treader treads out wine in the presses, <i>for</i> I have made the shouting to cease.</p> <p>¹¹ Therefore my heart intones like a harp for Moab and my inward feelings for Kir-hareseth.</p>	<p>⁶ We have heard of the pride of Moab— how proud he is! — of his arrogance, his pride, and his insolence; in his idle boasting he is not right.</p> <p>⁷ Therefore let Moab wail for Moab, let everyone wail. Mourn, utterly stricken, for the raisin cakes of Kir-hareseth.</p> <p>⁸ For the fields of Heshbon languish, and the vine of Sibmah; the lords of the nations have struck down its branches, which reached to Jazer and strayed to the desert; its shoots spread abroad and passed over the sea.</p> <p>⁹ Therefore I weep with the weeping of Jazer for the vine of Sibmah; I drench you with my tears, O Heshbon and Elealeh; for over your summer fruit and your harvest the shout has ceased.</p> <p>¹⁰ And joy and gladness are taken away from the fruitful field, and in the vineyards no songs are sung, no cheers are raised; no treader treads out wine in the presses; I have put an end to the shouting.</p> <p>¹¹ Therefore my inner parts moan like a lyre for Moab, and my inmost self for Kir-hareseth.</p>
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<p>¹² And it shall come to pass, when it is seen that Moab is weary on the high place, that he will come to his sanctuary to pray; but he will not prevail.</p> <p>¹³ This <i>is</i> the word which the LORD has spoken concerning Moab since that time.</p> <p>¹⁴ But now the LORD has spoken, saying, “Within three years, as the years of a hired man, the glory of Moab will be despised with all that great multitude, and the remnant <i>will be</i> very small <i>and</i> feeble.”</p>	<p>¹² So it will come about when Moab presents himself, when he wearies himself upon <i>his</i> high place and comes to his sanctuary to pray, that he will not prevail.</p> <p>¹³ This is the word which the LORD spoke earlier concerning Moab.</p> <p>¹⁴ But now the LORD speaks, saying, “Within three years, as a hired man would count them, the glory of Moab will be degraded along with all <i>his</i> great population, and <i>his</i> remnant will be very small <i>and</i> impotent.”</p>	<p>¹² And when Moab presents himself, when he wearies himself on the high place, when he comes to his sanctuary to pray, he will not prevail.</p> <p>¹³ This is the word that the LORD spoke concerning Moab in the past.</p> <p>¹⁴ But now the LORD has spoken, saying, “In three years, like the years of a hired worker, the glory of Moab will be brought into contempt, in spite of all his great multitude, and those who remain will be very few and feeble.”</p>
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After reading **ISAIAH 15-16** thrice . . .

1. What grabs your attention?

2. What questions do you have?

These 23 verses can be broadly divided into three sections:

- 15:1-9** Lament for Moab
- 16:1-5** Refuge for Moab
- 16:6-14** Reason for Moab’s judgment

A number of places were mentioned in these 23 verses. Let’s take some time to know and locate them in the map provided:



- Ar and Kir (or Kir Hareseth) are chief cities of Moab
- Dibon is a high place of the Moabite god Chemosh
- Nebo is a high mountain (the place where Moses stood to see the Promised Land before he died – cf. **DEUTERONOMY 34**); due to its height, it is a defensive strongpoint
- Medeba is about 5 miles southeast of Nebo
- Heshbon, Elealeh (not shown in the map) and Jahaz are just names of places up in the north
- Zoar is in the territory of Edom, most famous for being the little city that Lot wanted to flee to, when coming out of Sodom
- Eglath-shelishiyah (not shown in the map) is a name of a place in Moab, while Luhoth and Horonaim are places yet unknown to us

- Nimrim is an oasis on the southeastern shore of the Dead Sea
- Wadi of the Poplars (Brook of the Willows) is possibly Zered River, at the border of Edom
- Dimon is unknown

What is the purpose of knowing the names of these places in Moab? As we locate them in the map, we see that it covers almost the whole land of Moab: *from north to south, from east to west*. This conveys one simple message: *the coming judgment on Moab is not restricted to just one small area, but it is going to fall upon the whole land!* ***In simple words, it is devastating, and there is no escape!***

Day 4 Read **ISAIAH 15:1-9** – Lament for Moab

God’s judgment upon Moab will come via the invading armies of the Assyrians. It will be devastating and most terrible! How can we see this from these 9 verses? (Consulting the NASB and ESV may help you get an even firmer grasp of what the verses are saying in the NKJV)

Verse 1:

(Hint: Consider when the devastation will take place, and on which cities)

Verse 2: What is the significance of “bald heads” and “shorn beard”?

Verse 3: When will people put on sackcloth? Where will the people be weeping and how is their weeping described?

Verse 4: The cry of Heshbon will be heard in Jahaz – what is the significance of this? The armed soldiers of Moab will cry aloud and tremble – what is the significance of this?

Verses 5-8: We see fugitives here in these 3 verses. It is a very pitiful sight. They will gather up whatever riches they have and can carry, and run for their lives (**verse 7**). As they flee from Moab to Edom (Zoar is in Edom – **verse 5**), they will weep and wail and cry over their loss (**verse 5 & 7**). Another possible reason for their need to flee could be seen in **verse 6** – famine and drought in Moab, perhaps as a result of the war with the Assyrians.

Verse 9: “*Water of Dimon full of blood*” – what do you think is the message here?

If a Moabite managed to escape, does that mean he is safe? Why?

What is the message of these 9 verses?

Day 5 Read **ISAIAH 16:1-5** – *Refuge for Moab*

Take time to read and re-read these 5 verses, using the different English translations provided in page 11.

1. What is the message of these 5 verses?

2. How can we see the Gospel in these 5 verses?

Note: **Verse 4 (NKJV)** could be rendered as: *Let my outcasts dwell with you – Moab -- be a shelter to them from the face of the spoiler.* In other words, it is Moab asking Judah to accept Moabite refugees into her midst.

Day 6-7 Read **ISAIAH 16:6-14** – *Reason for Moab’s judgment*

1. What was the stated reason for Moab’s judgment? (**Verse 6**)

2. **Verses 8-10** mention the vines and grapes of Moab.

(a) What can be said about the vines of Moab in the past?

(b) What has happened to the vines of Moab now?

Note: **Verse 7** (NKJV) mentions “*the foundations of Kir Hereseth*” while both the NASB and the ESV rendered it as “*the raisin cakes of Kir Hereseth*”.

It appears that Moab was well-known for their grapes (“*choice clusters*” – **verse 8**) and hence produce renown raisin cakes for international consumption. This forms the basis of Moab’s economic foundation. When the Assyrians came, they so destroyed the vineyards of Moab that it was equivalent to destroying the economic foundation of Moab!

In this way, we can understand the absence of gladness and joy in the vineyards mentioned in **verse 10**.

3. (a) What was Moab doing in **verse 12**?

(b) Why do you think he will not prevail?

(c) Do you think what Moab did in **verse 12** is another expression of his pride and arrogance? Elaborate.

4. **Verse 14** is a re-statement of the devastation that will come upon Moab. How bad is the devastation, and how do we know?

5. What is the most important lesson you have learnt from **ISAIAH 15:1-16:14**, and how has your life changed as a result?

Week 3

[11th – 17th September 2016]

Day 1-3 Read **ISAIAH 17:1-11**

This prophecy was directed at Syria (capital city: Damascus) and Israel (also called Ephraim). The reason why they were put together was probably because of the alliance they formed to repel the Assyrians (recall **ISAIAH 7**).

1. What will happen to Damascus? (**Verses 1-3**)

2. (a) What will happen to Israel? (**Verses 4-5**)

(b) What is the message of **verse 6**?

3. What is the reason for the judgment that came upon Israel (**verses 9-11**)?

4. What will happen as a result of this judgment (**verses 7-8**)?

5. What is the most important lesson you have learnt from **ISAIAH 17:1-11**, and how has your life changed as a result?

Day 4-5 Read **ISAIAH 17:12-14**

1. What is the message of these 3 verses?
2. How is this a comforting and strengthening message for God's people during the time of *Isaiah*?
3. What is the relevance of this message for us today?

Day 6-7 Read **ISAIAH 18:1-7**

"The land shadowed with buzzing wings" is commonly understood to refer to Egypt while *"a nation tall and smooth of skin"* is commonly understood to refer to the Ethiopians.

In 715 B.C., Ethiopian Piankhi mastered Egypt, founded the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty and sought to play a part on the world stage. Envoys went to all the Palestinian states promising Egyptian aid in an anti-Assyrian rising.

It is likely that an Ethiopian-Egyptian envoy arrived in Jerusalem with such a message. The prophet *Isaiah* seized upon the occasion, and prophesied that all these reliance on human efforts will fail. Rather, it would be better if the envoys were to travel the world with the message to all the nations to trust in YAHWEH instead!

1. The political maneuverings of these nations is likened to a harvest (**verse 5-6**). How will things turn out finally?
2. While the nations were plotting and maneuvering, what was the LORD doing? (**Verse 4**)
3. According to **verse 7**, how will this entire episode end?

4. Imagine yourself as a resident in Jerusalem then. How will you respond to this message from *Isaiah* in these 7 verses?
5. What is the relevance of this message for us today?

Week 4

[18th – 24th September 2016]

Day 1-3 Read **ISAIAH 19:1-25**

1. Who is going to visit Egypt and what will be the effect of this visit? (**Verse 1**)
2. What will He do to the Egyptians? (**Verses 2-3**)
3. What natural and economic calamities will befall Egypt at that time? (**Verses 5-10**)
4. What do **verses 11-15** tell us about the political leadership of Egypt at that time?
5. From **verses 16-25**, we come across the phrase “*in that day*” 5 times.
 - (a) In the first “*in that day*”, what will happen to Egypt? (**Verses 16-17**)
 - (b) The second and third “*in that day*” are found in **verses 18-22**. What is the message of these 5 verses?

As a Jew living then, would you be glad to hear the words of **verses 18-22**? Why?

(c) What is the message of fourth and fifth “*in that day*” (**verses 23-24**)?

As a Jew living then, would you be glad to hear the words of **verses 23-24**? Why?

7. How and when do you think **verses 16-24** will come to pass? Discuss your answer with your RTBT group.

Day 4 Read **ISAIAH 20:1-6**

1. In the year that the Philistine city of Ashdod was captured by the Assyrians, what did the LORD command *Isaiah* to do? (**Verses 1-2**)
2. What was the message being conveyed by the prophet’s action and appearance? (**Verses 3-4**)
3. When this prophecy finally comes to pass, what will be the reaction of those who trusted in Egypt for their security? (**Verses 5-6**)

4. This message was originally meant for Judah. What do you think Judah was supposed to do, after hearing this prophecy from *Isaiah*?

5. What is the relevance of this message for us today?

Day 5-7 Read **ISAIAH 21:1-10**

These 10 verses contain a prophecy against Babylon. "*The Wilderness of the Sea*" (**verse 1**) is a reference to the area around the Persian Gulf, the home of the Babylonians. From **verse 9**, we know that this prophecy talks about the fall of Babylon. Which fall of Babylon was *Isaiah* referring to?

It could refer to the fall of Babylon to the Persians and Medes in 539 B.C., leading to the return of the Jews to Canaan, or it could refer to the conquest of Babylon by Sennacherib the Assyrian king in 702 B.C. This RTBT notes take the position that this prophecy refers to the fall of Babylon to the Assyrians in 702 B.C.

During that period of time, *Merodach-Baladan* was the leader of the Babylonians. He was known as a strong and courageous leader, and twice broke free from the control of the Assyrians in 722-710 and 705-702 B.C. As the Assyrians were his arch-enemies, *Merodach-Baladan* would do whatever he can to encourage the surrounding nations to oppose and trouble Assyria.

When he heard of how *Hezekiah* managed to defeat the Assyrians, and how *Hezekiah* was sick and yet recovered miraculously, he immediately sent a delegation to visit Judah, with the aim of exploring an alliance. Needless to say, this was an ego-boosting time for *Hezekiah* and little Judah. The details of this visit by the Babylonian ambassadors can be found in **ISAIAH 39**.

ISAIAH 21:1-10 contain *Isaiah's* prophecy to Judah, discouraging Judah from ever forming such an alliance and trusting in the Babylonians:

- **Verse 1:** The coming of the Babylonian delegation is likened to the whirlwinds of the South, only that this time, it is from the desert, from a terrible land.
- **Verse 2:** The message of *Merodach-Baladan* is simple, and something very attractive to the ears of the many in Judah. He promised to defeat the Assyrians and bring all sighs to an end. He further assured his hearers that Elam and Media will join him in his anti-Assyrian campaign.

- **Verses 3-4** contain *Isaiah's* response to the distressing vision (**verse 2**) he had received. This vision is in response to what the Babylonians were proposing to Judah and *Hezekiah*. Physically and emotionally, *Isaiah* goes into a shock, seeing the horror that will come upon Babylon!
- **Verse 5** records the contrasting response of the leaders of Judah to Babylon's proposal. They were feasting, and getting ready to join forces with the Babylonians!
- **Verses 6-10:** The LORD told *Isaiah* to function as a watchman, to see what is coming and report what he saw faithfully. So he did, and his report, in short is this: *Babylon is fallen, is fallen!*

What is the message of these ten verses to *Hezekiah* and Judah? *Joining forces with Merodach-Baladan looks like a good move, but in reality, it is ultimately useless and doomed! Babylon will fall, and hence identifying oneself with Merodach-Baladan will yield no lasting peace!*

What is the relevance of this message for us today? *As we face crisis in our lives, we are often tempted to turn to and find allies in this world. In fact, the world will come and invite us to join forces with them. But all such efforts and alliances are doomed. Rather than trust in man, we must rely on our Lord, and on Him alone!*

Week 5

[25th September - 1st October 2016]

Day 1-3 Read **ISAIAH 21:11-17**

1. Matthew Henry has a very good introduction to **ISAIAH 21:11-12:**

“This prophecy concerning Dumah is very short, and withal dark and hard to be understood. Some think that Dumah is a part of Arabia, and that the inhabitants descended from Dumah the sixth son of Ishmael, as those of Kedar (v. 16, v. 17) from Ishmael's second son, Gen. 25:13, Gen. 25:14. Others, because Mount Seir is here mentioned, by Dumah understand Idumea, the country of the Edomites. Some of Israel's neighbours are certainly meant, and their distress is foretold, not only for warning to them to prepare them for it, but for warning to Israel not to depend upon them, or any of the nations about them, for relief in a time of danger, but upon God only. We must see all creature confidences failing us, and feel them breaking under us, that we may not lay more weight upon them than they will bear.”

2. The watchman in **verses 11-12** refers to the prophet *Isaiah*.

In **verse 11** (NKJV), we hear someone from Seir (Edom) asking the prophet a question, “*What of the night?*” The ESV renders the question as “*What time of the night?*” while the NASB renders it as “*How far gone is the night?*”

The inquirer wants to know how much longer must he wait before morning arrives. He asked the question twice, indicating his desperation and impatience for daybreak.

Why do you think someone would have such intense longing for the night to end and the sun to shine again?

3. (a) What was the reply of the watchman? (**Verse 12**)

(b) What do you think his reply meant? (Discuss your answer with your RTBT group)

4. **ISAIAH 21:13-17**

Tema (**verse 14**) was an oasis city and caravan centre about 100 miles south of Elath, 200 miles east of the Red Sea.

The Dedanites were an Arabian tribe of the same general locality and Kedar (**verse 16**) was an Arabian tribe.

The whole Arabian area was affected by the sufferings and unrests caused by the Assyrians. In 703 B.C., these Arabs joined *Merodach-Baladan* in rebelling against the Assyrians. They were subsequently subdued by *Sennacherib*.

In this prophecy, Tema was called upon to help those who were fleeing from the war. So it is a case of one Gentile nation helping another Gentile nation in trouble. However, as **verses 16-17** tell us, even the helpers themselves will be defeated and conquered in due course.

The message therefore is clear:

The world cannot solve its problems. Gentile refugees are being helped by other Gentile nations but their root problem of insecurity remains unsolved.

Implication for Israel:

It is foolish to look to any of these nations for security and salvation! There is no truly safe place of refuge in this world. The only true refuge is found in the LORD Himself!

Day 4-7 Read **ISAIAH 22:1-25**

Verse 1 tells us that this is a burden (oracle) against the Valley of Vision. Most of our modern English translations inform us that this is actually a proclamation against Jerusalem. These 25 verses can be divided into three portions: **verses 1-7, verses 8-14, and verses 15-25.**

ISAIAH 22:1-7

Besides reading these 7 verses using the NKJV, consider reading them using the ESV and NASB. What is the message of these 7 verses?

ISAIAH 22:8-14

Besides reading these 7 verses using the NKJV, consider reading them using the ESV and NASB. What is the message of these 7 verses?

ISAIAH 22:15-25

Besides reading these 11 verses using the NKJV, consider reading them using the ESV and NASB. What is the message of these 11 verses?

After reviewing your answers above, answer: What is the message of **ISAIAH 22**?

Day 1-3 Read **ISAIAH 23:1-18**

From **verse 1**, we know that this is a prophecy against Tyre. We know from **verse 4** that Tyre's twin city – Sidon was also included in the prophecy.

1. **Verses 1-7** narrate (using a lament) what happened to Tyre and Sidon.
 - (a) What can be said about Tyre and Sidon previously?

 - (b) What can be said about Tyre and Sidon now?

 - (c) What do you think **verse 5** is conveying?

2. **Verses 8-14** give the reason (using a lament) why such devastation happened to Tyre and Sidon. What's the reason?

3. **Verses 15-18** tell us what will happen to Tyre after 70 years.
 - (a) What will happen to Tyre?

 - (b) What do you think is the meaning of **verse 18**? Discuss your answer with your RTBT group.

ISAIAH 24 - 27 belong together. In these 4 chapters, we meet with two cities: *the city of man* and *the city of God*. As the prophet concludes his vision of the supremacy of God over the nations, he looked forward all the way to the end of all things. Particular nations fade completely into the background, and the whole earth emerges as one city plunged into final ruin.

“In chapters 13-23 the nations came to the attention first; here it is God. The prophet wants to make it plain that God’s the sovereign actor on the stage of history. It is not he who reacts to the nations, but the nations who respond to him. Thus Israel’s hope is not in the nations of humanity. They will wither away in a moment under God’s blast. Rather, her hope is in the Lord, who is the master of the nations. This theme is developed by means of a recurrence of contrast.

There is the contrast between the City of Man and the City of God. The one is cast down, forsaken and destroyed. The other is a place of security, abundance, and life. There is also a contrast in song. In the city of chaos the drunken revelry which was once there is not silent. In its place there comes from the ends of the earth the song of Judah, a song about a God who is strong enough to save the helpless and compassionate enough to redeem the sinful.”

John N. Oswalt

For the next 3 days, we will focus on **ISAIAH 24:1-23** -- a poem concerning the destruction of this world. As you take time to read these 23 verses, note that it references the flood narrative of **GENESIS 6-9** as it talks about “*the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth are shaken*” (**verse 18** cf. **GENESIS 7:11**) and “*the everlasting covenant*” (**verse 5** cf. **GENESIS 9:16**).

1. According to **verses 1-3** . . .

(a) Who is the author of this destruction? (**Verse 1**)

(b) How comprehensive will this destruction be?

Verse 2:

Verse 3:

(c) How do we know if this judgment will come to pass?

Note: In these 3 verses, we are meant to see a picture of a teeming, abundant earth becoming a ruinous heap as a result of God’s judgment.

2. While **verses 1-3** talk of the coming devastation, yet no justification was given. Hence **verses 4-6** will provide the reason for God's judgment, while giving further elaboration of the devastation that this world will experience.

Further elaboration of devastation

Verses 4a-b focus on the physical world: *mourns and fades away, and languishes*. **Verse 6a** calls this "*the curse*". **Verses 4c-5a** focus on the people living in this world: *languish and pollute*. The rest of **verse 6** fills up the picture, using words like "*desolate*", "*burned*", "*few*". Taken together, they are meant to convey a picture of total devastation and utter tragedy.

Justification for devastation

Verses 4c-5 provide us the reason(s) why God would bring this judgment upon the world. What is the reason(s)?

3. Recall the words of John N. Oswalt in page 27: "*There is the contrast between the City of Man and the City of God.*"

Verses 7-13 put the spotlight on the *City of Man*. In your own words, describe what will happen to the *City of Man*:

4. While the singing has ceased in the *City of Man*, another song can be heard (**verses 14-16b**). Who is singing and what are they singing?

5. **Verses 16c-f** record *Isaiah's* response to this judgment.

(a) What is it?

(b) Why do you think he has such a response, although he will clearly not experience this judgment?

6. **Verses 17-20** depict in poetic form the destruction that will come upon this world.
- (a) What is the picture being painted in **verses 17-18**, and what is the message?

 - (b) The last two lines of **verse 18** allude to the Genesis Flood. This allusion reinforces the message of 6(a). How?

 - (c) What is the message of **verses 19-20**?
7. **Verse 21** mentioned "*in that day*".
- (a) What will the LORD do "*in that day*"? (**Verses 21-22**)

 - (b) Why would the moon be disgraced and the sun ashamed "*in that day*"? (**Verse 23**)

 - (c) When do you think "*in that day*" refers to? (Discuss your answer with your RTBT group)
8. What do you think the hearers were expected to do, after they have heard **ISAIAH 24**?

Day 1-4 Read **ISAIAH 25:1-12**

In **ISAIAH 24:14-16b**, we read of songs being sung to the LORD. **ISAIAH 25:1-12** is one such song that will be sung!

Like **ISAIAH 12**, the individual voice (**verses 1-5**) becomes a communal voice (**verses 9-10a**). The picture is that of the redeemed of the Lord coming to His city, and as each enters, they personally sing a song of deliverance. Then within the walls of His city, the redeemed joined their voices to praise their Redeemer!

1. **Verse 1** first begins with a declaration that the LORD is '*my God*'. It points to an intimate and personal relationship between God and *Isaiah*.

In the New Testament, the LORD (YAHWEH) is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Can you say of Jesus, "*You are my God*"? Why?

2. **Verse 1** continues with a declaration of praise to God because He has done wonderful things.

What are the wonderful things that YAHWEH has done?

Verses 2-3:

Verses 4-5:

Verse 4 celebrates the truth that God is a refuge from the storm and a shade from the heat! Use these two pictures of God, turn them into a pray and worship your God!

3. In contrast to the "city" of **verse 2**, **verses 6-8** point us to the "mountain".

(a) What do you think "this mountain" refers to?

(b) What will happen on “this mountain”? (**Verse 6**)

(c) What else will the LORD do on “this mountain”? (**Verse 8**)

(d) What do you think the last phrase of **verse 8** – “*For the LORD has spoken*” – seeks to convey?

4. (a) What does it mean that YAHWEH’s hand will be on “*this mountain*”? (**Verse 10**)

(b) What does it mean that YAHWEH’s feet will be on Moab? (**Verse 10**)

(c) What will be YAHWEH’s response to Moab’s pride, trickery and fortress?

Note: Moab would be part of the “city” (**verse 2**)

5. **Verse 9** states a saying that will be uttered “*in that day*”.

(a) What day is “*that day*”?

(b) What is the focus of the saying?

6. What truths have you learnt about God from **ISAIAH 25**, and how have they impacted your life?

Day 5-7 Read **ISAIAH 26:1-21**

Verses 1-6

1. "*In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah*" (**Verse 1**). What does "*that day*" refer to?
2. The "*mountain*" is now "*strong city*". In what sense is it strong?
3. Who may enter this city? (**Verse 2**)
4. **Verse 3** mentions "*perfect peace*".
 - (a) Why do you think the word "*perfect*" is used?
 - (b) Who will enjoy this "*perfect peace*", and why?
5. What is the message of **verses 5-6**?

Verses 7-9

6. What can we learn about God from these 3 verses?

7. What can we learn about the people of God from these 3 verses?

Verses 10-11

8. What is the message of these 2 verses?

Week 8

[16th – 22nd October 2016]

Day 1-4 Read **ISAIAH 26:1-21 (continued)**

Verses 12-15

9. What has the LORD done and what will He do? (**Verse 12**)

10. What is the message of **verses 13-15**, and how is it linked to **verse 12**?

Verses 16-19

11. What did the Lord's people do in the day of trouble? (**Verse 16**)

12. In **verses 17-18**, the imagery of a woman in labor was used. What is the message conveyed by this imagery?

13. What did the "expectant mother" Judah produce?

14. How can the dead live and sing? (**Verse 19**)

15. What is the overall message of **ISAIAH 26:16-19**?

Verses 20-21

16. What is the message of these 2 verses?

17. Review your answers to Q1-16 above. What is this poem about?

Day 5-6 Read **ISAIAH 27:1-13**

1. *In that day the LORD with His severe sword, great and strong,
Will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent,
Leviathan that twisted serpent;
And He will slay the reptile that is in the sea.*

27:1

Verse 1 describes the LORD's victory in the supernatural realm. The "*host of the exalted ones*" (**24:21**) are here described mythologically as "*punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, "Leviathan that twisted serpent" and "the reptile that is in the sea."*

This creature has immense power, but it is a creature. Hence God's power as Creator is above it. In poetic form, the sword of the Lord is said to be "*severe*", "*great*" and "*strong*", contrasting against the fleeing serpent, the twisted serpent and the reptile in the sea. The simple message is that the Lord's power is more than a match for this powerful creature. This creature is Satan, and it is a great comfort to God's people to know that though we are no match for Satan, Satan is no match for our God!

2. In **verses 2-6**, we have another poem about God's vineyard (recall **ISAIAH 5:1-7**).

- (a) What will the LORD do for His vineyard?
- (b) What does the phrase “*fury is not in me*” (**verse 4a**) mean?
- (c) The rest of **verse 4** is God challenging anyone to bring thorns and briers into His vineyard, and He will burn them up! This is an expression of His ardent love and tender care for His vineyard!
- (d) **Verse 5** is an invitation to the person mentioned in **verse 4**. What is the invitation?
- (e) What is the message of **verse 6**?
3. **Verses 7-11** deal with how God treats Israel. The question was posed in **verse 7**: *Does God treat Israel like how He treats Israel's enemies?*
- (a) **Verse 8** gives the first answer. What is it?
- (b) **Verse 9a** gives the second answer – God will even provide an atonement (covering for sin) for Jacob! While the issue of the atonement is not elaborated here, the fruit is! Israel will destroy all their images and crushed all their altars to pieces, implying that from henceforth, Israel will worship God alone!
- (c) **Verses 10-11** gives a sharp contrast to Israel's destiny by drawing attention to the end of the fortified city (City of Man, cf. **ISAIAH 24**). What is said about this city?
4. What is the message of **verses 12-13**?

Day 7 Review **ISAIAH 13-27**

1. What is the most important truth you have learnt concerning God from **ISAIAH 13-27**?

2. What is the most important truth you have learnt concerning the Christian Life from **ISAIAH 13-27**?

3. How has **ISAIAH 13-27** changed your life? Share one change:

Acknowledgement

Whatever the weaknesses of this Read-The-Bible-Together guide, they would have been far greater without the kind help of Sarah SOH and HO Suat Lin.

They gave their time and energy to review the entire guide, asking questions all the way and giving many valuable suggestions. Thank you, sisters!

Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another! (Proverbs 27:17, ESV)

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Questions or comments concerning this RTBT guide?
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