

THE REIGN OF GOD IN THE BIBLICAL ISAIAH 2:2-4

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Abstract

Isaiah does not mean actual mountain here. “The mountain of the house of the Lord” refers to YHWH’s rule. Mount Zion is portrayed here as the centre of God’s government over the world. Isaiah uses “Mountain” (*har*) as a figure of speech to portray the seat of YHWH’s rule. Isaiah envisions a time when Israel and her God would be the most highly exalted in the earth eventually. That the nations come to Zion to learn the Torah symbolizes the universal acknowledgement of YHWH, “the God of Jacob,” as the God of all nations. Isaiah portrays the Torah as the rule of life, the secret of peace and the anchor of a new world order characterized by peace and fraternal co-existence.

Keywords: Mount Zion, Torah, Peace, Reign of God.

1. Introduction

Isaiah 2:2-4 is one of the most outstanding passages in the entire book of Isaiah. This passage presents Isaiah’s vision of peace. The prophet envisions a time when all nation will seek peace. This can be when there is a change of mentality. In Isaiah’s view, this change of mentality can only be effected by God himself. The prophet declared that God would act to bring about the transformation of the present reality characterized by conflicts and wars (Motyer, 1993; Brueggemann, 1998). This hoped-for-future is explicitly expressed in Isa 2:2-4. Isaiah envisioned a time in an undetermined future (*bə’ahārīt hayyāmīm*, Isa 2:2d), when the nations will open up themselves to the direction of God’s Torah. Isaiah portrays the Torah as the secret of peace and anchor of a new world order characterized by peace and fraternal co-existence. The result of YHWH’s judging will be peace. This peace will be so all-encompassing that the weapons of war will be reshaped so that they can be utilized in peaceful pursuits. YHWH’s judgment will remove the grounds for dispute and open the way to peace and harmonious co-existence among humans.

2. Verse 2-3a: Zion as Rallying Point for the Nations

Isa 2:2 initiates the oracle concerning Zion. It speaks about the time in an undetermined future (*bə’ahārīt hayyāmīm*) when the mountain of the house of the Lord (*har bêt-yhwh*) shall be established as the highest of the mountains (*bərō’š hehārîm*) and raised above the hills, and all the nations shall flow to it. Verse 3a repeats the information contained in verse 2d that all nations will be involved in this mass-movement to Zion. In Isa 2:3a, the phrase “many peoples” (*ammîm rabbîm*) refers to mankind in general.

3. Motive of the Up-ward Flow to Zion

One issue about which scholars have varied opinions concerns the reason for the journey of the nations to Mount Zion. V.3 addresses the purpose of the coming. The conjunction particle *kî* (“that”, “because”, “for”) is key to the interpretation of Isa 2:3; it introduces the motive or purpose for the nations streaming up to Mount Zion (koehler and Baumgartner, 2001; Frankfort, 1960). The purpose of the journey of the nations to Mount Zion is expressed in parallel structure in v.3b: “That he may teach us his ways” (*wəyōrēnū middārākāyw*); “And that we may walk in his paths” (*wənēlkāh bə’ōrhōtāyw*). They come to learn YHWH’s way with the intent to put their knowledge into practice in their lives as they ‘walk in his paths’.

Just as the Israelites journeyed to Mount Sinai to receive the *torah* from the Lord, so also will the nations go up to Zion to learn the *torah* and YHWH’s word (*dəḅar-yhwh*). As the Isaian text implies, the divine way is taught by YHWH himself. The *torah* is portrayed here as a model for the instruction of the nations. McNamara (1961) notes that the nations come to Zion to seek the God of Jacob and to seek instruction (*torah*). The nations come to learn the way to resolve disputes without resorting to war. The *torah* is portrayed as the secret of peace and the clue to the new world order (Gray, 1975; Groenewald, 2016). The main intent of learning God’s *torah* is that they learn YHWH’s ways so that they may know how to “walk” in “his paths”. “To walk” is a biblical figure of speech that embraces the conduct of the whole of life. The term, “his way” (*dārākāyw*), means living one’s life according to the dictates of YHWH’s *torah*.

4. Mount Zion as a Symbol of YHWH’s Rule

The prophet foresees the elevation of Mount Zion to such a height that it overtops all mountains of Palestine (Gray, 1975). Isaiah underlines here that the mountain will be established (*nāḱôn*) as the most important and respected pilgrimage destination for “all the nations” (*kol-haggôyim*). The phrase “shall be established” (*nāḱôn yihyeh*) points to a specific event that will happen in the future. The verb, *nāḱôn*, is a niphil passive participle of the verb *kûn* - “to be established,” “to be firmly grounded” (Gerstenberger, 1997). The future import of the participle is intensified by the verb *yihyeh* (“shall be”) from the verb *hāyāh* in the qal imperfect. The phrase, “shall be established as the highest of the mountains” (*nāḱôn bərō’s hehārîm*), is parallel to “shall be raised above the hills” (*wənissā’ migḡāḅā’ôt*). The Hebrew words *ḡāḅā’ôt* (hill) and *har* (mountain), though sometimes taken as interchangeable terms by translators, do not have exactly the same connotation. The term “mountain” was often used figuratively as a symbol of divine presence, power and stability (Ps 30:7) (McGuire, 1967; Reed, 1962; Richards, 1985). In the Old Testament, the term “mountain” is sometimes used as a symbol of a rule or government (Dan 2:35,44f). In Jer 51:24f, God portrays powerful Babylon as a “mountain”. The word, “hill” (*ḡāḅā’ôt*), often refers to the pagan “high places”, cultic places, where altars were set up to the gods (1 Kgs 14:23; 2 Kgs 16:4; 17:10; 2 Chron 28:4).

The word “head” (*rō’s*) is often used metaphorically to describe the position of the leading figure in a society or in a group (Bartlett, 1969). When Zion is said to be the head (*rō’s*) or highest of the mountains, what is stressed is the strategic importance of Mount Zion as the mountain on which the temple of the Lord (*ḅêt-yhwh*) is situated.

The word *bêt* can designate house, dwelling, palace, family or clan. The term *bêt* is also used for the “house of a deity, temple, sanctuary” (Obiora, 2004). Thus, the expression *har bêt-yhwh* refers to YHWH’s house (temple) built on Mount Zion. Isaiah conceives that because the temple of YHWH is situated on mount Zion, mount Zion will be accorded an importance “higher than the mountains”. The irony is that Zion is not really a high mountain when compared with other mountains and hills in the ancient Near East (Tucker, 2001; McKee, 2017). When Isaiah speaks of the raising up of the “mountain of the Lord’s house” as the highest of the mountains, what is intended here is not geographical elevation. “Highest” (*bārō š*) here probably means most exalted in honour, not actually physically highest. Mount Zion derives its significance not because of its height, but because the temple of YHWH (*bêt-yhwh*) is situated on it (Wilderberger, 1991) and Boadt, 1984; Kissane, 1941).

When Isaiah said that Mount Zion will become a lofty peak that will attract other nations, he is not referring to an actual mountain, but to the reign of God, a reign characterized by righteousness (*šadāqāh*) and peace (Whiteley, 1972; Hanson, 1999). Jensen (1984) and Blenkinsopp (2000) have said that “the elevation of Mount Zion as the highest mountain is symbolic of its dignity as YHWH’s chosen seat” (p.59). In stating that Mount Zion would be raised up “as the highest of the mountains”, Isaiah is asserting that the time is coming when the superiority of Zion’s God and his truth will be seen and recognized universally. Thus, the lifting of Mount Zion is a metaphor which underlines two facts: the universal recognition of the Lord’s authority and a supernatural triumph of YHWH over all gods (Motyer, 1993). Mount Zion is portrayed here not as political but as a religious hill (Musija, 2011). The primacy of Zion is first of all spiritual. The spiritual significance of Zion, according to Musija, has social and political effects as well. By streaming to mount Zion the nations thereby submit themselves to YHWH’s authority. Thus, if Isaiah uses the term “mountain” (*har*) or “mountain of the Lord’s house” (*har bêt-yhwh*) as a metaphor for the Lord’s kingdom, he means YHWH would be universally recognized as the God, and Israel would be seen as the nation among nations.

YHWH’s presence on mount Zion lifts Zion’s importance to supremacy, compared with other mountains and hills (Watts, 1985; Kaiser, 1983; Gray, 1975). Purely because YHWH is there, Zion attracts the nations. The nations “flow” uphill (*wānāhērū ’ēlāyw*) to the summit of YHWH’s mountain to learn from the God of Jacob (*’ēlōhē ya’ēqōb*) the lessons which will eliminate war among them and lead to peace (Watts, 1985). This irenic picture of Zion portrayed by Isaiah as a place where nations converse to work out the way to peace is, however, a far cry from the Jerusalem of David’s time which was marked by warfare. Isa 2:2-4 describes a sharp reversal of policy and goal, from the culture of war to a desire for peace. Isaiah proclaimed that the future Zion would be in a position to fulfill its destiny as YHWH’s chosen city, the seat of his universal rule and a city to which people of all nations will come in order to be taught God’s ways (Isa 2:3).

5. Zion Theology as Background of Isaiah 2:2d-3a

Isaiah’s oracle of Mount Zion towering as the highest of the mountains seems to be influenced by the Zion tradition (Roberts, 1982; Motyer, 1993). In the ancient world,

mountains (*hārîm*) were believed to be the abode of the gods (Moriarty, 1968) (cf. Lev 26:30; Num 33:52; Deut 12:2; 2 Sam 1:19; Ps 48:2-3, etc.). Mountains were not only regarded as the abode of the divinities, they were also believed to be a place where humans encountered God (Neusner, 1996; McGuire, 1967, Johnson, 1979). For this reason, the ancients built the temples on the heights. Influenced by this tradition, the Jews regarded Mount Zion as the divine mountain or YHWH's abode. In ancient Jewish belief, Zion was seen as a cosmic mountain which stood at the center of the world from where YHWH reigned as king over all of his created order. This Zion theology finds expression in the Zion Psalms. For instance, Pss 76:2 and 87:1-2 refer to Zion as YHWH's chosen abode: "His abode has been established in Salem, his dwelling place in Zion" (Ps 76:2). Ps 46:9 indicates that it is on Mount Zion that YHWH will effect a world-wide disarmament: "He (YHWH) makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire." Many elements of Isaiah's oracle in 2:2-4 relate well to the so-called Zion Psalms (particularly to Pss 46; 48; 76; 87 and 132).

The tradition concerning Zion as YHWH's holy mountain and Jerusalem as the chosen city (cf Deut 12:5) antedated Isaiah and apparently fueled the theology of Isa in 2:1-5. This view is supported by Roberts (1982); Sweeney (2001); Jensen (1984); Wildberger (1957), Miller and Hayes (1986). Isaiah pictures all nations (*kol-haggôyîm*)/many peoples (*'ammîm rabbîm*) streaming to Zion, YHWH's cosmic mountain to learn the secret of peace and fraternal co-existence. The lessons of peace learn from Zion's God moves the nations to destroy their weapons of war, thus putting an end to warfare (Ps 46:9; 76:3) and bringing about global peace (Clifford, 1972, Gamey, 2014).

6. Mount Zion as Focal Point of Mankind

The phrase in Isa 2:2d, "all the nations will flow to it" (*wənāhērû 'ēlāyw kol-haggôyîm*) provides a vivid imagery of Zion's importance. Not only will Mount Zion be the highest of the mountains; it will also be the focal point of mankind. The noun construct, *kol* (all), is inclusive – "all nations" (*kol-haggôyîm*). These nations (*gôyîm*) "stream" (*nāhērû*) to God's high mountain moved by the desire for peace. The verb *nāhar* (to flow or stream) is a denominative verb related to the noun *nāhār* ("river"). Isaiah employs this river imagery to paint the picture of the movement of the nations uphill to Mount Zion (Isa 2:2; cf Mic 4:1). The nations are literally viewed as flowing like water uphill to Mount Zion. Here the natural laws of gravity are overcome by the magnetic hill of Zion. Motyer (1993) writes that "the incongruity of a stream" flowing uphill to Mount Zion "is intentional; a supernatural magnetism is at work" (p.54). The nations stream to mount Zion to learn YHWH's Torah and to seek the way of peace and fraternal co-existence (Von Rad, 1975; Park, 2000; Winkle, 1985). As a result of their new-found wisdom, the nations redirect their lives in the light of the *torah*. Such a newfound knowledge, according to Motyer (1993), leads them to embrace peace and practice it. The *torah* which goes "out of Zion" is portrayed as the way of righteousness and the secret of peace.

7. The Universal Acknowledgment of Zion's God (Isaiah 2:2b-3)

Verse 2b begins with an impressive picture of the pre-eminence to be accorded in the future to Israel's God and to Israel's religion (Driver, 1961). Isaiah envisioned a time when the "mountain of the house of the Lord" (*har bêt-yhwh*) shall be firmly established (*nākôn yihyeh*) as the highest of the mountains" (*bārō's hehārîm*). The simple designation *rō's* (head) suggests a position of height (Magonet, 1991). The expression, *har bêt-yhwh* ("mountain of the house of the Lord") occurs only three times in the Hebrew Bible - in Isa 2:2, Mic 4:1 and 2 Chron 33:15. In each case the expression refers to the Temple Mount/Mount Zion (Tucker, 2001). In this Isaianic passage, Mount Zion is accorded the status of pre-eminence over other mountains and hills because it is the mountain on which the Temple of YHWH is situated. In Jewish faith, Temple is the visible symbol of YHWH's presence with his people. In the Isaiah's day, Mount Zion was not impressive by the usual standards. Isaiah stresses that in time to come, Zion's exclusive splendour will be seen by all nations as they assess not its topological or political significance, but its spiritual pre-eminence as the place where YHWH is pleased to reveal himself.

The nations stream to Zion, because they can no longer endure the desperate condition in which they live. Therefore, they come to Zion in order to learn the ways or conduct which YHWH prescribes and approves. Instead of turning to their gods, the nations come to the 'God of Jacob' (*'ēlōhê-ya 'ēqōb*) to learn the secret of peace. By going to learn YHWH's way, as Childs (1985), Van Winkle (1985), Miscall (1993) and Gerstenberger (2002) remarked, the nations bear testimony that YHWH alone is God and that there is no god besides him (Isa 45:14). By accepting YHWH's *torah* they acknowledge "the God of Jacob" as the God of all nations (Motyer, 1993).

8. Isaiah 2:1-5 and the Reign of God

Amidst all the confusions and uncertainties, the threats of war, etc, characterizing the society of Isaiah's era, Isaiah foresees human history moving to the divinely appointed goal. The future which Isaiah foresees is one characterized by peace and harmonious co-existence among nations. The prophet expects a radical transformation of history. Among the OT prophet, Isaiah has a well-developed conception of a plan of God (Isa 5:19; 14:24; 26:27; 28:29; 30:1). The ultimate goal of this plan is the establishment of a universal reign of YHWH among the nations. This is already anticipated in the hymn of praise sung by the *Seraphim*, which Isaiah heard at his inaugural vision (Isa 6:3): "the whole earth is full of his glory." In the Psalter, the Songs of Zion (Pss 46; 48; 76) contains promises in which Mount Zion occupies the central position. Isaiah envisions a time when YHWH will set up Mount Zion, as the center of YHWH's kingdom of peace and justice (Isa 2:2-4).

Isaiah envisioned a time when the "mountain of the house of the Lord" shall be "firmly established" (v. 2b) as the "head" or "highest of the mountains". The expression, "mountain of the house of the Lord", occurs only three times in the Hebrew Bible - in Isa 2:2, Mic 4:1 and 2 Chron 33:15. In each case the expression refers to the Temple mount (Mount Zion) and the Temple (Tucker, 2001). Zion is accorded the status of pre-eminence over other mountains and hills because on it is situated the temple of YHWH, the visible symbol of YHWH's presence with his people. Authors, like McKinion (2004) and Young (1996), interpret "the mountain of the house of the Lord"

(*har bêt-yhwh*) in Isa 2:2-3 as referring to the Church. According to McKinion, “the Mountain of the house of the Lord” in Isa 2:2b refers to the government of the Church which now is the house of God. However, the view that Isa 2:1-4 is fulfilled in the Church is untenable for several reasons. First, Isa 2:1 indicates that the word which Isaiah saw concerns Judah and Jerusalem. There is no evidence in the Old or New Testament that suggests that Isa 2:2-4 is referring to the Church. Second, while authors like Von Rad opine that the Isaianic passage is an oracle of salvation, the pericope is discussing global international peace. Vlach (2013) insists that while salvation is crucial, God’s kingdom includes a holistic restoration of all things, including the restoration of international peace and harmony. The text needs not be “spiritualized” and hastily applied to the church, for as the context suggests, the passage describes a literal kingdom of righteousness and peace. The view that Isa 2:2-4 is fulfilled in the Church today relies on a spiritualization of the text that is not warranted. Such spiritualization (or allegorizing) makes it very difficult to comprehend the original intent of Isaiah’s oracle in 2:1-5, given the fact that it was clearly spoken to Judah and Jerusalem (Isa 1:1; 2:1).

In the Old Testament, the term, “mountain”, was often used figuratively as a symbol of divine presence, power and stability (Ps 30:7). “Mountain” was also sometimes used as a symbol of a rule or government (Dan 2:35, 44f). For instance, in Jer 51:24f, God refers to powerful Babylon as a “destroying mountain” (*har hammašhîṭ*). It seems proper to understand the term “mountain of the Lord’s house” (*har bêt-yhwh*) in Isa 2:2b as a metaphor for the Lord’s kingdom or the rule of YHWH in contrast to human governments (Binz, 2005). Thus, Whiteley (1972), interprets Isa 2:1-5 as pointing to the reign of God, a reign characterized by righteousness (*sedeq*) and peace (*šālôm*). If Isaiah was using “mountain” as a figure of speech, it could be said that that meant that Israel and her God would be the most highly exalted in the earth eventually. Israel’s God would be recognized as the true God, and Israel would be seen as the nation among nations. By streaming to Zion to learn the ways of righteousness and peace, the nations acknowledge the God of a single nation, “the God of Jacob,” as the God of all nations (Motyer, 1993; Van Winkle, 1985).

It is important to note that the term “nations” (*gôyîm*) in the Old Testament is almost always a synonym for the Gentiles. Here Isaiah is explicitly stating that at a time in history, even the Gentiles will acknowledge the supremacy of Israel’s God and come to Mount Zion where presumably they will worship the God of Jacob. This same idea appears in Jer 3:17: “At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the Lord, and all nations shall gather to it, to the presence of the Lord in Jerusalem, and they shall no longer stubbornly follow their own evil will” (cf. Zech 8:20-22; Hag 2:6-7; Isa 66:22f). Zion is portrayed as the cult centre for a huge number of international believers in an era of peace.

9. Zion Tradition as Basis of Isaiah 2:1-4

Isaiah’s oracle of Mount Zion towering as the highest of the mountains seems to be influenced by the Zion tradition. This view is supported by authors like Roberts (1982); Motyer (1993); Sweeney (2001); Jensen (1984); Wildberger (1957). In the

ancient world, mountains (*hārîm*) were believed to be the abode of the gods (cf. Lev 26:30; Num 33:52; Deut 12:2; 2 Sam 1:19; Ps 48:2-3, etc.). Mountains were not only regarded as the abode of the divinities, they were also believed to be a place where humans encountered God (Neusner, 1996; McGuire, 1967, Johnson, 1979). Accordingly, in ancient times, the temples were built on the heights. The belief was an element of the Canaanite mythology which regarded mountains as the dwelling place of the gods.

This Zion theology finds expression in the Zion Psalms. Sweeney (2001) has demonstrated that many elements of Isaiah's oracle in 2:2-4 relate well to the so-called Zion Psalms (particularly to Pss 46; 48; 76; 87 and 132). For instance, Pss 76:2 and 87:1-2 refer to Zion as YHWH's chosen abode: "His abode has been established in Salem, his dwelling place in Zion" (Ps 76:2). Ps 46:9 indicates that it is on Mount Zion that YHWH will effect a world-wide disarmament: "He (YHWH) makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire." Here, unlike in Isa 2:4, it is YHWH himself who destroys the weapons of war, thus putting an end to warfare (Ps 46:9; 76:3) and bringing about global peace (Clifford, 1972, Gamey, 2014). Mount Zion becomes a symbol of the secure place (cf. Isa 25:6-8). While the context of these Psalms differs from that of Isa 2:1-5, the theme of pilgrimage is not simply a novel idea (Gamey, 2014). These elements of the Zion theology antedated Isaiah and provided part of the background from which he taught.

In ancient Jewish belief, Zion was seen as a cosmic mountain which stood at the center of the world from where YHWH reigned as king over all of his created order. Traditions concerning Zion as YHWH's holy place and Jerusalem as the chosen city (cf Deut 12:5) apparently fueled the theology of Isa in 2:1-5. Influenced by this tradition, the Jews regarded Mount Zion as the divine mountain or YHWH's abode. Miller and Hayes (1986) stressed that this Zion theology formed the background of Isaiah's oracle of peace (2:2-4) which pictures all nations (*kol-haggôyîm*)/many peoples (*'ammîm rabbîm*) streaming to Zion, YHWH's cosmic mountain to learn from YHWH himself the secret of peace and fraternal co-existence. The author of Isa 2:1-5 asserts that the time is coming when the superiority of Zion's God and his truth will be seen and recognized universally. Isaiah couched his message in a catching imagery. He foresees the elevation of Mount Zion to such a height that it will be visible to the nations. The lifting of Mount Zion is a metaphor for the universal recognition of the Lord's authority. The irony is that Zion is not really a high mountain when compared with other mountains and hills in the immediate neighbourhood (Tucker, 2001; McKee, 2017). When Isaiah speaks of the raising up of the "mountain of the Lord's house" as the highest of the mountains, what is intended here is not geographical elevation. Mount Zion derives its significance not because of its height, but because the Temple of YHWH (*bêt-yhwh*) is situated on it. YHWH's presence on mount Zion lifts Zion's importance to supremacy, compared with other mountains and hills (Watts, 1985; Kaiser, 1983; Gray, 1975; Wilderberger, 1991; Boadt, 1984).

The elevation of Mount Zion as the highest mountain is symbolic of the dignity of Zion as YHWH's chosen seat (Jensen, 1984)' and the universal acceptance of

YHWH's Torah as a secret of peace and fraternal coexistence underlines the superiority of Zion's God and his supernatural triumph of YHWH over all gods (Blenkinsopp, 2000; Motyer, 1993). The nations come to Zion "to learn from the God of Jacob (*'ēlōhē ya 'ēqōb*) the lessons which will eliminate war among them and lead to peace (Watts, 1985). Simply because Zion is the YHWH's holy mountain and the seat of his reign, it is regarded as the most important and respected pilgrimage destination for "all the nations".

10. Universalism of Isaiah 2:1-5

A remarkable feature of Isaiah's vision of peace (Isa 2:1-5) is not only its universalism, but its freedom from narrow nationalism. Isa 2:2-4 (Mic 4:1-5) proclaims a salvation which is all-inclusive. It is a salvation which is open to all nations/ many peoples (*kol-haggōyīm*)/ *'ammîm rabbîm*). It is true that the passage speaks of Zion/Jerusalem and the Temple. Jerusalem, however, is presented not merely as David's royal city, nor is it seen as an impregnable fortress. Here Isaiah presents Zion/Jerusalem as the spiritual center of the world (Anderson, 1966). It is exalted but open to all. It is to it that the nations come to learn the new way of life and to find settlement of their disputes.

11. YHWH as the Divine Judge and Broker of Peace (Isa 2:4)

Verse 4 specifies the nations' quest intention for the upward flow to Mount Zion: that YHWH will "judge between the nations" (*wəšāpaṭ bēn haggōyīm*) and "arbitrate for many peoples" (*wəhōkî'q̄h lə 'ammîm rabbîm*). In verse 4, the verb *šāpaṭ* (to judge) is a synonym for the verb (*yākah*) (to decide or arbitrate). Both verbs describe the decisions of a wise ruler. We must note that in this vision there is no earthly monarch. By streaming to the mountain of the Lord, the nations are acknowledging YHWH as their true ruler (*melek*) and judge (*šōphēṭ*). God is depicted as rendering justice to the nations and giving them the way of peace (Scott and Kilpatrick, 1956). YHWH judges by means of his Torah. Isaiah portrays the Torah as the secret of peace and the way of righteousness. Miscall (1993) says that YHWH's judging ushers in total and universal peace because he judges with justice. When the nations accept and live by his Torah, they see the need to reject war and embrace peace. Jerusalem is portrayed as the center of world unity and peace, because in Jerusalem is found God's gift of instruction (*torah*).

12. Conclusion

Isa 2:1-4 envisions the time when the nation "flow" uphill to Mount Zion to learn the secret of peace offered by Zion's God. Isa 2:1-4 focuses not only on the strategic importance of Zion, but also on the transformative power of the *debar-yhwh* and torah (2:3) on the nations (*haggōyīm*). Isaiah's oracle here does not imply a literal geophysical change in the mountain ranges in the Middle East. Isaiah's language here is metaphorical. Zion here is a symbol of YHWH's reign, because on it is situated YHWH's temple. Zion is described as the Temple-city, the greatest and most popular pilgrimage city in the world. Zion holds this distinction because on it is situated the Temple of YHWH, which is a visible symbol of YHWH's presence among his people. As the seat of God's worldwide rule, Zion is regarded as the navel of the earth (Ezek

5:5; 38:12). By journeying to Mount Zion the nations express their recognition, acceptance of, and submission to YHWH as the only God.

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