For convenience I've put the entire chapter (Good News Bible) on this thinksheet; but first, let's have a close look at the structure of the chapter's heart, vv.6-8 (my translation). The letters A-C correspond, distributively, with these three vv.; and the numbers are the lines in each quatrain (= unit of four lines). (NOTE: This is for having a close look at the Hebrew poetry; the verses were added many hundreds of years after the Bible was written, and they butcher it up into bite-size for convenience--as the chapters, also added much later, but not quite so late, butcher the Bible up into meal-size portions. So naturally, p.2 of this thinksheet follows the Hebrew-structure letter-number divisions.) The slashes ("/") designate the beats, three to the line; one beat is silent, and designated by ("//"). Here we go:

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A
1"What gift / shall I bring with me / into the LORD's Presence
2 and prostrate myself / before God / on high?
3 Shall I come / with animal offerings / to be burnt whole,
4 with my / most valuable / calves?
B
1 Would God be pleased / with thousands / of rams,
2 or with libations / of rivers / of oil?
3 Or must I give / my first-born as priest / in atonement for my sin?
4 the fruit / of my body / for my offenses?"
C
1 What is fitting / has been narrated to you, / Adam-man!

THIS / is what the LORD / asks of you:
2 only this: / to act / justly,
3 to love // loyally,
4 and to walk / in humble obedience / with your God.
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Mic.6 is a court scene: Israel on trial, the LORD the plaintiff, the mountains the jury. In the accusation, God points to (vv.3-5) his leal-love (cf. C3, above) in his dealings with Israel. Then in vv.6f the penitent worshipper makes escalating offers in meditating on appropriate (cf. C1, "fitting," the basic meaning of "good" in Hebrew) offerings; and the prophet answers (v.8) as to what would fit: only a life conformable to the character of God as seen in his mighty acts of deliverance and guidance (again, as narrated in vv.3-5). The rest of the chapter threatens judgment for the described sins of social injustice and religious corruption.

6 Listen to the Lord's case against Israel.

Arise, O LORD, and present your case; let the mountains and the hills hear what you say.

<sup>2</sup> You mountains, you everlasting foundations of the earth, listen to the LORD's case! The LORD has a case against his people. He is going

to bring an accusation against Israel.

3 The LORD says, "My people, what have I done to you? How have I been a burden to you? Answer me.

1 brought you out of Egypt; I rescued you from slavery; I sent Moses. Aaron, and Miriam to lead you. 5 My people, remember what King Balak of Moab planned to do to you and how Balaam son of Beor answered him. Remember the things that happened on the way from the camp at Acacia to Gilgal. Remember these things and you will realize what I did in order to save you."

6 What shall I bring to the LORD, the God of heaven, when I come to worship him? Shall I bring the best calves to burn as offerings to him? Will the LORD be pleased if I bring him thousands of sheep or endless streams of olive oil? Shall I offer him my first-born child to pay for my sins? 8 No, the LORD has told us what is good. What he requires of us is this: to do what is just, to show constant love, and to live in humble fellowship with our God.

lowship with our God.

9 It is wise to fear the Lord. He calls to the city, "Listen, you people who assemble in the city! 10 In the houses of evil men are treasures which they got dishonestly. They

use false measures, a thing that I hate. How can I forgive men who use false scales and weights? Your rich men exploit the poor, and all of you are liars. So I have already begunt your ruin and destruction because of your sins. You will eat, but not be satisfied—in fact you will still be hungry. You will carry things off, but you will not be able to save them; anything you do save I will destroy in war. You will sow grain, but not harvest the crop. You will press oil from olives, but never get to use it. You will make wine, but never drink it. This will happen because you have followed the evil practices of King Omri and of his son, King Ahab. You have continued their policies, and so I will bring you to ruin, and everyone will despise you. People' everywhere will treat you with contempt."

3/2

This summary of the prophetic message, perhaps the locus classicus of Jewish religion and thus at the heart of Christianity, is elegantly structured as three, threebeats-to-the-line, quatrains. In your Bible, letter the quatrains A, B, and C [ = vv. 6, 7, 8]; then number each of the four lines in each quatrain 1, 2, 3, 4--as the rest of this thinksheet will refer thus rather than to vv. [If we used the vv. division, the quatrain lines would be, e.g. in vs.8, thus: 8a, 8b, 8c, 8d .... SITUA-TION: Something has gone wrong, and it's assumed God is out of sorts about something --as two women standing on a streetcorner after yesterday's [21 Mar 76] storm were arguing one of them that God was punishing America and the other that God was punishing N.J.--and along comes a minister who says, "Had you thought it might just be the weather?" The women saying it's theological, the religious leader that it's not! The minister had a point; but taken too far, the point would eliminate biblical rel-Parallel our passage, the Iliad would not exist without its opening scene: a plague is interpreted as Apollo's displeasure-alienation, and the question--just as in our passage -- is how to "come before" [a techincial expression, in our passage, for "access" or approach] God. Hermeneutic ASSUMPTIONS: If one were to assume that the gods do not exist, the access-to-God issue would not exist; nor would it if one were to assume that the gods are [as in Epicureanism] unapproachable, or that the divine-human are [as in philosophical Hinduism] identical or [as in Romanticism] indivisible-inseparable [e.g., Wordsworth's "nearer than breathing, closer than hands and feet"]. What, on the contrary, our passage, and the whole of biblical religion, assumes is that [1] God loves us, [2] enters into covenant with us, [3] is faithful to his side of the covenant [see, #775, "chesedh"], [4] requires that we conform to his character as Holy Love and [5] "walk" with him in humble openness to his will, [6] repenting-returning when by "sin" we have distanced ourselves from him, [7] a breach-healing that occurs, through "grace," when we re-conform ourselves to his nature and will. Existentially, the assumpton is that "adam"-man [1] has violated the covenant through [C4] injustice, ruthless insensitivity, and prideful egocentrism [narcissism, humanism], and needs to "return" [the Heb. term for repentance] across the consequent distance to God. Thus,....AIM: To overcome the estrangement by expiation, propitiation [AB]....THEME: What God wants, i.e. what is acceptable to him as sufficient for closing the gap, effecting reconciliation, or--lower-coil put-cooling his anger....The PROCESS: Just liturgical action [A2], won't get the job done: we must bring some offering [Al]. What we bring may be viewed as a lovegift, as a business negotiation, as a bribe to a venal judge [here, an escalation of fees or bribes; calves, thousands...rivers, first-born(A3-B4)]. [In this popular religion, the offerings can be ordinary or, as from the rich in goods [thousands... rivers] or in liturgical devotion [first-born], extraordinary: ignorance and impenitence render all such efforts ineffective.] What is acceptable is nothing that any of us has, but only something that each of us is, viz. a living-acting self [C].... TONE-MOOD: Not that of the condemning prophet, but that of the sympathetic, pleading teacher whose message is as profound as it is concise. Giving the inner is not enough [A2], and giving the outer is not enough [A3-B4]; with the gift of self, inner and outer are both given, and given in integrity and integration: contrast the inauthentic bodysoul integration in B4. The Holy One will not accept sacred substitues for life-holiness, which is what he "requires" [C2, the vb. from which we get the Heb. wd. for interpretation, viz. "midrash"]. NB: The point of character is not that it has any value in itself ["good for good's sake," an end in itself] but that it's the only acceptable means of access to God, in communion with whom life is to culminate for the whole creation in justice-joy ["shalom"]....ADDRESSEE: "You've been told, Adam...!" [C1]: the individual [as Jer., therefore perhaps 7th c. though usu. put as the last of the 8th-c.prophets] as socially responsible [a liberation theologian!][C3] destined for sanctity [C4]....PARTICULARS: First, to "establish justice" or "do right" or "do the right" or "do righteousness" [e.g., Jn. Q. Adams' address to the Supreme Court in the Amistad case]. Juridical, rational, fairplay oriented. Cf. Amos. Second [2 of the 3 being on humanity, as 1Jn.4.20], "love kindness or good-will or goodness or leal-love." Relational, emotional [root "bow," diff. fr. vs.6]. Hosea. Third, like Is., "walk eagerly with God" [modest openness].