

The Prince of Shalom

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*Water will gush forth
in the wilderness and
streams in the desert.*

ISAIAH 35:6

The Hebrew word that Isaiah uses to describe the peace that the Promised One will bring is *shalom*. It's a beautiful word that conveys wholeness, harmony, and health. Where we might settle for uneasy truces and Band-Aid fixes as proxies for peace, *shalom* represents something much more robust. Beyond the cessation of war, *shalom* is a transformation of the conditions that lead to war in the first place.

When there is *shalom*, everything gets to function the way it was created to. *Shalom* rejects the idea of life as a zero-sum game and dares to imagine the comprehensive flourishing of every person and every thing, all at the same time. Theologian Darrell Johnson teaches that *shalom* describes “a psycho-somatic-relational-racial-

economic-spiritual wholeness.” In chapter 35, Isaiah depicts that wholeness in beautifully poetic language.

Let’s start with the psychological wholeness the Prince of Shalom can offer us. According to Isaiah, there is a peace on offer that says, “Be strong, do not fear” to our “fearful hearts” (v. 4) until “gladness and joy” overtake us and “sorrow and sighing . . . flee away” (v. 10).

And what of somatic (or bodily) wholeness? In one vivid image after another, Isaiah describes physical healing: The blind see, the deaf hear, the lame “leap like a deer” and the mute “shout for joy” (vv. 5–6). Even the creation itself is healed, as “water will gush forth in the wilderness” (v. 6) and “the wilderness will rejoice and blossom” like a crocus flower bursting into bloom (vv. 1–2).

As Isaiah 35 builds to its culmination, we are offered a vibrant vision of relational, economic, and spiritual wholeness in the depiction of a redeemed people walking and singing together on a highway of holiness. There are no lions there, Isaiah tells us, and we can safely assume the way is free from all other predatory or opportunistic foes. The people enter Zion together, where “everlasting joy will crown their heads” (v. 10).

This ultimate shalom, Isaiah tells us, is our future. But there’s even more to it than that. Author Jonathan Martin suggests in *Prototype* that, because the Prince of Peace gives us his Spirit, we are called to be “people from the future”—people who practice shalom here and now.

This Advent, when you face a situation in which peace is sorely needed, ask the Lord: *What action or attitude would most move this situation toward the comprehensive flourishing of everyone and everything involved?* You may find that the Prince of Shalom makes you a stream in the desert and fills you with gladness and joy.

Contemplate Isaiah 35.

What words or phrases would you use to describe the peace envisioned here? How does it speak to our future hope? How does it speak to the work of the Prince of Peace in our lives today?