

Desert of the Sea." The second, "The Burden of Dumah," might perhaps better be translated "The Burden of Silence," since the Hebrew word Dumah means "silence" or "still waiting." The third, "The Burden of Arabia," may also be translated, "The Burden in the Evening." The fourth is "The Burden of the Valley of Vision."

This group of four visions is not an isolated section. It continues the part of Isaiah which began with chapter 17. To quite an extent this section parallels the Book of Immanuel (chs. 7-12) and also the section from chapters 28 to 32. It deals with the situation resulting from the wicked alliance of Ahaz with Assyria. Chapter 17 indicated that the result would be to bring Assyria right next to Judah without a buffer state between. Then God declared that He Himself would protect Judah from the inevitable Assyrian attack. In chapters 18-20 He showed the folly of looking to Egypt and Ethiopia for help. Now discussion of the same theme is carried a bit further. All earthly help in this crisis is futile. Trust should be placed in God alone.

The title of the first of these burdens is very strange – The Burden of the Desert of the Sea. Verse 9 shows that the prophet is dealing with Babylon. Two whole chapters, 13 and 14, have already been designated as "The Burden of Babylon." Another section is now given to Babylon, dealing with a different theme.

In chapters 13 and 14 Babylon was taken as representative of the great world powers which oppose God. God predicted His final vengeance against these great powers, and outlined the destruction that would certainly come to them. In this chapter Babylon is not thought of as the great evil empire, but simply as one other source to which the people of Judah have looked for help against Assyria.

Chapter 39 tells of the embassy that Merodach-baladan, king of Babylon, sent to Hezekiah. Isaiah rebuked Hezekiah for having made common cause with Merodach-baladan and told him that eventually Jerusalem would be taken captive to Babylon. This must have seemed fantastic to the Jews in Isaiah's day, because Babylon, like Judah, was being oppressed by Assyria and was looking for relief from that great aggressor.