Isaiah 44:9-20 -- a satire on those who make idols.
A brief historical review of the methods of criticism and interpretation.
by Richard Jizba

If you open a modern translation of the Bible and browse the section of the *Book of Isaiah* often referred to by modern scholars as *Deutero-Isaiah* (chapters 40-55)\(^1\), you will likely note that the text is laid out as poetry, except for the twelve verses that comprise Isaiah 44:9-20 which usually stand out as a block of prose text. In his commentary on Second Isaiah, John McKenzie\(^2\) wrote in 1968 that “The passage is in prose, and it is the only prose passage in entire collection of Second Isaiah.” However, in his 1998 commentary John Oswalt\(^3\) says that “Most recent commentators agree that 44:9-20 is poetry, not prose.” Though he notes that “the cola are longer and the parallels more diverse than expected elsewhere in this part of the book, the recurrence of synonymous statements is clear indication of parallel structure. The differences may well be accounted for the technical terminology required by the subject.”

This passage, which appears unique or special even to the lay reader, is often considered to be a late and even clumsy addition to the work. Child’s mentions that “The argument that the present literary positioning of the passage between vv. 6-8 and 22-23 reflects a readactional move is still largely accepted.”\(^4\) McKenzie adopts “the position that it is the work of a disciple or commentator ... [it] seems more mechanical and negative than [similar passages in the work].”

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\(^1\) A discussion of the structure and historical development of and Isaiah can be found in any of the commentaries cited below. This paper will focus only on Isaiah 44:9-20.


Grogan adds “Many modern scholars think the style, the somewhat ‘labored’ irony, and the sheer length of this passage raise doubts about its authorship.”

There is another oddity about this passage that brought it to the attention of the present author. Reading through this section of Isaiah earlier this year with someone who was using a different Bible translation, we noticed that there were some marked differences in the text, particularly in verse 44:14. One of us was using the New American Bible while the other was using the Revised Standard Version. The RSV is based on the Masoretic Text (MT) while the NAB will also incorporate some text from the Septuagint (LXX). Checking the Orthodox Study Bible which uses the Septuagint for its English translation, confirmed that the differences in verse fourteen was due to the different sources (see Appendix A). The two versions read as follows:

- The wood he cut from the forest which the Lord planted, and the rain made grow (LXX)
- He cuts down cedars; or he chooses a holm tree or an oak and lets it grow strong among the trees of the forest; he plants a cedar and the rain nourishes it. (MT)

This section of Isaiah from verse nine through twenty, which seems to be stylistically and historically different from the surrounding text, none-the-less has a rather straight forward message and has been titled by various modern authors as ‘The folly of idolatry’, ‘Satire on the making of idols’, and ‘An essay on idolatry.’ It is interesting passage precisely because it is such a pointed commentary on the human endeavor of making idols. Yet its specificity invites the reader to wonder about analogies: in what way am I like the idolaters? Do I spend my time and effort on things which do not give life?

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7 The Orthodox Study Bible (Thomas Nelson, Nashville, Tennessee, 2008)
In this paper we will explore how this intriguing passage has been read and interpreted by ancient Christian, medieval Jewish, and modern biblical scholars and commentators. We will examine how the medieval Jewish and modern critics have analyzed the text, what meanings lessons all three groups found in the passage and note some examples of the strictly modern concerns about the historical setting and the cultural context of the passage. Finally, we will conclude with reflection on verse fourteen: does it matter who planted the trees?

Analyzing the text.

Scholars in every era have closely read and examined the text of scripture. Difficulties with the ancient Hebrew have been a problem for a long time. It seems that even the ancient Jewish scribes encountered problems. Although the ancient and medieval scholars had access to more than one translation, it is the modern critic who seems to make the most systematic use of all the available translations, which reflects a modern concern of identifying the one true original text, even though it no longer exists.

There are a number of ‘simple’ problems with the text in this passage. Sometimes original Hebrew words were technical terms whose meaning has been lost and must be inferred from the context. Sometimes it is unclear to whom a pronoun refers. In other verses there seem to be odd changes in person from plural to singular or in verb tenses from past to present.

Several of the verses describe craftsmen working on an idol and include technical terms about the tools used in the process. But it seems as though the exact nature of the tools those

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words describe has been unclear for a very long time. A reading of verse thirteen from the LXX, MT, and Targum\(^9\) illustrates the problem:

Isaiah 44:13a
- The craftsman selects his wood and stretches out his **rule**, and fits it with **glue**. He makes it like the form of a man … (LXX-OSB)
- The carpenter stretches a **line**, he marks it out with a **pencil**; he fashions it with **planes**, and marks it with a **compass**; he shapes it into the figure of a man, … (MT-RSV)
- The carpenter breaks wood at the **line**, he **saws** it at the **plummet**, cutting it through with the **chisel**, and grasping it with **clamps**; he makes it into the figure of a man, … (Targum)

Rashi\(^{10}\) translated part of this as verse as “He smooths it with a plane and a blade” but added that Jonathan renders [a plane] as knives or blades. Modern textual critics note simply that “The first of the two tools is of less certain identity,”\(^{11}\) and go on to note that it could be understood as a knife, or chisels or planes. The exact identity of the tools is, however, a curiosity and doesn’t seem to have been a particularly important issue for scholars in any age. The real issue occurs at a higher level. Why did the author go into such detail? How does it serve the point he is making?

In the MT verse nine makes reference to witnesses, but it is not clear who the witnesses are. The reference is missing in the LXX, but in the Targum the witnesses are witnesses against themselves:

Isaiah 44:9
- All who form and carve gods are useless, and they desire things which shall not profit them; but they will be ashamed. (LXX-OSB)
- All who make idols are nothing, and the things they delight in do not profit; **their witnesses** neither see nor know, that they may be put to shame. (MT-RSV)
- All who make images are nothing, and those who serve them that will not profit them; **they are witnesses against themselves** that they neither see nor know, that they may be put to shame. (Targum)


\(^{10}\) Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, 1040-1105, France) the most famous medieval commentator on the Talmud. Cited from A.J. Rosenberg. Isaiah : a new English translation (translation of text, Rashi and commentary) (Judaica Press, New York, 1982, volume 2) (pp. 358-363)

\(^{11}\) John Goldingay and David Payne. *Op Cit p. 345*
Is the translation in the Targum, which identifies the image makers as the witnesses, an attempt to clarify the uncertainty of the Masoretic text? Rashi says “The idols are witnesses of the shame of their worshippers” which is obviously a different identification than the Targum. Modern commentators note that the word for “they” in the Hebrew is marked with dots over letters which is believed in this case to indicate that the Masorete scribes were uncertain about the authenticity of the text. In any case, modern commentators provide no further clarification.

Similarly in verse eighteen, the RSV translation of the MT uses a singular ‘he’ in the middle of the verse, whereas translations of the LXX and Targum use they. In all three cases, the meaning is slightly different:

Isaiah 44:18

- They do not know how to discern because they shut their eyes, so as not to see with their eyes or understand with their heart. (LXX-OSB)
- They know not, nor do they discern; for he has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see, and their minds, so that they cannot understand. (MT-RSV)
- They know not, neither do they discern; for their eyes are shut so that they cannot see, so that they cannot understand with their heart. (Targum)

In the Targum Jonathan the translation reads “their eyes are clogged from seeing”. Goldingay and Payne translate the verb as smeared but note that because of difficulties in the Hebrew, it is not entirely clear how to conjugate the verb. For them the most likely conjugation seems to be “their eyes are smeared” but they add that “he has smeared their eyes” is also a possibility.

Returning to the end of verse thirteen, the text of the Isaiah Targum makes a notable change from both the MT and LXX when it says that the figure made by the craftsman has the beauty of a woman dwelling in the house. It is unclear why this change was made. In his note on

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this passage Chilton says “The particular reference to the ‘woman’ sitting in a house fits well into a Babylonian setting, since this appears to have been a perennial motif in the art of the area.”

Isaiah 44:13

- He makes it like the form of a man and **according to the bloom of youth, to set it up in the house**. (LXX-OSB)
- he shapes it into the figure of a man, **with the beauty of a man, to dwell in a house**. (MT-RSV)
- he makes it into the figure of a man, **with the beauty of the woman dwelling in the house**. (Targum)

Since this translation is from the **Isaiah Targum**, it doesn’t receive much consideration in modern commentaries. Rashi, commenting on the MT text [with the beauty of a man] said, “that is a woman, who is the beauty of her husband.” In the **Genesis Rabbah** this verse from the Isaiah Targum seems to be the origin of a typology: “Said R. Huna, ‘Where do we find a case in which Eve is called Adam? It is in the following verse: **According to the beauty of Adam, to dwell in the house**’ (Is 44:13).”

Of course the issue of who planted the tree (44:14), mentioned earlier is another case of textual variation. The Septuagint seems to emphasize the theological point that the resources used to make the idols are provided by God and omits the details about the types of wood which were used for making the idols.

Isaiah 44:14-15a

- The wood he cut **from the forest which the Lord planted**, and the rain made grow, so as to be for men to burn and to take some of it to warm himself. (LXX-OSB)
- He cuts down cedars; or he chooses a holm tree or an oak and lets it grow strong among the trees of the forest; **he plants a cedar** and the rain nourishes it. Then it becomes fuel for a man; (MT-RSV)
- He cuts down cedars, or chooses a holm or an oak and **establishes it** among the trees of the forest; **he plants the laurel** and rain nourishes it. Then it becomes fuel for man; (Targum)

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15 Bruce D. Chilton, Op Cit p 87.
Modern commentators generally dismiss 44:14 in the LXX as an ‘omission’ or even a ‘mutilation’, arguing that the MT is closer to the original. Rashi, however, seems to see a similar issue that is made in the LXX, but working from the MT he must apply it to the rain, rather than the trees: “Although [the man] plants if for idolatrous purposes, rain makes it grow. Although rain is an agent of the Almighty, He, nevertheless, allows the world to go on in its natural manner.”

But with this issue, we are moving away from simple textual problems and into the meaning or the point of the passage and so it is time to bring the ancient Christian commentators into the discussion.

Meaning and lessons.

As noted in the introduction, this passage has always been viewed as a satire on the making of idols. It is unusual in the level of technical detail provided, at least relative to other Old Testament texts, although none of it is truly very detailed. We know that the Babylonian idols were human forms made of wood and plated with gold, silver or other metals. It is interesting that the author of this passage traces the process from the end to the beginning, rather than from the beginning to the end. Perhaps by taking the reader backwards through the process to see where these ‘gods’ actually originated, it highlights the folly of the activity more than the technical process.

One hallmark of the pre-modern critics or commentators was their lack of concern for the historical development of scripture itself. Although they read the text closely and were attentive to issues of translation, they were concerned with the application of the text: scripture is divine.
revelation and must speak to the reader in any age. Although they may have had preferences for allegory or typology, or argued over whether scripture revealed the nature of God or was simply God’s instruction for us, they were at heart teachers and preachers. Unlike many modern Biblical Critics, especially those more closely allied with the historical-critical method, theology was integral to reading and understanding scripture, and not a follow-on step to the process. How many modern critics see in their role a duty to offer scriptural commentary on modern cultural or spiritual issues?

In the introductory verses of this passage (9-11) the author sets the tone with a theological comment on idol makers. The medieval Jewish scholars often expounded on the text, bringing out what they saw as the points to be explained or highlighted: 19

1. If you say, “We do not know that the idols are of not avail,” I will tell you that the idols themselves are witnesses to that fact, for they neither see nor hear nor do they know. How then can they avail others (Redak)
2. Is there any such insanity as one forming a god? (Ibn Ezra) Is there any such insanity as one who wastes his work and puts his silver and gold into vanity? (Redak)
3. Let all the idolaters gather and discuss their deeds. If they could do that, many of them would fear God for what they did and be ashamed of themselves for their worthless work. (Redak)

But the commentary wasn’t just limited to an explanation of the text. There was a lesson to be learned as well:

1. R. Hanina bar Pappa … gave the following exposition [of the verse, “They that fashion a graven image are all of them vanity, and their delectable things shall not profit, and their own witnesses see not or know.” “In the age to come the Holy One, blessed be He, will bring a scroll of the Torah and hold it in his bosom and say, ‘Let him who has kept himself busy with it come and take his reward.’” 20

The negative example of the idolaters is not simply presented for our scorn, but as a reminder that one should keep busy with things that are worthwhile and holy – and what could be more holy than studying the Torah?

Eusebius of Caesarea interprets the introductory verses allegorically so that his audience will also see the lesson:

- Isaiah sees that in the ensuing time a very great number of people will arise who all “will be ashamed” and who will cease from their continual error. They will be ashamed and hide their faces. If they persist in their error, however, they will be given over to destruction at the time of judgment. But this word is also for those of us now in the present. (Commentary on Isaiah 2.26)²¹

After the introduction, the satire begins in earnest with the detailed account of the process of idol making. The ancient and medieval commentators note that the craftsmen give themselves to their work, driving themselves to the point of exhaustion, yet the idols they make are lifeless form which can offer them no help.

- Even he, the fashioner, lacks strength and is weak, for if he becomes hungry he has no strength, or if he does not drink water, he becomes faint immediately. Surely his product has to power to help him. (Rashi)²²

And the height of the idol makers’ folly is that what they produce, for the most god-like form they can conceive is the form of a man:

- It denotes that man is the most beautiful of God’s creatures. Therefore, they choose to make their god in his image (Redak)²³
- The highest ideal the imagination of mortal man can make is still only a Man (Hirsch)²⁴
- Isaiah has demonstrated that the production of these so-called gods relies on contributions. Their creator needs blacksmiths to prepare the tools and the whetstone for sharpening them; for his part, the bronze smith needs coal and fire, while the constructor of objects needs food and drink! It takes all this to prepare a god who is worshiped by these ignorant people. Isaiah is not finished mocking them. After choosing a log, the artisan immediately measures the so-called god, whereas the true God is immeasurable. He then shapes it with the appropriate tools, whereas the real God has no form or shape. … He does not copy divine characteristics but human ones; he shapes his human image and adores his own image as if it were divine. (Theodoret of Cyr)²⁵

Note that Theodoret of Cyr adds a comment about the nature of God: “the real God has no form or shape.” This seems to a move used by several early Christian writers. Although the

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²³ Ibid p 360.

²⁴ Ibid p 360.

passage never mentions God, only the nature of the idols and their makers, they use as a starting point to highlight the transcendent nature of God:

- We do not honor with may sacrifices and garlands of flowers such deities as humans have formed and set in shrines and called gods. For we see that these are soulless and dead and do not have the form of God (for we do not consider that God has such a form as some say that they imitate to his honor). These are names and forms of those wicked demons that have appeared. For why need we tell you who already know, into what forms the artisans, carving and cutting, casting and hammering, fashion their materials? And often our of vessels of dishonor, by merely changing the form and making an image of the requisite shape, they make what they call a god; which we consider not only senseless but to be even insulting to **God, who, having indescribable glory and form**, thus gets his name attached to things that are corruptible and require constant service. (Justin Martyr: First Apology 9.1-3)\(^{26}\)

- What do you think of them, and what is the nature of those who make gods from inanimate statues? For it is easy to see in the latter that they are works of artisans, prepared by axes and drills and such tools, the invention of the skillful and industrious people, who through a need of food have found an instrument of leisurely falsehood. **What do you think of the nature of God and about whether God needs our sacrifices and whether God is weak, as if according to Symmachus he is hungry and weak and feeble and cannot even drink water.** The statement that God cannot drink water implies that he desperately needs liquid, while in fact God shares in no such thing, as though he were a dumb creature. (Eusebius of Caesarea: Commentary on Isaiah 2.26)\(^{27}\)

Jerome and Cyril of Alexandria demonstrate another move away from the literal meaning of the text and use it as a metaphor to confront the problems of heresy:

- Whatever is said about idols can also be referred to the leaders of heresies, who form likenesses of their teachings with a heart of deceitful artifice and worship those things that they know to be facsimiles (Jerome: Commentary on Isaiah 12.18)\(^{28}\)

- The wise and eloquent people among the pagans are full of admiration for a well-turned phrase. One of their main preoccupations is with the elegance of expression. They are filled with the greatest enthusiasm for good style and take great pride in verbal dexterity. The base material of their poets is merely likes fashioned in rhythms and meters for grace and harmony; but for truth they have little if any regard. I would say that they are sick from the lack of any true or proper notion of the nature and reality of God. …And God said of them through the voice of Isaiah, “Know that their hearts are dust and that they have erred.” …As for the inventors of impure heresies, those profaners and apostates who have opened their mouths against the divine glory, “those who have uttered perverted things [Acts 20:30]”, we could accuse them of having slipped in their madness as low as the foolish pagans; perhaps they have slipped even lower, for it would have been better never to have known the way of sacred truth than once to have known it, to have turned away from the sacred commandment that was handed on to them. (Cyril of Alexandria: On the Unity of Christ)\(^{29}\)

\(^{26}\) Ibid p. 65.  
\(^{27}\) Ibid p. 65.  
\(^{28}\) Ibid p. 65.  
\(^{29}\) Ibid pp. 65-66.
Modern issues: trees and idols.

Two examples will suffice to contrast the concerns of modern historical-critical scholars with the pre-modern Jewish and Christian commentators. The first concerns the tree species mentioned in verse fourteen of the MT. The second is simply an anthropological analysis of the nature of idols and idolatry in the ancient middle-eastern cultures.

As already noted, even the pre-modern commentators puzzled over the exact tree species mentioned in the Hebrew MT text. But it is only the modern scholar, with his interest in the origin of the text and the background against which it was written, who sees the tree species as a possible key to these issues. In their commentary Goldingay and Payne note that the tree species mentioned in verse fourteen “tend to grow in the cooler, wetter, more northern hilly areas of Syria-Palestine than in warmer, drier, more southern valleys. In general this combination of trees suggests Syria-Palestine rather than Babylonia.”30 In his paper on these trees, Sherwin provides and extensive discussion of what species might correspond to those of the Hebrew text. He notes as others do that the trees indicated are not Babylonian and adds that Babylonian religious texts identify the wood of the Tamarisk tree for the making of divine images.31 What does he make of all this? He argues that this passage was probably pre-exilic and not written in Babylon, or if written in Babylon it was from the earliest years of the exile. In either case “the assumption that it is a later composition, among the latest levels of redaction of Isaiah, is no longer necessary.” This is a strictly modern concern! Unfortunately, the historical-critical attempts to understand the date and redactional history of this passage may overshadow the importance of the text itself and its message. Although Sherwin’s argument may not stand up to further criticism and study, it

ought to caution the lay reader that worrying too much about the history of the text can sometimes turn out to be nothing more than a distraction.

Another modern concern is represented by Michael Dick’s paper on Babylonian idol worship.32 His concern is that Isaiah misrepresents the practice of idolatry. Idols were not made to be gods, per se, but in hopes that a god would reside in the idol after a consecration ritual. He points out that the two day consecration ritual included a ceremonial dissociation between the idol and the craftsman who made it, so that the idol was not longer “made by human hands”. The Babylonians were also concerned with what happened when an idol was destroyed after consecration. What happens to the god who inhabits it? Again, this anthropological view, however interesting, is simply a modern concern.

Who planted the trees?

Then the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and he placed there the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the Lord God made various trees grow that were delightful to look at and good for food ...

(Genesis 2:8-9)

Does it matter whether we read this satire from a Bible based on the Masoretic or the Septuagint text? The two differ in details, but these don’t seem to matter much to the main point of the passage. Theodoret of Cyr is obviously using the MT in his commentary on Isaiah:

- The prophet proceeds to teach that the Creator gave the forests and woods on the mountains to supply food and fuel and for the sake of human bodies. They, however, take a holm oak, an oak or a cedar that God has planted and watered by providing rain for the benefit of human bodies and use the trees to create gods. (Theodoret of Cyr: Commentary on Isaiah 13.44.13)33

Yet it also seems as though he might have the text of the LXX close at hand: “The wood he cut from the forest which the Lord planted ...”

33 Ibid p. 65.
Although God is never mentioned in the satire (at least in the MT), without Him, there is no satire. With Him, the idol makers are not only foolish but pitiable. The pre-modern commentators saw this quite clearly and obviously did not need one text or the other to see the point: all that we have -- our resources, our talents, our creativity -- comes ultimately from God. They did not read this passage in isolation. They read it in the context of all the scriptures. They knew, without being told, the true and ultimate origin of the trees in forest. But how does the layman read or hear this text? Did the people of Cyr need Theodoret’s help to put the passage in context? What of the reader in the modern world? Is it more important to understand the kind of wood that was used to make the idols, or that the wood was ultimately provided by God? If the revelation of scripture is intended for our benefit, then which text takes priority?

This isn’t the kind of question that can be answered by historical scholarship. Perhaps this is the most intriguing aspect of Isaiah 44:9-20: it forces us to consider the foundational questions of what we mean by scripture. The Septuagint was accepted by early Christians as scripture, but has become suspect since the Reformation. If many denominations of modern Christians are persuaded that the Septuagint is simply a poor or inaccurate translation, at least of certain passages, what is lost? In an era when we no longer read all of scripture with the intensity of the pre-modern scholars, there may be real merit in studying both the MT and the LXX. For Christians this shouldn’t be a radical idea, because we live comfortably with four versions of the Gospel. If it takes both versions of the Old Testament to help us understand who planted the trees, perhaps we should read them together more often.
All who make images are nothing, and those who serve them that will not profit them; they are witnesses against themselves that they neither see nor know, that they may be put to shame.

Who makes a god or casts an image, that is profitable for nothing?

Behold, all those serving them shall be put to shame, craftsmen of the sons of men made them; let them all assemble, let them stand forth, they shall break up and be put to shame together.

The smith from iron makes an axe and blows fire in coals; he strengthens it with hammers, and makes it with the strength of his force; and if he that makes it becomes hungry and does not eat, there will be no force in him, and if he becomes thirsty and drinks no water, he will be faint.

The carpenter breaks wood at the line, he saws it at the plummet, cutting it through with the chisel, and grasping it with clamps; he makes it into the figure of a man, with the beauty of the woman dwelling in the house.

The wood he cut from the forest which the Lord planted, and the rain made grow, and according to the bloom of youth, to set it up in the house.

Then it becomes fuel for man; he takes part of it and warms himself, he kindles a fire and bakes bread; also he makes a god and worships, he casts the image and beseeches from it.

Part of it he burns in the fire, over part he eats flesh, he roasts meat and is satisfied; also he warms himself and says, "Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire!"

And the rest of it he makes into a god, an image; he worships and subjudgets himself to it and beseeches from it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god!"

They know not, neither do they discern; for their eyes are shut so that they cannot see, so that they cannot understand with their heart.

No one recalls to his heart, nor is there knowledge or understanding to say, "Part of it I burned in the fire, I also baked bread upon its coals, I roasted flesh and have eaten; and shall I make the residue of it an abomination? Shall I worship useless wood?"

Behold his god! Part of it is ash: his foolish heart has led him astray, and he cannot deliver himself or say, "Has not my right hand done a lie?"

All who make idols are nothing, and the things they delight in do not profit; their witnesses neither see nor know, that they may be put to shame.

Who fashions a god or casts an image, that is profitable for nothing?

Behold, all his fellows shall be put to shame, and the craftsmen are but men; let them all assemble, let them stand forth, they shall be terrified, they shall be put to shame together.

The smith fashions it and works it over the coals; he shapes it with hammers, and forges it with his strong arm; he becomes hungry and his strength fails, he drinks no water and is faint.

The carpenter stretches a line, he marks it out with a pencil; he fashions it with planes, and marks it with a compass; he shapes it into the figure of a man, with the beauty of the woman dwelling in the house.

Then it becomes fuel for a man; he takes a part of it and warms himself, he kindles a fire and bakes bread; also he makes a god and worships it, he makes it a graven image and falls down before it.

Half of it he burns in the fire; over half he eats flesh, he roasts meat and is satisfied; also he warms himself and says, "Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire!"

And the rest of it he makes into a god, his idol; and falls down to it and worships it; he prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for thou art my god!"

They know not, nor do they discern; for he has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see, and their minds, so that they cannot understand.

No one considers, nor is there knowledge or discernment to say, "Part of it I burned in the fire, I also baked bread on its coals, I roasted flesh and have eaten; and shall I make the residue of it an abomination? Shall I fall down before a block of wood?"

He feeds on ashes; a deluded mind has led him astray, and he cannot deliver himself or say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?"

All who form and carve gods are useless, and they desire things which shall not profit them; but they will be ashamed.

They all create a god and carve unprofitable things.

All by whom they were made are withered, and let all the deaf among men be gathered together. Let them stand together and be ashamed and dishonored together.

For the craftsman sharpens his iron tool, and fashions the idol with his axe, and perces it with the awl. He works it with the strength of his arm, and will hunger and grow weak, and will not drink water.

The craftsman selects his wood and stretches out his rule, and according to the bloom of youth, to set it up in the house.

The wood he cut from the forest which the Lord planted, and the rain made grow, so as to be for men to burn and to take some of it to warm himself. They kindle it, and bake bread for themselves; but he works into gods what is left and worships them.

They burn half of it in the fire, and with the other half they bake bread for themselves. They roast meat on it, eat and are satisfied. He even warms himself and says, 'I am comfortable, because I am warm, and have seen the fire.'

And the rest of it he makes into a carved god, and worships it and prays to it, and says, 'Deliver me, for you are my god.'

They do not know how to discern because they shut their eyes, so as not to see with their eyes or understand with their heart.

No one considered in his heart, nor is there knowledge or understanding to say, "Part of it I burned in the fire, I also baked bread on its coals, I roasted flesh and have eaten; and then made the rest of it an abomination; and they worship it.

Know this: their heart is ashes; they go astray, and no one can deliver his soul. See, you will not say, 'There is a lie in my right hand.'