

Verses 1-8 of chapter 51 form a poem with three stanzas. The first of these (vv. 1-3) assures those who pursue righteousness that God's promises to Abraham will not be forgotten, and declares that He will reestablish Zion as a place of joy and gladness. The second stanza (vv. 4-6) continues the universal outlook found in Isaiah 42, declaring that God will bring justice and light to all the nations, including even the distant isles, and stressing the fact that His control is universal and everlasting. The third stanza (vv. 7-8) tells those who sincerely desire to follow the LORD that they need not fear the opposition of sinful men, even though for a time these may seem to be dominant. God's people can know that in the end the wicked will be completely powerless, while His righteousness and His salvation will endure forever.

At first sight the second part of the passage appears to be another poem of three stanzas similar in structure to the first, though somewhat longer. This impression is produced by the fact that 51:9 and 52:1 begin with the words "Awake, awake," while 51:17 begins with the words "Rouse yourself, rouse yourself" (which represent a different form of the same Hebrew verb, and are translated "Awake, awake" in the King James Version). But the structure is really quite different, since verse 9 is addressed to the "arm of the LORD," while 51:17 and 52:1 are addressed to Jerusalem. This change clearly indicates that the passage begins with a prayer addressed to God and then gives the LORD's answer, thus making use of a rhetorical device found at many other points in the book of Isaiah. In Isaiah 51:9-11 the LORD's people plead with Him to exert His power on their behalf, as He did when He delivered their ancestors from Egypt and dried up the Red Sea before them. They ask Him to allow His ransomed people to return to Zion and there to obtain everlasting gladness and joy.

Most translations render verse 11 as a prediction of the future, but in the context it seems more reasonable to consider its verbs as jussives, ^{^32} or exhortations, translating it: "Let the redeemed of the LORD return and come with joyful shouting to